

terms. The result is a little doctrine book. And there lies the burden!

Translating a historic text into modern life requires precision, because as Jerome once noted during his Bible translation, “inexact speech” leads us astray. Precision standards apply to the creeds as well as to the Bible. The task requires a hermeneutic that allows the Scripture to speak on its own terms.

It is evident that Cranfield comes from the tradition of evangelicalism in Protestant thought. The respect that this tradition has for the Scripture is well known. Many of the author’s historic explanations are scriptural, even if they do not always reflect on the historical context that gave birth to the creedal formula.

The approach to creeds, however, is often colored by dogmatic presuppositions. Cranfield pours his insights into the creed through the sieve of Karl Barth and the Heidelberg Catechism. Two insights serve to illustrate the conundrum. The first relates to the second article of the creed.

In clarifying the creedal phrase that Jesus “was crucified, died,” the author points out the importance of the cross and of Jesus’ death for the forgiveness of sins. Then, to avoid any hint of dividing the Trinity’s work in the crucifixion, Cranfield asserts, “God did not lay the burden of our iniquities on a third party, but on himself—on his very self—in that human nature that his own dear Son, who is eternally God, inseparably one with the Father and the Holy Spirit, had for our sake assumed” (p. 33).

This approach rightly intends to preserve the personal union of God and man in Christ. But because the author earlier identifies the persons of the Trinity as “three ways in which God exists” (p. 13), the reader is thrown into confusion. If Jesus Christ is *merely a way in which* God exists, then a modal understanding of God’s work easily, if unintentionally, results.

A similar concern for the personal union moved the Lutheran writers of the *Schwabach Articles* to confess that “one should not believe or teach that Jesus Christ suffered for us as a man or as mankind; but because here God and man are not two persons but one indivisible person, one must hold and teach that God and man or the Son of God truly suffered for us” (WA 30<sup>III</sup>, 87, 16).

The question is: How does God participate in Christ’s work by virtue of the personal union? Did God suffer in Christ? And does this not result in the ancient error of *partri-passianism*, by which the Father suffered for us on the cross? In a disputation of 1540, Luther, as Cranfield does, upholds the mystery that God suffered for us in Christ. He writes, “What Christ has suffered should also be attributed to God, for they are one” (WA 39<sup>I</sup>, 121). But differently from Cranfield, Luther guarded against *two* extremes.

For one, Luther, like Cranfield, steered clear of the notion that the three persons of the Godhead are separate beings whose works were separate and divisible. But, on the other hand, Luther also clearly divorced himself from a modal understanding of God in which one God comes to us in three ways, one of which was his existence in Christ. Luther’s trinitarian position on the person of Christ is clearly identified in the Augsburg Confession when it states: “The word ‘person’ is to be understood as the Fathers employed the term in this connection, not as a part or a property of another but as that which exists of itself” (AC 1, 4 Tappert).

Another noteworthy item from the book demands explanations that are not easy to find in Cranfield’s limited offering. This reviewer has a problem harmonizing how the author can state that “faith is a *real personal decision on the part of the one who believes*” (p. 9, emphasis his) and yet in another place favorably quote Luther’s explanation of faith, which says the opposite: “I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to Him” (p. 56). To refer to this contradiction as a “paradox” fails to stand Scripture’s scrutiny, as the Formula of Concord demonstrates concerning our natural decision-making ability before God (SD II).

Finally, the author clearly unveils his hermeneutical approach with reference to creation. Almost condescendingly he remarks to the reader, “It goes without saying that the first chapters of Genesis were not intended to be a matter-of-fact account of the origin of the universe and of life within it. They are, rather, a poetic-theological statement” (p. 19). The same approach is evident in the long discourses on the virgin birth (five pages) and the resurrection (seven pages).

Christian teachers looking for a vehicle to acquaint members or prospective members with the Apostles’ Creed have a number of choices. Bjarne Teigen’s booklet *I Believe: A Study of the Three Universal or Ecumenical Creeds* is most serviceable. For historical backgrounds on the Apostles’ Creed, J. N. D. Kelly’s *Early Christian Creeds* remains a standard work.

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*Ministry in the New Testament.* By David L. Bartlett. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993. 210 pages. Paper. \$12.00.

■ Under other circumstances Bartlett’s book could be dismissed, but it appears from a Lutheran (ELCA) publishing house and follows closely on *Called and Ordained*, with the same fundamental message that the line between ministry and church be made as invisible as possible. Only an ELCA insider would know the real reason for ministerial disarmament, but any concerns about ordained women ministers are therewith answered. To Bartlett’s fundamental principle WELS might feel close, though they are in no position to ordain women as pastors. Here matters are exacerbated because the issue is not a liberal/conservative one (ELCA vs. LCMS), how much of the Bible history is true, but one embroiling old Synodical Conference members among themselves and now the ELCA.

Even if this issue were resolved officially, the battles would still rage on in the trenches. It is *the* show in town, simply because it is more than an abstract theological discussion. Congregations and pastors are finding themselves at loggerheads with each other, and too often the outcomes are unpleasant for all involved. This is not an attempt to avoid answering Bartlett’s exegetical arguments, but the appearance of his book can only have meaning within the present climate in American Lutheranism and not anywhere else. Matters for Baptists and Catholics are settled. Not so for Lutherans! Hence Bartlett’s *Ministry in the New Testament*.

