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Post-reformation reformed dogmatics, volume 1: prolegomena to theology

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of religion and then, echoing the Apologists of the second century, the superiority of Christianity. In its vision of the highest good of the human race, Grotius argues, Christianity preserves the truths known to natural religion, to ancient philosophy and to ancient Israel, while at the same time drawing them together into a higher form. Throughout the work, the reader is impressed by Grotius' grasp not only of the materials of the Christian religion but of classical literature and philosophy as well—and by Grotius' obvious assumption that Christianity cannot be discussed apart from the values and insights that it shared with and in many cases gained from classical antiquity.

Like the Arminian and, indeed, like the Lutheran theologians of his day, Grotius argues that Christianity, as a religion, is essentially practical: it is a form of knowing that tends toward a goal. This argument, however, leads him beyond the polemics of his day to the conclusion that the righteous or ethical life is the center of Christian teaching and not the much-controverted dogmas of then-contemporary debate. This is not to say that Grotius viewed Christianity as lacking doctrine: he identified fundamental doctrinal issues, *decreta*, such as the essence and attributes of God, God's relation to the created order, human nature as created in the image of God, and human nature as now troubled by evil. All of these *decreta* function as the grounds for ethical *officia*: the issue, for Grotius, is to direct his readers toward the fundamental intention of the Christian religion, living rightly in accord with God's will, not disputing fine points of dogma. He concludes his work with a plea for tolerance.

The importance of this volume lies not only in the new and clearer perspective that the *Meletius* itself gives on the life and work of an important thinker of the seventeenth century, but also in the major contribution made by its editor to our understanding of the intellectual life of the Netherlands in Grotius' time. The introduction and commentary are models of scholarship that offer insight into the workings of theology, theological politics, classical study and scholarship in the seventeenth century.

Richard A. Muller
Fuller Theological Seminary

Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics, Vol. I, Prolegomena to Theology

Richard A. Muller
Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1987
365 pp. \$12.95 U.S.

This volume is the first installment of a planned trilogy analysing the theology of post-Reformation Reformed Scholasticism. The present work

includes theological foundations, hermeneutics and the doctrine of God. The author is eager to restore more accuracy to historical judgements of the Protestant Scholastics, neither viewing them as normative for theology today (cf. Robert Preus) nor dismissing them as hopelessly obscurantist and of little use for contemporary theological reflection. Muller's thesis is that the achievement of the Baroque theologians "was the creation of an institutional theology, confessionally in continuity with the Reformation and doctrinally, in the sense of the larger system of doctrine, in continuity with the great tradition of the church" (p. 13). Far from representing a degenerated ossification of the Reformation, the Protestant Scholastics preserved the Reformation for posterity by codifying it under the threat of a resurgent Catholicism without and the bullying of Protestant rulers within. Moreover, in Muller's view, the imposing doctrinal edifice they erected remains influential in Protestant theology today.

Muller surveys the course of Protestant Orthodoxy through three phases of development: the early period from 1560 to 1630; the high period from 1630 to 1700; and the late period extending from 1700 to the middle of the century. To account for the rise of Protestant Orthodoxy Muller adduces four contributing factors: the polemical threat of Roman Catholic apologists; the need for a stable pedagogical foundation under the Protestant churches; the resolution of certain intra-Protestant dogmatic issues; and the search for a philosophical elaboration of the vision of the Reformation.

One factor which Muller discounts is the "controlling theological category" or *Leitprinzip*, whose importance has been considered quintessential of Reformed Orthodoxy since the nineteenth century. Muller argues that the idea of a *Leitprinzip* as forming a particular system of theology is a product of Romanticism and the importation of the idea into the study of Reformed Scholasticism has caused theologians such as Heppe, Barth and Bizer to misread the Reformed Orthodox as creatures of Calvin's successor Beza, dominated by rationalism and predestinarianism. Muller rejects the accuracy of these labels and asserts the continuity of Christian Aristotelianism, albeit in a different form from late Medieval or Reformation theology. As a form of Christian Aristotelianism, Orthodoxy was neither rationalist nor fideist. When Descartes and Locke replaced Aristotle and the scholastic method, Protestant Scholasticism was also eclipsed.

This volume has much to commend it to the prospective reader. It is researched and written well, offers insight into an important but often misunderstood and overlooked period of dogmatic history, and is very reasonably priced. Muller has made a valiant effort to rehabilitate the Reformed Scholastics from charges of torpidity and obscurity. What remains to be

seen from the results of his second and third volumes is whether he can sustain the thesis of continuity with the first generation of the Reformation and relevance for the present.

Timothy R. Cooke
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The Christ of the Ignatian Exercises

Juan Luis Segundo

Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1987

The Christ of the Ignatian Exercises is Juan Luis Segundo's fourth volume in his series "Jesus of Nazareth Yesterday and Today". Previous volumes have included: Volume One *Faith and Ideologies*; Volume Two, *The Historical Jesus of the Synoptics*; and Volume Three, *The Humanist Christology of Paul*.

Edited and translated from the Spanish by John Drury, the present volume finds its place in what will no doubt be, when it is complete, a major theological *opus* by one of the century's most articulate "liberation" theologians.

It is not easy going; the pages are theologically and syntactically dense and closely-reasoned; you will find yourself re-reading many a paragraph—or even page!—to follow and comprehend. But it is worth the struggle; Segundo makes a convincing case that Jesus of Nazareth belongs to the ages, in the words of Pelikan's recent argument. More than that, he makes a convincing case that Jesus of Nazareth belongs to the revolution-impassioned atheist as much as to the committed baptized.

And that is the accumulated force of the material Segundo presents here; he is a kind of evangelist—he might not select that term for himself, but that is how he must be read—eager to present a winsome portrait of the Center of our faith in terms that are attractive and also credible to the century's "cultured despisers". Among these, not surprisingly, the thoughtful and committed revolutionary laboring for justice for the oppressed finds a special place in Segundo's affections; one harbors the impression, in reading these pages, that their author feels a special sense of urgency in making Jesus both credible and attractive to a non-Christian audience thoughtfully and passionately committed to social justice. "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness..."

Segundo organizes his material into seven chapters, with an introduction and an appendix, and fully twenty pages of endnotes. The Introduction sketches out the parameters of his project: "Christologies in Christian Spiritualities". Chapter One is entitled "Jesus and God: Approach to