

lessons as well as learned explanation. Still within the Reformed tradition, his use of distinctions regarding God's power and the possibility of things gives another formulation of divine concurrence. His welcome openness to recognizing an "element of mystery" (199) in this area of theology is a reminder that he had a more popular audience in mind.

The final three chapters each deal with the theology of Jonathan Edwards. Muller's analysis here shows how Edwards departed from (and perhaps misunderstood) some of the scholastic distinctions regarding necessity and causality, leading to a denial of real contingency. His philosophical heritage from Hobbes, Leibniz, and Malebranche resulted in a form of determinism and a radical turning away from the Reformed orthodox avowal of concurrence. Muller discusses the reception of Edwards in the nineteenth century and debates about Edwards's conformity to the Reformed confessions, the differences between Francis Turretin (1623–1687) and Edwards, and the specific divergences from the Reformed tradition in Edwards's definitions of necessity, contingency, and freedom.

This collection of essays is a work of remarkable scholarship which will undoubtedly advance studies of the individual theologians named and provide surveys of the literature for those who wish to delve deeper. It should also be read as an important contribution to ongoing theological debate about the interaction of providence and free will.

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Beck, Andreas J. *Gisbertus Voetius (1589–1676) on God, Freedom and Contingency: An Early Modern Reformed Voice*. Brill's Series in Church History and Religious Culture, volume 84. Leiden: Boston: Brill, 2022.

Gisbertus Voetius (1589–1676), pastor, theologian, professor and rector at the University of Utrecht, and leading figure of the Dutch *Nadere Reformatie*, will be a name known to many in the English-speaking world. However, English speakers may be less familiar with Dutch scholarship which analyzes the particulars of his life and work. This magisterial work by Andreas Beck, professor of historical theology and director of the Institute of Post-Reformation Studies at the Evangelische Theologische Faculteit in Leuven, is the first English monograph dedicated to Voetius's theology. This edition is a translation by Albert Gootjes of a revised and updated version of his

PhD thesis, written at Utrecht University, published in German in Göttingen in 2007.

By way of introduction, Beck sets out such matters as the state of scholarship on Voetius, his own methodological principles, and a very helpful discussion of the university disputation system (21–23). He then divides the work into three parts. The first is an overview of Voetius's life, his place in the *Nadere Reformatie*, his major theological works, and an introduction to the major controversies in which he was involved (particularly those with Descartes (57–90)). Second, Beck gives, following a structure suggested by Voetius (151), an overview of his theological method. This includes discussion of natural and supernatural theology (what may be learned of God from nature and from Scripture (157–85)), the definition of theology as a practical science (186–93), and his view of communion with God as the ultimate good of human life (195–200).

The third part, the major study of this book, traces in detail Voetius's doctrine of God, moving from his existence and name through attributes such as his knowledge, will, right, justice, and power, to the relation of his decrees with human action. The volume contains as appendices two lists of the disputations in Voetius's *Selectae disputationes theologicae*. The first appendix lists the disputations in the order in which they were published in five volumes between 1648 and 1668. The second gives them in the chronological order of their original delivery. They are invaluable for further research into Voetius's theology.

Since Voetius did not write a systematic theology, Beck collates his views from a variety of published works. As Beck rightly states, this search for consistent and fully worked out theological statements "is not a question imposed on the material from the outside, for it runs like a red thread throughout Voetius's most important and comprehensive works" (1). Several of his works provide structured approaches to the questions which Beck examines. In particular, we can note the order of topics in the *Selectae disputationes*, his *Syllabus problematum theologorum* (first part published in 1643), which is an index of questions to stimulate his students' study with the barest indication of Voetius's view (as Beck calls it "the skeleton of a Reformed dogmatics" (120). Also, Beck includes many references to his *Catechisatie over den Heidelbergschen Catechismus* (1653).