Even if Bartlett did not admit to being a Baptist, we could guess it. Apart from the title's claim to being an exegetical work, it clearly fosters a dogmatical and even denominational (Baptist) view on the ministry. His approach is similar to Beasley-Murray's classic *Baptism in the New Testament*. Passages used for the ministry are located, traditional views set forth and then demolished. Ministry is understood as servanthood. Clericalism is the real danger. Even the apostolic office is not a distinctive. Paul's apostolicity can have little meaning if the church also possesses it (p. 56). Bartlett trespasses into pastoral theology or doctrinal practice in suggesting that sponsors baptize candidates (he makes no reference to children) and that lay persons take turns in officiating at Holy Communion, a point he makes more than once (pp. 54–56, 192, 198). The January 1994 issue of *Interpretation* (p. 7) informs us that this is common practice with Assemblies of God congregations, which even Baptists do not do. Unsurprising is his view that seminaries have proven to be useful, but are not necessary. Only a gift is necessary. Some even have the gift of recognizing the gifts of the others (p. 200). That is more than any pope claims for himself.

Ironically, the controversy over ministry provides a unifying base for Lutherans in America, because more of us are involved in defining this issue than any other. If the doctrine of the ministry were made the only basis for unity, lines would have to be redrawn. What seemed to be a once-upon-a-time majority diminishing now into minority in the ELCA, a recognized and vocal group of generally younger LCMS pastors, a hidden remnant in the ELS, and a hardly detectable smattering in the WELS recognize that the ministry is divinely given within the apostolate and cannot be simply identified with church. On the other hand, the wider view of the ministry as the prerogative of all church members historically associated with WELS is making a vigorous appearing in the ELCA and parallels a growing LCMS interest in church expansion methods associated with Fuller Seminary lay leadership programs. Sadly, these groups will find *Ministry in the New Testament* useful.

In front of me is John F. Brug's "Current Debate Concerning the Doctrine of the Ministry" in the *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* (Winter 1994, pp. 28–44). Its appended bibliography confirms that it is in part answering January 1993 *LOGIA*, whose articles are agreed in seeing the ministry as derived from Christ through the apostles. Striking is that Brug's wider definition of ministry as a function of the entire church, the traditional WELS view, is close, perhaps not quite identical, to the one offered by Bartlett. This leaves this reviewer in the untenable position of calling attention to a book whose arguments can be offered against his view. His only consolation is that Brug is so blatant in his anti-clericalism (egalitarianism) that those finding support for their position here may be led to reevaluate it. Before Bartlett raised the question of ministry, John N. Collins answered it in his *Are All Christians Ministers?* (Liturgical Press, 1992). The book jacket says that "Collins answers his question with an unfashionable *No!*" Lutherans might want to consider being unfashionable.

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*Heresy and Criticism: The Search for Authenticity in Early Christian Literature.* By Robert M. Grant. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993. 180 pages. Hardcover.

■ The early church did not originate in a vacuum. It sprang from deep Old Testament roots, of course, but growth and development *in annis Domini* were shaped for good or for ill by Greco-Roman culture in all its myriad forms. Robert Grant tries to account for an important part of this shaping. He argues that those deemed "heretical" within the Christian communion were actually the first to apply literary criticism to the Scripture. Thus Marcion was not so much a heretic as he was an editor, striving to rid Luke's Gospel and Paul of "interpolations" (p. 34). Marcion's work reveals that he understood the editorial procedures of the great Hellenistic critics:

After all, he wrote in a time when scholars were zealously reconstructing the philosophies that supposedly underlay Greek poetry and the authentic myths that underlay current versions of them. They were "demythologizing," using literary analysis to produce theology (pp. 34–35).

Grant applies this argument not only to Marcion (chapter 3), but also to Ptolemaeus, Galen, and Apelles—illuminating the teaching of each heretic in turn (chapters 4, 5, and 6 respectively). Yet by the time of Irenaeus (*floruit* A.D. 181) orthodox Christian teachers were using the same critical weapons against their heretical opponents (chapter 7: "The Orthodox Counterattack"). From then on the use of literary criticism for questions of authorship and interpolation had taken root throughout Christianity. Origen, whose interpretation of Scripture could itself bound on the heretical (compare pp. 100–101), was largely responsible for incorporating the critical methodology into the church at Alexandria; but later orthodox teachers who made the same use of contemporary "pagan" scholarship included Irenaeus, Eusebius, Rufinus, and Jerome (p. 112).

This book is not an easy read with its many footnotes and subtle argumentation, both of which presuppose a familiarity with texts and teachings that were obscure even in antiquity. One of the marks of heresy seems to be its very complexity and incomprehensibility. So Irenaeus complains that the Gnostics always begin with the enigmatic teachings of Scripture instead of the many clear ones. There must have been some justification to this complaint, for throughout Grant's book one is bombarded by such expressions as Achamoth, Pleroma, Enthymesis, Ogdoad, and Demiurge (from p. 54 alone!). Such terminology only becomes dangerous when it is allowed to explain or interpret the central doctrines of Scripture. Yet this was the standard way of doing theology among the early heretics. Grant provides example after heretical example of such exegesis.

Let one example suffice. Apelles was a prominent teacher at Rome in the late second century A.D. who became famous for his syllogistic attacks against the Old Testament. All syllogisms (from συλλογίζεσθαι, "reckon up; conclude from premises") work about the same way: "every virtue is laudable; kindness is a virtue; therefore kindness is laudable" (dictionary example). The results could be catastrophic when such reasoning is applied to Scripture or theology: