

vast majority of Adventists, both scholarly and otherwise, reside somewhere between those two extremes? Does the author hold that there are no possibilities for Adventism to maintain its theological integrity as it becomes consistently activated in the social realm, or is the either/or choice that he implicitly presents his readers with in his analysis the only alternative? To put it mildly, this chapter's excursion into Adventist historical theology is both simplistic and misleading. That sort of extreme reductionism is bad enough in itself, but to turn around and suggest that *one arm of a faulty dichotomy is the causative factor* is even more untenable.

Having said some fairly strong things about chapter seven, it is only fair to add that this chapter was the only one that was really misleading. Fortunately, the weaknesses of that chapter do not overly impact on the volume's overall validity. Each of the other chapters, even where bias is present, make major contributions to the understanding of Adventism. Not only are the historical chapters of great value but the final chapter, which deals with an Adventist basis for human rights, is especially worthy of study as Adventism takes necessary steps toward becoming more consistent in its approach to both social ethics and human rights.

Andrews University

GEORGE R. KNIGHT

Rohls, Jan. *Reformed Confessions: Theology from Zurich to Barmen*. Columbia Series in Reformed Theology, trans. John Hoffmeyer. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1998. 311 pp. Hardcover, \$35.95.

As the title of Jan Rohls's learned book already indicates, unlike Lutheran theology, where the process of confessional development basically came to a conclusion with the Formula of Concord (1577) and the Book of Concord (1580), the Reformed side of the Protestant Reformation has witnessed an "open" rather than a "closed" confessional tradition (cf. xi, 9).

Even though there are more recent Reformed confessions (cf. the 1982 edited volume by Lukas Vischer, *Reformed Witness Today: A Collection of Confessions and Statements of Faith Issued by Reformed Churches* [Berne: Evangelische Arbeitsstelle Oekumene, 1982]), they appear not to have received similar status and attention. Thus Rohls has limited himself to Barmen, which delineates a decisive moment in recent Reformed confessions.

However, the title of the book is somewhat misleading, because Rohls mainly and predominantly focuses on the Old Reformed Confessional Writings and misses out on a substantive interaction with more recent Confessions, for instance, with their new perspective on biblical interpretation. Especially more recent Reformed Confessions struggle, to name but one example, over how one is to understand, read, and treat Scripture. They are trying to make room for a critical reading and interpretation of Scripture that employs historical and literary criticism as important instruments for understanding how the Bible is to be read and understood. This consolidation of a new understanding that is taking place in more recent Reformed Confessions stands in stark contrast to a position loosely identified as inerrancy, a perspective that proposes that the very words of the Bible are directly inspired by God and are not to be doubted as to their full truth, which

is characteristic for the Old Reformed Confessional Writings (cf. 29-44).

This crucial development and the tension that marks the continuity and discontinuity of the Reformed Confessional tradition, especially in their newer forms, is ably and skillfully delineated in a superb introduction written by Jack L. Stotts, who masterfully discusses Reformed confessions since Barmen. Reading this introduction alone is worth the whole book.

Rather than chronicling the different confessions historically, Rohls has chosen to adopt a thematic treatment in his approach, presenting the theological contents of the reformed Confessional Writings (i.e., "Revelation, God's Word and Tradition"; "Divinity and Trinity"; "Human Beings and Sin"; "Covenant of Grace and Reconciliation"; "Christology and the Calvinist 'Extra'"; "Justification and Faith"; "Sanctification and Penance"; "Election and Rejection"; "The Church and Its Characteristic Marks"; "Word and Sacrament"; "The Double Form of God's Word"; "Baptism"; "The Lord's Supper"; "Ministry: The Office and the Offices"; and "Church and State"; cf. 29-264). The first chapter (9-28) provides a concise overview of the historical background to the development of the old Reformed Confessional Writings. The last chapter (265-302) deals with conciliatory theology, the question of toleration, and the development of neo-Reformed confessional writings.

