



themelios

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THE GOSPEL COALITION

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DESCRIPTION

Themelios is an international evangelical theological journal that expounds and defends the historic Christian faith. Its primary audience is theological students and pastors, though scholars read it as well. It was formerly a print journal operated by RTSF/UCCF in the UK, and it became a digital journal operated by The Gospel Coalition in 2008. The new editorial team seeks to preserve representation, in both essayists and reviewers, from both sides of the Atlantic.

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REVIEWS

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EDITORIAL

Perfectionisms

— D. A. Carson —

D. A. Carson is research professor of New Testament at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois.

Most readers of *Themelios* will be aware that the word “perfectionism” is commonly attached in theological circles to one subset of the Wesleyan tradition. As far as I can tell, the numbers who defend such perfectionism today are rather depleted. They hold that progressive sanctification is not only desirable and attainable but, borne along by grace, can result in a life of sinlessness here and now: we do not have to wait for the glorification that all God’s redeemed people will enjoy at the *parousia*. A century ago the movement was often an extrapolation of Keswick theology, then in its heyday—a movement distinguishable from Keswick theology by its claim to attain a rather higher “higher life” than most within the Keswick fold thought they could achieve.

It is easy to imagine that everyone in the perfectionist camp is a self-righteous and pompous hypocrite, easily dismissed as a fool whose folly is all the more ludicrous for being laced with self-deception. Doubtless some self-designated perfectionists are like that, but most of the rather small number of perfectionists I have known are earnest, disciplined, focused Christians, rather more given to work and serenity than to joy. Certainly it is less discouraging to talk about Christian matters with perfectionists than with those who claim to be Christians but who rarely display any interest in holiness. In any case, the most comprehensive treatment of perfectionism, essentially unanswerable, is the large volume by B. B. Warfield, *Perfectionism*, published in several formats (my copy was published by Presbyterian and Reformed in 1974).

There were species of perfectionism before Wesley, of course. Some connect the doctrine of entire sanctification with *theosis*; some tie it to various strands of the complicated and largely Roman Catholic history of “spirituality.” Moreover, there are uses of “perfectionism” in two other disciplines, viz. philosophy (going back to the classical period of Greek thought) and, in the more recent post-Wesley—indeed post-theology—world, the discipline of psychology. During the last three centuries of *Christian* discourse, however, the connection of perfectionism with one strand of the Wesleyan tradition is inescapable.

Yet I suspect that there is another species of theological perfectionism (though it is never so labeled) that owes no connection to Keswick or Wesley. Perhaps I can approach it tangentially. More than ten years ago a gifted pastor I know told me that at the age of fifty or so he was contemplating leaving pastoral ministry. Perhaps he would serve as an administrator in some sort of Christian agency. When I probed, I discovered that his reasoning had little to do with typical burnout, still less with a secretly nurtured sin that was getting the best of him, and certainly not with any disillusionment with the gospel or with the primacy of the local church. His problem, rather, was that he set extraordinarily high standards for himself in sermon preparation. Each of his sermons was a hermeneutical and homiletical

gem. Anyone who knows anything about preaching could imagine how much time this pastor devoted to sermon preparation. Yet as his ministry increased, as legitimate demands on his time multiplied, he found himself frustrated because he could not maintain the standards he had set himself. I told him that most of us would rather that he continue for twenty more years at eighty percent of his capacity than for six months at a hundred percent of his capacity.

One might dismiss this pastor's self-perceived problem as a species of idolatry: his ego was bound up with his work. Probably an element of self had crept into his assessments, but let us, for charity's sake, suppose that in his own mind he was trying to offer up his very best to the Master. Certainly he held to a very high sense of what preaching should be, and he felt it was dishonoring to Christ to offer him shoddy work.

Now transfer the perceived burden of this pastor to a more generalized case. Occasionally one finds Christians, pastors, and theological students among them, who are afflicted with a similar species of discouragement. They are genuinely Christ-centered. They have a great grasp of the gospel and delight to share it. They are disciplined in prayer and service. On excellent theological grounds, they know that perfection awaits final glorification; but on equally excellent theological grounds, *they know that every single sin to which a Christian falls prey is without excuse*. Precisely because their consciences are sensitive, they are often ashamed by their own failures—the secret resentment that slips in, the unguarded word, the wandering eye, the pride of life, the self-focus that really does preclude loving one's neighbor as oneself. To other believers who watch them, they are among the most intense, disciplined, and holy believers we know; to themselves, they are virulent failures, inconsistent followers, mere Peters who regularly betray their Master and weep bitterly.

Part of this pastoral dilemma can be thought of as a species of over-realized eschatology—not the over-realized eschatology Paul confronts in 1 Cor 4 that leads to pride nor the puerile over-realized eschatology of the health, wealth, and prosperity gurus, but a slightly different kind. It is the kind that knows glorification still lies in the future, but also knows that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation, that Christians have been not only justified but powerfully regenerated, that the Spirit has been poured out upon us, that sin no longer has dominion over us, making every sin a damnable failure, utterly without excuse. Doctrinally, therefore, these believers know that perfection still lies over the horizon; experientially, precisely because they know the kingdom has been inaugurated, they can sink into bleak despair as they confront their own sins. It is not that, objectively speaking, they are worse than other Christians. Far from it: these are among the finest Christians I know. Those who criticize them have rarely thought as long and hard about sin and how to overcome it as these brothers and sisters have. They remain so uncomfortable with their wrestlings because they know they *ought* to be better.

Perhaps it is unwise to suggest that their problem should be thought of as a kind of perfectionism. Certainly it is not the perfectionism in some strands of the Wesleyan tradition, in which entire sanctification is judged to be attainable. Rather, this unhappiness, sometimes descending to despair, is the fruit of frustration that perfection is *not* achievable. Yet it springs not from generalized aspirations for utopia, but from biblical declarations of the power of the gospel placed alongside our own shortcomings. It springs from the conviction that, granted the power of the gospel, perfection ought to be a lot more attainable than it is.

It springs, in short, from panting after perfection; it is another kind of perfectionism. Immediately one must say that pursuit of perfection is at many levels a good thing, a needed thing, plausible evidence that the gospel is at work in our lives. Many is the mature Christian who is acutely aware of the ongoing

struggle with sin, yet who avoids the disabling despair of the few. Indeed, it has often been noted that the godliest of Christians are characteristically most aware of their sin, yet equally aware of the limitless measure of God's love for them in Christ Jesus. What is it, then, that makes the pursuit of God and of holiness the characteristic mark of many disciples yet so utterly debilitating for some intense and devout followers of Jesus?

At least two factors are in play.

First, the Bible itself speaks to this issue in various ways, and some of those ways are cast as stark antitheses. In apocalyptic literature, for example, there are faithful followers of Christ, and there are diabolical opponents. People wear either the mark of the beast or the sign of Christ; there is nothing in between. Similarly in wisdom literature: one follows Dame Folly or Lady Wisdom, but not both. That is why a wisdom psalm like Ps 1 casts the choice in absolute antithesis: *either* one does *not* walk in the counsel of the ungodly, stand in the path of sinners, and sit in the seat of mockers, while delighting in the law of the Lord day and night and meditating on it, finding one's life before God is like a well-watered fruit-bearing tree, *or* the wicked are simply "not so." The Lord recognizes and owns one path, while the other perishes. There is nothing in between. The Lord Jesus can preach in many different styles, but included among them is wisdom polarity: reflect on the antitheses at the end of the Sermon on the Mount. On the other hand, over against such antithetical presentations of holiness and sin, of faithfulness and unbelief, are the many narrative portions of the Bible where God's people are depicted with all their inconsistencies, their times of spectacular faithfulness and their ugliest warts. Abraham the friend of God repeatedly tells half truths; Moses the meekest man loses his temper and consequently does not get into the promised land; David the man after God's own heart commits adultery and murder; Peter the *primus inter pares*, the confessor of Caesarea Philippi and the preacher of Pentecost, acts and speaks with such little understanding that he earns a rebuke from Jesus and another from Paul. In such narratives there is no trace of the moral polarities of apocalyptic and of wisdom. There is instead an utterly frank depiction of the moral compromises that make up the lives of even the "heroes" of Scripture. In short, *the Bible itself* includes genres and passages that foster absolutist thinking and others that warn us to recognize how flawed and inconsistent are even those we recognize as the fathers of the faithful. Certainly we need both species of biblical literature, and most Christians see a sign of God's kindness in the Bible that provides us with both. The narratives without the absolutes might seem to sanction moral indifference: "If even a man after God's own heart like David can fall so disastrously, it cannot be too surprising if we lesser mortals tumble from time to time." The absolutes without the narratives might either generate despair ("Who can live up to the impossibly high standards of Ps 1?") or produce self-righteous fools ("It's a good thing the Bible has standards, and I have to say I thank God I am not as other people are."). We need the unflinching standards of the absolute polarities to keep us from moral flabbiness, and in this broken world, we need the candid realism of the narratives to keep us from both arrogance and despair. Most of us, I suspect, muddle along with a merely intuitive sense of how these twin biblical heritages ought to shape our lives.

The *second* factor is how we attach the cross of Christ to all this. The intensity of the struggle against sin easily generates boundless distortions when we do not return, again and again, to God's love for us manifested in the cross. There alone is the hope we need, the cleansing we need, the grace we need. Any pursuit of perfection that is not awash in the grace of God displayed on a little hill outside Jerusalem is bound to trip us up.

MINORITY REPORT

The Importance of Not Studying Theology

— Carl Trueman —

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It might seem odd to write an editorial for a theological journal on the topic of not doing theology and how important that can be; and, indeed, perhaps it is contrarian even by my own exacting standards. But it is nonetheless important. Let me explain.

The greatest temptation of a theology student is to assume that what they are studying is the most important thing in the world. Now, I need to be uncharacteristically nuanced at this point: there is a sense, a very deep and true sense, in which theology is the most important thing in the world. It is, after all, reflection upon what God has chosen to reveal to his creatures; and it thus involves the very meaning of existence. In this sense, there is nothing more important than doing theology.

But this is not the whole story. One of the great problems with the study of theology is how quickly it can become the *study* of theology, rather than the study of *theology*, that becomes the point. We are all no doubt familiar with the secular mindset which repudiates any notion of certainty in thought; and one of the reasons for this, I suspect, is that intellectual inquiry is rather like trying to get a date with the attractive girl across the road with whom you have secretly fallen in love: the thrill comes more from the chase and the sense of anticipation than it does from actually finding the answer or eliciting agreement to go to the movies.

This plays out in theology in two ways. First and most obvious, there is a basic question of motivation which needs to be addressed right at the start of theological endeavour: am I doing this purely and simply for personal satisfaction? Has the study of theology become so central to my identity that the whole of my being is focused on it and seeks to derive things from it in a way which is simply unhealthy and distorts both its purpose and the person who I am? That is something with which all theologians will, I suspect, wrestle until the day they die, being part and parcel of who we are as fallen creatures; but there are also things we can do which ease the situation.

Strange to tell, I suspect that having a good hobby or two is critical. These can be important outlets for aspects of our personalities that have only limited and occasional usefulness in theology. I am aware that I have certain personality traits which, when applied to church or my studies, are likely to lead me to bad places. I like my own company; I like to push myself; I like to strategise and plan; and while not a bad loser on the whole, I do like to win. Far better than losing, in my experience. None of these things is bad in and of itself, but I need to make sure that the satisfaction I get from them is not such that it harms the church; and if I have no outlet for them other than theology and church, it will be a disaster. So I run

long distances, and after twenty-five years, I have taken up chess again, harmless outlets for personality traits which could otherwise be problematic. On the roads, the trails and the chessboard, I can be alone, I can scheme, and I can win as much as I want without fear of harming others.

The second way in which the study of theology for study's sake can play out is the manner in which it can ultimately disconnect you from reality, an odd result of studying that should, in theory at least, ground you more firmly in reality than anything else. I often wonder, as I sit in church on a Sunday, of how much of the knowledge I have is truly significant for the people in the pews—the man who has just lost his job, the single mum struggling to hold it together, the teenager coping with all of the pressures that come with the transition to adulthood.

Now I am not saying that high-powered technical theology is not important. For the single mum, the most important thing she can hear on a Sunday is that Jesus is risen. A simple statement, one that can be grasped by a child, but also one which rests upon a vast and complicated array of other theological truths and connections. But the mistake the professional theologian, or even the over-enthusiastic amateur, can make is the assumption that truths such as 'Jesus is risen' are in themselves so boring and mundane that they must always be elaborated and expressed in highly technical language in a way that can blunt the sheer gospel-power of what is being said.

This attitude often betrays itself in reactions to sermons. If the proclamation of the gospel on a Sunday morning is more likely to elicit from you a question as to what the pastor thinks of the genitive construction in the passage immediately after what he has expounded, it could be that you are studying too much theology or at least studying it in a way that is not aimed at deepening your knowledge of God but deepening your knowledge of a technical field, in the way one might deepen one's knowledge of chess openings, bridge bidding systems, or sports statistics. To put it bluntly, you probably need to get out more, spend time with real Christian people dealing with real everyday situations.

Further, the study of theology in the abstract can lead to the objectification of the task. Luther was once asked what the difference between what he believed and what the Pope believed was. On one level, he said, there is no difference: we both believe Christ, the Son of God, came to earth, took flesh, died on the cross, rose again, ascended into heaven, and will return. So where was the difference? 'I believe he did these things *for me*' was Luther's response.

The point Luther was making was that the Pope had objectified theology in a way that it no longer had that personal, existential dimension that caused him to revise his own understanding of himself and, ultimately, to bow down in worship and in awe. The opening of Calvin's *Institutes*, with its statement about the intimate connection and interdependence of our knowledge of God and our knowledge of ourselves, makes a similar point: it is not, as is sometimes argued, anything to do with the modern concern for contextualization, and everything to do with the connection of our identity to that of God, forcing upon us the realization that theology cannot be abstracted from who we are before God.

The answer to such abstraction is not to stop making the study of *theology* our goal; it is rather to stop making the *study* of theology our goal. We have a tendency to make the chronological end points—what new things we learn each day—the most important. Yet this confuses the process of learning with the real order of things. The study of theology is not a chase after something or a movement beyond where we start our Christian lives; it is rather a reflection upon the foundations of where we already are. The end term is, strange to tell, the beginning. I start by confessing with my mouth that Jesus is Lord and believing in my heart that God raised him from the dead, and I never actually go any further. All my theology, all my study, is simply reflection on what lies behind that. Thus, I never move beyond praise, never leave behind the beauty of adoration of the living God; I simply learn more and more about

the deep foundations upon which that praise and worship rest, which all believers share from the most brilliant to the most humble.

We need to stop studying theology, or, perhaps to put it better, we need at least to stop thinking of what we do as study in the generic sense. It does not move us beyond our starting point; it merely helps us to understand that starting point better.

New Commentaries on Colossians: Survey of Approaches, Analysis of Trends, and the State of Research

— Nijay Gupta —

Nijay Gupta currently serves as a visiting instructor at Ashland Theological Seminary in Ohio. Beginning in the fall, he will teach Biblical Studies at Seattle Pacific University.

New Testament scholarship in its present state is experiencing a time of abundance, especially with respect to biblical commentaries of every shape, length, level of depth, theological persuasion, intended audience, and hermeneutical angle. This is, indeed, of value to researchers and ministers who have a wide selection of options to choose from on almost any given book. However, the downside of this fecundity is that the wide selection is so bewildering that one needs a guide to navigate through the dense jungle of commentaries.¹ In this article, the intent is narrow: to survey and analyze the latest commentaries on the book of Colossians with a view towards trends in recent texts and the state of the discussion of key interpretive issues.

