

Audiences of many stripes can benefit from this work. Nardoni intentionally wrote it for the pew and the parish, not just for the gown and the lectern. Pastors, liturgists, and parishioners will find it as useful as will the academic guild. This is especially true because it goes beyond a merely historical and exegetical study, relating the texts to present social situations.

The reader should be aware of a few inadequacies in the book. Most glaring are a few typos, particularly on page 9. There is also what I consider a mistaken view of the social situation of the first century—especially in Palestine. Nardoni fails to accept, or at least recognize, the generally accepted view (at least by Second Testament social scientists and social historians) that there was no middle class in that world.

None of the above, however, should lessen the excellent contribution this work has made to the sociotheological discussion of the biblical world. The extensive bibliography and good overview of the issues and the debates that surround them make this book a must-have for all students of the Bible and its world.

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Noll, Mark A., and Carolyn Nystrom. *Is the Reformation Over?: An Evangelical Assessment of Contemporary Roman Catholicism*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005. 272 pp. Hardcover, \$24.00.

Mark Noll, formerly McManis Professor of Christian Thought at Wheaton College in Illinois, and now at the University of Notre Dame, is author of many books, including *Turning Points* and *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*. With this book, he joins freelance writer Carolyn Nystrom to assemble an informative and instructive chronicle of two major worldwide faith communities and their relationship with one another. Their stated goal is for the book to be “an evangelical assessment of contemporary Roman Catholicism, with special attention given to the dramatic changes that have taken place since the Second Vatican Council” (13). The book primarily features the major shift that has unfolded in the United States within Catholicism; but developments in Canada, Latin America, Europe, and other countries are also included.

The title for chapter 1 immediately indicates that “Things Are Not the Way They Used to Be” between Catholics and Protestants. Chapter 2 sketches the long history of the major divide between the two that began in the sixteenth century, reminding the reader that this rupture continued unchanged for several hundred years. Chapter 3 recites the many varied and unexpected developments that have taken place in the last sixty years. The authors also offer suggestions as to why the long-standing rupture has modified so rapidly in recent decades.

Chapters 4–7 reference many dialogues and exchanges between Catholics and Protestants, along with the resultant convergences and disagreements emerging from these discussions since the Second Vatican Council. In the process, Noll and Nystrom furnish a wide spectrum of evangelical responses to the contemporary Catholic Church. For example, they discuss how the Anglican tradition leans toward believing that the “primacy of the bishop of Rome is not contrary to the New Testament and is part of God’s purpose regarding the Church’s unity and catholicity, while admitting that the New Testament texts offer no sufficient basis for this” (88).

The issue of sacraments is also addressed, including baptism: Catholics baptize infants by sprinkling; some Protestant traditions baptize believers by immersion. However, agreement has been fostered between the two traditions by recognizing that all Christians “baptize with water in the name of the Trinity by a duly authorized

minister” (85). But Noll and Nystrom recognize that “devotion to Mary, celibacy of clergy, birth control, saints, marriage and divorce, and women in ordained ministry” remain controversial areas as far as any genuine unity between Catholics and evangelicals is concerned. Interestingly, in the author’s view, freedom of conscience is not fundamentally a moral right, but is rather a “social” issue (101).

Chapter 5 discusses the *1994 Catechism of the Catholic Church*, “the most accessible, complete statement of official Roman Catholic teaching that exists today” (14). Noll and Nystrom speak positively of this catechism: “Undergirding all is a verbal picture of the majesty and mystery of God. Protestant readers will find much in the *Catechism* that leads them to worship. They will also discover a better connection with early fathers and mothers of the faith, a clearer picture of their brothers and sisters from the other side of the Reformation, and much that they can make their own” (150). “Is the Reformation over?” Noll and Nystrom ask. The two authors suggest that maybe a better question evangelicals should be asking is, “Why do we not possess such a thorough, clear, and God-centered account of our faith as the *Catechism* offers to Roman Catholics?” (150).

The document “Evangelicals and Catholics Together [ECT],” is analyzed in chapter 6. The first installment, “The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium,” is an 8,000-word document organized around five statements: “We affirm together, we hope together, we search together, we contend together, and we witness together.” The concluding paragraph endorses the project positively: “We understand Evangelicals and Catholics Together as a work in progress. We are convinced that this is a work of the Holy Spirit. This work was underway long before ECT was begun” (183). Though the document caused an uproar among some evangelicals at the time it was released, it reflects the influence of previous decades of wide-ranging dialogues between Catholics and Protestants. Noll and Nystrom note significantly that “commentary [on this document], pro and con, was much more extensive from evangelicals than from Catholics” (156).

