

stating: 'Promoting mutual Christian understanding is a good thing. We do not reach that goal, however, simply though interpreting similarities as identities' (287). His challenge is one that should be heeded.

The topic of deification should provide Protestants much material for discussion, not only with ecumenical partners but also as they continue to reinvestigate the Bible and their theological forefathers. This book helps further that discussion. Accordingly, it serves as an excellent introduction to those who are new to discussions about *theosis* but also provides requisite depth and breadth for those already initiated.

Ben C. Blackwell
Durham, England

Christian Prophecy: The Post-Biblical Tradition Niels Christian Hvidt

Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007, xviii + 418 pp., £21.99, hb; ISBN 978-0-19-531447-2

SUMMARY

Contrary to the scholarly consensus that the charisma of prophecy has ceased, Hvidt argues that prophetic revelations have been a continuous feature of the Christian church, though they have undergone transformation in order to meet new challenges under different historical conditions. These prophetic revelations are not predictions of the future but revelations aimed at the present circumstances of the church, designed to bring restructuring where needed and to provide edification to its people.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Entgegen einem verbreiteten gelehrten Konsens, dass das Charisma der Prophetie eingestellt wurde, argumentiert Hvidt, dass prophetische Offenbarungen ein fortlaufendes Merkmal der christlichen Kirche waren, auch wenn sie Veränderungen durchgemacht haben um neuen Herausforderungen unter neuen historischen Bedingungen zu begegnen. Diese prophetischen Offenbarungen sind keine Vorhersagen der Zukunft, sondern sind Offenbarungen, die auf die gegenwärtigen Verhältnisse der Kirche abzielen und dazu gedacht sind, dort Neustrukturierungen zu bringen, wo sie gebraucht werden um das Kirchenvolk zu erbauen.

RÉSUMÉ

Prenant le contre-pied d'un large consensus académique selon lequel le charisme de prophétie aurait cessé, Hvidt s'efforce de montrer que les révélations prophétiques ont été un facteur continu dans l'Église chrétienne, même si elles ont pris des formes différentes pour répondre à des besoins différents en diverses circonstances historiques. Ces révélations prophétiques ne sont pas des prédictions du futur, mais des révélations concernant les circonstances présentes de l'Église. Elles visent la restructuration là où c'est nécessaire et l'édification du peuple de Dieu.

* * * *

This book is a slightly re-worked version of Niels Christian Hvidt's doctoral dissertation presented to the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome. Written from a Catholic perspective, it is an important volume for Protestant traditions to engage, especially those within charismatic segments. It represents an in-depth study of an often neglected topic, the gift of prophecy in the modern church.

In the first two chapters, Hvidt draws attention to the prevailing view among systematic theologians that the charisma of prophecy ceased after the rise of Monism at the latest. Through a very thorough survey of secondary literature he discusses the different categories of 'revelation', private, particular, special, dependent and prophetic, and critically analyses how systematic branches in the Catholic tradition treat the issue very differently. Thus, Hvidt moves toward a synthetic approach and seeks to demonstrate the fallacy of the present understanding of prophecy.

The third chapter is especially illuminating in that Hvidt examines the historical development of prophecy from Ancient Israel into the 21st century, providing the modern day example of Vassula Rydén, while still encompassing the Second Temple period, the earliest church and the Middle Ages. The author argues that prophecy has never ceased in being an active feature of the church though it has undergone a transformation from what we see in the Hebrew Bible and Second Temple traditions in order to meet the challenges of new historical conditions. While some understand that the organization of the church and development of the canon were detrimental to the charisma of prophecy, Hvidt notes that prophecy and the need to control it were in fact formative in the development of both.

Interestingly, he includes personal visions, Marian apparitions and private locutions within the context of 'prophetic revelations', though he uses these phenomena primarily to argue for a continuous link in the prophetic gift within the church. Though Protestants are not likely to be persuaded of the importance of these mystical accounts, they are nonetheless an important addition to the lacuna in scholarly treatments of the prophetic gift and reflect the detail with which the writer has approached the subject.

Over the next three chapters Hvidt carefully reviews the subject of 'revelation', its relationship to prophecy and the role it plays within the church. Rather than viewing Christ as the 'end' of revelation, he argues that this was the highpoint, or the ultimate fulfilment of revelation, though God continues to reveal himself in ways that draw attention to previous revelation for the edification of the church. Like the OT prophets that pointed to Christ, the post-biblical revelation points back to the Christ event and God's revelation in him. Thus, the author argues that previous revelation in the Scriptures and in Christ has not yet been fully realized by the church in history and that God continues to reveal them

in ways that correspond to new historical situations and conditions. Interestingly, Hvidt notes that while prophetic revelations in the Catholic tradition have not been received directly as dogmatic traditions, they have served as catalysts for and confirmations of dogmatic truths and have also been instrumental in leading to new pious traditions. Again, while Protestants may not agree with these ideas, the author has provided a compelling case for how these prophetic revelations to individuals have played an important though seemingly indirect role in the church.

