

RESURRECTION
AND
ESCHATOLOGY

THEOLOGY *in SERVICE of the* CHURCH

ESSAYS IN HONOR OF

RICHARD B. GAFFIN JR.

EDITED BY

LANE G. TIPTON AND JEFFREY C. WADDINGTON


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Contents

Foreword vii

Carl R. Trueman

Introduction xi

Lane G. Tipton

Abbreviations xv

A Personal Word from Herman Ridderbos xix

Part One: Studies in Biblical and Systematic Theology

1. The Function of Romans 7:13–25 in Paul’s Argument for the Law’s Impotence and the Spirit’s Power, and Its Bearing on the Identity of the Schizophrenic “I” 3
Dennis E. Johnson
2. Psalm 110: An Exegetical and Canonical Approach 60
Bruce K. Waltke
3. The Quest for Wisdom 86
Vern Sheridan Poythress
4. Biblical-Theological Ruminations on Psalm 1 115
D. A. Carson

CONTENTS

5. A Specific Problem Confronting the Authority of the Bible: Should the New Testament's Claim That the Prophet "Isaiah" Wrote the Whole Book of Isaiah Be Taken at Face Value? 135

G. K. Beale

6. Christology in Colossians 1:15–20 and Hebrews 1:1–4: An Exercise in Biblico-Systematic Theology 177

Lane G. Tipton

7. God's Speech in These Last Days: The New Testament Canon as an Eschatological Phenomenon 203

C. E. Hill

8. The First and Last Son: Christology and Sonship in Pauline Soteriology 255

David B. Garner

Part Two: Studies in Historical and Polemical Theology

9. "The Infallible Rule of Interpretation of Scripture": The Hermeneutical Crisis and the Westminster Standards 283

Peter A. Lillback

10. Reason, History, and Revelation: Biblical Theology and the Enlightenment 340

William D. Dennison

11. "Something Much Too Plain To Say": A Systematic Theological Apologetic 361

K. Scott Oliphint

12. Geerhardus Vos and Culture 383

William Edgar

13. A Millennial Genealogy: Joseph Mede, Jonathan Edwards, and Old Princeton 396

Jeffrey K. Jue

14. Christ and the Spirit: The Meaning and Promise of a Reformed Idea 424
Mark A. Garcia
15. On the Antiquity of Biblical Theology 443
J. V. Fesko
16. Jonathan Edwards’s “Ambiguous and Somewhat Precarious” Doctrine of Justification? 478
Jeffrey C. Waddington
- Part Three: Studies in Pastoral Theology**
17. Oliver Bowles on the Life and Ministry of the Evangelical Pastor 501
Translated by Jonathan B. Rokey and Philip G. Ryken
18. Calvin’s Theology of Certainty 513
David B. McWilliams
19. Calvin on Baptism: Baptismal Regeneration or the *Duplex Loquendi Modus*? 534
James J. Cassidy
20. Preaching by Faith, Not by Sight: A Sermon on 2 Corinthians 5:5 555
John Currie
21. He Offered Up Himself: A Sermon on Hebrews 7:27–28 565
William F. Snodgrass
22. Filling Up Christ’s Afflictions: A Sermon on Colossians 1:24–29 570
Eric B. Watkins
- Appendix: A Comprehensive Bibliography of Publications by Richard B. Gaffin Jr. 577
Danny E. Olinger and John R. Muether



Foreword: Little Exercises by Theologians Young and Old

THEOLOGY IS, as the word suggests, talk about God; it therefore arises out of God's own revelatory speech to human beings; and God is thus always the subject, not the object, of theology. In addition, the context for theology is the church, the community of the faithful who hears God's words in faith and respond to him in a manner regulated and informed by the priority of divine speech. This was the intentional approach of all the great pre-Enlightenment church theologians, who sought to move in faith from scriptural text through exegesis to doctrinal synthesis and application, and to do it all within the context of the church herself.

