

that most of the Protestant world, at least historically, has denied. Is there no possibility of maintaining a commitment to absolute moral and spiritual truth in the absence of some worldly spiritual interpretive authority, such as a pope or council of bishops?

A constitutional analogy, appropriately, comes to the rescue. Pelikan opens his book with a quote from Edward Hirsch Levi, a legal scholar. Levi wrote that “the influence of constitution worship . . . gives freedom to a court. It can always abandon what it has said in order to go back to the written document itself. . . . By permitting an appeal to the constitution, the discretion of the court is increased and change made possible” (iv). In other words, when the court treats the broader language of the constitution as ultimately authoritative, rather than its own particular opinions, it is freer to respond to changing circumstances and to explore new dimensions of existing constitutional principles. It is freer to get it more right in the end than if it was bound by its earlier mistakes.

Similarly, a denial of earthly spiritual authority does not prevent the careful collection of doctrinal statements by groups of believers. Nor does it prevent these believers from forming voluntary associations in which a respect and adherence to these statements becomes a requirement for leaders and teachers. But it does, or should, prevent those statements from taking on an authority equal to the Bible. A denial of any ultimate earthly spiritual authority is a safeguard against particular human applications obscuring the divine principles.

The confessional statements are, or should be, continuously compared to the broader principles and teachings of Scripture. Time, circumstances, and growing understanding of the body of believers may reveal that a particular doctrinal statement is inadequate, incomplete, or even incorrect. Dissenters should not be dismissed out of hand for disagreeing with a confessional statement, but their dissent should be compared with the Bible itself. The true freedom, and the freest way to truth, is to be able to assert the authority of the Bible as a corrective to what are merely human constructs of truth.

Constitutional scholars are fond of saying the Supreme Court is not final because it is right, but it is “right” because it is final. But on this side of eternity, there will be no “final” statement of spiritual truth, outside the Bible. We have no other creed. Thus we should resist labeling any earthly body as always and ultimately “right” in matters of doctrine. For all their similarities, the Bible and the Constitution are ultimately different in this point, which Pelikan fails to acknowledge—one is of earthly origin, and subject to earthly authority; but the other is of heaven and knows no final authority here below, other than the Holy Spirit moving on the individual believer’s conscience.

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Resseguie, James L. *Spiritual Landscape: Images of the Spiritual Life in the Gospel of Luke*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004. 195 pp. Paper, \$19.95.

James Resseguie, Professor of New Testament at Winebrenner Theological Seminary in Ohio, brings together the disciplines of NT exegesis, literary theory, and spiritual formation to take a fresh look at the Gospel of Luke. The title’s description of the book as “images” is an apt one, for the scope and size of the book dictate that the Lukan passages covered be treated more as “snapshots” than with any of the elaboration of a feature presentation. Despite, however, the sometimes-frustrating brevity with which individual passages must be treated, the approach offers a creative way of seeing that makes available an abundance of fascinating insights. Resseguie organizes the images in his “album” by using the concept of “landscapes”—not only physical, but also social and economic. Within each chapter, he

uses literary and narrative criticism to examine each of the major pericopes relating to the landscape under consideration, drawing out implications for spirituality that are then, in the chapter summary, drawn together into a model for spiritual life and growth.

Two chapters on *physical landscapes*, “Topography: The Landscape of Spiritual Growth” and “Journeys: The Itinerary of Spiritual Formation,” display Resseguie’s ability to bring out the meaning embedded in the literary nuances of individual texts; yet a certain oversimplification also becomes evident as he assigns singular symbolic meanings to the Jordan, desert, lake, mountain, and journey, out of which he brings neatly packaged applications to modern spiritual life. The three chapters on *social landscapes*—“Families and Households: Models of Spiritual Development,” “Meals: Spirituality of Hospitality,” and “Clothing: A Map of the Spiritual Life”—are more straightforward, and draw on a variety of current research to strengthen his presentation. Finally, a challenging chapter on “Consumption: The Spiritual Life and Possessions” aptly expresses Luke’s concerns regarding the handling of wealth.

Resseguie’s writing on the individual pericopes is fluent and vivid and often full of insight. The book leaves one with a desire to dig further into the various areas of emphasis he has uncovered, as well as to spend time contemplating how they can be applied practically to the spiritual life. The book’s biggest challenge is in translating its exegetical insights into the language of spiritual formation without attributing meanings incompatible with the message of the first-century text. While such theological implications need to be further developed and nuanced, the analysis of the text will be valuable both for scholars seeking to understand the theology of Luke and for pastors preparing sermons on Lukan passages or themes.

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Riddell, Peter G., and Peter Cotterell. *Islam in Context: Past, Present and Future*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003. 240 pp. Paper, \$17.99.

Peter Riddell, Director of the Centre for Islamic Studies and Muslim-Christian Relations at London Bible College, and Peter Cotterell, who teaches at the same institution, have teamed up to produce an excellent book dealing with the background and historical elements that have produced modern-day Islam. The book offers readers helpful insights in understanding Islam, describes how Islam has interacted with the rest of the world, shows historical background and root causes for present-day tensions, and suggests how Christians and Muslims can interact in the present in view of their past histories.

The authors suggest that it is the Muslim world that stands at a crossroad. Muslims must decide if they are going to go the way of violence or the way of moderation, with great tension building between the various groups over this choice. It is the Muslim world that must deal with these tensions, not the West or Christianity. The present state of affairs in the Muslim world, the authors contend, is not the fault of Western materialism or nineteenth-century colonialism; rather it is Islam’s own historical past that has created the present tensions it must now face in modern Islam.

The book is divided into three parts. Part 1 focuses on the distant past, the foundational period of Islam. Many of today’s tensions can trace their origins to that period. The authors follow the historical development of Islam from its earliest days on the Arabian peninsula, showing how the concept of *jihad* developed, and how it became connected with the promise of paradise and the forgiveness of sins for those who die while on *jihad*—concepts that impact present-day tensions. Tensions between Muslims