The final chapters include discussions within the realm of the sociology of religion and its relationship to prophecy. Prophecy, according to Hvidt, represents the liminal within the structure of the church. Though at times it is content to be separate from the structure to which it belongs, the goal is the restructuring and strengthening of the community as a whole. In this paradigm, the prophetic revelations are designed to highlight the original revelation of the Word and Christ, and to lead the church into a deeper understanding of the mystery of its life as the community of the body of Christ.

Hvidt concludes by emphasizing the fact that prophecy is not to be confused with predictions of the future but always points to the present. Thus, those who receive prophetic revelations are pointing to the present needs and concerns of the church and do so in relation to the testimony of previous revelation in the Scriptures and in Christ. Whether this study is compelling to those who hold a cessationist view or not remains to be seen. However, the importance of this contribution to scholarship, and to the church itself, makes this a worthwhile read for both to scholar and layperson alike. An intriguing look at the gift of prophecy in the church.

*Mark D. Mathews
Durham, England*

*The Divine Spiration of Scripture: Challenging
Evangelical Perspectives*

A.T.B. McGowan

Nottingham: Apollos, 2007, 229 pp., £14.99, pb;
ISBN 978-1-84474-220-2

SUMMARY

By challenging evangelical perspectives on Scripture, Andrew McGowan has stirred up criticism from those who equate the Reformed view of Scripture with the importance put on the concept of 'inerrancy' by the Hodge-Warfield school. McGowan's view is that the view of Scripture as 'infallible', the more European view of James Orr and the Dutch Calvinists, is equally orthodox and that it is a better way of defending the full authority of Scripture. The book argues that we should understand the 'spiration' of Scripture not as apologetic prolegomena, but in the context of the doctrine of God, and particularly, of the Holy Spirit.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Indem er evangelikale Perspektiven zur Schrift herausfordert, hat Andrew McGowan Kritik von denjenigen heraufbeschworen, die die reformierte Ansicht über die Schrift mit der Wichtigkeit gleichsetzen, die das Konzept der „Irrtumslosigkeit“ für die Hodge-Warfield-Schule hat. Doch McGowans Sicht lautet, dass die Sicht der Schrift als „unfehlbar“, also die eher europäische Sicht von James Orr und den holländischen Calvinisten, ebenso orthodox und ein vorzuziehender Weg ist, die volle Autorität der Schrift zu verteidigen. Das Buch argumentiert, dass wir die „Spiration“ der Schrift nicht als apologetische Prolegomena verstehen sollten, sondern im Zusammenhang der Lehre von Gott und insbesondere vom Heiligen Geist.

RÉSUMÉ

McGowan critique certaines perspectives évangéliques sur l'Écriture et s'est attiré des critiques en retour de la part de ceux qui identifient la doctrine réformée de l'Écriture avec la notion d'inerrance telle que l'ont défendue l'école de Hodge et de Warfield. McGowan considère que la position européenne de James Orr et des calvinistes hollandais, qui affirment simplement l'infaillibilité de l'Écriture, est tout autant orthodoxe et constitue une meilleure façon de défendre l'entière autorité de l'Écriture. Il argue que l'on ne doit pas considérer la « spiration » de l'Écriture comme une prémisse apologetique, mais qu'il faut la replacer dans le contexte de la doctrine de Dieu et du Saint-Esprit.

* * * *

The sub-title of Andrew McGowan's book seems to foresee that its publication might be somewhat controversial, and judging by the reviews which have already appeared, this expectation has not been disappointed! But to assess this controversy, we first need to see the scope of the contents of the book.

After the introductory chapter, the author openly affirms in chapter 2 that his intention is a 'reconstructing' of the doctrine of Scripture, and any reconstruction is bound to be controversial. But the matter is put in broad historical perspective and it is evident that the intention is to draw on resources within the Reformed tradition. It is made clear that historically, Scripture has sometimes been seen as the logical starting point in some of the Reformed confessions, but not in others, and the view is taken that while the former makes sense logically, the latter is more appropriate theologically. Theology begins with God, and therefore Scripture should be seen within that context, specifically within the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Where one of the historic confessions begins with Scripture, this seems to have been the result of the epistemological issues raised during the period of modernity and formulated most sharply by the Enlightenment. This approach, shaping one's theology in order to speak to epistemological questions, is related to the 'evidentialism' of one school of apologetics. After an overview of the Enlightenment and Liberal Theology in the third