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BOOK REVIEW

Gerald L. Bray. *Doing Theology with the Reformers*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2019. x + 278 pp. Pbk. ISBN 978-0-8308-5251-2. \$24.00.

The Reformation Commentary on Scripture series has provided contemporary Bible readers with a way to engage with Protestant Reformers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Gerald Bray hopes that his book, *Doing Theology with the Reformers*, will accompany this series by offering readers an introduction to the world of the Reformation, the mindset of the Reformers, and the confessional statements that gave shape to Protestant denominational identities.

Bray divides the main body of the book into six chapters. The first gives an introduction to the education that the Reformers would have received. He highlights the invention of the printing press, the dominance of the Latin language in theological writings, the importance of memorization, and the shaping and development of preaching methodologies. The devotional practices of the church before the Reformation are also addressed, as well as the academic climate that the Reformers were part of. Bray concludes, “It is not much of an exaggeration to say that education was the key to the Reformation” (40).

The second chapter addresses the four sources of authority in the pre-Reformation church and the Reformers’ responses to them. Bray writes about the first locus of authority, the Bible, by offering a survey of the development of the canon and its reception before showing how the Reformers placed it as their ultimate authority. The second place was tradition. Whereas the pre-Reformation church generally held tradition to be infallible, the Reformers would reject its holding the same place as Scripture. The third source of authority was the papacy, which Bray gives

historical context for in order to explain the Reformers' radical response to it. And in fourth place, Bray writes about a number of the church councils, and how later church councils ultimately never became an important part of Protestantism. Throughout this chapter, Bray emphasizes the Reformers' high view of Scripture and how they saw it as "the final court of appeal" (83).

Chapter 3 is on the interpretation of the Bible. Here, Bray highlights the thoughts of several Reformers regarding such things as how they understood the Old and New Testaments in relation to each other, the development of a systematic theology that was based on Scripture alone, how the law was to be understood and applied, covenant theology, and predestination. Although much of this thought is based on the work of Martin Luther and John Calvin, Bray highlights some lesser-known figures as well, such as William Tyndale, Thomas Cranmer, and Philipp Melanchthon.

In chapter 4, Bray writes about the work of the Holy Spirit. He begins by giving a brief historical overview of how the doctrine of the Holy Spirit was developed before turning to the sacraments of the Lord's supper and baptism. Whereas the church of the Late Middle Ages came to believe that grace was communicated through consecrated elements, the Reformers argued that transformation was "brought about by the working of the Holy Spirit" (151). Nevertheless, the Reformers were not uniform in how they understood and practiced the sacraments, and Bray displays this by surveying the major different perspectives held by Reformers such as Calvin, Luther, Zwingli, and the Anabaptists. This chapter also includes discussion of the doctrine of justification by faith and the Christian life, interacting most heavily with the theology of Luther and Calvin.

The fifth chapter deals with the relationship between the church and the state and how this was influenced by the Reformation. Bray traces the social impact of the Reformation, the way it shaped church government, and the influence it had on society more generally. All in all, this chapter displays how the ideology of the Reformation extended far beyond the church walls to subsequently change history.

The sixth and final chapter is on the confessional theology

that came out of the Reformation. Bray surveys many of the different confessions that emerged as denominations were looking to define what they believed in contrast to other Christian groups. However, while some early Reformers believed in the concept of *adiaphora* (things indifferent), later theologians would deny this concept. They would instead place heavier emphasis on secondary matters rather than on the doctrines on which everyone agreed. Bray comments on this reality, stating, "It was a lopsided approach in which denominational distinctives often took centre stage and produced controversies over things that should never have divided the church" (260).

In the conclusion, Bray summarizes the core doctrines of Protestantism as communicated in the confessions as presenting the "radical character" of the fall, salvation, the church, and spiritual authority, respectively. Bray then closes with a list of the works cited, including both primary and secondary sources.

Bray has done well to offer the reader an introductory overview of the Reformation in historical and theological contexts. This book will be of aid to those interested in learning more about the Reformers, Calvin and Luther especially, and for those who want to understand some of their major ideas and some of the reasons why these views emerged. One downside to the book is that while Bray is expansive in addressing several different Reformers, other Reformers are left out or are kept in the background. Those of the radical reformation, for example, are brought up at times but are discussed far less than those in the magisterial reformation. Further, fringe theologians like Peter Vermigli and Heinrich Bullinger are only mentioned in passing. Nevertheless, since this book is meant to be an introduction, perhaps this is the most Bray could do.

Concerning the format of this book, the reader should be aware that the footnotes offered are few and sometimes far between. The works cited section is therefore relatively short and takes up only four pages. Although this work is an introduction, it still would have been beneficial for Bray to lead his reader to more sources and more interaction with contemporary scholarship. At the very least, he could reference more of his statements to help his readers see where he bases his claims. To the scholar

this will be an inconvenience, for others, the simplicity may be appreciated.

Yet at the same time, while the scholar may be looking for more, the person who is being introduced to church history and theology for the first time may at points get lost. With the Reformation being so historically and theologically situated, it would be difficult for a reader to jump in without any background knowledge. With that being said, this book will best serve those who are familiar with some church history and theology, and who are interested in learning more about the Reformation and the theology of the Reformers more specifically. To be sure, this is quite likely the very audience that Bray had in mind, as he designed this book to be read by those who read the Reformation Commentary on Scripture. In this, he certainly succeeded.

While the Reformation is a large and expansive topic, Bray introduces it competently and helpfully surveys and interacts with many different historical developments, Reformers, and confessions. This book will leave its readers longing to learn more, and, quite likely, with the desire to pick up and read the Reformers themselves.

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