Colossians is of particular interest for several reasons. First, it had been neglected for many years, whether being passed over by commentators altogether, minimized by being lumped together with its cousin Ephesians, or treated succinctly under the heading of “captivity epistles.”² Second, many scholars do not consider Colossians to be an “authentic” Pauline letter, so they have often not considered it as important a source for understanding Paul’s mission, circumstances, and theology. The time of neglect,

¹ While we are offering a basic kind of guide to recent Colossians commentaries in this article, other treatments of this nature exist elsewhere. In printed form, fine commentary guides are found in John Glynn, *Commentary and Reference Survey: A Comprehensive Guide to Biblical and Theological Resources* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2003); D.A. Carson, *New Testament Commentary Survey* (6th ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007). On the internet, two useful resources include www.bestcommentaries.com and the annotated bibliography of NT resources provided by Denver Seminary’s online *Denver Journal* at www.denverseminary.edu/resources/the-denver-journal/index.php/. The books listed above tend to be longer and provide a more detailed discussion, though they need to be updated regularly with new editions. The online resources are more current, but tend to be very basic.

² One could divide previous scholarship on Colossians into two periods: before the 1970s and after. As for the former, the most profitable commentaries include J. B. Lightfoot, *The Epistles of St Paul: Colossians and Philemon* (London: Macmillan, 1875); T. K. Abbott, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles to the Ephesians and to the Colossians* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1916); M. Dibelius, *An die Kolosser, Epheser, an Philemon* (rev. H. Greeven; Tübingen: Mohr, 1953); C. F. D. Moule, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957); and the latter period: E. Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971); J. Gnllka, *Der Kolosserbrief* (Freiberg: Herder, 1980); P. T. O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon* (WBC; Waco, TX: Word, 1982); F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984); P. Pokorný, *Colossians: A Commentary* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1987); J. D. G. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996).

however, has apparently come to an end because six new commentaries have been published in the last four years, several by eminent Pauline scholars. By paying attention to the various approaches of these scholars, their distinctive emphases, and their commonalities, we may better understand the present context of the study of this epistle and the fruit and influence of newer approaches to biblical interpretation. Our examination of recent work on Colossians will concentrate on the six commentaries by Marianne Meye Thompson,³ R. McL. Wilson,⁴ Charles H. Talbert,⁵ Ben Witherington III,⁶ Douglas J. Moo,⁷ and Jerry Sumney.⁸ We begin by offering a description of each of the six commentaries that features their distinctive approaches (especially as determined by the series) and the theological commitments of the authors where detectable and relevant. From there we will move on to our analysis.

1. Recent Commentaries

1.1. Marianne Meye Thompson (2005)

Thompson's commentary is the inaugural volume in the Two Horizons series, which is attentive to both "theological exegesis" and "theological reflection." While these commentaries utilize traditional exegetical approaches, they also give attention to the canonical setting of the text, the history of interpretation (including pre-critical voices), and questions related to biblical theology. One dimension of this series makes it special, namely, that dialogue takes place with Christian theologians. For example, Thompson interacts with such theologians as Wolfhart Pannenberg, Colin Gunton, and Miroslav Volf. Only about one hundred pages of the book involve standard "commenting" (13–109). About another eighty pages engage with the "theology of Colossians," including a discussion of the letter's key themes, its place in Pauline theology, and its contribution to biblical and constructive theology. One should not expect from this commentary new directions in interpreting exegetical conundrums. It is best utilized as a mature, concise reading of Colossians with an interest in NT theology. In terms of the perspective and use of this commentary, Thompson stands broadly within the evangelical tradition and offers many theological insights to ministers and teachers.

1.2. R. McL. Wilson (2005)

This volume in the magisterial International Critical Commentary series is a completely different sort of commentary from Thompson's. Hailed for acumen in philology, textual criticism, history of interpretation, and comparisons with contemporaneous ancient literature, contributions in this series often become standard reference resources for researchers. Wilson, an expert in early Gnosticism, is able to discuss the background issues and historical context of Colossians with much skill. Though he

³ Thompson, *Colossians and Philemon* (Two Horizons Commentary; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005).

⁴ Wilson, *Colossians and Philemon* (ICC; London: T&T Clark, 2005).

⁵ Talbert, *Ephesians and Colossians* (Paideia; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007).

⁶ Witherington, *The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Captivity Epistles* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007).

⁷ Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon* (Pillar NT Commentary; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008).

⁸ Sumney, *Colossians* (NTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008).

follows most interpreters in refuting the idea that the Colossian heresy was a form of Gnosticism, he admits that some elements of this philosophy point to its early development.

Wilson's bibliography contains over 400 entries and is divided up into two major sections: "commentaries" and "other literature." The first section is further segmented into three parts: patristic commentaries, those of the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, and modern works. As for the main commenting itself, the focus is, of course, on the Greek text. The Greek word, phrase, or clause in question is in bold, and a detailed semantic discussion usually follows. A distinctive feature of Wilson's commentary is his regular dialogue with older works (such as Lightfoot and Moule), which is rare among recent commentators.

The ICC volumes tend to avoid theological discussion and do not adhere to a particular ecclesial tradition. This work is best utilized, therefore, as a reference resource for gleaning insight into the linguistic and historical background of the letter.

1.3. Charles H. Talbert (2007)

Similar to Thompson, Talbert's is the first volume of a new series. In this case it is the "Paideia" series, which is especially suitable for course instruction because it enables "students to understand each book of the New Testament as a literary whole rooted in a particular ancient setting and related to its context within the New Testament" (Talbert, ix). Also, similar to the Two Horizons series, the Paideia series is not a verse-by-verse treatment, but moves forward in terms of larger rhetorical units. It is also a distinctive feature of this series that the authors come from a variety of confessional viewpoints.⁹ Talbert himself comes from a moderate-critical stance, but his theological discussions (see below on structure) tend to be more descriptive than prescriptive.

In terms of structure, each unit under consideration proceeds in three movements: a discussion of "introductory matters," "tracing the train of thought" (comments and annotations), and "theological issues." The commentary is loaded with helpful tools such as diagrams, sidebar additions (such as quick outlines), and pictures. The notes rarely break new ground, but offer competent surveys of scholarly opinion and often point the reader to illuminating texts from Jewish, Hellenistic, and Roman literature that help to establish Colossians within its ancient social, literary, and historical milieu. Preachers and lay leaders will find especially useful the way that Talbert makes the ancient world accessible.

1.4. Ben Witherington III (2007)

This conservative evangelical NT scholar has set out to write a commentary on every book of the NT and has written over a dozen since 1995. His books follow a "socio-rhetorical" approach, an apt label as his exegesis employs many of the tools of both social-scientific criticism and rhetorical criticism. With respect to the latter, he concentrates on classical categories and draws attention to standard rhetorical devices in the biblical text.

Written at a semi-technical level, Witherington is known for writing in elegant prose. As a dedicated instructor, he is also attentive to the needs of students and their level of comprehension of scholarship. He includes, therefore, many helpful features in this book, including an annotated bibliography of about fifty important works (it covers Ephesians and Philemon as well as Colossians). Several excursuses are scattered throughout the commentary (called "A Closer Look") on such issues as the Christ hymn,

⁹ Thus, future volumes will come from, for example, Greek Orthodox scholar George Parsenios (Johannine epistles), Catholic scholar Frank Matera (Romans), and Baptist scholar Todd Still (Thessalonians).

the Colossian philosophy, and marriage and slavery “in context.” When Witherington appeals to the original text (transliterated), he does so in a way that readers without knowledge of Greek can easily comprehend. Also, his work is always marked by sensitivity to theological and moral issues.

1.5. Douglas J. Moo (2008)

Moo’s work falls within the relatively new Pillar New Testament Commentary series, which attempts to blend careful exegesis with attention to biblical theology and application. In terms of the format of the commentary, it is typical. After a standard treatment of introductory issues, it proceeds with a verse-by-verse discussion of the text with attention to the structure of the larger discourse, semantic issues, and various theological matters. This particular volume, however, is quite useful for two main reasons. First, Moo is known for his research on Romans, and given the thematic and theological similarities between Romans and Colossians, he offers a unique and helpful perspective on a number of issues. Second, he has researched issues related to protology, eschatology, and cosmology, from which he brings a wealth of knowledge and information into the study of a letter that is seriously concerned with creation and cosmological powers. Preachers will be especially appreciative of this series’ commitment—exemplified well by Moo—to “loosen the Bible from its pages” and make it relevant to the modern world.

1.6. Jerry Sumney (2008)

This contribution on Colossians appears in the New Testament Library commentary series. These commentaries offer a new translation of the text and are attentive to situating the NT book within the ancient world, describing its literary design, and discussing its theological nuances. Only a few volumes have appeared since the New Testament Library was launched in 2002. The format, again, is standard. It is not quite a verse-by-verse treatment, as often 2–3 verses are discussed at once.

Sumney brings to the discussion a strong background in Pauline studies, with special capability in mirror-reading and the study of Paul’s opponents. His focus is generally on the text’s rhetorical flow and author’s argumentative strategy (generally following classical rhetoric procedures). Perhaps the most distinctive feature of Sumney’s commentary is his interaction with the imperial setting of this text. His discussion of the household codes, with the aid of post-colonial criticism, is priceless and adds a dimension to the discussion rarely found even in the most recent commentaries.¹⁰ Similar to Witherington’s commentary, Sumney’s book contains a number of excursuses on such issues as Colossians’ use of metaphors for the work of Christ (particularly in 1:12–23), the use of the term “Scythians,” and the household codes.

The New Testament Library series has no particular theological commitments, and Sumney himself approaches the text from a moderate-critical stance (similar to Talbert). In the commentary proper, Sumney rarely makes directly applicable theological statements. However, in the excursuses, deeper reflections can be found on the theology of the text.

2. The State of Research on Interpretative Cruxes in Colossians

While it is useful to survey briefly the approaches of newer commentaries, one is still left wondering if anything *new* is actually being said on Colossians that moves the discussion forward. In view of

¹⁰ Also, in terms of the Bible and Empire, see B. Walsh and S. Keesmaat, *Colossians Remixed: Subverting the Empire* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2004).

providing this kind of information, we now treat several interpretive cruxes in Colossians, attempting to detect consensuses, ongoing debates, and how modern approaches have aided in illuminating this ancient text.

2.1. Authorship

Since the middle of the nineteenth century, scholars have debated whether Colossians is authentically from Paul. In the last quarter of the twentieth century, scholarship was about evenly divided on the issue. These six new commentaries reflect the same sort of ambivalence. Thompson, Witherington, and Moo work from and support Pauline authorship. In the past, the most significant problems with claiming authenticity were unique vocabulary, eccentric style, and ostensibly unpauline theology. On the first and third matter, Thompson and Moo note that the contingency of the letter can account for the unusual vocabulary and focus on particular theological issues (and the neglect of others). Style appears to be a more pressing concern, though it is common within recent discussions to take into account co-authorship and the role of the letter's secretary. Witherington, contributing in a special way to this issue, argues that Paul purposefully uses a more refined and poetic Asiatic style in Colossians (and Ephesians) that can account for the unusual vocabulary as well as such features as pleonasm. In terms of unpauline theology, some have argued that Colossians demonstrates a realized eschatology that cannot be found among Paul's undisputed letters. Moo cogently reasons, though, that Romans contains several comments that point to a more realized eschatological perspective; thus, the eschatological gap between the undisputed letters and Colossians is more perceived than real.

From the other end, Wilson argues that Colossians is pseudonymous, with Sumney and Talbert slightly favoring this position as well. However, none of these scholars presume that this should devalue the theological import of the letter. Rather, it is now common to view it as an acceptable literary technique in the ancient world that can be labeled "honest forgery" (Wilson, 11). In Wilson's argument against authenticity, the main issue seems to be historical implausibility, as he finds the kind of heresy that the author is arguing against to be too far advanced towards Gnostic beliefs to fall under the same imprisonment period as, for instance, Philippians (Wilson, 19). For Sumney, the concern seems to be the valorization of Paul, that is, the extended portrayal of Paul as a trustworthy apostle—something that can be easily accounted for if the writer is pseudonymous (Sumney, 7). Sumney concludes, "the amount of space Colossians devotes to this subject is unusual for a letter in which his authority is not under attack" (7).

We may conclude, then, that the debate over the authenticity of Colossians is ongoing as several issues and problems still need clarification and resolution. While vocabulary and style are no longer the most pressing matters, the theology of Colossians is still a concern, as well as the question of historical implausibility. The matter of determining the nature of the Colossian philosophy as well as the purpose and meaning of the household codes contribute to these concerns. We will give more attention to such issues below.

2.2. The Colossian Heresy or Philosophy

Determining the nature and background of the opponents in Colossians is a matter of considerable debate in NT scholarship. In 1973, J. J. Gunther listed over forty-four different suggestions made by scholars.¹¹ The most well-known views from nineteenth- and twentieth-century scholarship are that

¹¹ See J. J. Gunther, *St. Paul's Opponents and their Background: A Study of Apocalyptic and Jewish Sectarian Teachings* (Leiden: Brill, 1973), 3–4.

the Colossian heresy was drawn from Essenic Gnosticism (Lightfoot), the mystery cults (Dibelius), or a form of Jewish-pagan syncretism.¹² The first two theories have been largely debunked as anachronistic or exegetically tenuous. Within the modern discussion the important question is whether this philosophy can be understood as fully Jewish (accepting that Judaism at that time was extremely diverse) or as combining Jewish and non-Jewish practices, viewpoints, and traditions. Again, these scholars are relatively evenly divided. Thompson, Talbert, and Witherington generally view the philosophy as coming mainly from Judaism. Wilson,¹³ Moo, and Sumney seem to envision more of a syncretistic (Jewish and non-Jewish) philosophy.

What we may glean from this discussion methodologically is that theories nowadays tend to shy away from simplistic answers. The multifaceted nature of the evidence leads one to view the opposition as either representing diversity *within* Judaism or combining Jewish and non-Jewish elements. What can be learned about Colossae itself has been hindered by the fact that it has never been excavated. If work is done on the site by archaeologists, the findings may bear on this matter in significant ways.

2.3. Paul and the Sufferings of Christ (1:24)

Our first textual crux under consideration is the matter of “Paul” making up for what is lacking with regard to the “sufferings of Christ” (1:24). Most scholars avoid supporting any notion that salvific suffering is meant here. Rather, the common interpretation of modern exegetes is that the so-called “messianic woes” are being addressed here (see Thompson, 45; Wilson, 170–71; Witherington, 144–45; Moo, 150–52). Thompson and Moo focus on the perspective here that Paul’s apostleship is unique in this regard as his proclamation is the reason that others oppose and afflict him, and this moves history (alongside other factors) towards the end-time events. Sumney alone hesitates to draw from this background, choosing instead to view this verse in terms of the Greco-Roman *topos* of “noble death” (Sumney, 100).

2.4. *Stoicheia tou Kosmou* (2:8, 20)

More controversial is the meaning of the phrase *stoicheia tou kosmou*, which can be understood in three ways. It could refer to the spiritual beings that dominate the earth (the archic view), the basic principles of the world (the logical view), or the component parts of the world (the elemental view). In twentieth-century scholarship, the archic view was dominant. However, among our six modern scholars, there is no consensus. Thompson (53) and Witherington (155) draw attention to the logical view as the “teachings” and “rules” of the philosophy seem to be a major issue. Talbert (211–12) leans towards the archic view, while Moo (187–92) argues that a combination of the elemental and archic is appropriate. Sumney and Wilson (195–96) appear to be undecided. Sumney focuses on the rhetorical import of the phrase, namely, to point out that “the teaching has a worldly source instead of a divine one” (131).

Though disagreement continues over the *stoicheia*, it is helpful to observe how the conclusions are reached. Some scholars focus on usage of the term in comparative literature (e.g., Moo, Wilson,

¹² On this third option, the work of Clinton Arnold has been particularly influential. See C. E. Arnold, *The Colossian Syncretism: The Interface Between Christianity and Folk Belief at Colossae* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996).