In the last two chapters of the book, the authors offer opinions of both evangelicals and Catholics when addressing the question of the book title, “Is the Reformation Over?” Their evaluation is built around two main pillars of the Protestant Reformation—*sola scriptura* and *sola fide*—along with issues of ecclesiology. Noll and Nystrom recognize that salvation by grace is a key point, but that “more and more Catholics and evangelicals express the opinion that differences over the means of grace need not overwhelm common affirmations concerning the basic character of God’s justifying grace” (233).

The book is most informative as it traces and documents the declining animosity between Protestants and Catholics over the last 60 years. Noll and Nystrom generally encourage an ecumenical stance when supporting rapprochement between the two traditions. This is also undergirded by their dedicating the book to “J. I. Packer, discerning pioneer,” whom they extensively quote in support of the ECT documents. They concede that their thinking “will not satisfy strong partisans who cluster at the poles of contemporary discussion” (15).

However, the positive ecumenical sentiments of Noll and Nystrom may have to be readjusted in light of recent official statements issued by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith of the Catholic Church: “Response to some Questions Regarding Certain Aspects of the Doctrine on the Church,” dated June 29, 2007. Protestants are duly reminded: “Fifth Question: Why do the texts of the Council and those of the Magisterium since the Council not use the title of ‘Church’ with regard to those Christian Communities born out of the Reformation of the sixteenth century?”

Response: According to Catholic doctrine, these Communities do not enjoy apostolic succession in the sacrament of Orders, and are, therefore, deprived of a constitutive element of the Church. These ecclesial Communities which, specifically because of the absence of the sacramental priesthood, have not preserved the genuine and integral substance of the 'Eucharistic Mystery cannot, according to Catholic doctrine, be called 'Churches' in the proper sense. The Supreme Pontiff Benedict XVI, at the Audience granted to the undersigned Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, ratified and confirmed these Responses, adopted in the Plenary Session of the Congregation, and ordered their publication [emphasis added]."

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Petersen, Eugene H. *Eat This Book: A Conversation in the Art of Spiritual Reading*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006. xii + 198 pp. Hardcover, \$20.00.

Eugene Petersen, of *The Message* Bible paraphrase, has written a book for people who write books about the Bible. Petersen, a retired pastor, suggests that we ought not read to the Bible as we do any other book. Rather, we are to feed on its words and incorporate them into our daily lives.

The book's nine chapters in no way diminish the scholarly approach to Scripture. Petersen knows that "exegesis cannot be slighted" (51), for it is "the discipline of attending to the text and listening to it rightly and well" (50). But he also knows that exegesis has sometimes taken charge of the text, treating the Bible like "a warehouse of information" (55), instead of submitting to the text in "an act of sustained humility" (57). Nor is scholarly detachment humanity's only distraction from hearing and eating the Word of God. Generated ecstasy has given some a sense of immediacy with the divine; "moral heroism" (16) has persuaded others to call up and disclose the god within; private asceticism, the holiness of the hermit, has convinced still others. But the church community has said "no" to all these.

Today, however, the church community in America is threatened by a "self-sovereign" spirituality, apparently much more exciting and glamorous than the pedestrian way of walking after Jesus through faithful submission to words in an ancient book (16, 17). Be that as it may, self-centered spiritualities may only appeal as they do because the excitement of living, yes, of eating the book of God, as John the Revelator was once commanded to do, has been lost.

Having convinced us of the virtue of eating the book, Petersen goes on to show, in chapter 3, the relational character of the Trinitarian God who reveals himself in the Scriptures. The God of the Bible is a personal Being committed to personal interaction with humanity. Chapter 4, "Scripture As Form," lays out some of the main issues involved in following the Jesus of the Bible story, highlighting the compelling significance of the story itself as story. The Bible is not various forms of writing, including story. It is all story (47). The Bible is "story-shaped" because story is the shape of history, our lives, reality, and the world (62).

Chapter 5, "Scripture As Script: Playing Our Part in the Spirit," speaks authoritatively to the conviction that everything, comprehension included, is secondary to obedience. Eating the book is "virtuoso spirituality" (76), playing a score by living the experience, experiencing the life; it is the performer becoming a part of the narrative recounted by the master musician's composition.

Section 2 (chaps. 6-7) expounds upon the four elements of *lectio divina* ("reading to live the text"): *lectio* ("reading"), *meditatio* ("meditating"), *oratio* ("praying"), and *contemplatio* ("living"). The four are not particularly sequential. They are more like