

Although written from a Western perspective, *Christian Dogmatics: An Introduction* represents a fresh contemporary account which may prove very useful for those working in a Western context. The authors did an excellent job of synthesizing recent Reformed thought. The book should be part of every theologian's library. Supplemented with other recent volumes (like Norman Gulley's *Systematic Theology* or Zondervan's *New Studies in Dogmatics* series), *Christian Dogmatics: An Introduction* is recommended as a textbook for teaching at both undergraduate and graduate levels.

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*Prophets in Conflict: Issues in Authority*, by George R. Knight. Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2020. 204 pp. + 4 pp. index. ISBN 978-0-8163-6670-5. Softcover.

George R. Knight is a prolific author in the areas of the history of Seventh-day Adventists and Ellen G. White's writings. His *Prophets in Conflict: Issues in Authority* contains majority of his thoughts for forty years on E. White's voluminous writings. This book, according to the author, "is my final major contribution to Ellen White's studies" (p. 8) and is intended to impress some important ideas on the readers. Thus, most chapters of this volume are selected from his prior publications and speeches. Only chapter 10 is specifically written for this book.

This work has fourteen chapters divided into five parts. The first part has two chapters. In this part, the author introduces the difference between the Mormons and the Seventh-day Adventists, especially on the authority of their prophets' writings. While Joseph Smith set an example of uplifting his writings above the Bible, E. White pointed to the Bible as the truth's standard. While Smith regarded the Bible as insufficient because it contains incomplete truth, E. White accepted the Scriptures as a complete revelation of God to teach us the way to salvation. These differences continue in the hermeneutical system of both denominations. However, as Knight points out, Mormon's danger, an effort to lift a prophet's writings to be at least equal with the Scriptures, always existed in the Seventh-day Adventist Church since the second-generation of leaders took the lead (p. 36).

To prevent the Mormon temptation from entering the Adventist Church, the author provides frameworks for understanding E. White's writings and her authority in part two. In this part, six chapters explain the subject. The author starts with the six reasons why the prophetess wrote her writings. This chapter is followed by his explanation of some significant

themes in her works. By giving the purpose and theme, Knight expects the readers not to lose the bigger picture to understand her ideas. The following chapters show the misconception many people have about the static understanding of E. White when, in fact, she was progressive (chapters 5 and 7). He also suggests thirteen principles in understanding E. White's writing in a healthier way (chapter 6). The closing chapter of this part demonstrates how E. White understood her inspiration. This chapter's attractive section is about the postscript segment of E. White's agreement on W. C. White's statements that his mother has thought inspiration and not verbal, as S. N. Haskell suggested, and she was not infallible in historical works.

The third part of this book is about E. White's compilation authority. There are two chapters in this part. The first discusses that the starting point of E. White's compiled writings was initiated since she was still alive. She never permitted others to produce a compilation of her writings during her lifetime except during her last years; she entrusted this to the Ellen G. White Estate (p. 130). The subsequent chapter relates to the standard operation of the Ellen G. White Estate in doing the compilation. While Knight endorses how the trustee compiles the manuscripts, he points out four books that create some problems since the process was more a one-sided perspective and was not initiated by Ellen G. White Estate. The author concludes this part by suggesting awareness to readers on bias perspective while appreciating the compilation to "provide the church with a massive amount of important material from the pen of Ellen White on selected topics" (p. 143).

The fourth part of this volume provides examples of the proper and improper use of E. White's writings. Knight argues that it is not a proper use of Ellen White's authority to settle a doctrinal controversy which does not have enough biblical evidence. This effort is an unfruitful discussion, as shown in the controversy of the human nature of Jesus Christ in His incarnation (p. 159). Nevertheless, understanding E. White's ideas in its historical context will lead to beneficial results for God's church, for example, her guidance in developing an Adventist educational system (chap. 12).

The author suggests ways on how to apply the authority of E. White's writings to avoid tension in the church in this last part of his book. By proper application, people can avoid conflicts. The first way of application is for the reader to apply it in his or her life, and when he or she shares it with others, he or she needs to do it with a loving spirit (chapter 13). The last chapter (14) consists of some suggestions on future studies about E. White. Knight also calls for more researches on E. White because of her tremendous contribution to American life.