Today, of course, much that passes for "theology" does not actually correspond to what I have just described. University theology departments pursue a discipline which, by and large, they regard as incoherent in terms of its classical conception. Indeed, the unity of the university discipline is found more in the administrative structures within which theological teaching takes place—in other words, in an external rationale rather than in any internal principle. Once the uniqueness of Scripture had been denied, whether theoretically or practically—it makes no difference—the whole reason for Christian theology to be seen as a unified, coherent discipline simply disappeared. And once theology had been removed from the church, its whole purpose—that of guarding and explicating the faith once delivered, and of thus edifying the saints—was radically subverted and transformed into something more abstract and, inevitably, more nebulous.

FOREWORD

Richard B. Gaffin Jr.'s academic life has, of course, been profoundly counter-cultural in this regard: for him, theology is rooted in, and regulated by, God's uniquely authoritative revelation. In Scripture, the Father has spoken; it is not for the children to question what he says but rather to explicate it, apply it, and, when necessary, to defend it. Dr. Gaffin has also lived out his professional life in the context of the church: the terminus of his work has not been profundity or originality for their own sakes, though he has made contributions which are both profound and original. Rather, his work has been consistently aimed at the upbuilding of the church, an upbuilding which uses scholarly excellence as a means to an end and which takes with the utmost seriousness the statements and methods that the church herself has sanctioned over the years as reflecting sound patterns of words and God-honoring procedures. It is thus fitting that the collection of essays which have been commissioned in his honor should reflect the same set of priorities. Coming variously from the pens of biblical scholars, systematicians, church historians, and perhaps most importantly of all, churchmen and preachers, these contributions demonstrate that the tradition of theologizing in and for the church, that of real faith seeking true understanding, is not dead.

We live in an age where taste, not truth, holds sway; or, perhaps better, we live in an age where taste is truth. Thus, to claim truth relative to God is distasteful because it automatically implies that some other position is wrong or inferior. This has had a baneful effect on modern theology, systematic and biblical. Some today delight in the quintessential postmodern aesthetics of tension, uncertainty, and systematic agnosticism; others seem positively delighted to surrender their virtue to the disciplinary fragmentation of the modern scholarly cults of specialization, with their elitism and quasi-Gnostic attitude to criticism which comes from outside their specific guilds. Still others might posit a radical separation of biblical and systematic theology which functions in practice as a virtual theory of double truth rooted in what one friend calls "the genre trick"—that academic *deus ex machina* which can be wheeled in at any point to avoid a particularly pressing question about truth or coherence; and yet others see novelty and innovation as the essence of true theology, buying into cultural paradigms which are lethal to the preservation, proclamation, and propagation of the gospel. *Church* theologians, however, are cut from a different cloth: they rejoice in the cross-fertilization of their work by others and are happy to

lay their work open not only to the scrutiny of their chosen guild but of the church in general, and to see their individual contributions as combining together with those of others to clarify and strengthen the church's ongoing, historic, certain, and firm declaration of the gospel.

It is in this spirit that the following essays are offered. They are each contributions designed for the upbuilding of Christ's church, whether by way of original biblical scholarship or pungent application of Scripture in preaching. As such, they serve not simply the material function of adding to the great tradition of Christian literature which the church has at her disposal for the encouragement and strengthening of God's people; they also offer patterns of how thoughtful theologizing can and should be done in the present age.

Those looking for the thrill of the new, the doubtful, or the iconoclastic should look elsewhere. These essays are offered in a different spirit, that of humility and a desire to be faithful to those little, simple things of the faith once for all delivered to the church, things which can be grasped by a child and yet which take more than a lifetime to master. Indeed, perhaps that spirit of submission to the life and mission of the church, and its contrast to those for whom cleverness is an end in itself, is captured nowhere better than by the great Martin Luther in his introduction to his Large Catechism:

As for myself, let me say that I, too, am a doctor and a preacher—yes, and as learned and experienced as any of those who act so high and mighty. Yet I do as a child who is being taught the Catechism. Every morning, and whenever else I have time, I read and recite word for word the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Psalms, etc. I must still read and study the Catechism daily, yet I cannot master it as I wish, but must remain a child and pupil of the Catechism, and I do it gladly. These dainty, fastidious fellows would like quickly, with one reading, to become doctors above all doctors, to know all there is to be known. Well, this, too, is a sure sign that they despise both their office and the people's souls, yes, even God and his Word. They need not fear a fall, for they have already fallen all too horribly. What they need is to become children and begin learning their ABC's, which they think they have outgrown long ago. Therefore, I beg these lazy-bellies and presumptuous saints, for God's sake, to get it into their heads that they are not really and truly such learned and great doctors as they think. I implore them not to imagine that they have learned these parts of the Catechism perfectly, or at least sufficiently, even

FOREWORD

though they think they know them ever so well. Even if their knowledge of Catechism were perfect (though that is impossible in this life), yet it is highly profitable and fruitful daily to read it and make it the subject of meditation and conversation. In such reading, conversation, and meditation the Holy Spirit is present and bestows ever new and greater light and fervor, so that day by day we relish and appreciate the Catechism more greatly. This is according to Christ's promise in Matt. 18:20, "Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them."¹

Amen. So let it be.

Carl R. Trueman

1. Tappert, Theodore G.: *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 2000), 359.

Introduction: A Tribute to Richard B. Gaffin Jr.

AS HERMAN RIDDERBOS indicates in his personal word at the beginning of this volume, Dr. Richard B. Gaffin Jr. has reached a milestone in his distinguished career. On this occasion, the contributors to this volume are delighted to present this festschrift, honoring Dr. Gaffin for his tireless service to Jesus Christ in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and at Westminster Theological Seminary.

Dr. Gaffin was born in Peiping (now Beijing), China, on July 7, 1936, to missionaries in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. He received a BA from Calvin College, and pursued graduate theological studies at Westminster Theological Seminary, where he received a BD in 1961, a ThM in 1962, and a ThD in 1969. He also studied for one year at Georg-August Universität, Göttingen (1962–63) and joined Westminster's faculty in 1965, where he has taught with distinction for over forty years.

Dr. Gaffin is, first and foremost, a churchman. His service to the Orthodox Presbyterian Church is astounding, especially in light of his numerous seminary responsibilities. He has the longest continuous presidency of a standing committee in OPC history (Committee on Foreign Missions, 1969–present; president 1972–76) and has also served on the Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations (1989–2004). He has served on the following special committees: Committee on Sabbath Matters (1969–72); Committee on Scripture and Inspiration (1969–72; chairman); Committee on Proof Texts for the Shorter Catechism (1971–78); Committee on Baptism of the Holy Spirit (1975–76); Committee on Baptism and the

INTRODUCTION

Gifts of the Holy Spirit (1977); Committee on Reformed Ecumenical Synod Matters (1973–87; chairman, 1986); Committee on Principles of Diaconal Ministry (1980); Committee to Study the History and Development of the OPC (1982); Committee on Hermeneutics (1984); Committee on the Hermeneutics of Women in Office (1985–87); Committee to Study the Involvement of Men and Women in Places of Leadership in Worship Services (1988–89); Committee on the Involvement of Unordained Persons in the Regular Worship Services of the Church (1990–91); Committee to Study the Method of Admission to the Lord’s Supper (1991–93); Committee on the Doctrine of Justification (2004–06). He also moderated the 51st General Assembly of the OPC in 1984 and served as a commissioner to the General Assembly twenty-four times.

But Dr. Gaffin is not only a churchman; he is also a theologian of the highest order. Among Reformed interpreters of Scripture in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, Dr. Gaffin stands out as a giant. Finding peers only in theologians such as B. B. Warfield, Geerhardus Vos, Herman Ridderbos, John Murray, and M. G. Kline, Gaffin has introduced generations of students to the riches of Reformed biblical and systematic theology.

