

the Westminster Standards ought to influence apologetics, and Jue shows that Van Til's low view of natural theology has antecedents in Protestant scholasticism.

The most intriguing contribution to the book is Don Collett's "Van Til and Transcendental Argument." Collett draws upon the philosophy of Peter Strawson and Bas van Fraassen to argue that Van Til's transcendental argument is meaningfully distinct from the traditional arguments for God's existence: "According to Strawson, a statement *A* may be said to *presuppose* a statement *B* if *B* is a necessary precondition of the truth-or-falsity of *A*" (p. 269). For apologetic purposes, this allows the construction of arguments like this:

Design presupposes God.
 (Design is true) or (Design is false).
 Therefore, God exists.

In other words, given this understanding of *presupposition*, neither the affirmative nor the negative formulation of the minor premise is intelligible apart from the existence of God. John Frame, who has repeatedly denied the uniqueness of transcendental argumentation, has recently conceded that this is a genuine difference between the traditional theistic proofs and the transcendental argument. In the traditional arguments, only the version of the minor premise that affirms design results in a valid argument; the presuppositional version of the syllogism presents a stronger claim. Collett's article alone makes the acquisition of this volume worthwhile for students of Van Til's apologetic (although his is one of the previous published articles, in the Fall 2003 *Westminster Theological Journal*).

Michael Riley

Baptism in the Early Church: History, Theology, and Liturgy in the First Five Centuries, by Everett Ferguson. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009. xxii + 953 pp. \$60.00.

The veritable dean of American Patristics studies, Everett Ferguson has once again contributed a major work to the field of church history. Most know him for his surveys on early church history, his numerous journal articles, or his *Early Christians Speak* anthologies. His latest contribution, *Baptism in the Early Church*, is sure to incite conversation as only a few people—mostly Disciples of Christ, Church of Christ—agree with him concerning key issues within the material. For one particular doctrinal and liturgical topic, the book's size is massive and its material encyclopedic (approx. 860 pp. of body text). In addition Ferguson saw fit to include six different indexes for quick reference,

covering Scripture, Greek and Roman literature, Jewish literature, non-canonical Christian literature, modern authors, and subjects. Ferguson is currently Professor of Church History Emeritus at Abilene Christian University. Despite this reviewer's disagreement with Ferguson's views on baptismal efficacy, he admires Ferguson's refusal to elide or hide his baptismal views which leave him in conflict with most of evangelicalism. The reader gets the sense that despite Ferguson's scholarship, he would prefer to be honest rather than irenic about what he believes.

Ferguson begins with a substantial literature survey covering everything from the early eighteenth century onward to the most recent works. He treats various types of literature under the categories of "comprehensive surveys," "studies with liturgy as the theme," "topical studies," and "collections of sources." His survey is erudite and thorough—something similar to what the reader finds in a typical dissertation. This survey provides a useful bibliography of the literature that has been written on the subject, aiding in the reader's own research. This source should be the starting place for any seminary paper written on baptism, and it certainly should not be ignored by postgraduate researchers.

Following this survey, part one discusses the major antecedents of Christian baptism. Those familiar with the history surrounding the rite realize that baptism was not a foreign concept in the Mediterranean world during the time of Christ. Ferguson discusses the pagan applications of baptism and finds that Christian baptism had less in common with Greco-Roman paganism and more in common with Jewish practice. Ferguson follows these observations with a discussion on the uses of the βαπτ word group in Classical and Hellenistic Greek, followed by an extensive commentary on Jewish washing rituals noting their more pointed parallels to Christian baptism. From here Ferguson begins to comment on the New Testament practice of baptism prior to the establishment of Christian baptism. His division of the material primarily indicates his view on the connection of John's baptism to the dominical command in Matthew 28:19. He finds the two baptisms to be distinct in both purpose and theology. Interestingly, however, he only treats John the Baptist's baptism in a general way with the antecedent literature; Ferguson specifically discusses Jesus' own baptism by John with the other New Testament literature including Paul's teaching on Christian baptism.

Ferguson discusses Christ's baptism with the balance of the New Testament literature because of the connection the church has historically drawn between the two, and because it supports his argument that something efficacious happens in the act of baptism. He deals with each salient passage in a brief exegetical fashion. His work here is probably the weakest point of the book. While many reviewers fail to point this out, choosing to dwell instead on his contribution to the identification, classification, and commentary of original source material, his failure here points to the common rift between exegetes and theologians. But Ferguson is a historian, and he still fails to employ a theological method

that seeks to harmonize the whole of Scripture instead of opting to allow seeming contradictions to stand within the corpus of Scripture. He takes each reference in isolation from any other teaching found within Scripture instead of allowing Scripture to interpret Scripture. Indeed, Ferguson's constant references to baptismal regeneration throughout his book border on an incessant harangue. But, to be fair, the course of the history of this doctrine might have more to do with that than he.

Ferguson's strongest point comes out in the many pages of the remainder of his tome. While covering the next five centuries by century and geography, he argues quite effectively against infant baptism, finding support not only from Tertullian but even Clement of Alexandria. He further argues for immersion being the preferred method of baptism during this period. He concludes along with David F. Wright that paedobaptism before the fourth century was not commonly practiced except in emergency situations.

Successive chapters systematically treat particular church fathers organizing them by geography and summarizing their teaching on baptism. He explores interesting practices of the fathers surrounding the rite of baptism including delay of baptism, catechesis before baptism, anointing, exorcism, nudity, privacy, and actual method.

Overall, Ferguson's contribution provides an accessible 900 pages of summarized research that would be valuable to any scholar or student doing research on the subject. His constant reminders of baptismal regeneration notwithstanding, this volume contains a great deal of information about the mode, liturgy, theology, and subjects of baptism as the doctrine developed through the first five centuries of church history.

Van Carpenter