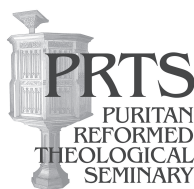


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2965 Leonard St. N.E.

Grand Rapids, Michigan 49525

misguided. That kingdom will be restored in a way surpassing all expectations when the New Jerusalem comes down from heaven, but the end time restoration begins with the outpouring of the Spirit and the formation of the congregation of Israel in a New Testament form. The apostles and the church in general have to fulfill their duty of proclaiming Jesus as Lord and Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit and not make any attempt to compute the times.

The three stages of the progress of the gospel, namely, the dawn of salvation in Jerusalem, the reconstitution of Israel, and the inclusion of the Gentiles, are all foretold by Isaiah. Acts shows how the Old Testament prophecies are fulfilled in the New Testament church consisting both of Jews and Gentiles. The Apostle Paul is portrayed by Luke as a prophetic figure whose divinely given role is to complete the task of the Servant of the Lord to bring Israel back to the Lord and to take the messianic salvation to the Gentiles.

Peterson's commentary on Acts is a valuable tool for providing insight into this important and unique book of Scripture—the only one that gives information about the first stage of the New Testament church.

—Pieter de Vries



Willem J. van Asselt with contributions by T. Theo J. Pleizier, Pieter L. Rouwendal, and Maarten Wisse. *Introduction to Reformed Scholasticism*. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2011. 263 pp., paperback.

The Reformed pastor or seminarian interested in studying mid-sixteenth to late-seventeenth-century Reformed doctrinal florescence faces a daunting journey into an area that is largely *terra incognita* in the standard seminary curriculum—Reformed scholasticism. For starters, the historical scope is huge: from eleventh-century Scholasticism to eighteenth-century Enlightenment. Additionally, the field is not Anglophone-friendly: the primary sources (very few of which have been translated into English) are in Latin, and, until recently, many of the most important secondary sources are in Dutch, French, German, or Italian. What is more, engagement with the sources requires, at a minimum, familiarity with Aristotle, Augustine, and Aquinas. The preliminary path appears almost impassable.

Yet, all hope is not lost, for, as the ancient Chinese proverb teaches, the journey of a million miles begins with a small step. But, to continue the metaphor, if one is to begin the million-mile journey into the field of Reformed scholasticism, one certainly needs a good map. The new English translation of Willem J. van Asselt's *Inleiding in de gereformeerde scholastiek* (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum, 1998) (Introduction to Reformed Scholasticism) is therefore most welcome; by mapping the field of study and providing a guidebook for further research, this book both fills a void in Anglophone scholarship and gives hope to newcomers that the path, despite its daunting appearance, is not altogether impassable.

The authors describe their purpose as follows: "This textbook reveals the roots, developments, and main topics of this theology [Reformed scholasticism] in their historical context and is meant as a stimulus for further study" (xiv). Specifically, readers will find clear definitions of "orthodoxy," "scholasticism," and "Reformed scholasticism"; a historical survey of the entire era of scholasticism; introductions to the most important figures and schools of thought throughout the three periods of Reformed orthodoxy; a state of the question on key issues along with significant bibliographies appended to each chapter; and a reader's guide that details how to approach a scholastic text and applies the method to Gisbertus Voetius's disputation on "The Use of Reason in Matters of Faith." To quote from Richard A. Muller's foreword, this book "is not merely an introductory survey. It is a significant guide for the further study of the era" (x).

Compared to the Dutch original, chapters 4, 5, and 9 have been updated (with mostly formal changes), and an entirely new chapter on the implications of Reformed scholasticism for today has been added (ch. 11).

The book is arranged into two parts, the first of which treats the scholastic method in post-Reformation Reformed theology. Notably, in chapter 1, van Asselt and Pieter L. Rouwendal explicitly locate the book in what might be termed a revisionist line of historiography on Reformed scholasticism. This means that they disagree with the traditional answer given to the key question that undergirds the entire field of study: what is the nature of the historical relation between medieval scholasticism, Reformation theology, and post-Reformation scholasticism? At the risk of generalization, the traditional answer is that, after the Reformation (which supposedly was a time of warm,

simple, biblical theology), Protestant theology reverted to the cold, dry, rationalistic scholasticism that the Reformers sought to leave behind. This answer is largely based upon the assumption that the new scholastic *form* of post-Reformation theology (which, according to both sides, is an indisputable development) entails a change in *content* of that theology. The revisionists dispute the latter. They counter that Reformed scholasticism is primarily a change in *method* rather than content: "The most important thesis we will defend in this work is that the term scholastic refers above all to method, without direct implications for content. It pertains to methods of disputation and reasoning which characterize scholasticism in contrast to other ways of doing theology" (8). Accordingly, they point out that, during this period, the scholastic method was used not only for theological content but also for jurisprudence and medicine. Also, they note that scholasticism was the universal method employed by Reformed, Roman Catholic, and Lutheran theologians alike. Since the scholastic method was employed to propagate a wide variety of content in multiple academic fields and a wide array of conflicting theologies, the revisionists view the older assessment to be untenable.