¹³ Wilson’s view is idiosyncratic in that he sees here hints of the development of Gnosticism. One important issue he raises is the matter of how far the philosophy had reached. If it was only in Colossae, it was probably a more regional problem based on local aberrant beliefs. If it had reached Rome, it was probably closer to proto-Gnosticism.

Talbert), while others take interest in the purpose of the phrase in Colossians (Thompson, Sumney, Witherington). Both approaches, of course, are important for the elucidation of the phrase. Indeed, it must be recognized that there is a dialectic that exists between a word's (or phrase's) meaning *in common usage* and the meaning as it appears *in context*. At the end of the day, even though one must get a sense for how a group tends to use a particular word or phrase, the key determinant in meaning is the actual historical and literary context of the work at hand. It would seem that those commentaries that make the Pauline rhetorical context primary (without ignoring antecedent and contemporaneous usage) will end up finding a consensus sooner.

2.5. The Fullness [*Plērōma*] of God (1:19; 2:9)

An issue that generated much discussion in the past was how to interpret Colossians' use of *plērōma* in 1:19 and 2:9. For some time, scholars assumed that the author of Colossians was using a Gnostic term, but recent scholarship has dismissed this view (see Wilson, 152–54). The focus is now on how this term fits into the agenda of Colossians, namely, to present Christ as offering the full presence and power of God (see Thompson, 30; Witherington, 135–36; Talbert, 190; Sumney, 74). Moo adds the possibility that though it is not a Gnostic term, it may have been a word Paul co-opted from the opponents who argued that the Colossians needed to fill out their spirituality (131–32).

2.6. Shadow and Body/Substance (2:17)

Colossians 2:16 refers to food regulations, feast-keeping, and Sabbaths. Then it goes on to argue, “These are only a shadow [*skia*] of what is to come, but the substance [*sōma*] belongs to Christ” (Col 2:17 NRSV). Traditionally, commentators have read 2:17 in terms of Platonic dualism (as also evident in Philo). This view is also generally taken up by Talbert (216–17), Witherington (160–61), and Moo (224). Sumney finds this view overstated, noting that *sōma* is not usually set in direct opposition to *skia* in contemporaneous literature (152). Sumney, Wilson, and Thompson explore the significance of Colossians' employment of *sōma* here, which is also used for the body of Christ himself as well as the church in this letter. Thompson sees this play on words emphasizing that the Colossian believers would be hurting the communal *sōma* in their competitive bodily asceticism.

2.7. Worship of Angels (2:18)

A well-known conundrum in the interpretation of Colossians is whether *thrēskeia tōn angelōn* (“worship of angels”; 2:18) is to be taken as an objective genitive (angels being worshiped) or a subjective genitive (angels as worshiping God). Judging by these works, scholarship is still split quite evenly, with Thompson (66–67), Witherington (161–62), and Sumney (154–55) taking the subjective view and Wilson (222–23), Talbert (218–22), and Moo (226–27) taking the objective view. The discussion has been further complicated by appeal to the magical papyri, the Dead Sea scrolls, and closer study of the OT Pseudepigrapha. One can find evidence in early Jewish writings both of humans worshiping angels or angel-like beings and of angels worshiping God. It appears that discussions of the literary and theological distinctives of Colossians will play a larger role in resolving this debate, therefore, than appeals to contemporaneous evidence. That is, more attention will need to be paid to the nature and importance of revelation and worship in Colossians and which reading fits this context more appropriately.

2.8. The Household Code (3:18–4:1)

An important aspect of understanding Colossians is properly interpreting the household code in 3:18–4:1, which to many scholars does not seem to fit well into its context. A significant issue is whether this code coheres with Pauline social ethics. Put another way, would it be understood as “overturning or accommodating to cultural norms” (Thompson, 89)? Scholars like Dibelius would have viewed it as wholly in line with values of the wider society. However, most of our six modern scholars have tried to understand it otherwise. Thompson (89–97), Talbert (236–37), and Witherington (196) see it as somewhere between conformity and resistance, a kind of sanctified version of the code. Wilson explains it as a call to “live up to the highest standards, but *as Christians*, in the name of the Lord Jesus” (275). Sumney takes the discussion further by utilizing the perspective of post-colonial criticism and how subjected people show resistance: “the household code in Colossians may encode meanings that run counter to the most straightforward reading of persons who are not attuned to the countervailing message” (237). An example of a subtle form of resistance comes in the phrase “as is fitting in the Lord,” after the command for wives to submit to their husbands (3:18; Sumney, 242). Sumney interprets these kinds of statements as more than just a secular ethic with Christian wrapping. Such qualifying and contextualizing phrases refocus the moral vision of the household code when read through this political-hermeneutical lens.¹⁴

3. Conclusion

Recent commentaries have offered a variety of approaches to interpreting Colossians, some traditional, others more exploratory. Some consensus have been formed on particular cruxes, but largely the agreement lies in the elimination of tenuous theories. On the major issues of authorship and the background and opposition, considerable disagreement continues. A major factor in the advancement of the discussion is the use of parallel ancient texts. Scholars have paid more attention to the OT Pseudepigrapha, the Greek magical papyri, the Dead Sea scrolls, and the Nag Hammadi (see Wilson). Also, more attention is being given to Greco-Roman sources—not evidence from the mystery cults or the hermetic corpus, but rather the moralists, philosophers, and poets.

It is one thing to have more information about a group of new commentaries (as we have tried to offer here). However, after such a discussion concludes, it is still difficult to decide on which resources to turn to for academic and ministerial purposes. It is appropriate, then, to offer a few comments on the use of these resources. In terms of library-building, if someone does not already have a commentary on Colossians, I would probably recommend Moo’s Pillar commentary due to its clarity, exegetical depth, and theological insight. If one is looking to supplement what they already have in their library, I would suggest either Thompson or Sumney. What Thompson offers is an attempt to “think with” theologians and explore the theological horizons of Colossians. Pastors and students will be challenged by her efforts and she offers a nice example of what it means to penetrate the text beyond simply answering historical questions. Sumney provides something quite different, focusing more on social and rhetorical issues, but his approach engages the socio-ethical dimensions of Colossians in ways that have rarely been done before. In the end, though, all six commentaries are worthwhile study tools.

As we look to the future of Colossians scholarship, we can expect the level of productivity to continue with contributions slated from G. K. Beale, Christopher Seitz, David Pao, and Michael Bird. Perhaps in another five years (or sooner) another guide will be needed.

¹⁴ This kind of discussion is beginning to take place also with respect to Ephesians and 1 Peter.

Does Baptism Replace Circumcision? An Examination of the Relationship between Circumcision and Baptism in Colossians 2:11–12

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Reformed paedobaptists frequently cite Col 2:11–12 as evidence that baptism replaces circumcision as the covenant sign signifying the same realities. For example, question 74 in the Heidelberg Catechism asks,

Q. Should infants, too, be baptized?

A. Yes. For they as well as adults belong to God’s covenant and community (Gen. 17:7) and no less than adults are promised forgiveness of sin through Christ’s blood (Matt. 19:14) and the Holy Spirit, who produces faith (Ps. 22:10; Is. 44:1–3; Luke 1:15; Acts 2:39; 16:31).

Therefore, they, too, ought to be incorporated into the Christian church by baptism, the sign of the covenant, and distinguished from the children of unbelievers (Acts 10:47; 1 Cor. 7:14). *This was done in the Old Testament by circumcision (Gen. 17:9–14), in whose place baptism was instituted in the New Testament (Col. 2:11–13).*¹

Likewise, Col 2:11–12 has often been invoked in significant paedobaptist defences:

These words remind us that salvation comes through faith, and also that *the rite of circumcision that once signified the benefits of Abraham’s covenant has been replaced by baptism.*²

Paul here names baptism ‘the Christian circumcision’ and describes it thereby as the Christian sacrament which corresponds to Jewish circumcision and replaces it.³

What do these words mean, except that the fulfilment and truth of baptism are also the truth and fulfilment of circumcision, since they signify one and the same thing?⁴

¹ Cited in Lyle D. Bierma, ‘Infant Baptism in the Reformed Confessions’, in *The Case for Covenantal Infant Baptism* (ed. Gregg Strawbridge; Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2003), 233 (italics added). Cf. the Westminster Confession of Faith, 28.1c.

² Bryan Chapell, ‘A Pastoral Overview of Infant Baptism’, in *The Case for Covenantal Infant Baptism* (ed. Gregg Strawbridge; Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2003), 17 (italics original).

³ Joachim Jeremias, *Infant Baptism in the First Four Centuries* (trans. David Cairns; LHD; London: SCM, 1960), 39.

⁴ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (ed. John T. McNeill; trans. Ford Lewis Battles; 2 vols.: LCC 20–21; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 4.16.11 (Battles 2:1333).

This brief sample represents how frequently those who claim that baptism replaces circumcision appeal to Col 2:11–12.⁵ Although people frequently make the above assertions, they seldom defend them with exegetical care.⁶ The purpose of this article is to examine whether these verses prove that baptism replaces circumcision. To that end I briefly examine the *Sitz im Leben* of the epistle followed by a concise examination of Paul's theology of circumcision and baptism. Most space will be given to the exegesis of Col 2:11–12 before summarising the argument and drawing some conclusions.⁷

The thesis is that the paedobaptist understanding of Col 2:11–12 is illegitimate. First, we shall see that the verses are primarily polemical and thus require caution in drawing firm conclusions regarding sacramentology. Second, I will argue that there is a disjunction for Paul between physical and spiritual circumcision, and it is the latter to which Col 2:11 refers. Third, I shall demonstrate that 'circumcision' and baptism do not signify precisely the same realities in these verses. This issue is important and relevant for church practice. If baptism replaces circumcision and signifies the same realities, then as a covenant sign it ought to be administered to infants of covenant members. If, however, we can demonstrate that such a link does not exist, it calls into question practices based upon such a connection, to the extent that they rely on Col 2:11–12.

1. The Situation at Colossae

It is worth briefly considering the situation at Colossae to see if this illuminates the purpose, function, and meaning of Col 2:11–12, particularly if Col 2:8–23 is viewed as the 'polemical core' of the epistle.⁸ The contours of the 'heresy' have been variously understood, with some disputing the existence of false teachers completely.⁹ DeMaris surveys the range of opinion on the 'heresy' which spans Gnosticism, asceticism, mysticism and syncretism, among others.¹⁰ The clearest statements are to be found in Col 2:8–23,¹¹ with evidence of a particularly Jewish influence as follows:

⁵ Other authors who appeal to Col 2:11–12 to prove that baptism replaces circumcision include Robert R. Booth, *Children of the Promise: The Biblical Case for Infant Baptism* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1995), 107; Oscar Cullmann, *Baptism in the New Testament* (trans. J. K. S. Reid; SBT 1; London: SCM, 1950), 58–59; Paul D. Gardner, 'Circumcised in Baptism—Raised Through Faith: A Note on Col 2:11–12', *WTJ* 45 (1983): 172–77; Mark E. Ross, 'Baptism and Circumcision as Signs and Seals', in *The Case for Covenantal Infant Baptism* (ed. Gregg Strawbridge; Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2003), 102–3.

⁶ Of the twenty works I consulted that appeal to Col 2:11–12 to prove that baptism replaces circumcision, only Gardner, 'Circumcised in Baptism', provides sustained exegesis.

⁷ While this essay does not give space to patristic interpretations, it is worth noting that not until the mid-fourth century was Col 2:11–12 cited as an argument for infant baptism (J. P. T. Hunt, 'Colossians 2:11–12, the Circumcision/Baptism Analogy, and Infant Baptism', *TynBul* 41 [1990]: 227).

⁸ Richard E. DeMaris, *The Colossian Controversy: Wisdom in Dispute at Colossae* (JSNTSup 96; Sheffield: JSOT, 1994), 41.

⁹ For example, M. Hooker, 'Were There False Teachers in Colossae?' in *Christ and Spirit in the New Testament* (ed. B. Lindars and S. Smalley; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 315–31. Most scholars, however, accept that there was some kind of false teaching present in Colossae.

¹⁰ DeMaris, *Colossian Controversy*, 18–40. Gunther's list runs to forty-four possibilities regarding the 'philosophy'. John J. Gunther, *St. Paul's Opponents and their Background* (NovTSup 35; Leiden: Brill, 1973), 3–5.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 45. Douglas J. Moo (*The Letters to the Colossians and Philemon* [Pillar NT Commentary; Nottingham: Apollos, 2008], 51) sketches them out as follows:

1. Hollow, deceptive philosophy based upon human tradition (2:8)

1. Mention of festivals, food, purity, and Sabbaths (2:16–21) are all distinctively Jewish elements.¹²
2. ‘Circumcision’ appears three times (2:11, 13; 3:11) suggesting it was a contentious issue in Colossae.
3. Θρησκεία τῶν ἀγγέλων (2:18), particularly if τῶν ἀγγέλων is taken as a subjective genitive, has a strong Jewish background.¹³
4. The Lycus valley, it is argued, had substantial Jewish minorities.¹⁴

It may be that Dunn and Witherington are correct in viewing the heresy as essentially Jewish mysticism influenced by Greek philosophy;¹⁵ at the least it is syncretistic.¹⁶ It is reasonable, therefore, to suppose that there was some sort of Jewish element present within the ‘philosophy’. Thus the inclusion of rites-language within the ‘polemical core’ may well have been a direct response to opponents, or at least a preemptive strike against false teachers imposing certain rites as essential. Paul’s purpose is not to discuss baptism or circumcision *per se*, but rather to include them within the section highlighting the fullness already possessed in Christ through all he has accomplished.

2. A Pauline Theology of Baptism and Circumcision

This section’s topic is a significantly larger topic than this article’s topic.¹⁷ However, a brief consideration of Paul’s views of circumcision and baptism may illuminate our understanding of his use of them in Col 2:11–12.

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2. Mention of the στοιχειῶν (2:8)
 3. Does not depend on Christ and has lost connection with the head (2:8, 19)
 4. Mention of foods and holy days (2:16)
 5. Presence of asceticism and angel worship (2:18, 23)
 6. Mention of visions and pride in them (2:18)
 7. Involves obedience to human precepts (2:20–23)

¹² David E. Garland, *Colossians and Philemon* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 29.

¹³ *T. Lev.* 3:4–8; *Asc. Is.* 7:19; *1 En.* 36:4. For the argument for taking τῶν ἀγγέλων as a subjective genitive, see Fred O. Francis, ‘Humility and Angelic Worship in Col 2:18’, in *Conflict at Colossae* (ed. Fred O. Francis and Wayne A. Meeks; 2d ed.; Atlanta: Scholars, 1975), 176–81; *pace* Clinton E. Arnold, *The Colossian Syncretism: The Interface between Christianity and Folk Belief at Colossae* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 100, who argues for an objective genitive.

¹⁴ James D. G. Dunn, ‘The Colossian Philosophy: A Confident Jewish Apologia’, *Bib* 76 (1995): 154.

¹⁵ Dunn, ‘Colossian Philosophy’, 166; Ben Witherington III, *The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Captivity Epistles* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 110.

¹⁶ Arnold, *Colossian Syncretism*, 90–98.

¹⁷ For a fuller treatment, see F. F. Bruce, *Paul: Apostle of the Free Spirit* (2d ed.; 1977; repr., Exeter: Pater-noster, 1983); 280–83; James D.G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998); 442–59; Herman Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology* (trans. John Richard de Witt; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 396–414; Rudolf Schnackenburg, *Baptism in the Thought of St. Paul* (trans. G. R. Beasley-Murray; Oxford: Blackwell, 1964); Thomas R. Schreiner, *Paul: Apostle of God’s Glory in Christ: A Pauline Theology* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2001), 371–79.

