

Geschichte der Albigen, Waldenser, von John Wyclif, Jan Hus, des Hieronymus von Prag und der Hussiten, die gewissermaßen die Anführer und Vorläufer aller neueren Häretiker waren“... (386) – Abgesehen von diesem Lapsus ist das Werk eine lohnende Lektüre besonders für Kirchengeschichtler, die mehr über Bildung in Mönchtum und Christentum im allgemeinen sowie Bibellektüre in den ersten Jahrhunderten im besonderen wissen wollen. Frömmigkeit und / oder Studium: Ein aktuelles Problem, das schon eine lange Geschichte hat! Leider ist das Werk in dem Evangelischen eher unbekannten EOS-Verlag St. Ottilien erschienen. Es lohnt sich, andere darauf hinzuweisen!

Jochen Eber, Mannheim, Deutschland

***Theology: The Basics and Theology: The Basic Readings***

**Alister McGrath**

Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004, 2008, 215 and 210 pp., £14.99 and £15.99,  
ISBN 978-1-4051-6754-3 and 978-1-4051-7042-0

**SUMMARY**

These books are an introduction to theology using the Apostles' Creed for a selection of traditional topics in Christian theology. They are written in a friendly style, offering helps for study and suggestions for further reading. The non-partisan character of the work can be seen in the selection of readings that come from different Christian theological traditions.

**ZUSAMMENFASSUNG**

Diese Bücher sind eine Einführung in die Theologie, die das apostolische Glaubensbekenntnis für die Auswahl traditioneller Themen der christlichen Theologie verwendet. Sie sind in einem freundlichen Stil verfasst und bieten Hilfen für das Studium sowie Anregungen für weitere Lektüre. Der unvoreingenommene Charakter des Werkes kann an der Auswahl von Texten abgelesen werden, die aus verschiedenen christlichen theologischen Traditionen stammen.

**RÉSUMÉ**

Ces ouvrages sont une introduction à la théologie sélectionnant les sujets traditionnels de la théologie chrétienne à partir du Symbole des apôtres. L'auteur s'exprime sur un ton bienveillant et apporte une aide pour l'étude tout en recommandant d'autres ouvrages permettant l'approfondissement des sujets abordés. Le caractère non partisan de ces volumes se manifeste par le fait que les lectures recommandées émanent de traditions théologiques chrétiennes diverses.

\* \* \* \*

Alister McGrath hardly needs an introduction to readers of this Journal. His output is impressive, both in

the number of books and in the themes he has written about. His textbook *Christian Theology: an Introduction* has been widely used in teaching theology to beginners in this field. As a former atheist who has turned into a Christian apologist he writes texts that are both philosophically and scientifically informed and relevant for a contemporary thinking person. He writes reliably and in a very reader-friendly manner on Historical Theology, Systematic Theology, Christian spirituality and Apologetics. His approach is thoroughly ecumenical and sensitive to all opinions that historically have been considered 'Christian'.

Choosing *the basics* in any field of study requires an expert with a large experience and a teacher who loves his subject and has good communication skills. McGrath has all these qualities and they are put to work in the second edition of *Theology: the Basics*. The work comes in two small volumes: *Theology: the Basics* [TB] at 215 pages and *Theology: Basic Readings* [TBR] at 210 pages. In the words of the author, it '...is aimed specifically at those who are approaching it for the first time, and who feel intimidated by the thought of studying theology.' It is '...best seen as a "taster" in Christian theology...' (TB viii-ix). And it '...assumes you know virtually nothing about the subject...' (TBR xi). This is a good description. I would add that it is necessary for one who 'tastes' to have access to a good theological library so that they can read more of what they have just 'tasted'.

The theological loci discussed in the book are taken from the Apostles' Creed (faith, God, creation, Jesus, salvation, Trinity, Church, sacraments and heaven). In this way the author introduces the reader to the leading concepts of Christian theology, their development throughout the history of Christianity, some of the key terms of theological vocabulary, and the key thinkers of Christian theology. According to the author, this all is done so that... 'the book does not advocate any one specific form of Christian theology... it is generous both in terms of range of Christian opinions noted and the positive attitude adopted towards them...' (TB ix-x).

A beginner in theology is greatly helped by the glossary, biographical sketches and index at the end of the book. Also, each chapter has at its end questions and assignments that guide the student to think deeper and to understand the material they have just read better.

McGrath is not afraid to touch some sensitive issues in theological discussion. He talks without obvious partisanship about Barth and natural theology, young earth creationism and evolution, the sacraments and the use of icons in devotion.

McGrath chooses his readings from very different, often opposite traditions or schools of thought and quotes them to support his basically confessional understanding of Christian theology. His approach is thoroughly historical so the reader gets not only a variety of approaches to the same topic but also a sense of a historical dimension and of different traditions in theological thinking. We meet here not only the Church Fathers,

the Reformers and thinkers in the 'orthodox' line, but also liberal, existential and feminist theologians. The author quotes Roman Catholic Thomists and Protestant liberals with the same respect and esteem. But although the choice of sources is broad, McGrath always selects material that ultimately supports his theological views on related matters.