Starting with Schleiermacher and Hegel, in chapter 2, van Asselt and Rouwendal survey nineteenth-century approaches to the underlying historical question along with twentieth- and twenty-first-century reactions and developments. Against this backdrop they present their revisionist case for seeing a much larger measure of positive continuity between the theological content of medieval scholasticism, Reformation theology, and Reformed scholasticism.

In chapter 3, T. Theo J. Pleizier and Maarten Wisse introduce Aristotle's signal methodological role in Reformed scholasticism. Contrary to the common caricature of Reformed scholastics as naïve synthesizers of Aristotle's pagan philosophy and the Holy Bible, the authors argue that the Reformed scholastics did not appropriate from Aristotle uncritically. Rather, they gave many terms new meanings and they rejected several aspects of Aristotelian philosophy outright. The authors also present a basic survey of Aristotle's corpus and introduce key concepts from his metaphysical formulations that appear in Reformed polemics with Socinians, Lutherans, and Roman Catholics.

In chapter 4, Wisse presents Augustine's significant material role in Reformed scholasticism. He avers that, just as Aristotle is the methodological fount of Reformed scholasticism, so Augustine is its didactic

and polemical fount, especially regarding prolegomena, the doctrines of God and the Holy Trinity, and the doctrine of predestination.

Rouwendal surveys medieval scholasticism in chapter 5. He explains how specific features of the scholastic method work, such as the several steps of the *quaestio* method. He also introduces the most important medieval theologians and texts. Thus he illuminates the medieval methodological tools and theological sources that the Reformed scholastics critically appropriated in order to formulate their theological positions.

In chapter 6, van Asselt introduces a significant historical question that underlies the study of Reformed scholasticism, namely, how the Renaissance relates to the Reformation and hence how humanism relates to scholasticism. Building on the work of Paul Kristeller, he suggests that scholars of Reformed scholasticism need to broaden their horizon in order to take humanism into account insofar as a humanist line and a scholastic line coexist both in the Renaissance and the Reformation periods.

Van Asselt and Rouwendal trace the development of Reformed theological method in chapter 7. Beginning with early Reformation-era guides to Bible reading such as are found in Erasmus, Melancthon, and Calvin, the authors illuminate the origins and growth of the *loci* method, the rise of Ramism, the distinction between the analytic and synthetic methods, and the discussions on whether theology is a theoretical or practical science.

Part 2, authored by van Asselt, is comprised of three chapter-length surveys of the periods of early, high, and late Reformed orthodoxy (chs. 8–10). Van Asselt explicates each period's historical context, main theological debates, and eminent centers of Reformed theology (mostly Reformed academies and universities along with their attending theologians). He also provides theological samplings from representative theologians of each era: Franciscus Junius's formulation of the *theologia archetypa-ectypa* distinction, Francis Turretin's *quaestio* on the freedom of the will, and Benedict Pictet's view of the relation between reason and revelation respectively.

In chapter 11, van Asselt rehearses several historical correctives from the revisionist line of Reformed scholasticism studies and suggests several ways in which the field can be further developed. He also returns to the question with which the book began: does Reformed scholasticism have any relevance for theology today?

He answers in the affirmative for three reasons: (1) ignorance of Reformed scholasticism leads to superficiality and vagueness in theological formulations; (2) the all-encompassing breadth with which the Reformed scholastics sought to bring to bear in their explanations of God's agency in the world is worth emulating; (3) the intent of the *quaestio* method—to attain clarity through critical analysis of one's own and another's ideas and to theologize in light of the great stream of catholic orthodoxy—is a pressing need in contemporary Protestant theology.

To these benefits, three more can be added specifically for those of us within the American Presbyterian and Reformed tradition. First, this book challenges the overtly negative attitude toward Reformed scholasticism that arose in early twentieth-century Reformed philosophy at the Free University in Amsterdam under Herman Dooyeweerd, which attitude was then imported to American Reformed theology via Cornelius Van Til. It is time to reassess this attitude based upon actual interaction with the primary sources of Reformed scholasticism, a feature that is lacking in this earlier scholarship. Second, for those of us who are not expert Latinists, this book still provides an invaluable orientation to the Reformed scholastic texts that are available in English such as Edward Leigh's *Body of Divinity*, John Owen's *Works*, Francis Turretin's *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, and even Herman Bavinck's *Reformed Dogmatics*. Third, insofar as this book highlights the international scope and vast breadth and depth of Reformed theology in its period of florescence, it challenges contemporary Reformed theologians to avoid reductionistic tendencies such as thinking that one's pet theologian is the sole paragon of Reformed theology.

This first-class guidebook is highly recommended to anyone interested in a basic orientation to the study of Reformed scholasticism.

—Laurence R. O'Donnell III