

temptation, the essence of Jesus' temptations, the key to His overcoming, the example He set for us.

As far as Jesus' death is concerned, Erickson's view—stated without documentation—that the Scriptures teach an intermediate state, a state of conscious existence between death and the resurrection (564) leads him to conclude that our Lord's death was no extinction or end of life, but rather a mere transition from one state to another (565). This tends to limit our Lord's sufferings on the cross to merely physical suffering. Erickson thus fails to comprehend Christ's real agony, the feeling of being eternally separated from the Father.

In the historical section, a question begs to be answered, i.e., What happened in the Christological debate between 794 and 1800? Did the Reformation or the Enlightenment have any influence on the debate? Are they not significant enough that Erickson should have explained why they did or did not?

Many readers will commend Erickson and his publishers for the physical characteristics of the book. The font style and size are pleasing. The margins are wide. The layout is attractive. Headings and subheadings help guide the reader through the material. The book also provides a Scripture index and a name and subject index, though no bibliography, which, it is to be hoped, will appear in a second edition.

Erickson's use of inclusive language is so skilled that it does not "show." It may, in fact, do more to attract feminists than the chapter featuring salvation and women.

Has Erickson reached his goal of developing an orthodox incarnational Christology for our time? He certainly has made an admirable and much-appreciated attempt to speak to his contemporaries. He did not shy away from challenging the contemporary mind-set. *The Word Became Flesh* shows convincingly that an incarnational Christology of the traditional Chalcedonian type is possible and relevant today, and fits the biblical data better than any other.

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Geisler, Norman L. *Thomas Aquinas: An Evangelical Appraisal*. Foreword by Ralph McInerney. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1991. 195 pp. \$12.95.

Norman Geisler writes with two very clear purposes in mind. First, he wants to uncover, underline, and defend the basic continuity that he sees between evangelical theology and the philosophical-theological synthesis produced by Thomas Aquinas. Second, because of such a perceived continuity, he feels the need to introduce evangelical students and theologians to some features of Aquinas' thought that he considers to be at the foundation of evangelical theology. Geisler considers an introduction

to Aquinas's thought necessary for evangelicals because "it is still all too rare to find evangelical philosophers or apologists who really understand the views of Aquinas" (15).

The first purpose is addressed in chap. 1, where Geisler deals with what he considers "the irony of evangelical criticism" (14) of Aquinas, namely, the fact that in spite of an explicit criticism and rejection of Aquinas, most evangelical theologians still develop their theological thought on the implicit basis provided by Aquinas' philosophical-theological system. Geisler openly confesses belonging to the "silent minority" of evangelicals who "are directly dependent on Aquinas for [their] basic theology, philosophy, and/or apologetics" (14). Geisler actually pleads with evangelicals to take Aquinas' philosophical-theological system to their "evangelical bosom, bathe it in a biblically-based theology, and nourish it to its full strength." After all, he adds, "as a mature evangelical, Aquinas is a more articulate defender of the faith than anyone in our midst" (23).

The second purpose is accomplished in the following eleven chapters, which describe some of Aquinas' most relevant ideas selected on the basis of their special applicability and usefulness for evangelical theology. After a biographic sketch (chap. 2) and an overview of Aquinas' thought (chap. 3), Geisler develops Aquinas' ideas on Scriptures (chap. 4), faith and reason (chap. 5), epistemology (chap. 6), ontology (chap. 7), God (chaps. 8 and 9), religious language (chap. 10), evil (chap. 11), and ethics (chap. 12).

Geisler's book targets evangelical scholars to whom he wishes to introduce Aquinas' thought in a positive way. Geisler is to be commended for condensing difficult and complex issues without distorting them and for his mastery in making Aquinas' ideas accessible to the nonspecialist. Thus, *Thomas Aquinas: An Evangelical Appraisal* should be recommended as a first step to students and scholars who wish to penetrate the rather difficult but fascinating world of Aquinas' theology.

The potentially controversial part of the book, in my opinion, lies in Geisler's evaluation of Aquinas' role in evangelical theology. He not only unapologetically stands on the side of Aquinas' system, but also considers Aquinas' metaphysical thought provides positive contributions for evangelical theology. What evangelicals should reject, in his opinion, is Romanism and not Aquinas' philosophical-theological system (23). Of course, Geisler clarifies that he does not agree with everything that Aquinas said (14). He explicitly mentions, without discussing, a sampling of areas in which he disagrees with Aquinas: the Apocrypha as part of Scripture, the beginning of human life, the divine authority of the Roman Catholic Church, infant baptism, sacraments, his cosmology, and his biology (177). Areas of agreement are those he writes about in chaps. 2-12.

What motivates this explicit return to the scholasticism of 17th-century Protestant Orthodoxy? One possible reason could reside in the need to find an antidote for the challenge of process theology to evangel-

icalism. In this context Aquinas appears, in Geisler's eyes, as the "better system capable of answering the threat raised by process theology" (21).

One only wishes that *Thomas Aquinas: An Evangelical Appraisal* could motivate evangelical theology to probe beyond the concrete issue of whether to choose Aquinas over Augustine into the deeper, more foundational issue regarding the relation between philosophy and theology.

In this regard many questions arise. Is evangelical theology really built on nonbiblical, philosophical foundations as Geisler contends? Can the *sola Scriptura* principle of the reformation still be coherently maintained in such a context, or should it be radically reinterpreted? Is evangelical theology, as we know it, dependent on philosophical thought to the point that departure from it into biblical intelligibility would require radical, theological reinterpretations? Should Christian theology answer the continuous challenges coming from the philosophical field by returning, as Geisler suggests, to a nonbiblical philosophical basis to be found in tradition, or should Christian theology explore a new, biblical way? Is it possible to build a Christian theology on the basis of a biblical philosophy? Geisler's book contributes not only to reopening the philosophy-theology issue in evangelicalism, but also to providing a first step toward a possible and much needed evangelical probe into the field of fundamental theology.

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Hasel, Gerhard F. *Understanding the Book of Amos: Basic Issues in Current Interpretations*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1991. 171 pp. Paperback, \$10.95.

Among the abundant literature on the prophetic books, Hasel's *Understanding the Book of Amos: Basic Issues in Current Interpretations* stands as a significant work in the study of the book of Amos. This is so because of the scope of the historical, sociopolitical, and to a certain extent, literary background Hasel presents.

Hasel should be praised for providing a comprehensive overview of the different stages of interpretation, as well as hermeneutical trends in the understanding of the book of Amos. Furthermore, the author pinpoints a hermeneutical problem of paramount importance, namely, the need for a viable approach in interpreting the book of Amos, as well as the prophetic books in general. Hasel argues that, so far, no approach (synchronic or diachronic) has been fully satisfactory (24, 25, also 68), resulting in the emergence of pluralistic methodologies (68) and a paradigm change (27) which tends toward a literary approach (66). In the same vein, Hasel concludes that current tendencies to integrate form-critical, traditio-critical, and literary-critical methods are not altogether successful. Furthermore, he