On a critical note, this broad ecumenical and irenic approach may be somewhat confusing to a student who is looking for spiritual advice for his or her personal relationship with God. McGrath avoids partisanship so well that he does not always tell the student what is close to historical orthodoxy. In so doing he tends somewhat to blur the importance of differences that there may be between opposing opinions or contradictory doctrines.

Pavel Hanes  
Slovak Republic

### *Biblical Interpretation in the Russian Orthodox Church*

Alexander I. Negrov

BhTh 130. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008, xvi + 348 pp., € 89,--, cloth, ISBN 978-3-16-148371-4

#### SUMMARY

This volume surveys the history of biblical interpretation in the Russian Orthodox Church from the 10th century until 1917. The main features of Russian Orthodox hermeneutics are that the church and tradition are indispensable guides to our understanding of Scripture. Christ is considered as the beginning, centre and end of biblical interpretation, and exegesis is based upon cooperation between the Holy Spirit and the human interpreter. The church demands that the reading of the Scriptures be guided by church doctrine. Negrov presents a comprehensive *description*, which helps the non-Orthodox to better understand Orthodox biblical interpretation and theology. His attempt to describe Orthodox hermeneutics from within leads primarily to a sympathetic presentation. At times one misses a more critical distance and assessment. Unfortunately the historical survey stops at 1917.

#### ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Dieser Band bietet einen Überblick über die Geschichte der Bibelinterpretation in der russisch-orthodoxen Kirche vom 10. Jahrhundert bis 1917. Das Hauptmerkmal der russisch-orthodoxen Hermeneutik besteht darin, dass die Kirche und die Tradition unverzichtbare Führer für unser Verständnis der Schrift sind. Christus wird als Anfang, Zentrum und Ziel der Bibelinterpretation angesehen, und die Exegese wird auf die Kooperation zwischen dem Heiligen Geist und dem menschlichen Interpreten gegründet. Die Kirche verlangt, dass das Lesen der Schriften von der kirchlichen Lehre geleitet wird. Negrov präsentiert eine umfassende *Beschreibung*, die den Nicht-Orthodoxen hilft, orthodoxe Bibelinterpretation und Theologie besser

zu verstehen. Sein Versuch, orthodoxe Hermeneutik aus einer Innenansicht heraus zu beschreiben, führt vorrangig zu einer sympathetischen Präsentation. Zeitweise vermisst man eine kritischere Distanz und Bewertung. Unglücklicherweise endet der Überblick mit dem Jahr 1917.

#### RÉSUMÉ

Cet ouvrage retrace l'histoire de l'interprétation biblique au sein de l'Église orthodoxe russe du X<sup>e</sup> siècle à 1917. L'herméneutique russe orthodoxe se caractérise principalement par l'importance accordée à l'Église et à la tradition comme guides indispensables à l'interprétation de l'Écriture. Christ est considéré comme étant le début, le centre et la fin de l'interprétation biblique, et l'exégèse est basée sur une coopération entre le Saint-Esprit et l'interprète humain. L'Église requiert que la lecture des Écritures soit guidée par la doctrine de l'Église. Negrov livre ici une présentation très complète, qui aide celui qui est étranger à l'Église orthodoxe à mieux comprendre l'interprétation biblique et la théologie orthodoxes. Sa tentative de décrire l'herméneutique de l'Église orthodoxe de l'intérieur donne lieu à une présentation essentiellement favorable. On aurait parfois aimé plus de distance et d'évaluation critiques. Il est dommage que la présentation s'arrête à l'année 1917.

\* \* \*

The present monograph had its origin in a doctoral thesis at the University of Pretoria under the direction of Jan van der Watt. The author presently teaches New Testament at St. Petersburg Christian University. His study seeks to survey the history of biblical interpretation in the Russian Orthodox Church from the 10th century until the end of the Synodal period (1721-1917). 'Its purpose is not to argue either *pro* or *contra* Russian biblical scholarship, but rather to present a coherent analysis of the essential elements of Orthodox biblical hermeneutics as it developed over a period of several centuries critical to the defining of the Orthodox Church' (v). Negrov particularly writes for biblical experts outside the Russian Orthodox confessional borders, both in the East and the West. He endeavours to do so from inside the Orthodox theological framework.

After the introduction and brief methodological considerations in the first two chapters, Negrov describes in chapter three biblical interpretation in the Russian Orthodox church in a historical perspective during different periods: historical beginnings in the Kievan period in the 10th to 13th centuries, the period of Tartar invasion (1280-1480), ecclesiastic self-establishment in the 15th to 18th centuries, and biblical interpretation in 19th century Russia. Chapter four examines the sources and distinctive features of 'Orthodox anthropology and its implications for biblical hermeneutics', including the conviction of the superiority of the Orthodox in understanding and knowing God which can come across as arrogant.

Chapter five presents as a case study the hermeneuti-