

was very practical in nature. Their great aim was to win souls and edify saints. Boone's study pays most attention to the former aspect, and this is precisely because he focusses on the effectual call.

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J.V. Fesko, *The Theology of the Westminster Standards. Historical Context and Theological Insights*, Wheaton, Il.: Crossway, 2014; 441 pp.; ISBN 9781433533112; \$28.00.

Surprisingly, there have been few historical commentaries on the Westminster Confession of Faith. The Westminster Standards are contemporary documents because churches still subscribe to them, but they also developed in a historical context. It is important to grasp this context in order to understand and evaluate the theology of these Standards. While Fesko's *Theology of the Westminster Standards* does not cover the entire Westminster Confession, it treats most of its major subjects with a heavy emphasis on citations from contemporary authors. This book provides a gripping historical companion that both pastors and scholars will not want to be without. However, there are some shortcomings in Fesko's analysis of various issues that require further research.

Fesko's historical introduction is a concise and clear treatment of the English Reformation with special emphasis on the seventeenth century development of politics, British society, and Reformed theology. In this reviewer's estimation, his chapters on sanctification and on the law of God are some of his clearest and most profound work. In particular, his treatment of the habits and acts of sanctification helps navigate a vital issue that is foreign to contemporary readers. Fesko gives the added benefit of comparing and contrasting this historic formulation with more recent constructions of sanctification, such as what are now called definitive and progressive sanctification. The chapter on the law of God is valuable as it sets the topic in the context of a developing Reformed covenant theology, as includes an able discussion of the different uses of the law. Additionally, explanation of the *ordo salutis* as grounded in union with Christ is very helpful both for historical and contemporary discussions (252-253).

The book includes a number of sections that require further refinement and nuance. For instance, under the "sufficiency" of Scripture, Fesko treats hermeneutical principles, such as the perspicuity of Scripture and the analogy of Scripture (81-86). This is a serious deficiency because Scripture sufficiency

was one of the primary distinctive features of Reformed theology. Fesko confuses the function of Scripture in faith and practice (sufficiency) with the interpretation of Scripture (hermeneutics).

Fesko also repeatedly uses the term, “natural law” (e.g., 133, 144, 166, etc.) without defining the term. The meaning of natural law is debated hotly in contemporary theology. It often refers to a moral standard that binds mankind that is distinct from the Decalogue and the Mosaic covenant. However, Emidio Campi has argued recently that Reformed orthodox views of natural law were very different from some modern versions. In his recent work on Francis Turretin, James Bruce shows that natural law referred to natural rights that reflected God’s nature and harmonized with man’s nature. The moral law was the external expression of natural law, meaning that the content of the moral law was always an exact replica of natural law. It is important to avoid potential equivocation by using terms that are common both to the past and to and to the present without defining them carefully.

In describing the thorny issue of the aseity of the Son and his personhood in relation to the Father, Fesko misappropriates historic trinitarian terminology. Most Reformed orthodox taught that Christ was God *a se*, but that eternal generation referred both to Christ’s personal subsistence and to eternal communication of the divine essence to him from the Father. Eternal communication of the divine essence was not equivalent to treating the Father as the source or origin of the Son’s being, since deity is self-existent by definition. Calvin held to a slightly different view. Fesko states that for Calvin, eternal generation referred to “communication of Sonship” while for others it also entailed communication of deity (181). However, Calvin, Polanus, and most others defined personhood in the Godhead as a certain “incommunicable quality.” The divine essence is communicable from Father to Son, but a “communication of Sonship” would have been a contradiction in terms in the seventeenth century, since personhood is incommunicable by definition.

The above examples are not exhaustive. They illustrate how difficult it is for one author to master the entire system of seventeenth century Reformed orthodox theology in its historical context. However, Fesko’s historical work on the Westminster Standards is one of the first works of its kind. It is an outstanding introduction to the main theologians and the primary theological works of the time. He leads readers on the right path by filling a vital gap in the secondary literature. This reviewer hopes that his painstaking labors will bear much fruit, both in church and school alike.

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