2.1. Paul's View of Baptism

Paul's understanding of baptism can be grouped into three main areas:

1. Baptism symbolises washing, cleansing, and regeneration (1 Cor 6:11; Eph 5:26; Tit 3:5). First Corinthians 6:11 describes believers as washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of God. There is debate as to whether the rite of baptism is in view, but the majority of scholars think it is.¹⁸ The mention of washing along with 'in the name of Jesus' echoes Acts 22:16, which clearly refers to baptism, and by the mid-50s notions of washing would have likely brought the rite of baptism to mind.

Ephesians 5:26 may also link 'cleansing' to baptism. O'Brien thinks it more likely uses the imagery of the bride-bath given the context, but that does not rule out baptism.¹⁹ Rather baptism is being spoken of as the cleansing bath that prepares the Church for her bridegroom.²⁰ The reference to baptism is primary, with the notion of a bridal bath secondary.²¹

Finally, Tit 3:5 links the 'washing of rebirth' with the eschatological, saving work of God.²² Commentators divide here into those who see baptism functioning *ex opere operato* and those who react against this, denying any reference to water-baptism.²³ Is it possible that spiritual baptism and the outward rite are both in view, hence Paul's choice of terminology? Noteworthy is the close link between baptism, sanctification, and new birth as a complex in Paul's usage.²⁴

2. Baptism incorporates us into the body of Christ (1 Cor 1:13; 12:13; Gal 3:27). Galatians 3:27 speaks of the baptized person as having 'put on Christ' (ESV). Paul says in 1 Corinthians that they were baptized into the name and body of Christ (1:13; 12:13). For Paul, baptism binds and unites us to Christ and is seen as an initiation into the one body. This is almost certainly speaking of conversion since 1 Cor 12:13b adds, 'all were made to drink of one Spirit,' and Spirit-reception is a mark of beginning the

¹⁸ Fee does not see an explicit reference to the rite of baptism here but concedes he is in the minority. Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1987), 247n38. Those who do see a reference to baptism here include C. K. Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (BNTC; London: A&C Black, 1968), 141; David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 215–16. Thiselton is also happy to see a reference to baptism here but in its broadest terms, i.e., the 'spiritual event of which baptism constitutes the sign'. Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (NIGTC; Carlisle: Paternoster, 2000), 453–54.

¹⁹ Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (Pillar NT Commentary; Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1999), 422–23. Authors who do see a reference to baptism here include Ernest Best, *Ephesians* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 542–43; J. C. Kirby, *Ephesians, Baptism and Pentecost* (London: SPCK, 1968), 151–52; Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (WBC 42; Dallas: Word, 1990), 375.

²⁰ Schnackenburg, *Baptism*, 5.

²¹ Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 375.

²² Ridderbos, *Paul*, 398.

²³ Those who take a Catholic sacramentalist view include Raymond F. Collins, *I and II Timothy and Titus* (NTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 364; Jerome D. Quinn, *The Letter to Titus* (AB 35; New York: Doubleday, 1990), 217. For a Protestant reaction, see I. Howard Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), 318; William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles* (WBC 46; Nashville: Nelson, 2000), 448–49.

²⁴ Dunn, *Theology of Paul*, 443–47; Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 216.

Christian life (cf. Gal 3:1–5).²⁵ Again, Paul’s lack of concern to distinguish water- and Spirit-baptism should be noted from 1 Cor 12:12–13.²⁶

3. Baptism unites us to Christ in his death and resurrection (Rom 6:1–11; Col 2:11–12). It is more than just a picture of our own dying and rising—rather, it is symbolic of our union with Christ.²⁷ In Rom 6:3–4, baptism describes the believer’s participation in *Christ’s* death and resurrection.²⁸ Moo goes so far as to say baptism is the ‘instrument through which we are buried with him.’²⁹ Thus, for Paul, baptism effects a vital union with Christ. Again, there is debate as to whether Spirit- or water-baptism is in view. As with previous verses discussed, this seeks to neatly distinguish what would have been held together in the early church.³⁰ For Paul and the early Christians baptism and conversion were held together.³¹

2.2. Paul’s View of Circumcision

We now consider more briefly Paul’s view of circumcision. Paul’s discussions of circumcision are frequently negative. It is easier to construct what Paul says circumcision does *not* do rather than what it does. In Rom 2:25–29, physical circumcision anticipates the true circumcision of the heart, and inner not outer circumcision defines the ‘true’ Jew.³² The value of physical circumcision exists only if the law is perfectly obeyed (cf. Gal 5:2–3). Once it is broken, circumcision becomes uncircumcision (Rom 2:25; 3:2).³³ Thus Paul distinguishes between physical and spiritual circumcision.³⁴

²⁵ Thomas R. Schreiner, ‘Baptism in the Epistles: An Initiation Rite for Believers,’ in *Believer’s Baptism: Sign of the New Covenant* (ed. Thomas R. Schreiner and Shawn D. Wright; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 72.

²⁶ Cross argues that 1 Cor 12:13 refers to both Spirit- and water-baptism by way of synecdoche. Anthony R. Cross, ‘Spirit- and Water-Baptism in 1 Corinthians 12:13,’ in *Dimensions of Baptism* (ed. Stanley E. Porter and Anthony R. Cross; JSNTSup 234; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 120–48.

²⁷ Ridderbos, *Paul*, 403–4.

²⁸ Schreiner, *Romans*, 309.

²⁹ Moo, *Romans*, 364. Wright also describes it as ‘the event in which this dying and rising is accomplished.’ N. T. Wright, ‘The Letter to the Romans: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections,’ in *NIB* (vol. 10; Nashville: Abingdon, 2002), 533.

³⁰ I. Howard Marshall, ‘The Meaning of the Verb “Baptize,”’ in *Dimensions of Baptism* (ed. Stanley E. Porter and Anthony R. Cross; JSNTSup 234; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 9. Commentators who consider water-baptism to have been in view here include James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8* (WBC 38A; Dallas: Word, 1988), 313; Moo, *Romans*, 359; Wright, *Romans*, 533.

³¹ Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Theology* (Leicester: IVP, 1981), 756.

³² Moo, *Romans*, 167.

³³ Moo, *Romans*, 168. The context of Rom 2:17–3:8 is one in which Jewish people thought themselves spared from the wrath of God on the basis of nationality, covenant membership, and circumcision. Moo *Romans*, 166–67.

³⁴ Some may object that Paul’s purpose in the verses discussed is polemical and that, therefore, it would be difficult to draw definite conclusions about his view of circumcision. Even if he is being polemical, though, it is not wholly so, for in the context of Romans, it is in part about the new eschatological age of the Spirit as opposed to the old age of the law. See John M. G. Barclay, ‘Paul and Philo on Circumcision: Romans 2:25–9 in Social and Cultural Context,’ *NTS* 44 (1998): 554. Finally, Lemke argues that ‘circumcision of the heart’ is one metaphor that is part of a larger trajectory concerned with spiritual renewal that is fulfilled in the New Covenant (Deut 6:5; 10:12; Jer 3:10; 17:1; 31:31–34; Ezek 18:31; 36:25–27). It is not something intrinsic to the rite itself. There is actually a tension between the physical and spiritual *within* the OT (Deut 10:16; 30:6; Jer 4:4; 6:10; 9:24–25). Therefore to read spiritual circumcision into the OT rite is mistaken. See Werner E. Lemke, ‘Circumcision of the Heart: The Journey of a Biblical Metaphor,’ in *A God So Near: Essays on Old Testament Theology in Honor of Patrick D. Miller* (ed. Brent A. Strawn and Nancy R. Bowen; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 317–18.

There is a trio of verses that all begin with the phrase ‘neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything’ (1 Cor 7:19; Gal 5:6; 6:15). The second half of those verses present the antithesis—keeping the commandments (1 Cor 7:19); faith working through love (Gal 5:6); and new creation (Gal 6:15). Inner as opposed to outer is what counts so that Paul can say the ‘true circumcision’ are those who worship by the Spirit (Phil 3:3). The disjunction between the outer rite and the inner reality is made plain.

Positively, physical circumcision is a sign and seal of faith in the case of Abraham (Rom 4:11). Some paedobaptists appeal to this to defend the idea that just as circumcision is a seal linked to faith, so too baptism.³⁵ However, this verse is speaking descriptively about *Abraham* and not prescriptively about his seed.³⁶ Abraham’s descendants are circumcised as a seal of the covenant God made with *Abraham*, not because they themselves have faith. Actually all this verse would prove is ‘believer’s circumcision.’

2.3. Significance

The significance of this all-too-brief outline of Paul’s theology of baptism and circumcision is as follows. First, when we encounter baptismal language in Col 2:12, we must remember that divorcing the spiritual from the ritual is unusual in Paul.³⁷ Second, baptism sits within a complex of events, including regeneration, cleansing, incorporation, repentance, faith, reception of the Spirit, and so on.³⁸ Third, there *is* a distinction in Paul’s writings between physical and spiritual circumcision. Thus we have already begun to see that a close analogy between physical circumcision and baptism is questionable. We shall now look at Col 2:11–12 for a more precise picture of the relationship between circumcision and baptism.

³⁵ See Pierre Marcel, *The Biblical Doctrine of Infant Baptism* (trans. Philip Edgcumbe Hughes; London: Clark, 1953), 210–11; Cornelius P. Venema, ‘Covenant Theology and Baptism,’ in *The Case for Covenantal Infant Baptism* (ed. Gregg Strawbridge; Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2003), 221.

³⁶ Schreiner, ‘Baptism in the Epistles,’ 86–87; Paul K. Jewett, *Infant Baptism and the Covenant of Grace* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 86–87.

³⁷ Exceptions to this may be seen in 1 Cor 1:13–15 and 10:2–5. In 1 Cor 1, Paul is opposing acolytes of certain human leaders. The implication of the rhetorical question in v. 13 is that they are baptized, not into the name of Paul, but into the name of Christ, which I take to be the same as being baptized into Christ in 1 Cor 12:13, thus Paul’s concern is not to distinguish between water-baptism and Spirit-baptism, but between baptism into Christ and baptism into Paul/Cephas/Apollos. In 1 Cor 10:2–5, Paul describes the wilderness generation as baptized into Moses, drinking from Christ, yet God was not pleased with them. In context, these verses warn against apostasy (vv. 1–13). All this text says is that it is possible to receive sacraments and fall away. The analogy should not be pressed beyond that. See Fee, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 445; Beasley-Murray, *Baptism*, 184. We can see that Paul can conceive of somebody receiving the sacrament in vain (thus it cannot be functioning *ex opere operato*), but in general he holds them together in a functional unity. This is in contrast to his portrayal of physical and spiritual circumcision.

³⁸ Bruce, *Paul: Apostle of the Free Spirit*, 281; Dunn, *The Theology of Paul*, 443–45; Schreiner, *Paul: Apostle of God’s Glory*, 372. Peter Leithart, a paedobaptist, sees this connection clearly, and although his conclusions are dangerous in my opinion, he is at least consistent in seeing the link between baptism and conversion. See Peter J. Leithart, *The Baptized Body* (Moscow, ID: Canon, 2007), 53–56; idem, *The Priesthood of the Plebs: A Theology of Baptism* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2003), 165–66.

3. Exegesis of Colossians 2:11–12

Although ascertaining section breaks within 2:6–4:6 is not easy,³⁹ it seems reasonable to see vv. 8–23 as a section, comprised of vv. 8–15, which is the positive argument against the ‘philosophy’ outlining the completeness of the spiritual victory we have in Christ, and vv. 16–23, which repeats the warning but supplies the negative side, outlining the erroneous teaching of the false teachers.⁴⁰ Within vv. 8–15, v. 10 gives the grounds for not being taken captive (‘you are in Christ’), and v. 11 specifies the reason for this union (the activity of Christ in ‘circumcising’ and ‘baptising’ the Colossians).⁴¹ The ‘in him’ language ‘runs like a scarlet thread through the passage’ and serves to reinforce the point that Christians appropriate all blessing and ‘fullness’ by virtue of their union with Christ.⁴² If the Colossians were being encouraged to embrace new teachings or practices as a means to a more complete spirituality, Paul in vv. 8–23 demonstrates that in Christ they have all the fullness and completeness required.⁴³ We now turn to address five key questions pertaining to the referents of, and relationship between, the ‘circumcision’ and baptism. The first three questions consider the ‘circumcision’ of v. 11. Questions four and five consider the baptism of v. 12 and its relationship to the ‘circumcision’.

3.1. What Is the ‘Circumcision Made without Hands’ (περιτομή ἀχειροποιήτω—v. 11)?

What does it mean to be circumcised with a circumcision made without hands? The use of the aorist passive περιετμήθητε demonstrates that the Colossians were the object of the circumcision with God as implied agent and that in context Paul views the action as a single past constative action at the time of conversion.⁴⁴ Unlike the circumcision of the OT that the Judaizers possibly promoted, it was performed without hands and ‘plainly opposed to that which is made with hands.’⁴⁵ O’Brien suggests ἀχειροποιήτω is used specifically to refer to what is God’s work alone, a point underscored by the use of the aforementioned passive verbs.⁴⁶

What is in view is spiritual circumcision, a circumcision of the heart that the OT promised (Lev 26:41–42; Deut 10:16; 30:6; Jer 4:4; Ezek 44:7; Rom 2:28–29; Phil 3:3). Here the contrast between the physical and spiritual needs to be drawn out. God gave physical circumcision to the seed of Abraham as a sign and seal of his covenant with Abraham. It did not equate with spiritual circumcision. Rather, God calls the physically circumcised to circumcise their hearts in Deut 10:16 and later promises to do the job himself (Deut 30:6). In context, this is a promise of grace for after their return from exile (see

³⁹ Wright, *Colossians*, 100.

⁴⁰ Moo, *Colossians*, 183.

⁴¹ John Callow, *A Semantic Structure Analysis of Colossians* (ed. Michael F. Kopeseck; Dallas: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1983), 132.

⁴² Peter T. O’Brien, *Colossians and Philemon* (WBC 44; Nashville: Nelson, 1982), 104.

⁴³ Richard C. Barcellos, ‘An Exegetical Appraisal of Colossians 2:11–12’, *RBTR* 2 (2005): 5. I am indebted to Barcellos’s thorough work on this passage, and my argument in many ways builds on his. We diverge significantly when it comes to interpreting the relationship between the aorist main verb περιετμήθητε, and its dependent participle συνταφέντες.

⁴⁴ Harris, *Colossians*, 101.

⁴⁵ John Eadie, *A Commentary on the Greek Text of the Epistle of Paul to the Colossians* (ed. W. Young; 2d ed.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1884), 146.

⁴⁶ O’Brien, *Colossians*, 115–16.

Deut 30:1–5).⁴⁷ The Deuteronomistic history plays out the failure of Israel to circumcise their hearts, and it is the Deuteronomistic prophet Jeremiah who promises that it will ultimately come with the New Covenant (Jer 31:31–34).⁴⁸ Thus, the circumcision without hands is the new covenant fulfillment of an old covenant promise. Physical circumcision is a type that anticipates the circumcision of the heart.⁴⁹ As Beasley-Murray says, ‘The prophetic call for heart circumcision is a pictorial application of the rite, not an exposition of its meaning.’⁵⁰ This is ‘spiritual surgery performed on Christ’s followers at the time of their regeneration.’⁵¹ Exactly what is cut away will be seen in examining the next phrase.

Dunn suggests that the use of circumcision language here indicates that circumcision was a presenting threat in Colossae.⁵² Given what has been said regarding the *Sitz im Leben*, there are sufficient Jewish elements present in the ‘philosophy’ to suppose that circumcision could have played some part in the problems facing the Colossians. Even if there was no specific false teaching on circumcision, Paul could still be making a preemptive strike, given his teaching on the subject elsewhere (e.g., Gal 1:8–9; 5:12; 6:15).

