

this is the God we worship. We worship him for he alone is transcendent over creation and effective in our salvation.

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Always Reforming: Reflections on Martin Luther & Biblical Studies, edited by Channing L. Crisler and Robert L. Plummer. Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2021. 181 pp. \$29.99.

This book of essays on Martin Luther is a Festschrift in honor of Mark A. Seifrid, longtime professor of New Testament Interpretation at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and now professor at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis. Some of the essays were first presented at a session in honor of Dr. Seifrid at the 2019 annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society. I was at that session, and it began with former students giving testimony to the impact of Dr. Seifrid's teaching of the gospel on their lives. Anyone who has sat under or read Mark Seifrid knows his love for Martin Luther, so this volume is a fitting tribute. It is edited by two of his beloved students: Channing Crisler, a professor at Anderson University in South Carolina and Rob Plummer, a professor at Southern Seminary. It begins with a forward by D. A. Carson, Seifrid's former teacher at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School.

The book begins with an introduction by Channing Crisler reminding us of Luther's aim to comfort the afflicted with the word of God. This is a fitting introduction in that most of the essays are about the centrality of the word in Luther's life and teaching. The first chapter by Gregg Allison is about the perspicuity of Scripture in Luther's writings before his famous statement of the doctrine in *The Bondage of the Will*. Luther rejected the idea that Scripture must be clarified by the Fathers since Scripture itself was clearer than the Fathers. Luther also rejected the fourfold meaning of Scripture in favor of the literal meaning or, in Luther's words, the "grammatical, historical meaning" (9). The second chapter continues this theme as Rob Plummer shows how Luther rejected Origen's allegorizing of the biblical text. Luther was both a critic but also a practitioner of allegory. How are these to be reconciled? Plummer argues that Luther viewed allegory as *secondary* to the historical or literal sense of the text. These first two essays helpfully remind us that a focus on the literal meaning of the Bible goes all the way back to the Reformation and is not simply a product of the Enlightenment.

In chapter three, Channing Crisler suggests that suffering can explain both the contingency and coherence of Paul's theology or the "center" of Paul's theology. Crisler derives this idea from Luther's description of theology as a combination of prayer, meditation on Scripture, and the experience of affliction. In chapter four, renowned Luther scholar Robert Kolb reflects on Luther's lectures on Titus. Luther saw

Titus as a model pastor, whose chief duty was not the performance of ritual but the teaching of the word of God. A notable quotation: "This is our, the Christian, religion, to believe in Christ and to be moved to compassion for the poor and the weak...and if the cross approaches, that is the complete Christian religion" (57). Kolb observes that "the cross has become for [Luther] a mark of the church" (57).

Chapter five, at forty-five pages, stands out in that it is over twice as long as the other essays in the book. It is a translation of a Finnish article by Timo Laato. The article engages polemically with a view of baptism and regeneration taught by Matti Väisänen, bishop emeritus of the Luther Foundation in Finland. In Väisänen's teaching, baptism alone regenerates rather than the word regenerating. Väisänen argues that this was the original position of Luther and that it was corrupted by Orthodox Lutheranism. In response, Laato shows that Väisänen's position disagrees with Luther, the Lutheran confessions, and Scripture. Laato pulls no punches in what he sees to be an erroneous and pastorally harmful teaching. Baptist readers will be looking in on this debate from the outside as spectators, but perhaps it will lead us to reconsider the importance of baptism and its relationship with the gospel and conversion (and not simply "the first step of obedience" *after* conversion).

In chapter six, new perspective critic A. Andrew Das considers Luther on the Scriptures in Galatians and makes two seemingly unrelated points: First, the "new perspective" view of "works of the law" is not that new, for Luther was responding to Erasmus's idea that "works of the law" refer to the ceremonial law. Second, Luther was a competent reader of Scripture and recognized the important quotations of the Old Testament in Galatians. He did not, however see many of the subtle "echoes" so emphasized by modern scholars. This should give us pause about whether Paul intended readers to see them. Chapter seven is an essay by Tom Schreiner observing text after text in Paul's letters that support Luther's teaching that the Christian is simultaneously justified and a sinner. In chapter eight, Ben Merkle considers the importance of the book of Romans in Luther's conversion and theology. And in chapter nine, Brian Vickers reflects on Luther's important sermon "Two Kinds of Righteousness"—the alien righteousness of Christ and the proper righteousness in our life that flows from our relationship with Christ. One thing that stands out to me in these two chapters is the importance of love and good works in Luther's teaching. Finally, chapter ten is a short sermon by Oswald Bayer, one of Mark Seifrid's favorite theologians, on the need for Christians to wrestle like Jacob through the darkness of the night in order to take hold of the blessing promised in God's word.

Should you buy this book and read it? Yes, I think so, and especially if you are interested in Luther. Some may might find the book a little uneven, especially with the long chapter by Laato in the middle regarding a topic that most readers of this journal will have never heard of. It would have been helpful to tie the essays together more in the introduction or with a conclusion to the volume. With that said, I think the

volume makes an important contribution to our current moment. So much interest in theology today is in the medieval and patristic theologians (commonly called “retrieval theology”). We have much to learn from these theologians, but sometimes it seems that we have forgotten that a Reformation needed to happen and that reformation according to the word of God continually needs to happen. We must not only retrieve the Fathers and Aquinas but Luther with his emphasis on the word of God and its power to save and comfort the afflicted. This short book is an inspiring and encouraging step in that direction.

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Holy Living: Jonathan Edwards’s Seventy Resolutions for Living the Christian Life, by Matthew Everhard. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2021. 163 pp. \$16.95.

The year 2022 marks three hundred years since Jonathan Edwards began writing his seventy “Resolutions.” To commemorate this anniversary, Matthew Everhard has written a book which takes readers on a theological and devotional walk through this famous document. The first chapter offers a brief biography of Edwards. Here, Everhard indulges in a bit of hagiography. On the first page alone he lauds his subject as “America’s first incomparable intellect,” “a polymath,” “the American Colonies’ most gifted individual,” and more. He also repeats the common misconception that Edwards spent his time in Stockbridge “repreach[ing] some of his simpler sermons and focus[ing] instead on writing some of the major treatises.” Otherwise, it is a good biography.

The main body of the book consists of three chapters, which correspond to the three main groupings of Resolutions that Everhard has identified. He labels them “Existential Resolutions,” “Ethical Resolutions,” and “Eschatological Resolutions.” Readers may find the categorization of each resolution somewhat arbitrary. For example, under the category “Eschatological Resolutions,” Everhard includes such resolutions as #5: “Resolved, never to lose a moment of time; but improve it the most profitable way I possibly can”; and #67: “Resolved, after afflictions, to inquire, what I am the better for them, what good I have got by them, and what I might have got by them.”

As he works through each resolution, Everhard very skillfully correlates them with entries in Edwards’s Diary and other extant writings to provide a good picture of the historical context behind each entry. The result is an Edwards that appears not so different from the rest of us. As Everhard says in his first chapter summary, “[Edwards] argued with his parents, doubted his own conversion, struggled with indwelling sin, and through it all sought refuge in Christ” (61). As Everhard weaves in his own illustrations and applications throughout the book, he also seeks to