

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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FERNANDO CANALE

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

notes, the diachronic approach "is no longer at the cutting edge of research" (99).

Hasel's presentation of Amos' sociological background is carefully developed and includes the main positions adopted pertaining to the prophet's origin and profession(s) (36-45). In his treatment, the author challenges modern thinking, which, he states, tends sometimes to argue on the basis of subjective evidence or "linguistic speculations" (40). He prefers instead to leave some questions open whenever the level of certainty is tenuous (40, 68-69, 86, 119). Hasel attempts to solve all the complex (and sometimes problematic) facets of the historical and sociological background of the book of Amos. He affirms, and rightly so, that there are cases in which the final word has not been said (15, 55). But whenever the context allows for it, the author gives some clues that may lead to a better understanding of a specific methodological or textual aspect, as, for instance, in the problem related to Amos as prophet (46-47).

The last chapter of the book, entitled "Amos' Future Hope and Eschatology," is quite insightful. First, Hasel describes the problem of Amos' eschatological message—namely, whether the prophet proclaims an unconditional end to Israel or not. Then he develops some key themes that convey the idea of an eschatological expansion—the day of the Lord, the remnant, and the future restoration—to assert that Amos is both a prophet of doom and a prophet of hope. Hasel then goes on to argue that if the position which views Amos as a prophet with a dual role is rejected by some scholars, it is because they want to see in Amos a consistent prophet of doom. Such reasoning, he asserts, is the result of forcing "our standard of consistency" on the biblical pattern (119).

The bibliography of Hasel's book is monumental, and by itself occupies more than one-fourth of the book (45 pp. in small print). It represents, in the reviewer's estimation, one of the most exhaustive lists ever compiled in the study of prophetic books. In fact, the bibliographical section alone could have been a separate publication. It contains more than 1,160 books, articles, dissertations, and other publications.

The book, however, has a few typographical errors. Most of these appear in the transcription of foreign languages. It should be said, however, that these technical errors do not undermine the richness of the book.

Hasel's *Understanding the Book of Amos: Basic Issues in Current Interpretations* is to be considered as a landmark study of the book of Amos in particular and the prophetic books in general. This remarkable publication leads to the cutting edge of a new hermeneutic, and gives a striking picture of the prophet and his milieu. Hasel's intense dialogue with other scholars, the genuineness and extensiveness of his research, the relevancy of the debates that are raised, and the in-depth study of the historical perspectives are among the features that make his publication not only a valuable tool, but also an indispensable reference for all serious students of Amos and the prophetic books.