3.2. What Is the ‘Body of Flesh’ (σώματος τῆς σαρκός—v. 11)?

What then does God cut away in this spiritual circumcision? The ‘body of flesh.’⁵³ There are three major options for the referent of this phrase. First, it could stand for the sinful nature,⁵⁴ which is how the TNIV renders it: ‘Your sinful nature was put off.’ ‘Flesh’ is frequently used in an ethical sense in Paul (Col 2:18; Rom 8:5–7; 13:14; Eph 2:3), and the ‘body of flesh’ would be equivalent to the ‘body of sin’ in Rom 6:6.⁵⁵ Second, Lohse suggests that the phrase refers to ‘the human body in its earthly frailty wherein it

⁴⁷ J. Gordon McConville, *Deuteronomy* (AOTC 5; Leicester: Apollos, 2002), 425. Thomson argues that the ‘circumcision of the heart’ in Deut 30:6 is a promise that ‘he will grant them what was previously not granted, namely the ability to obey him.’ Christopher James Thomson, ‘Optimism and Pessimism in Deuteronomy 29–32: An Examination of the Relationship in Deuteronomy 29–32 between Optimism and Pessimism Concerning Israel’s Ability to Obtain Life through Obedience to the Law’ (Short dissertation, Oak Hill Theological College, 2007), 21.

⁴⁸ Some may object that Jer 31 does not mention circumcision, but note the link between circumcision, Spirit, heart, and law in Jer 31:31–34; Rom 2:28–29; and Phil 3:3. For others who see a link between Deut 30:6 and Jer 31:31–34, see McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 427; Richard D. Nelson, *Deuteronomy* (OTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 349; Duane L. Christensen, *Deuteronomy 21:10–34:12* (WBC 6B; Nashville: Nelson, 2002), 740.

⁴⁹ Stephen J. Wellum, ‘Baptism and the Relationship between the Covenants,’ in *Believer’s Baptism: Sign of the New Covenant* (ed. Thomas R. Schreiner and Shawn D. Wright; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 158.

⁵⁰ Beasley-Murray, *Baptism*, 158.

⁵¹ Harris, *Colossians*, 116; See also James M. Hamilton, Jr. *God’s Indwelling Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Old and New Testaments* (NAC Studies in Bible and Theology; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 2.

⁵² Dunn, *Colossians*, 155.

⁵³ Σώματος should probably be taken as an objective genitive with τῆς σαρκός being an attributive genitive. R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistles to the Colossians, to the Thessalonians, to Timothy, to Titus and to Philemon* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1937), 104; Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 87.

⁵⁴ Moo, *Colossians*, 199; Barcellos, ‘Col 2:11–12,’ 9.

⁵⁵ Moo, *Colossians*, 200. I take Paul’s statement in Rom 6:6 to refer to inaugurated realities, not simply eschatological hope. Moo, *Romans*, 372–76; Schreiner, *Romans*, 316–17.

is subject to suffering, death, and dissolution.⁵⁶ The ‘body of flesh’ would be equivalent to the ‘body of death’ in Rom. 7:24.⁵⁷ The third interpretation views the phrase as referring to Christ’s physical body which was stripped off—a gruesome metaphor for his death.⁵⁸ O’Brien describes it as ‘not the stripping off of a small portion of flesh but the violent removal of the whole body in death.’⁵⁹ Frequently noted is the almost identical expression (ἐν τῷ σώματι τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ) in 1:22, which clearly refers to Christ’s physical body.⁶⁰

Two problems arise with this third interpretation. First, the absence of αὐτοῦ, unlike 1:22, suggests that the phrase more naturally refers to the body of Christians.⁶¹ O’Brien responds that the omission may be due to the close connection between believer and Christ or because the words ‘of Christ’ in the following phrase make it clear.⁶² Neither of these is persuasive. The union with Christ mentioned at the start of the verse and mention of Christ at the end hardly make it *clear* that we are talking about Christ’s death. Such a usage would be ambiguous and susceptible to misunderstanding. Second, it is alleged that taking the ‘body of flesh’ as referring to Christ’s physical body is ‘dangerously close to a kind of docetic idea in which Christ’s body is a negative encumbrance to be disposed of.’⁶³ To this accusation O’Brien responds that Paul could simply be underscoring that Christ’s death was gruesome and violent.⁶⁴ Perhaps so, but that raises the further question of why Paul would employ such a gruesome metaphor here. It appears nowhere else in the NT and does not fit the mood of the argument. The first view appears most likely, given the connection between trespass and spiritual deadness in 2:13, and the similar phrase employing the same verb in 3:9.⁶⁵ The ‘stripping off’ of the ‘body of flesh’ in the ‘circumcision made without hands’ refers to the putting off of the sinful nature as the ‘old man’ dies.⁶⁶

The preposition at the start of the phrase could be epexegetical, temporal, or instrumental, depending largely on how one understands the object. I take it to be epexegetical, further concretising the more abstract περιτομῆ ἀχειροποιήτω. The double preposition (ἀπό and ἐκ) on the front of ἀπεκδύσει has an

⁵⁶ Lohse, *Colossians*, 102. See also Eadie, *Colossians*, 146.

⁵⁷ As with Rom 6:6, I do not take this verse to be solely about future deliverance. As Schreiner (*Romans*, 391) says, ‘The genius of Paul’s eschatology is that the future has invaded the present.’

⁵⁸ O’Brien, *Colossians*, 116–17; Dunn, *Colossians*, 157–58; Beasley-Murray, *Baptism*, 152–53; Schreiner, ‘Baptism in the Epistles’, 76.

⁵⁹ O’Brien, *Colossians*, 117.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 116.

⁶¹ Moo, *Colossians*, 199.

⁶² O’Brien, *Colossians*, 117.

⁶³ Moo, *Colossians*, 199.

⁶⁴ O’Brien, *Colossians*, 117.

⁶⁵ Eduard Schweizer, ‘*sarx*’, in *TDNT* 7:136; Callow, *Semantic Structure*, 141.

⁶⁶ I take Paul’s references to stripping off the body of flesh, putting off the old self, and the death of the old self to refer to the same reality in Rom 6:6; Eph 4:22, Col 3:9; 2:13; and here in Col 2:11. All of these passages in their contexts speak of (1) a death or putting off on the one hand and (2) a putting on, new self, renewal, being made alive, or new life on the other. What is being spoken of here in Col 2:11–12 is the death, burial, and resurrection of the believer in Christ. For further exposition of these links, see Jung Hoon Kim, *The Significance of Clothing Imagery in the Pauline Corpus* (JSNTSup 268; London: T&T Clark, 2004), 159–70.

intensifying or perfective force,⁶⁷ demonstrating the totality of the spiritual transformation.⁶⁸ Again, the contrast to the physical rite, in which just a small piece of flesh is removed, is explicit.

3.3. What Is the ‘Circumcision of Christ’ (τῆ περιτομῇ τοῦ Χριστοῦ—v. 11)?

The issues addressed with the previous phrase go some way to outlining and answering the difficulties with this one. The way one interprets the phrase depends in large measure on the way one understands the genitive τοῦ Χριστοῦ. There are three main possibilities. First, it could be an objective genitive, speaking of Christ’s death under the metaphor of circumcision.⁶⁹ O’Brien notes this pattern found elsewhere in Paul, that Christ died, was buried, and was raised (1 Cor 15:3–4; Rom 6:3–4).⁷⁰ The problem is that Paul has been talking about what happened *in* and *to* the Colossians, not *for* them; what Christ did for them comes in 2:13b–14.⁷¹ Second, it may be a subjective genitive—a circumcision that Christ effects.⁷² The TNIV reads ‘circumcision performed by Christ’. Third, it may be a possessive genitive—Christ’s circumcision or Christian circumcision.⁷³ Barcellos contends ‘either of these last two options fits the context better than the first option.’⁷⁴ The third option does not preclude the second. It could belong to *and* be performed by Christ.⁷⁵ ‘It is Christ’s circumcision, as opposed to Moses’, the Fathers’, or anyone else’s. It is Christian or New Covenant circumcision because it is under the authority and administration of Christ.⁷⁶

It is this third option which appears the most natural and appropriate to the context. As Wright observes, ‘the context requires that Paul say something about what has happened to the Colossians in their becoming Christians.’⁷⁷ Perhaps, countering false teachers, the superiority of the one who performed their circumcision is stressed.⁷⁸

So far I have argued that the Colossians have received a ‘spiritual/‘Christian’ circumcision’, namely, the stripping away of their sinful nature/old man, which has been performed by Christ at the time of conversion. These first three questions have served to draw out the contrast drawn by Paul between physical, done-by-human-hands circumcision, which strips away a small piece of flesh and ‘belongs’ to

⁶⁷ Barcellos, ‘Col 2:11–12’, 8; Harris, *Colossians*, 101. BDAG 100b describes it as a ‘removal’ or ‘stripping away from’.

⁶⁸ Lightfoot, *Colossians*, 183.

⁶⁹ Dunn, *Colossians*, 158; O’Brien, *Colossians*, 11 7–18; Beasley-Murray, *Baptism*, 152; Schreiner, ‘Baptism in the Epistles’, 76.

⁷⁰ O’Brien, *Colossians*, 119.

⁷¹ Barcellos, ‘Col 2:11–12’, 10. Further, this interpretation does not fit easily with the conclusions drawn on the previous phrase (‘the stripping off of the body of flesh’). It is not impossible that our sinful nature is stripped off in Christ’s death. This indeed seems to be the force of the argument in Rom 6:2–6. However, ἐν τῇ περιτομῇ τοῦ Χριστοῦ as a stand-alone metaphor for Christ’s death would be even more ambiguous.

⁷² Lenski, *Colossians*, 105.

⁷³ See Harris, *Colossians*, 102; Moo, *Colossians*, 200; Wright, *Colossians*, 105; Barcellos, ‘Col 2:11–12’, 9–11.

⁷⁴ Barcellos, ‘Col 2:11–12’, 10.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.; Eadie, *Colossians*, 147.

⁷⁷ Wright, *Colossians*, 106.

⁷⁸ Callow, *Semantic Structure*, 141.

the Patriarchs, and the spiritual, not-done-by-human-hands circumcision, belonging to and performed by Christ, which strips away the entire ‘old man.’

Therefore, *if* there is a replacement-motif, it is between the physical, done-by-human-hands circumcision and the spiritual, performed-by-Christ circumcision. If Paul here is responding to specific false teaching, or even acting preemptively, the question he is asking is ‘Why would you need physical circumcision when you have been circumcised spiritually by Christ?’ Having noted Paul’s contrast between physical and spiritual circumcision, we move now to consider the ‘baptism’ of v. 12 and its relationship to the ‘circumcision.’

3.4. What Does Baptism Signify in Verse 12?

That baptism signifies a burial is made clear from the start of v. 12: συνταφέντες αὐτῷ ἐν τῷ βαπτισμῷ. But does baptism signify more than just burial? To answer that, we need to inquire about the antecedent of the relative pronoun (ἐν ᾧ) in v. 12. If the pronoun refers to baptism, then the ‘raising’ (συνηγέρθητε) is included. If, however, the relative pronoun goes back to Christ, as in v. 11, only the burial is connected to baptism. Dunn thinks it is the latter, that the pronoun refers back to Christ as ‘the fourth of the sequence of “in him, in whom” phrases around which this hymn-like snatch has been composed.’⁷⁹ There are, however, problems with this. First, it seems the obvious parallel to ἐν ᾧ . . . συνηγέρθητε is the immediately preceding συνταφέντες . . . ἐν τῷ βαπτισμῷ. Otherwise we may have expected ηγέρθητε instead of συνηγέρθητε.⁸⁰ Further, as Moo notes, it would be somewhat awkward to be ‘raised with him in him.’⁸¹ Finally, it seems more natural to see the καί as connecting συνηγέρθητε and συνταφέντες, rather than the further removed περιετμήθητε.⁸² Therefore the relative pronoun (ἐν ᾧ) in v. 12 refers to baptism, and thus baptism signifies both a ‘burial’ and a ‘resurrection.’ The use of the aorist tense for συνηγέρθητε, as with the previous verbs in vv. 11–12, highlights the present reality of the Colossians’ new life in Christ.

3.5. How Does the ‘Baptism’ (v. 12) Relate to the ‘Circumcision’ (v. 11)?

So how does Paul relate baptism, with its burial and resurrection, to the spiritual, performed-by-Christ circumcision in Col 2:11–12? Resolving this question depends upon the temporal relationship of the adverbial participle συνταφέντες to the main verb περιετμήθητε. Is the ‘burial’ antecedent, contemporaneous, or subsequent to the ‘circumcision’?

The antecedent option is unlikely as this would make the ‘circumcision’ dependent upon baptism and place the burial before the ‘stripping off.’⁸³

Barcellos favours the subsequent option: the old man was ‘stripped off’ before burial with Christ in baptism.⁸⁴ This retains the ‘death, burial, resurrection’ motif except the death in view here is of the old man, not Christ. While this view is attractive, it is not without significant problems. Anderson’s work on this particular participial construction demonstrates that the most significant deictic markers are genre

⁷⁹ Dunn, *Colossians*, 160.

⁸⁰ Harris, *Colossians*, 104; Beasley-Murray, *Baptism*, 154.

⁸¹ Moo, *Colossians*, 203.

⁸² Harris, *Colossians*, 104. See also Lightfoot, *Colossians*, 185; Moo, *Colossians*, 203.

⁸³ Harris, *Colossians*, 103.

⁸⁴ Barcellos, ‘Col 2:11–12’, 12.

and word order.⁸⁵ In the Pauline corpus, where an aorist participle follows an aorist main verb, as here, the participle is contemporaneous with the main verb in over 75% of occurrences, with only 1.9% being subsequent.⁸⁶ This strongly suggests that Barcellos' view, although possible, is unlikely, and that the best way to understand the participle in Col 2:12 is contemporaneous relative to the main verb.⁸⁷ Thus, the 'circumcision'/'stripping off' takes place contemporaneous to the 'burial' and 'resurrection'.⁸⁸

This raises the further question of manner of contemporaneity. Are the two events—burial (and resurrection) in baptism and 'circumcision'—synonymous or separate or does one happen within the sphere of the other? This may be represented diagrammatically as follows:

Figure 1. *Synonymous*

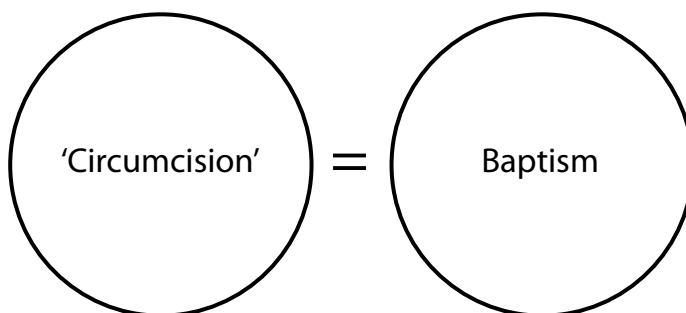
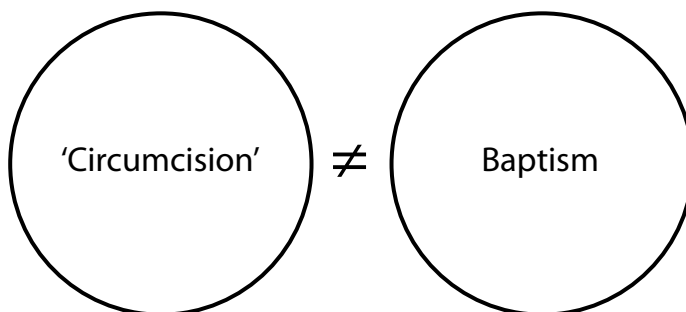


Figure 2. *Separate*

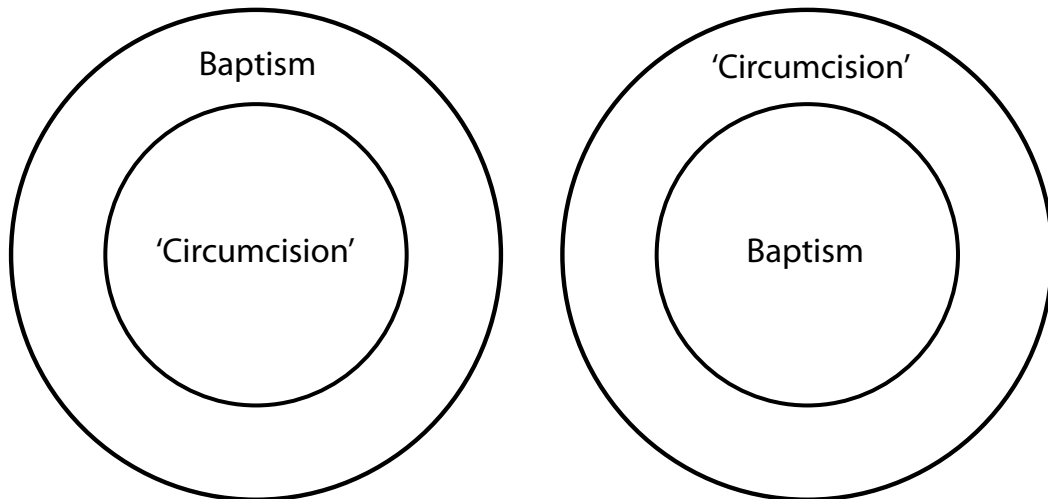


⁸⁵ See Charles A. Anderson, "Time, Time, Time. See What's Become of It": Factors on the Temporal Relation of Aorist Participles and Verbs in the New Testament' (paper presented at the annual meeting of the SBL; Washington, D.C., 19 November 2006), 3, 13.