The argumentation in parts two and three is supported by discussion of the scriptural, medieval, and contemporary sources upon which Voetius drew and extensive Latin citations in the footnotes. These at times occupy more of the pages of the main text. Voetius was "a scholastic theologian

*par excellence*" (108) and Beck details the logical and conceptual apparatus of distinctions in which he grounded his theology. Perhaps, in recognition of the density of sections of the text, Beck himself recommends (24) that the major conclusions of the monograph can be gleaned by consulting the summaries at the ends of some sections. The whole book could be read by consulting these summaries and the final chapter, "Synthesis and Relevance" (466–86), before immersing oneself in the detailed argument.

Many significant themes emerge in the course of the work which will be of interest to students of early modern theology. The major thrust of the book's structure moves toward the chapter on the relationship between divine and human action. Beck shows how Voetius stands firmly in the tradition of Reformed orthodoxy in what Beck calls a non-determinist (439) view of God's concurrent action with a free human will. This is grounded in Voetius's understanding of how God as a necessary being relates to a contingent world through the acts of his will. Beck describes the doctrine of the will of God as expounded by Voetius as "the pivotal point between necessity and contingency" (472). In the words of Voetius, God "with his will effectively wills the [human] will not only to act but also to act freely" (463). Beck references modern discussions of this Reformed tradition, particularly those of Muller and Helm, but for the most part allows Voetius to speak for himself.

Throughout the book, the theological and historical background within which Voetius was working and the various traditions on which he drew are on display. Beck traces the roots of terminology and themes developed by Voetius in the works of medieval and baroque scholastics and finds both Thomist and Scotist influences. Voetius is eclectic in his use of Reformed and Roman Catholic writers. Beck's excellent extended discussion of debates around *scientia media* ("middle knowledge") (300–51) shows how thoroughly Voetius knew writings on both sides of this attempt to resolve questions about human freedom and divine sovereignty, as well as delineating his comprehensive response to the issues. It is notable when considering the question of intellectual tradition that Voetius claimed for himself and others in the Reformed world the name of "Reformed Catholics" (482).

Two other themes related to each other are worthy of note. Voetius has been portrayed as an intellectualist theologian, but Beck demonstrates convincingly that Voetius represents the way in which theology co-exists with practical piety. Voetius is indeed a fitting adherent of the *Nadere Reformatie* with its desire for ethical impact on society and culture. His inaugural oration at Utrecht in 1634 was entitled *De pietate cum scientia conjungenda*

("How piety should be combined with knowledge"), a "programmatic" title (48) which might also be taken as a description of how Voetius turns his theological conclusions to practical implications.<sup>10</sup> He saw theology as a *scientia practica* ("practical science") (186–93) which properly used will lead people to worship God and to live lives in service to Him. Indeed, his view of communion with God as the ultimate good of human beings embraces this theological endeavor (196).

Central to the debates between Voetius and Descartes was the question of the relation of theology and philosophy. Beck relates this to the "two-level theory" (200–208) which proposed a dualism between grace and nature, allowing an autonomous role for reason. Voetius stood in the Augustinian-Anselmian tradition of *fides quarens intellectum* ("faith seeking understanding") which saw philosophy as a handmaid to theology (206). It is true both that right reason is deployed in theology, and that when it is used correctly in other intellectual endeavors it will not reach conclusions which contradict God's revelation in Scripture. In the same way, natural theology, which is itself grounded in Christ the Logos (157), is a supplementary means of knowing God which uses its own tools. In terms of its contents, it is a sub-set of supernatural theology which derives fuller and saving knowledge of God from revelation given in Scripture (193). Voetius counters any attempt to create a separation between theology and philosophy or between grace and reason.

In Beck's analysis of the theology of Voetius, he has brought to the fore a relatively neglected theologian. His book is a rich source of Reformed orthodox theology which will contribute to understanding in many areas.

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Marsden, George. *An Infinite Fountain of Light: Jonathan Edwards for the Twenty-First Century*. Downers Grove, Ill. InterVarsity Academic Press. 2023.

In 2003, George Marsden wrote *the* critical biography of Jonathan Edwards. He wrote a shorter biography on Edwards in 2008 and his latest book, *An Infinite Fountain of Light*, came from a presentation of the Stone

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10. See also the title and theme of one of the few recent English-language books on Voetius, Joel R. Beeke, *Gisbertus Voetius: Toward a Reformed Marriage of Knowledge and Piety* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 1999).