REVIEWS OF BOOKS


Since at least 1950, when G. R. Cragg wrote *From Puritanism to the Age of Reason*, it has been accepted that the exclusion of a majority of Church of England ministers sympathetic to Reformed theology by the Act of Uniformity of 1662 brought on the decline and eventual "eclipse" (Cragg's term) of Calvinism in England. Thereafter, it existed only in the religious subculture of Nonconformity. Dewey Wallace is not the first to challenge the adequacy of Cragg's dictum; most recently its inadequacy was shown by Stephen Hampton's *Anti-Arminians: The Anglican Reformed Tradition from Charles II to George I* (Oxford University Press, 2008, reviewed in *WTJ* 71 [2009]: 511-13). Yet Wallace has, in *Shapers of English Calvinism*, provided us with the most substantial evidence to date for toppling this misrepresentation.

Wallace's earlier study of predestinarian thought in the English Puritan period (*Puritans and Predestination*, 1982, reprinted 2004) and numerous journal articles touching on the church history of the Elizabethan and Stuart periods have prepared him for this close interpretation of the theological developments in England following the restoration of monarchy in 1660.

In the opening survey comprising his first chapter, "English Calvinism in a New Era," Wallace provides what this reviewer considers to be the finest compact survey of the relation in which the indigenous English Reformed tradition stood to its Continental counterpart from the reign of Edward VI (commenced 1547) forward. Here is a healthy antidote to the common tendency to evaluate the English Reformed tradition (inside or beyond the Church of England) purely in terms of its degree of correspondence to models provided on the Continent. Yet this section simply prepares the ground for what follows.

Wallace provides, in five succeeding chapters, descriptions of the theological trajectories of various individual preachers/theologians (in one chapter, a trio of such). In each case, attention is given to the creativity and individuality of the figure(s) as they responded to both a changing intellectual climate—characterized by renewed interest in Platonism and the emergence of the early phase of the Enlightenment—and a changing political climate in which one's allegiance to Reformed theology brought with it suspicion of being out of sympathy with royal supremacy in religious matters. Thus adaptation and innovation (in the sense of creative response to a changed situation) became the order of the day.

The emphasis of the five chapters, taken collectively, is on the manifold diversity of thought which became always more evident among these Reformed thinkers who were, at the same time, quite united as to essentials. Some treatments are deserving of special comment.

Chapter 3, "Theophilus Gale and the Ancient Theology," shows how a Reformed thinker who lost his post at Oxford University after the restoration of the monarchy spent much of the rest of his life wrestling with the question—agitated from the Patristic age forward—of how divine revelation from the Mosaic period and onward was to be understood in its possible
relations with the best insights of the classical world. Wallace masterfully shows that by the age of the Renaissance and Enlightenment the Christian theological approach to this question had fundamentally changed from its Patristic stance. While once it had been maintained that Plato was indebted to Moses, in Renaissance and Enlightenment thought there were advocates of the view that Plato and Moses were equally expounders of a primitive revelation much older than either. Gale, while deeply fascinated with the question of primitive revelation, was determined to uphold the sound theological principle that special revelation, through Moses and through Christ, claims precedence. Gale upheld the principle of particularity in face of early Enlightenment thought which was headed in another direction.

Chapter 5, "Joseph Alleine and Evangelical Calvinism," demonstrates that in Alleine (1634–1668) we have the prototype of the conversionist pastor-evangelist the likes of which we have been led by the regnant David Bebbington thesis on the origins of evangelicalism not to expect to see until the age of Whitefield. In Alleine, Reformed theological niceties were harnessed and focused upon the all-important response of the sinner to offers of grace.

A collective chapter 6, in which are together treated Richard Baxter, William Bates, and John Howe, demonstrates that these Presbyterians—reader to find a place in the Church of England than many of their Nonconformist peers—were also, because sensitive to the winds of the early Enlightenment, eager to state and to defend Christian truth not so much in terms of what Christian antiquity had held, but in terms of best evidence. In this way they bequeathed a strong evidentialist legacy to subsequent evangelical Protestantism.