⁸⁶ Anderson, 'Time, Time, Time', 13.

⁸⁷ Cf. Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 624. The word 'relative' is important here. Strictly speaking, since we are dealing with the aorist tense, we are viewing them as an undifferentiated whole (see Stanley E. Porter, *Verbal Aspect in the Greek of the New Testament, with Reference to Tense and Mood* [SBG 1; New York: Peter Lang, 1989], 98). Any time-reference is relative, not absolute. Therefore, to say the 'circumcision' occurs contemporaneously with the baptism is not to speak in terms of hours, seconds, or minutes, but rather that the events can be grouped into a contemporaneous complex of events in union with Christ. Moo (*Colossians*, 202) explains that Paul 'identifies baptism as the "place" where our spiritual circumcision takes place' (italics mine). There is a sense in which this union, death, burial, and resurrection is actually atemporal. See Moo's comments on Rom 6:5 (*Romans*, 371).

⁸⁸ Moo, *Colossians*, 201–2.

Figure 3. *Separate One in the Sphere of the Other*

The first option (fig. 1) seems difficult since the 'circumcision' is a stripping off whereas the baptism is a burial *and* resurrection. The second option (fig. 2) is possible but perhaps divides the complex of events too neatly. Baptism occurring within the sphere of circumcision (fig. 3) is also unlikely as the resurrection would have to occur within the sphere of the 'stripping off.' Circumcision within the sphere of baptism is the most favourable option, particularly given the close link between Col 2:11–12 and Rom 6:3–6.⁸⁹ In Rom 6:3–4, Paul includes death (as well as burial and resurrection) in his description of baptism. I have already argued that the 'stripping off' in Col 2:11 stands for the death of the old man. So Rom 6:3–4 refers to 'death-burial-resurrection,' whereas Col 2:11–12 refers to 'circumcision-burial-resurrection.'⁹⁰ Therefore it seems the 'circumcision' in Col 2:11 is parallel to the 'death' of Rom 6:3 and should be viewed as occurring within the sphere of baptism. The old man is crucified/stripped off with Christ, buried, and raised with him to newness of life.⁹¹ The 'circumcision-made-without-hands' is a *part* of what baptism signifies. Baptism, thus, includes the 'death' that is circumcision here, but signifies more, namely, burial and resurrection. While there is a connection, therefore, between *spiritual* circumcision and baptism, they do not signify precisely the same realities.

Scholarship is divided over whether the baptism referred to is physical or spiritual. As has already been argued, 'any attempt to distinguish between Spirit baptism and water baptism in the Pauline writings goes beyond what Paul himself wrote.'⁹² Moo also argues that by the mid-60s 'baptism' had become a 'technical expression for the Christian rite of initiation by water' and that this seems the most likely way the Colossians would have understood it.⁹³ Thus, Paul links the sign and the thing signified

⁸⁹ See Beasley-Murray, *Baptism*, 152.

⁹⁰ Paul's polemical purpose may explain why he here uses the terminology of circumcision rather than death.

⁹¹ In Rom 6:5, resurrection is connected to the future verb ἐσοµεθα. Given that Col 2:12 speaks of resurrection in the aorist, I take Rom 6:5 to allude both to the physical future resurrection and the realized spiritual resurrection of believers (cf. Rom 6:11). Eduard Schweizer, 'Dying and Rising With Christ,' *NTS* 14 (1967–68): 3; See also Moo, *Romans*, 371; Wright, *Romans*, 538.

⁹² Cross, 'Spirit- and Water-Baptism,' 120–48.

⁹³ Moo, *Romans*, 359.

closely together. The NT connects faith, repentance, the gift of the Spirit, and baptism closely together, implying the presence of all of them in each instance.⁹⁴ Such is the functional unity in Paul between these things that it is difficult to see how one could occur without the presence of the others.

3.6. Summary

In summary, Paul's aim in this wider passage (vv. 8–15) is to give assurance to his readers of the 'fullness' they have received in Christ so that they will not be taken captive by the hollow and deceptive philosophy. Verses 11–12 explain how the fullness of v. 10 comes about. They have been circumcised with a circumcision not done by human hands, consisting in the stripping off of the old man, performed by and belonging to Christ. All this stands in stark contrast to the physical rite which was perhaps being imposed by the false teachers. This 'Christ-circumcision' is a *part* of the death-burial-resurrection that baptism signifies. Given the link with Rom 6:3–6, baptism (both water- and Spirit-baptism) is the sphere in which 'spiritual circumcision' occurs, yet they do not signify precisely the same realities. Baptism incorporates the believer, by faith, into the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. *If* there is a replacement motif present in these verses, it is the replacement of physical circumcision by spiritual circumcision rendering the former unnecessary.⁹⁵ In the sphere of baptism, the spiritual fulfillment of the physical rite is effected.

4. Conclusion

We began by noting the frequent appeal made by paedobaptists to Col 2:11–12 to demonstrate that baptism replaces circumcision, signifying the same spiritual realities. This article demonstrates that to be an illegitimate interpretation of the text.⁹⁶

First, a consideration of the *Sitz im Leben* suggests the presence of Jewish elements in the false teaching and that the polemical core (2:8–23) addresses some of those issues. Therefore, mention of circumcision in Col 2 is primarily polemical not sacramental.

Second, an examination of Paul's theology of baptism and circumcision demonstrates that there is a disjunction between physical and spiritual circumcision. It is the latter which is referred to in Col 2 and which Paul relates to baptism.

Third, the exegesis shows that spiritual circumcision and baptism do not signify precisely the same realities.⁹⁷ Baptism includes spiritual circumcision but also signifies more, namely, burial and resurrection.

⁹⁴ Moo, *Colossians*, 202.

⁹⁵ It is interesting to observe that Paul nowhere employs the 'baptism is the replacement for circumcision' argument in his confrontation of Judaizers. If this were the case, then in Acts 15 or Galatians, for example, it would have been simpler for Paul to refute his opponents by appealing to baptism as the replacement for circumcision. The fact he does not should make us question the connection often made by paedobaptists. See Dunn, *Theology of the Apostle Paul*, 454–55.

⁹⁶ This paper has not attempted to tackle paedobaptism in its entirety. Its aim and thesis is simply to demonstrate that paedobaptists illegitimately use Col 2:11–12 to prove that baptism replaces circumcision and signifies the same realities.

⁹⁷ *Contra Calvin, Institutes* 4.16.11 (Battles 2:1333).

Three conclusions may be drawn from this. First, paedobaptists should not appeal to this passage as evidence of baptism replacing circumcision, signifying the same realities. The replacement and fulfillment of circumcision is *spiritual* circumcision. Baptism is the sphere in which this occurs.

Second and connected to this, baptism and spiritual circumcision are connected with spiritual cleansing and new life. In this respect they are unlike physical circumcision, which is sharply distinguished from spiritual circumcision and its concomitant realities. Paedobaptists have blurred the distinction between the physical and spiritual that Paul sees so clearly.

Third, both sides of the debate would do well to approach these verses with caution, appreciating that they are concerned primarily with addressing false teaching, not with providing the church with a theology of baptism.

PASTORAL PENSÉES

The Church: A Hidden Glory (1 Timothy 3:14–16)¹

— Bill Kynes —

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1. Introduction

I didn't come from an Evangelical home, and though he never told me outright, I'm sure my father never wanted me to become a pastor. I can't blame him—not one bit.

My father was a corporate attorney who traveled in circles of power and influence. He had been involved in politics and was friends with senators and governors. He was engaged in the world of big business with its fancy board rooms and corporate jets. He had lunch with university presidents and high-priced lawyers. I had the impression that he thought the church may have been fine for children and old ladies; it may have been a place to get married or get buried; but it never seemed to connect with real life—at least not with the areas of life that mattered. After all, the only time a church ever made the newspapers was when a pastor embezzled money or sexually abused children. The pastors he knew seemed to have been the milquetoast variety who knew how to handle themselves at afternoon teas and who delivered rather tepid moralistic messages about how the world would be a much better place if we all just tried a little harder to get along. I think my father wanted more for his son than that—and I respected him for it.

I became a Christian through Young Life in high school. My father didn't understand what was happening when I went off to college and got very involved in a church. I could sense his confusion when I began to talk about being a pastor. My older brother was also a lawyer, so my dad joked about me balancing the honor of the family name, but I don't think he meant it. He didn't mind my studying theology in Oxford, but he was baffled with my decision to pass on Harvard or Yale and instead attend a place called Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. He'd never heard of it. And when I went to pastor a church in Virginia—a church of about a hundred at the time, meeting in a rather modest upstairs fellowship hall—I assume he thought it was OK for starters. Surely, I could move up in time. There are big, powerful, and impressive churches, but this wasn't one of them—and twenty-two years later, it still isn't. I could see how it was a disappointment for a father with high aspirations for his son.

¹ This talk was originally presented at the annual Pastors' Colloquium of The Gospel Coalition in Deerfield, IL, on May 28, 2008.

1.1. The Church: A Lowly Cinderella

It's true: the church, which once held a prominent position in the social makeup of American society, no longer receives much respect. About fifteen years ago, a reporter in our local paper, *The Washington Post*, described Evangelical Christians in America as “largely poor, uneducated and easy to command.”² There was an uproar about that comment, but its accuracy didn't matter much because it captured a real perception. This is how the church, particularly the Evangelical church, is viewed by many on the outside. It's not much to look at, not something that successful people, thinking people, really need to consider.

Though Michael Lindsay's recent book, *Faith in the Halls of Power: How Evangelicals Joined the American Elite*,³ suggests some change, one can still say that where once the church occupied a privileged place in the American public square, both literally and figuratively, now the secular gatekeepers of our culture—the journalists, political pundits, academic leaders, and even some county zoning boards—are no longer quite sure where churches fit in the American landscape.

Unfortunately, this low view of the church is not only a prevailing opinion of society at large; it is found even among many Christians. “I can be a Christian without going to church, can't I?” And even many who do “go to church”—an expression I hesitate even to use—are often very tentative and tepid in their commitment. In our consumer culture, they go when it's convenient, or they go when it meets their needs. We have a whole culture of “Lone Ranger” Christians who keep a safe distance from any of the complicated connections created by a church community.

Who needs a church? George Barna's book *Revolution* raises that very question.⁴ And it's a question that is very relevant to a passage we consider briefly—1 Timothy 3:14–16. For Paul, this community of Christians that we call a church was more than just a convenient spiritual support group. It was more than a social club meant to lessen our loneliness. The church, in Paul's view, was central to the purposes of God in the world.

1.2. The Church's Hidden Glory

Paul, writing to Timothy, says this: “Although I hope to come to you soon, I am writing you these instructions so that, if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:14–15).⁵ The conduct that Paul is calling for from the Christians in Ephesus is based on who they are, and three descriptions of their identity are embedded in these two verses.

2. The Church as the Family of God

First, Paul says that these Christians must know how people ought to conduct themselves, literally, “in God's house.” By this phrase we know Paul is not talking about a building, some sacred space that

² Kevin Merida and Helen Dewar, “In Boom of Phone and Fax Activism, Citizens Give Government an Earful,” *The Washington Post* (February 1, 1993): A1.

³ D. Michael Lindsay, *Faith in the Halls of Power: How Evangelicals Joined the American Elite* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

⁴ George Barna, *Revolution* (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 2006).

⁵ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture is Scripture taken from Holy Bible, New International Version®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House.

demands a certain solemn decorum. He is referring to the community of people who constitute the church. They are God's house; they are God's family.

Family language is prominent in this letter. Already in 3:4 Paul has said of elders that they must manage their own households well, for how else could they manage the household of God? In 5:1–2, Paul urges Timothy to treat other Christians in Ephesus as members of a family: “Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as if he were your father. Treat younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity.” Paul talks about the church bearing the family responsibility of caring for widows in those cases where those widows have no physical family to support them (1 Tim. 5:4). The picture of the church that Paul presents here is that of a family.

2.1. Family Leadership

Several implications flow from this understanding of a church. First, it matters in the way we structure the leadership of a church, reflecting something of the structure Paul outlines for the home in other places (cf. esp. Eph 5:22–6:4). In our church we speak of the elders as having a fatherly role with the primary leadership function. We have recently instituted a distinctly motherly role in our church consisting of a team of five mature godly women, appointed by the elders, to assist the elders in their pastoral care of women. We call it the Titus Two Team. This has worked very well, and it reinforces this model of the church as a family with significant and distinctive roles for husbands and wives, fathers and mothers.

2.2. Family Relationships

The model of a family is reflected not only in structures of leadership, but also in the way members of the church are to relate to one another. You can choose your friends, but you are stuck with your family. The question is not “Do we like one another?” but “Will we love one another?” This is not a consumer choice, but a divine mandate. Christians are to exhibit a kinship affinity, a blood relationship, through their common participation in the saving blood of Christ.

2.3. Family Diversity

This model of the church also suggests the nature of the church's composition. It is to reflect a generational diversity as much as possible. A family has young and old: it has children, grandparents, aunts, and uncles of all ages—all of whom contribute to the makeup of that extended family. The church becomes that village, that moral community, that helps to shape our lives and the lives of our children. So in our church we work to hold young and old together as best we can. That's a great challenge in this culture, but it's a biblical imperative if we understand what the church should be.

2.4. Family Purpose

The church is God's household, God's family, and unlike a business enterprise or even a parachurch organization, the success of a family can't be measured by numbers on a spreadsheet. A family is a place of refuge, encouragement, and discipline. It is a place of education and instruction and nurture. It is a web of loving relationships, working themselves out as together we grow up and mature, becoming more like God our Father and Jesus Christ our elder Brother. It is out of this family that we live out our various vocations in the world.

A family may also have a mission, but again, unlike a business, it can't exclude those who can't do much to contribute to that mission. A family forms a home, and as Robert Frost once described it, "Home is a place where, when you have to go there, They have to take you in."⁶ That's not true of parachurch organizations, which is why they sometimes make the church look sadly inefficient in comparison! But efficiency is not the church's highest value. You're not valued in the church by how much you can contribute to the mission, but by how much you are loved by our heavenly Father. An underachieving child isn't kicked out of the family. In fact, sometimes a troubled or unhealthy child—the child who "produces" very little—is the one who receives the most love and attention. That's why a healthy church often attracts a lot of unhealthy people—odd people, socially awkward people, needy people. The church is one of the few places where those people will be taken in and find the acceptance and love that reflect God's love and acceptance in the gospel.

