

crucial methodological issues and eases the way into the intricacies of the first book of the Bible. As Ross is fully aware, however, his work is not a replacement of other deeper and more specialized studies (p. 14); it is to be viewed as a starting point and an encouragement for further research.

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Schwarz, Hans. *Responsible Faith: Christian Theology in the Light of 20th-Century Questions*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1986. 448 pp. \$23.95.

Hans Schwarz, professor of theology at the University of Regensburg, West Germany, has produced a comprehensive, one-volume summary covering the main themes of Christian faith: revelation, Scripture, God, creation, anthropology, sin, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, church, grace, resurrection, and the final judgment. The limited space allowed for each theme precludes in-depth treatment. Nevertheless, the book offers an informative and helpful presentation of Christian theology in our ecumenical age and serves as an excellent scholarly introduction to the main Christian themes.

Schwarz's concern is to present Christianity as truthful, thought-provoking, and growing, in distinction from other world religions, such as Buddhism (meditative) or Islam (obedience-oriented). Christian faith is intrinsically a responsible faith (p. 27). To remain credible and living, theology must function in "critical, apologetic, and doxological" ways (p. 34). Each era requires new accents in different places. "If this critical dimension is missing, the church will be in danger of becoming anachronistic, an archaic remnant in a changed world, rather than a beacon beckoning to new shores" (p. 35).

Theological reflection is, for Schwarz, the attempt "to raise into consciousness what we are doing." In other words, a responsible faith makes the difference between being a habitual or a conscious Christian. Anselm's dictum, "I do not seek to understand so that I may believe; but I believe so that I may understand," motivates Schwarz's summary of Christian faith. Since his point of reference is not the exegetical foundation of Christian faith, but rather the scientific and philosophical trends of our times, the book is characterized by a strong rational structure and terminology.

The historical introductions to the formation of the classical Christian doctrines are clear and contribute to a better understanding of the orthodox creeds. Most of all, Schwarz shows an overall respect for the biblical text and the history of salvation. His views of creation and redemption are basically in harmony with conservative biblical theology. On the other hand, he assumes that the creation accounts of Gen 1-2 "hardly take us back beyond the 7th or 8th century B.C." (p. 98).

The superficial treatment of the atonement of Christ is disappointing (pp. 252-254). Schwarz's positing of an alternative between a monistic and a dramatic dualistic approach to the divine atonement fails to consider seriously a standard exegesis of Holy Scripture. Schwarz further ignores the major theories of the atonement in Christian history. His treatment gives little guidance to the biblical understanding of the doctrine of reconciliation through Christ's atoning sacrifice. Also, Christ's present celestial ministry of intercession is fully overlooked.

As to the relation of law and gospel, Schwarz defends Luther's historical order of law-gospel (pp. 345-346). He acknowledges that "the proclamation of the gospel alone without the law does not suffice" (p. 348). Justified believers live from the gospel and respond to it by following God's will. But sinners live under the law, oblivious to God's grace. "The law then serves to drive the sinners back to the gracious God who once again forgives and encourages them" (p. 348). God has granted Christians a limited freedom, which is based on a relationship with God's Word that allows them to live in a "responsive responsibility" (p. 349).

Schwarz rejects the traditional concept of an "immortal soul" (p. 380). "We hope," he states, "for a fulfillment beyond death in the resurrection of the dead" (p. 381). He also affirms his belief in a universal final judgment, and views an intermediate state between death and resurrection as neither necessary nor legitimate. Death is called in the NT (and by Luther) a "sleep until judgment day" (p. 390). Schwarz explicitly confirms that the only way to heaven is through judgment (p. 396). The day of reckoning at the Parousia is not a judgment of "our own merits but of our response to God's grace which he has extended to us in Jesus Christ" (p. 397). Through alignment with Christ, the believer's death will result in a resurrection to both judgment and eternal life.

Schwarz affirms that the eternal separation of the believer and the persistent unbeliever is ultimately based on the distinction between divine justice and love (p. 399), a "paradox" that cannot be solved by human concepts. It is, however, disappointing that the central and important teaching of the last judgment receives such an inadequate and superficial treatment. The book of James is never quoted, although there judgment, justification, faith, and works are closely related. The indispensable messages of Daniel, Revelation, and 2 Thess 2 are sadly by-passed or deliberately omitted, as if these eschatological perspectives were superfluous and irrelevant to a responsible Christian faith.

All in all, Schwarz's book has great merit in its historical introductions to the main doctrines of Christian faith. It is inadequate, however, in its exegetical discussions, while it completely fails to consider biblical apocalyptic. The thirteen chapters are supplemented with helpful bibliographies.