Reformed Confessions is rich in its discussion and presentation of (at times) difficult-to-obtain sources and background information. Rohls's discussion on the understanding of the law in the Reformed tradition, and here especially on Christ as the end of the law and the so-called third use of the law, is insightful and full of promise and deserves to be taken into consideration by contemporary theology more seriously. Another interesting historical detail is uncovered, when Rohls points out that according to the Second Helvetic Confession as well as other Reformed Confessions, baptisms could not be administered in the church by women or midwives because, so it was argued, Paul deprived women of ecclesiastical duties and baptism has to do with these (207-208).

On p. 265ff, Rohls gives an enlightening account of the development of Old Reformed Confessions. Interestingly, there were attempts to dissolve the unity of Orthodox doctrine in favor of a limitation to those articles that were deemed fundamental (266). Rohls correctly observes that "the distinction between those articles of faith which are fundamental and those which are not thus led to the recognition of a theologically justified pluralism" (271). Such an attempt to delineate a confession within the confession reminds one of the fruitless search of a canon within the canon that has engaged biblical theologians of many persuasions over the past two hundred years.

While Rohls generally seems to have handled the sources masterfully and evenhandedly, I am not convinced about the veracity of his claim that already in the Synodical Declaration of Bern "the word of God is by no means initially identified with scripture, but primarily with God's saving historical action in Jesus Christ" (32-33, 35). Rohls apparently wants to make room for an early understanding of Scripture in the Old Reformed Confessions that is less oriented to the idea that the "Word of God" is identified with the Bible. However, at this point he does not adequately recognize and acknowledge the intricate and inseparable connection and relationship that exist between content/doctrine and

gospel in the Old Reformed Confessions. Furthermore, he seems to have overlooked the fact that already as early as in the Ten Theses of Bern (*Theses Bernenses*, 1528) this identification seems to be presupposed, which is later specifically spelled out in the First Helvetic Confession (1536).

Rohls's book raises a number of crucial questions for any theological tradition, such as: What is the nature and binding character of a confession? Who or what is the final authority and norm for a confession? Is it Scripture, the church, or has the confession assumed such an authoritative status itself? Why do we need confessions at all? Can any church afford to do without them? Does not unity of faith require and presuppose a unity of confession?

Rohls's book provides the English reader with a readable translation and a wealth of information at one's fingertips. Aside from a minor misspelling in the dedication (it should read: *Allgäu*) the book has been carefully proofread. It will be a standard in its field for a long time to come. Thanks to Westminster/John Knox Press for making it available to the English-speaking world.

Seminar Schloss Bogenhofen
A-4963 St. Peter am Hart, Austria

FRANK M. HASEL

Ryken, Leland, James C. Wilhoit, and Tremper Longman III, eds. *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1998. 1,058 pp. Hardcover, \$39.99.

Leland Ryken, a Wheaton College English professor, is perhaps the best known of the conservative "Bible as Literature" experts. His textbooks, such as *The Literature of the Bible*, *Words of Delight*, *How to Read the Bible as Literature*, and *A Complete Literary Guide to the Bible* (which he and Longman coedited), have been used in Christian colleges throughout the country. Tremper Longman III is the author of *Literary Approaches to Biblical Interpretation*, a coeditor of *Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation*, and a writer of commentaries, publishing since 1993 about three books a year that he has written or edited. James C. Wilhoit teaches Christian education at Wheaton and has authored *Christian Education and the Search for Meaning* and coauthored *Effective Bible Teaching* with Ryken.

The primary intent of the *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* was to focus on aspects of the Bible inadequately covered by most Bible dictionaries: imagery, metaphors, and archetypes. It grew, however, to include entries on "character types, plot motifs, type scenes, rhetorical devices, literary genres and the individual books of the Bible" (preface, n.p.). The audience is primarily "not scholars but laypeople," but scholars will find this a very useful reference work, and pastors who use a topical approach to Scripture in their sermons will find the book invaluable.

About 175 writers from around the English-speaking world contributed to the book, many of them theologians, others English teachers, and many of unspecified affiliation. The editors, however, decided that they were doing so much "shaping, rewriting and augmenting" that the writers would not receive credit for individual articles. I strongly disagree with this decision, on the basis of 1 Tim 5:18.

I approve, though of the aim and approach of the *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*. Like C. S. Lewis, although I write about theology, my Ph.D. is in English