2.5. Homeless Christians?

So people who say "I can be a Christian without being a part of a church" are missing the whole point. You might as well say I can be born without being a part of a family. That may be true, but who would want to? Being a part of a local church is part of what it means to be a Christian. Like marriage, living as a Christian is something that can't be done alone. For the church is the family, the household, of God. In our postmodern culture, with its tremendous sense of homelessness, both socially and cosmically, I can think of no more powerful attraction than to find one's home in the family of God.

3. The Church As the Gathered People of God

The Apostle also speaks of the Christians in Ephesus as "God's household, which is the church of the living God." They are the church of the *living* God, not the Dead Poets Society. Our God is very much alive. He is at work among his people, and that living divine presence distinguishes a church from every other human assembly. Without that presence a church is nothing but a self-help group, a mere social club.

The presence of God among his people is perhaps the central covenant promise of the Bible: "I will live with them and walk among them," the Lord says, "and I will be their God, and they will be my people." In the NT, that promise takes a special form when Jesus says, "For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them" (Matt 18:20). In Christ, Paul says, we "are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit" (Eph 2:22).

What an incredible thought that is: if you want to find God in the world today, the Bible says you need to look not in the chambers of Congress or in the lecture halls of Harvard or in the mansions of Hollywood. If you want to find God in the world today, the Bible says you are to look in an ordinary gathering of Christian believers in a local church, which is the gathered people of the living God.

4. The Church As the Pillar and Protector of Truth

Finally, Paul describes the believers in Ephesus as "the pillar and foundation of the truth." At first sight it seems odd for Paul to say that the church is what holds up and protects the truth. In Eph 2:20,

⁶ From *The Death of the Hired Man*. That poem continues: "I should have called it / Something you somehow haven't to deserve."

Paul says that the truth is the foundation of the church. In relation to the church's source, its life, and its health, the church must be built on the truth of the gospel. There can be no other foundation. But in relation to the church's mission to commend the gospel to the world, the church itself upholds and protects the truth.

But isn't it the job of the seminary to protect the truth? Don't we look to the biblical scholars and theologians at places like Trinity Evangelical Divinity School to guide us theologically so that we do not fall into error? Well, yes, but there are lots of seminaries that teach theological rubbish. How can Trinity be protected from that? It still comes back to the church. With no connection with and dependence on local churches, with no accountability to the faith of the people of God in the churches, how many academic institutions have gone off on their own into all sorts of theological detours and dead ends?

But isn't it the job of the pastor to be the pillar and protector of the truth? Well, yes, but churches, especially in our Free Church tradition, have a great deal to say about the kind of pastor they call. Again, ultimately, it is the role of the church to be the pillar and protector of the truth.

4.1. A Truth That Must Be Lived

The truth that must be protected is not just what is taught, but also what is lived. In our postmodern world in which people are so skeptical about even the very notion of truth and are very wary of rational arguments in support of truth, it is increasingly the case that the truth that we proclaim in Christ must be seen and experienced if it is to be believed. It is in the context of the life of the church that we are to display this wonderful truth of God's love and grace in Jesus Christ and say, "Come, taste and see that the Lord is good."

This is why Paul is so concerned about how believers in the church behave. Our lives are a part of the message of the truth that we are called to proclaim to the world. If our lives are no different from those around us, if the gospel has no impact on the way we relate to one another—on the way we handle our money, on the way we go about our work, on the way we approach trials, or even the way we approach death, then why should anyone believe what we have to say?

That new humanity in Christ which God is creating through the gospel is itself to be embodied and displayed to the world through the church. The church is the firstfruits of what is to come. In the words of John Howard Yoder, "The church does communicate to the world what God plans to do, because it shows that God is beginning to do it."⁷ The church is missional in its very being, for its very existence is a demonstration of the gospel it proclaims. The medium is indeed an essential part of the message. The church is to be a living witness to that good news of God's work in the world. It is to be the pillar and protector of the truth.

4.2. The Mystery of Godliness

The church as the household of God, as the gathered people of the living God, as the pillar and protector of the truth—is that what the world sees when it looks at your church or my church? Isn't this a bit romantic and idealistic? Paul addresses just that question in what follows.

"Beyond all question, the mystery of godliness is great: He appeared in a body, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory" (1 Tim 3:16). This mystery of godliness is the story of Jesus Christ, who came into this

⁷ John Howard Yoder, *The Royal Priesthood: Essays Ecclesiastical and Ecumenical* (ed. Michael G. Cartwright; Scottdale, Pennsylvania: Herald, 1998), 126.

world as a baby in a manger. He lived like one of us and died the shameful death of a criminal, yet he was vindicated by the Spirit when he was raised from the grave on Easter day. He was seen by those in the angelic realm, but not by all here on earth. His story still had to be preached to the world; it still had to be believed. It is only then that he will be given the glory that belongs to him.

It is a mystery, not in the sense that no one understands it, but that no one could understand it if God had not now made it known. Jesus came to bring the kingdom of God, and he did—but not in power and glory. He brought the kingdom into the world silently, mysteriously—like a tiny mustard seed you plant in the ground, like a little yeast that you put in a lump of dough. It does its work without fanfare and is seen only with the eyes of faith.

The presence of that kingdom is now embodied in a peculiar people whom Jesus calls his body, the church. This is a profound and wonderful mystery, and it is the same mystery that was revealed in Jesus himself. It is the mysterious pattern of lowliness and humility in this world—a true identity hidden and disguised, seen only by those who have eyes to see. Only later will it be vindicated before the world. Like Master, like disciples.

I think of the statement by Dorothy Sayers: God underwent three great humiliations in his efforts to rescue the human race. The first was the incarnation, when he took on the confines of a human body. The second was the Cross, when he suffered the ignominy of public execution. The third humiliation is the church. In an awesome act of self-denial, God entrusted his reputation to ordinary people.

God entrusted his honor to people, Paul says, who were not wise by human standards, or influential or of noble birth (1 Cor 1:26). He might have said, “to people who are largely poor, uneducated and easily led.” This is not what anyone would expect the kingdom of God to look like. It is the mystery of the church: God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him (1 Cor 1:27–29).

Who would have thought, looking at her scrubbing the floors, that Cinderella would have been the star of the ball? But that’s who we are. We as the church of Christ are like Cinderella—chosen by God in his grace to share in the very glory and splendor of Jesus Christ our Lord.

The church is the centerpiece of God’s purposes for humanity. Paul says that it was God’s intent that “now through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Eph 3:10–11).

That is what the whole Bible is about, isn’t it? God’s purpose is to undo the sin of Adam, to reclaim fallen men and women for his kingdom, to create a new society, a new humanity. The church is to be that new humanity-in-the-making, a new community in which the rule of God’s kingdom is confessed and lived out in the world.

Is that hard to believe? It is when I look at my church, full of very ordinary people and full of all the failures to which ordinary people are prone. It is hardly a group of people that are going to change the world. Could that possibly be what Paul the Apostle is talking about? But just think how hard it was to believe that a carpenter’s son from the small backwoods town of Nazareth who was crucified as a criminal by the Roman governor was the Son of God and Savior of the world. It is a mystery—a mystery grasped only by faith.

4.3. Ambassadors of a Disputed King

As pastors there is much to discourage us. We can feel insignificant compared to the powerful and influential people of our age. We are engaged in what has been called a “perplexed profession” in our modern world, and many are seeking to make it more professional as a result. It is tempting to seek the recognition and validation of the culture around us.

Richard Neuhaus compares our present situation to that of being the ambassadors of a disputed king.⁸ Compared with other members of the diplomatic corps at the courts of the world, an ambassador for Christ is in an awkward position. Most ambassadors bear the authority of and are legitimated by the sovereignties that they represent. But the sovereignty of the one we claim to represent is itself in question. The claim is under the shadow of a history shadowed by powerful evidence against his sovereignty. The shadow will not be dispelled, the question will not be answered, until he returns in glory.

The temptation, Neuhaus suggests, is one of relieving the awkwardness of our position by accepting a lesser authority from another kingdom. In other words, we are tempted to play by their rules. We are tempted to use some power of this age—the power of money, academic reputation, political clout, or something else—to make the other members at the world’s court listen to us. But that is just what we must not do, for until he comes, our King is enthroned upon a cross; and he has called us to claim no authority but that of his sovereign, suffering love for the world. We are called to hold on to that mystery of faith.

5. Conclusion

Being a pastor is not easy, but this is what encourages me. This is what sustains me. This is what makes me think that I could be doing nothing more significant with my life in all the world than this: serving as a pastor in a local church. As we look at the very ordinary local churches we serve, may we see the church as Paul saw it: the family of God, the gathered people of the living God, the pillar and protector of the truth, manifesting to the powers of the invisible realm the manifold wisdom of the mysterious purposes of God for his own glory.

⁸ Richard John Neuhaus, *Freedom for Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 69–71.

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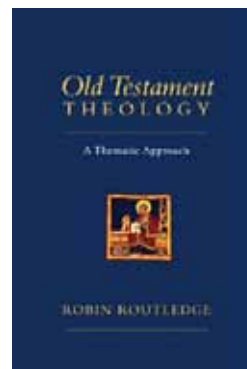
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— OLD TESTAMENT —

Robin Routledge. *Old Testament Theology: A Thematic Approach*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2009. 384 pp. \$32.00.

In *Old Testament Theology: A Thematic Approach*, Robin Routledge, a senior lecturer in Old Testament at Mattersey Hall in England, gives a comprehensive overview of OT theology by presenting central issues and themes, a goal that is probably related to his doctoral studies at Sheffield University on the purpose of God in the OT. Embarking on the study of biblical theology, Routledge seeks to make the enormous task of OT theology accessible to both pastors and beginning students. In ten chapters, Routledge tackles the OT from the perspective of its most significant theological theme, namely, God, giving full attention to God's dealings with other 'gods', his creation, his people, future, and the nations.



In the preface to the book, Routledge unfolds his own perspective on studying OT theology. Acknowledging the existence and usefulness of many other OT theologies appearing on the shelf, Routledge seeks to provide the reader with an informative outline of the discipline for the benefit of those beginning the task of studying the OT. Routledge says that his goal is “to look at the theological significance of the text within its canonical context, noting unity and coherence within the OT (and to some extent between the OT and the NT), while being aware of diversity” (p. 9). The book is a result of many years of teaching Scripture and pastoral ministry, featured by an unambiguous Christian perspective and evangelical perception of the OT.

Routledge covers a wide array of subjects and topics in this thematic approach to OT theology. This introductory book deals with issues that are common to most works of theology such as God's faithfulness, covenants, and punishment, but it also deals with ethics, morality, and law. Insofar as the approach keeps Christ in view as it goes about dealing with the OT, Routledge does understand, and he informs the reader regularly that the scriptures of Israel find their ultimate fulfillment in Christ. In the first chapter, Routledge surveys a plethora of methodologies starting from John Cassian in antiquity to Brueggemann and Goldingay in contemporary scholarship, and he outlines four stages in the interpretative process: exegesis, biblical theology, dogmatics, and homiletics. Indeed, he argues in favor of a balance between the historical critical method and the canonical method.

Discussing the core of OT theology, the doctrine of God, an important discussion about the divine names and the origins of monotheism precedes his talk on God's nature and being. The nature of God is personal and spiritual, whereas holiness, righteousness, love, faithfulness, and wrath describe God's very being. A section on the Spirit of God and what Routledge calls “other supernatural beings” (demons, angels, sons of God, Satan, etc.) conclude this chapter. In chapter 3 on God and creation, the story of creation is told in comparison with ANE counterparts. It is a theological interpretation of divine reality, and it unfolds God's transcendence, immanence, authority, and redemption. The relationship between God and his people is determined by the terms of election and covenant (chap. 4). Next (chap. 5), Routledge offers a discussions on the place of worship, cult, religious festivals, sacrifices, prayer, music, and singing. The prophetic material and the wisdom literature are covered under the topic “receiving divine instruction” (chap. 6). The following chapter (chap. 7) deals with kingship in Israel. The ruler is meant to represent God in Israel by administering true justice, but also expected to lead the people

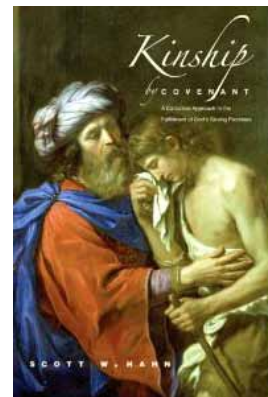
in worship. Chapter 8 addresses the issue of ethics and ethical questions under the topic “God and his people.” Chapter 9, God and the future, presents hope as a theological concept whereby the future is envisaged by three key concepts: the Lord’s day, God’s battle with the chaotic powers, and Zion or Zion tradition(s) found in prophetic literature and elsewhere. The reader will also find other lengthy discussions on eschatological issues such as Messiah, Sheol, death, and resurrection. The last chapter (chap. 10) concludes the book by recalling an early theme: God’s dealings with the nations. Since the Gentiles were part of God’s dealings with Israel right from the outset of biblical history, it is natural that the OT is rightly considered the heritage of Christian as well. The book ends with selected and supplementary bibliographies and indexes of Scripture references, names, and subjects.

Routledge takes great pains to extensively annotate, footnote, and provide bibliographical information. The footnotes supplement quite well the ongoing discussion of the material under examination, and the author offers suggestions for further reading and research. Another positive note is that the book is not overly technical (no knowledge of biblical languages is assumed). Some readers may be surprised by the author’s affinity with ANE practices when he compares them with those found in the OT. Given the main thrust of the work, one might be disappointed that the discussion of revelation lacks depth. The theme of revelation is mentioned only by passing. However, the book’s many strengths outweigh its weaknesses. Robin Routledge has written a valuable and readable guide to the OT theology that will serve many pastors and non-specialists. It will be useful in preaching and teaching in academic and non-academic settings. I assume that this introduction will be warmly welcomed by biblical scholars, undergrad students, and all whose minds are open to learn more about God and his ways as revealed in the Bible.

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Scott W. Hahn. *Kinship by Covenant: A Canonical Approach to the Fulfillment of God’s Saving Promises*. Anchor Yale Bible Reference Library. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009. xiv + 589 pp. \$50.00.

Scott Hahn’s *Kinship by Covenant* is a rewritten version of his dissertation and through an interpretation of the OT covenants seeks to provide a “covenantal interpretation of the Christ event as it is presented in Luke 22, Galatians 3–4, and Hebrews 1–9, the three loci of the New Testament that correlate the terminology of kinship with that of covenant” (p. 22). It is the hope that this covenantal framework will throw into relief many of the exegetical moves of the NT authors. Hahn argues that biblical covenants function to extend the bonds of kinship. In particular, covenants extend kinship by placing the chosen people into a father-child relationship with God. Hahn’s work is at home with traditional historical criticism, though he instead chooses to employ narrative analysis and canonical criticism. That is, Hahn looks to the narrative itself to understand the differences between covenants and interprets each text in light of the entire canon.



In chapters 2–4, Hahn examines the three covenant forms found in the OT: the kinship, the treaty-type, and the grant-type. A kinship covenant binds two parties together in a mutual relationship with divine sanction. This type of covenant may be used to reinforce prior familial bonds or to draw hostile

parties into a familial relationship. This covenant has the features of an oath, a shared meal, sacrifice, and concepts denoting mutual affiliation. The Sinai covenant is kinship in form due to the presence of most of these features. The treaty-type covenant is imposed by a suzerain on a vassal. Often this covenant is marked by the vassal's swearing an oath that consists in the promise of loyalty under threat of divine judgment (cf. Deut 29). The most prominent example is Deuteronomy's reconfiguration of the Sinai covenant, which is the result of God's punitive discipline of Israel. There is a stronger sense of distance between the parties and a threat of curse should Israel break the covenant, though Israel remains God's son. With the third covenant, the grant-type, the vassal is rewarded for its loyalty by the suzerain with a grant. A good example is the grant made to Noah. The covenant is the result of Noah's loyalty and is based on God's promise of unconditional blessings.