While this book offers many principles and ideas on studying E. White's writings and applying her authority in the proper place, there is an issue that must be clarified. Knight objects a point of resolution from a 2019 General Conference Annual Council document entitled "Statement of Confidence in the Writings of Ellen G. White." He claims that "the second paragraph of the 2019 document departs from mere affirmation and indicates that one purpose of Ellen White's writings is to 'correct inaccurate interpretations imposed' on the Bible" (p. 44). He is concerned that if this statement is passed, "the denomination will have officially reverted to the divine-commentary approach that both its founders and Ellen White rejected" (p. 44). In this section, "correct inaccurate interpretations" may refer to the statement making E. White's writings as a "divine-commentary" tool.

Some statements from the Adventist pioneers explain the use of authority in "correcting" the error. James White, in 1851, wrote that if every church member could follow the Bible, there would not be a problem. "But as the reverse exists, and ever has existed, God in much mercy has pitied the weakness of his people, and has set the gifts in the gospel church to correct our errors, and to lead us to his Living Word" (*Review and Herald*, April 21, 1851, p. 70). A few years later, he also stated two ways on how E. White's authority could be used for correcting errors. First, "after his people have searched the Word, if then individuals err from Bible truth" (*Review and Herald*, February 28, 1856, p. 172) then the authority could be used to bring them back. The second way was when God's people "through strife urge erroneous views upon the honest seekers for truth, then is God's opportunity to correct them by the Gifts. This is in harmony with our entire experience on this subject" (*Review and Herald*, February 28, 1856, p. 172). In these statements, J. White observed that God permitted the authority to be used when His people had sincerely studied the Scriptures and still misunderstood the message. The authority was not to solve the doctrinal issue but to bring people back to the Bible to find the answer from it. The other situation was when a false teaching was pushed through, or some people attempted to force error over the truth, then the authority was used to indicate the existing truth. In 1855, J. Bates, J. H. Waggoner, and M. E. Cornell accepted E. White's writings and gave themselves to "be corrected by their [the writings] admonitions" (*Review and Herald*, December 4, 1855, p. 79). These statements indicate that correcting the error does not always mean using the authority of E. White's writings as infallible Bible commentary but to guide God's people back to the Bible and the existing truth.

E. White gave some hints on how to correct error. In 1851, she wrote that her writings were "not for a new rule of faith, but for the comfort of his people, and to correct those who err from Bible truth" (*A Sketch of the*

*Christian Experience and Views of Ellen G. White*, 64). She gave an example of how "God dealt with Peter when he was about to send him to preach to the Gentiles" (*A Sketch of the Christian Experience and Views of Ellen G. White*, 64) in Acts 10. She also understood her authority in 1910 as "to correct specious errors and to specify what is truth. The Lord has revealed many things pointing out the truth, thus saying, 'This is the way, walk ye in it'" (Letter 127, 1910). Thus, E. White's writings are not set up as infallible commentary or new light but only point to the Bible and its existing truth.

Overall, this book is highly recommended to those who want to study E. White's writings in a balanced way. Seventh-day Adventist ministers and church members should read this book in order to avoid misunderstanding her writings. This book can be utilized as one of the textbooks in classes related to E. White studies.

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*The State of New Testament Studies: A Survey of Recent Research*, ed. Scot McKnight and Nijay K. Gupta. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019. 496 pp. + 7 pp. index. ISBN 978-0801098796. Hardcover or softcover.

NT studies is a lively and very dynamic area of academic research. Every year brings many articles, books, monographs, and commentaries that try to provide a fresh perspective on the NT texts themselves, the different aspects of their context, and their theology and contemporary application. Navigating in this enormous sea of scholars' opinions and approaches is not an easy task even for specialists, let alone for those who are just beginning their journey. The book *The State of New Testament Studies: A Survey of Recent Research* by Baker Academic is designed to help in this process.

This collection of essays was inspired by and designed to become a continuation of the book *The Face of New Testament Studies: A Survey of Recent Research*, edited by Scot McKnight and Grant R. Osborne and published by the same publisher in 2004. For fifteen years since that time, NT studies' landscape has somewhat changed. To orient the readers of the current state of the field, Scot McKnight and Nijay K. Gupta gathered a new team of more than twenty experts whose contributions constitute *The State of New Testament Studies: A Survey of Recent Research*.