Erdozain is convincing, but he is also arguing for his thesis in a polemic and almost bantering way. His indictment of colleagues is rather harsh. His way of expressing himself comes through as somewhat awkward to a Swede longing for consensus; though at the same time it’s catchy and triggers the reader to continue. However, it is important to keep in mind that Erdozain’s interpretation of the past is biased, especially since he emphasizes the need to value the religious change of the nineteenth and twentieth century from a theological perspective. From my point of view, a discussion on what is included in this perspective more than traditional theological dogma is lacking.

The Problem of Pleasure pays attention to several important questions regarding religious change. Of course it highlights the relation between sports and recreation on the one hand and religion on the other. More importantly, it raises questions concerning historiography as well as the pre-understanding and epistemological starting points upon which each researcher dealing with history needs to reflect. In addition we have Erdozain’s important call for the significance of evident qualitative premises when it comes to understanding, explaining, and assessing the religious change that has characterized Modernity. In that way, this book about British evangelicals during the nineteenth century has a wider scope. Thus, Erdozain’s research could be an interesting point of departure for Church historians in many other European countries.

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Recently several studies of Puritan theology have been published, such as Joel R. Beeke’s and Mark Jones’s A Puritan Theology and Christopher Cleveland’s research regarding the influence of Thomas Aquinas on John Owen. Simon Burton’s study of the intellectual roots of Richard Baxter’s theology is part of this resurgence of Puritan research. As is true for Owen’s practical works, Baxter’s practical works not only greatly influenced the English world, but also the Netherlands and Germany. His theological works, however, have remained less known than those of Owen. This is also true regarding the intellectual roots of his idiosyncratic Puritan theology.

Burton’s research has compensated considerably for this noteworthy scholarly deficiency by his analysis of Baxter’s magnum opus, his Methodus
Theologiae. This work, published in 1681 and thus during the latter part of his life, can be considered as the ripe harvest of his theological thinking and discussion. Although Baxter belongs to the most scholastic among Puritan authors, his *Methodus Theologiae* has received relatively little scholarly attention. This is surprising given the fact that this work is particularly suited to trace his intellectual and theological roots.

Burton’s eminent research focuses for the first time on the scholastic Baxter and proves that Puritans, as Reformed-orthodox theologians, were conversant with and used several medieval scholastic sources. The recent research of Christopher Cleveland (*Thomism in John Owen*) affirms that Owen was influenced by Thomas Aquinas and early modern thomistic sources, but Baxter orientated himself toward Johannes Duns Scotus (1265/66-1308), as is evident in his doctrine of God, his view of the freedom of the human will, and the prominent place of love. According to Burton, Baxter gives a central place to the Trinity. This not only frames his theological method and the global structure of his theology, but it also leaves room for man’s threefold response of faith, hope, and love.

In this review, I wish to focus on Baxter’s ambivalent reception in Reformed circles. On the one hand, as a practical writer, Baxter has appealed to a considerable circle of readers with his urgent call to repentance, for the living of a conscientious Christian life, and for meditation upon future glory. This is affirmed by the multiple reprints of his writings.

On the other hand, several of Baxter’s theological views have been criticized severely by his contemporaries, especially his doctrine of justification as expressed in his *Aphorisms of Justification* from 1649. Although he states that human contribution to salvation is only a “hot peppercorn”, it nevertheless constitutes an indispensable component of the application of salvation. Baxter is therefore simultaneously an important practical Puritan writer, as well as a controversial theologian.

Burton has significantly expanded scholarly research on Baxter by shifting one’s attention from the doctrine of justification to the whole of Baxter’s theology. By positing *Methodus Theologiae* as the most mature of his theological writing, he has made this work the focal point of attention, making it clear how much Baxter has been influenced by medieval scholastic sources, as was true of the whole Reformed-orthodox movement. Never before has it been argued that Baxter was scholastic-orientated to such a degree.

Two aspects of Burton’s analysis are important. First, there is his recognition of development in Baxter’s theological thinking. Whereas Baxter allotted a small but nevertheless significant place to human contribution in justification, in his later thinking he would have emphasized God’s grace more strongly, doing so mainly by focusing on the Trinitarian nature of God’s operations. This accentuation of grace is evident, for example, in his doctrine of
election, for there he assumes an intermediate position between the Reformed and Arminian views.

According to Burton, however, Baxter gravitates much more to the first than to the second. He states that Baxter, being influenced by John Davenant (1672-1641), espoused a very moderate doctrine of predestination, which he saw mirrored in the Canons of Dordt. However, Baxter goes beyond moderate Calvinism by teaching merely election. According to Burton, Baxter also wishes to emphasize God’s grace also in his doctrine of justification, stating that in the new reality issuing forth from Christ’s atonement the human contribution to salvation is placed within the context of God’s merciful acceptance.

Secondly, Burton attempts to ascertain Baxter’s position more fully from his Pneumatology, doing so by focusing on the relation between God’s grace and human responsibility. Here we observe Baxter’s unique position once more, differing from Owen by not opting for the thomistic position which focuses on grace by way of the doctrine of the infused and growing habitus. Baxter fears that the human contribution to salvation will consequently be neglected. Instead, he manifests Scotistic influence, stating that God takes the human response seriously from the very outset. Although God moves man spiritually and governs spiritual life throughout the entire course of the Christian’s life, he continually gives credence to the faith and sincerity of the believer.

I challenge the conclusion that there is theological development in Baxter’s thinking, resulting in God’s grace being increasingly emphasized. Ultimately, his Methodus Theologiae contains the same elements as his early theological position expressed in his Aphorisms. Baxter remains an original, complex, and idiosyncratic Puritan writer, whose emphasis on human responsibility was strongly fuelled by his lifelong opposition to Antinomianism, which, in his opinion, emphasized God’s grace to such a degree that the human response was neglected. His theological reaction to this engendered a great deal of discussion in Puritan circles. Burton’s extensive research is an attempt to position Baxter in close proximity to the classic Reformed position. However, he remains at a distance from this position in the areas of predestination, justification, and regeneration.

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