

Synopsis Purioris Theologiae / Synopsis of a Purer Theology; Volume 1: Disputations 1–23. Dolf te Velde, ed.

Riemer A. Faber, trans. *Studies in Medieval and Reformation Traditions* 187; *Texts and Sources* 5. Leiden: Brill, 2015. xvi + 660 pp. \$154.

This work is a valuable translation and the first of three proposed volumes, edited by Dolf te Velde, translated by Riemer A. Faber, and assisted by a host of scholars, of a series of theological disputations held at Leiden University from 1620 to 1624. The university began holding cycles of disputations beginning in 1596 covering the full gamut of theological topics. These were challenging times for the theological faculty at Leiden, who were at the forefront of the Arminian controversy. Jacobus Arminius taught there until his death in 1609, as did Franciscus Gomarus up to his departure in 1611. The debates detailed in this volume were held in the wake of the Synod of Dort (1618–19) and the removal of the Remonstrant Simon Episcopius from the faculty. The four professors highlighted in this volume include Johannes Polyander, the only professor of theology at Leiden when Antonius Waleus and Antonius Thysius joined in 1619. Andreas Rivetus was then hired in 1620. Together they formed a strong theological faculty who would train a generation of Reformed pastors. Given the context of the Synod of Dort, these professors attempted to provide a united theological front to show consensus among Reformed theologians in contrast to the discord that had characterized the faculty during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. They called it a “purer” theology to show support for the theological clarity that they believed had been accomplished at Dort.

This work includes twenty-three disputations out of the total cycle of fifty-two, covering an important array of topics including the doctrine of scripture, the nature of

God, the Trinity, creation, the nature of man, original sin, the freedom of the will, the law, the Gospel, idolatry, the nature of the Sabbath, and the relationship between the Old and New Testaments. The professors displayed a vast familiarity with patristic and medieval sources, as well as a thorough awareness of theological issues and disputes of their era. As a result they delivered a strong case for Reformed orthodoxy on a number of foundational topics and a Reformed alternative to other contenders, such as the Anabaptists, the Roman Catholics, the Socinians, and the Spiritualists.

This edition provides insights into an important genre of theological discussion, the disputation. It makes sense that within a generation of the early Reformation that Protestants would set up their own theological schools and would borrow the teaching methods of their medieval forbears. The disputation as an exercise can be traced back to the earliest days of the rise of the university system and is reflective of the Scholastic method. The disputation consisted of a series of theses that the student would have to defend orally against the arguments of their colleagues. The professor would draft the theses beforehand and the exam would test the student's knowledge of theology and ability to reason and debate, with the goal of mastery of the subject matter. Ultimately the cycle of disputations held from 1620 to 1624 would be compiled and published as a handbook of theology.

This book includes an impressive critical apparatus. The original Latin text and the English translation appear face-to-face on every page, offering access for further academic study and comparison. Footnotes provide detail on church fathers, theological terms, and issues referred to in the text, making it easier to follow. The editors have also included an excellent glossary of Latin theological concepts and terms. In addition, a general index and index of scriptural references serve as helpful tools to use this text more effectively. An extensive bibliography of primary and secondary works provides opportunities for those who intend to pursue additional research.

MARTIN I. KLAUBER, *Trinity Evangelical Divinity School*