To this writer, chapter 7 was of greatest interest, as it is devoted to surveying the career of John Edwards (1637–1716), regularly (though inaccurately) designated as the last remaining Anglican Reformed theologian of that era. Edwards, whose writings later proved of use to New Englander Jonathan Edwards, is shown to have been an able and often polemical theologian and preacher whose relative isolation within the Church of England meant that his affinity most clearly lay with the kind of Nonconformists described elsewhere in the volume.

This work does place heavy demands on the reader. Wallace, who has very evidently immersed himself in this seventeenth-century theology and has a mastery of its sources, resorts to extensive paraphrase of the treatises these heroes produced.

Furthermore, this volume, despite its strengths, raises questions in the reader's mind. The first of these is the question of what would be the ongoing living link between this succession of writers and the Reformed theological tradition with which they wished to be aligned. Oddly, the volume gives no real place to the consideration of the Westminster Confession and Catechisms or the Savoy Declaration of Faith, confessional documents produced in the mid seventeenth century within this very setting. It is clear enough that, within Nonconformity, the English Reformed tradition was going to continue in England. But as another writer, Alan Sell, has demonstrated in his *Hinterland Theology* (2008), English Nonconformity's Reformed consciousness gradually diminished over time. The price of eventual toleration (granted in 1689) was to be Nonconformity's obligatory approximation of conformity to the 39 Articles of the Church of England. Yet by the dawn of the eighteenth century, these Articles themselves were being construed in a very latitudinarian way. A tendency to theological entropy needed resisting.

A second question is that of the English Reformed tradition's ongoing association with the Scottish Reformed tradition. Given that English Nonconformists, barred from their own two universities (Cambridge and Oxford) looked increasingly to the Scottish universities (which
REVIEWS OF BOOKS

placed no obstacle in the way of their admission), and given the fact that these Scottish universities would furnish a steadily increasing proportion of tutors to English Nonconformity’s own training institutions (the numerous Academies), one is entitled to wonder whether Wallace has not treated the English Reformed tradition in greater isolation in this period than is warranted. That it represented and remained a definite sub-species of Reformed theology is true; but that it existed and perpetuated itself in isolation from other branches of the Reformed family is not true.

Finally, the Wallace volume forces (by implication, rather than argument) upon readers the awkward question of whether the Reformed tradition’s diversity has been sufficiently acknowledged. If one grants that the figures highlighted by Wallace were within the parameters of the broad Reformed orthodoxy of the seventeenth century, then hard questions arise. Taking nothing away from the place and role of the Westminster Standards, it appears that today’s Reformed constituency has been bequeathed a constricted “canon” of seventeenth-century English Reformed authors and writing. This has come about largely through the editorial choices of the nineteenth-century Scot, Alexander B. Grosart (1827–1899). This “savant” of the literature of the Elizabethan and Stuart eras oversaw the massive Victorian reprinting program of the seventeenth-century Puritans included in the influential “Nichols Series of Puritan Divines.” Today’s Puritan reprints are, by and large, from the “canon” as Grosart defined it. But the likes of Theophilus Gale and John Edwards did not make the “cut.” While Grosart’s endeavors clearly enriched the evangelical and Reformed world, Wallace’s work serves to highlight how the range of emphases in the Puritan world of the seventeenth century was considerably more diverse.

KENNETH J. STEWART
Covenant College


The Contemporary Church and the Early Church (hereafter CC&EC) is an anthology of papers on the theme announced by its suggestive title. The collective effort of members of the Evangelical Theological Society’s section on Patristic and Medieval History in the year 2008, it stands between two distinct types of evangelical publications produced in recent times relative to the Early Church.

On the one hand, we see a growing number of introductions to the literature and leading figures of the Patristic era such as those produced by Bryan Litfin (2007) and Michael Haykin (2011). On the other hand, we have recently seen worthy studies on Patristic doctrinal themes produced by Christopher Hall (1998, 2002) and on the overall need for evangelical appropriation of the theological legacy of the Early Church by D. H. Williams (1999, 2002, 2005).

CC&EC, by contrast, came into existence as an attempt both to assess how the contemporary evangelical movement is faring in its current attempts to carry out this desired appropriation and to propose some fruitful avenues for inquiry as this appropriation goes forward. In the opinion of the contributors to CC&EC, recent efforts at borrowing from the Early