From the earliest stages of his career, Gaffin demonstrated a mastery of the biblical material that would distinguish him as a uniquely gifted exegete and theologian. His doctoral dissertation, entitled *The Centrality of the Resurrection: A Study in Paul’s Soteriology*, which was later published under the title *Resurrection and Redemption: A Study in Paul’s Soteriology*,¹ significantly advances Reformed scholarship in the area of biblical soteriology. In that volume he corrects a longstanding lack of attention in Reformed theology with regard to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, particularly its bearing on the structure and nature of the once-for-all accomplishment of redemption by Christ and its application to believers in Christ. His *Perspectives on Pentecost: New Testament Teaching on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit* constitutes another seminal work that both develops and defends the cessationist view of tongues and prophecy in the apostolic age. Gaffin’s sensitivity to the bearing of biblical theology on various *loci* in systematic theology is evident in both of these landmark works.

But Gaffin is not merely a constructive theologian who has advanced the Reformed tradition in stimulating and orthodox ways. He is also a

1. Full bibliographic information for this and all of Gaffin’s publications may be found in the appendix.

polemicist for the orthodox doctrine of Scripture he learned from the founding faculty of Westminster Theological Seminary, particularly from the contributions of John Murray, E. J. Young (his father-in-law), and Cornelius Van Til in the original faculty symposium on Scripture, titled *The Infallible Word*. He has fought vigorously and consistently throughout his career against the inroads of doctrinal error in the forms of liberalism and neoorthodoxy. Gaffin's reviews of Deewey Beegle and Helmut Thielicke's works on Scripture (1964, 1965), along with his response to John Franke's Post-Conservative Evangelical paradigm (2003) supply bookends of sorts to a career of passionate defense of a Reformed doctrine of Scripture. His "Old Amsterdam and Inerrancy," now republished under the new title *God's Word in Servant Form: Abraham Kuyper and Herman Bavinck and the Doctrine of Scripture*, masterfully maps out a properly Chalcedonian and Reformed use of the incarnational analogy in the development of the doctrine of Scripture. In the past year he wrote the introduction to E. J. Young's republished collection of essays titled *The God-Breathed Scripture*, published by the Committee for the Historian of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

Additionally, Gaffin reviewed E. P. Sanders and James Dunn's versions of the so-called New Perspective on Paul (2000), demonstrating a keenly analytical mind that is uniquely capable of leveling penetrating criticisms of theological positions that depart in significant ways from biblical teaching. His recent volume, *By Faith Not by Sight: Paul and the Order of Salvation*, extends his critique of recent misinterpretations of Pauline theology and offers a constructive alternative based on careful biblical exegesis.

Representing Westminster's tradition in a unique way in the twenty-first century, Dr. Gaffin bridges the present Westminster back to its founding faculty. Gaffin, as indicated earlier, studied under many of Westminster's original faculty members, and it is particularly through Murray and Van Til that he has developed, and continues to develop, theological distinctives found in the works of Geerhardus Vos and Herman Bavinck. Gaffin has given to students, both in written and oral form, a thoroughly non-speculative theology that is regulated by redemptive-historically conditioned exegesis. It is especially through the influence of Murray that Gaffin offers to the church an essentially *biblical* systematic theology.

Through his forty-three years of teaching at Westminster Theological Seminary, Dr. Gaffin has left an enduring legacy for the church of Jesus Christ. He has influenced thousands of students through his classroom

INTRODUCTION

lectures. Those who have sat under Dr. Gaffin's teaching are impressed by its crystal clarity and close fidelity to the biblical text. And students frequently express their desire to emulate Dr. Gaffin's faithfulness to Scripture in their own preaching and teaching ministries.

For these reasons, and many more, it is fitting to offer Dr. Gaffin this festschrift in profound appreciation for his service to the church and the academy. His work has both upheld and advanced the very best of the Westminster tradition in biblical and systematic theology. Perhaps the best way to describe his labors among us can be summed up in a simple phrase: *faithfulness to the self-attesting Christ of Scripture*. May the Lord continue to bless the labors of his humble and faithful servant, Dr. Richard B. Gaffin Jr.

Lane G. Tipton