In chapter 5, Hahn argues that while there is only one covenant with Abraham, this covenantal relationship between God and Abraham undergoes expansion and reconfiguration in Gen 15, 17, and 22. Each chapter expands on one of the promises made to Abraham from Gen 12:1–4: nationhood (Gen 15), a great name (Gen 17), and blessing for all nations (Gen 22). Hahn shows that these three covenant-making episodes correspond to the three essential covenants in Israel's history: Sinai, the Deuteronomic covenant, and the Davidic covenant. To take just one example, there are strong similarities between Gen 22 and the Davidic covenant. Both events occur at the same place: Zion. The promises made to Abraham during the Aqedah are fulfilled through David's dynasty (Gen 22:15–18; 1 Kgs 4:20–34). Hahn argues that the climax of the Abrahamic covenant is the Aqedah, where God awards Abraham a grant by making an oath to bless the nations through his offspring.

In chapter 6, Hahn demonstrates that a pre-Levitical form of priestly activity was invested in the firstborn son. Thus, it is Israel's collective priestly status that is emphasized when it is referred to as God's firstborn son (Exod 4:22), and it is the Sinai covenant which marks Israel out as God's "kingdom of priests" (Exod 19:6). At Sinai Israel is given the priestly task of mediating God's blessings to the nations. Exodus 19–24 is clear, however, that this covenant is conditional upon Israel's obedience. Thus, when Israel commits apostasy with the golden calf, the covenant must be reconfigured. Israel's idolatry results in the forfeiture of her priestly firstborn prerogatives to the Levitical priests. Hahn shows how sin disrupts the order of the family and how, therefore, Israel's covenants are often in need of renewal. The Levitical code is, thus, added as a result of sins, as the cultic legislation reflects penitential and restorative purposes for Israel.

In chapter 7, Hahn notes that the Davidic covenant contains the main features of a grant-type covenant: a divine oath, the promise of blessings for the dynasty, the extension of the blessings to future generations, and an emphasis on David's loyalty. The content of God's blessings to David is threefold: an everlasting dynasty (2 Sam 7:12), a temple in Zion (7:13), and familial privileges between God and the Davidic dynasty (7:14). This last blessing is unique in that divine sonship is applied to a single individual (e.g., Ps 2:7; 89:26). Critical for the NT is the description of the Davidic covenant as the renewal of God's promise to Abraham to bless not only Israel but the entire world (2 Sam 7:18–29).

In chapters 8–10, Hahn turns to explore how the NT reconfigures and develops Israel's covenants. Luke, for example, identifies the restoration and fulfillment of the Davidic covenant with Christ (e.g., Luke 1:32–35), who bestows the covenant upon his apostles. Hahn argues that the institution narrative presents the apostles as the Messiah's co-regents of the Davidic kingdom (Luke 22:14–30). The language of kingdom, royal echoes in the context (e.g., Luke 19:11–40), the sharing of a meal, the reference to a new covenant, and the father-son language indicate that Jesus is renewing the Davidic covenant and

conferring it to his disciples. Hahn shows how the beginning of Acts demonstrates that the apostles are the heirs of this covenant.

In chapter 9, Hahn turns to Galatians and argues that the covenant Paul refers to in Gal 3:15–17 is the covenant God made with Abraham at the Aqedah, as this is the only covenant God made with Abraham to bless the nations. Paul's claim that those who place themselves under the law are under a curse should be understood covenantally, for the specific reference is to the broken and self-retiring covenant of Deuteronomy (Gal 3:10–14). Thus, when Paul quotes Lev 18:5 in Gal 3:12, he presupposes that Israel has already failed to keep the covenant and has inherited its curses. This covenant was penitential and temporary from the beginning and was intended to be in place only until the coming of "the seed" that God promised Abraham in Gen 22:18. Paul's argumentative strategy throughout Gal 3:6–4:31 is to prove that the coming of the "seed" promised to Abraham takes priority in every instance over the Mosaic law.

Finally, in chapter 10, Hahn examines covenant in Heb 1–9. He argues that the emphasis on Christ as God's firstborn son, king, and high priest represents the restoration of the pre-Levitical form of priesthood that was lost due to Israel's apostasy. Second, Hebrews has a complex understanding of the covenants in that figures from Israel's history participate proleptically in the new covenant, and persons under the new age can, through apostasy, return to the old covenant curses. Third, Christ enters into solidarity with Israel and, through his sacrifice, releases humanity from the covenant curses and establishes a new covenant.

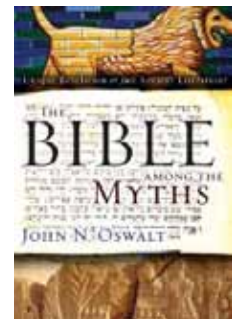
Hahn's *Kinship by Covenant* is meticulously researched, comprehensive in scope, clear in its prose, and one of the best works I have encountered on the theme of covenant. He establishes his thesis throughout both testaments, namely, that covenant is derivative of kinship. His canonical approach to covenants demonstrates how the concept of covenant unifies the biblical witness without denying the diversity of the texts. Hahn is successful in demonstrating how an examination of the OT covenants lends clarity to much of what one finds in the NT. Particularly fruitful and worthy of attention by Pauline scholars is his treatment of Gal 3:6–18. My only disappointment is with Hahn's treatment of Hebrews; it feels a little rushed and lacks some of the depth that characterizes the rest of the book. Nevertheless, this book will be the first work I turn to when studying the covenants.

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John N. Oswalt. *The Bible among the Myths*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009. 204 pp. \$17.99.

Since the nineteenth century, the comparison between the biblical texts and the documents from the Ancient Near East (ANE) has been one of the most prolific areas of research in exegesis. The recently-published *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009) will again help readers to benefit from the results of comparative studies.

However, something essential has changed during the last fifty years, claims John Oswalt in *The Bible Among the Myths*. While scholars like G. Ernest Wright noticed numerous similarities between Israelite and ANE texts, they considered the



differences as fundamental. Today, it is common to argue that the religion of the Israelites was to a large extent similar to the practices of their neighbors, and authors like Mark Smith see biblical thought as the product of an evolutionary process from the Canaanite religion.

In this book Oswalt tries to assess this new situation in two steps. In the first part, he has a close look at the connections between the Bible and the ANE myths. Reviewing the possible definitions of “myth,” he concludes that it is “a form of expression, whether literary or oral, whereby the continuities among the human, natural, and divine realms are expressed and actualized” (pp. 45–46). He then devotes two chapters to exploring the basis of mythical and biblical ways of thought: “continuity” and transcendence. For example, in the myths the overlapping of divine, natural, and human worlds results in a blurring of all the boundaries. This is why a god can also be a bull or why humans can influence gods and natural forces through magic. Various characteristics of the myths are easily explained in this context. For example, the diversity of the natural forces implies polytheism, and the projection of human realities on the divine realm results in a low view of the gods. On the contrary, transcendence involves monotheism, a high view of God, etc. Finally, Oswalt reviews the resemblances between the Bible and ANE texts, whether they rest on a similarity in practice (e.g., sacrifices), of expression (e.g., “Leviathan”) or in thought patterns (e.g., Gen 1 and *Enuma Elish*). He shows that they are in no way fundamental and far less important than the essential opposition of continuity and transcendence.

In the second part of his work, Oswalt deals with the question of whether the Bible accounts can be considered as history writing. As with the myths, in chapter 6 he first gives a definition of history: a narrative intended for human knowledge of a series of events involving human beings acting in time and space, trying to be accurate and complete, and providing an evaluation of the relative importance of the events. Then he demonstrates that there is no such thing in the ANE (although some categories of texts provide historical data) and that the underlying reason is the principle of continuity. Conversely, the transcendence of God creates an interest in the way he intervenes in the experience of Israel and consequently in writing history. Chapters 7 and 8 answer two important questions: (1) Given the differences between the biblical accounts and modern historical works, is it really fair to call the former “history”? (2) Does it matter whether these accounts are historical? Regarding the first question, Oswalt dialogues with authors like G. von Rad and James Barr. He reaffirms that the biblical accounts are true history and claims that the sole explanation for the unique way of thinking of the Bible is that it stems from a revelation. As for the second question, he criticizes both the existentialism of Bultmann and process theology. The final chapter (chap. 9) briefly expounds the insufficiency of four alternatives explanations for the appearance of the biblical thought: J. van Seters, F. M. Cross, W. Dever and M. Smith.

I am grateful to Oswalt for this book. When studying the fascinating parallels existing in ANE literature, there is a risk of losing sight of the fundamental differences with the Bible. *The Bible among the Myths* provides a good corrective in order to get a balanced view. Particularly illuminating is the insightful analysis of the underlying principles of continuity and transcendence because it explains many aspects and the overall logic of both the mythical and biblical ways of thinking.

Certainly, in his effort to point out the main principles of the myths, Oswalt sometimes seems to oversimplify the subject. For example, I wonder whether the distinction between sacred and profane fits into his perspective. Moreover, it seems exaggerated to say that in the worldview of continuity, “nothing is considered for itself apart from its impact on me. Ultimately, it only has existence as it relates to me” (p. 123). Furthermore, I regret that Oswalt chose to discuss only Bultmannian ideas and those of process

theology to answer the question “Does it matter whether the Bible is historical?” Many people ask this question without adhering to these philosophies.

But this work does not claim to constitute a handbook of religious studies, nor does it stand as the definitive work on the connection between history and the Bible. Rather, it is a useful reminder of the fundamental differences between ANE texts and the OT. Within these limits, it is a refreshing and instructive book that I highly recommend to readers studying the Scriptures in their context.

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Steven Tuell. *Ezekiel*. New International Biblical Commentary. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2009. xv + 368 pp.

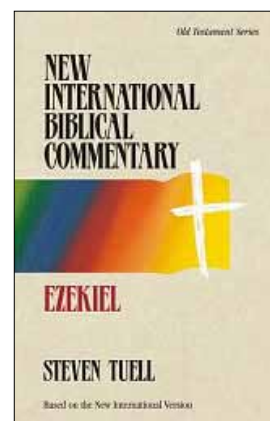
The commentary on Ezekiel in the NIBC series has been entrusted to Steven Tuell, Associate Professor of Old Testament at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, partly because his doctoral work is on this biblical book (*The Law of the Temple in Ezekiel 40–48* [HSM 49; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992]). Naturally, this study shares the common features of the series and consequently the qualities and limitations it implies:

1. In each chapter, the main section addresses general questions of interpretation about a passage, whereas technical details are treated at the end as additional notes. The advantages of this presentation are obvious: the book becomes accessible to people who are not acquainted with exegetical methods (they simply have to drop the final notes); readers expecting a discussion of questions pertaining to philology or textual criticism will often find them all the same; for both kinds of people, the main text flows naturally.

2. The book widely integrates words and phrases of the text in the comments in bold characters so that it is easy to follow the progression without constantly looking aside to the biblical text. At the same time, the risk of paraphrasing Ezekiel is always present, and in practice it is frequently what happens.

3. The scope of the study is limited, and many aspects of the text are left aside, partly due to the editorial guidelines of NIBC series. That being the case, the degree of detail that Tuell’s work provides, especially in the “additional notes,” is frankly superior to what we encounter in many other titles of the NIBC series. Moreover, he has supplied many bibliographical references in order to palliate his own editorial constraints by giving advice for those who want to go into more detail. However, Tuell rarely mentions interpretations other than his own.

4. The underlying hermeneutics can be labeled as “believing criticism,” that is, a willingness to integrate some positions stemming from critical scholarship into an approach that recognizes the authority of the Bible. In the present case, the main implications concern the redactional history of the book. Tuell adopts a two-stage model: most of the book originates from the prophet himself, but some insertions were made by “priestly editors” during the Persian period, mostly in Ezek 40–48. Readers should be forewarned that Tuell advocates here the personal position he developed in his doctoral dissertation:



(a) He believes that 43:7b–27; 44:3–46:24; and 47:13–48:29 are insertions made during the restoration in order to add a “Law of the Temple” to the temple vision. Tuell repeats only a part of his arguments in the present commentary; for example he insists on the idea that Ezek 44 contains a criticism of the Levites that is incompatible with the authentic Ezekelian texts, while the absolute restriction of the priestly duty to Zadokites reflects the situation during the beginning of the Persian period.

(b) Tuell considers that this “Law of the Temple” and the Pentateuchal Torah (more precisely, the so-called “P” writings) are two parallel, independent, and virtually contemporaneous works, the first being placed under the authority of Ezekiel by priests in the restored Jerusalem, while the second was placed under the authority of Moses by exiled authors.

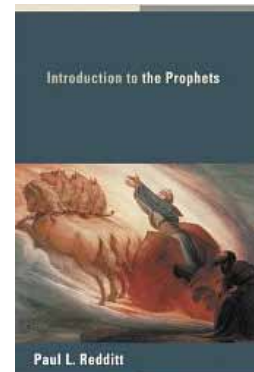
On these two points, Tuell’s hypothesis will doubtless convince neither conservative nor all critical scholars: (a) This is not the place to answer all of Tuell’s arguments. For a short discussion, see the review of Tuell’s *The Law of the Temple* by D. Block (*JBL* 113 [1994]: 131–33). For an interpretation of Ezek 44:10–14 without a polemic against the Levites, see D. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25–48* [NICOT; Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1998], pp. 626–37). (b) Scholars have sustained at least three positions regarding the link between the “Law of the Temple” and, in particular, the “Holiness Code” (Lev 17–26): dependence in either way, mutual influence, or even independence. Tuell’s thesis belongs to the last stream, but it is a relatively rare opinion. For example, in the most recent detailed study on this topic (*From Law to Prophecy: Ezekiel’s Use of the Holiness Code* [Library of Hebrew Bible; OTS 507; New York: T&T Clark, 2009]), Michael A. Lyons assigns the “Law of the Temple” to Ezekiel himself and shows how he uses “H” in making subtle transformations in order to adapt it to the audience of Exiles. Moreover, Tuell’s argument depends on an exilic date for the “Holiness Code,” but even in critical scholarship there are specialists who consider it as pre-exilic. Examples include J. Milgrom (*Leviticus 17–22* [AB 3A; New York: Doubleday, 2000]) and Jan Joosten (*People and Land in the Holiness Code: An Exegetical Study of the Ideational Framework of the Law in Leviticus 17–26* [VTSup 67; Leiden: Brill, 1996]).

In sum, this book can be helpful to students or pastors who are looking for a basic commentary on Ezekiel, more detailed than other titles of the same series but with the same editorial limitations. However, they should be aware of the existence of other interpretations on several points and of the fragility of the hypothesis influencing the last section, which will no doubt lead them to consult other works in order to reach an accurate view of the issues involved.

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Paul L. Redditt. *Introduction to the Prophets*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008. xv + 404 pp. £17.20/\$26.00.

In this thorough and up-to-date work, Paul Redditt introduces the OT prophets to an undergraduate audience, presuming “no appreciable knowledge of the Old Testament” on their part (p. x). After an introduction to prophecy as a religious phenomenon in the ancient world, another chapter introduces the major prophets before treating Isaiah (in two chapters—one each for Isa 1–39 and 40–66), Jeremiah, Lamentations and “other Deutero-Jeremianic literature” (Baruch and the Letter of Jeremiah), Ezekiel, and Daniel. Another introduction prefaces the discussion of the minor prophets, which Redditt treats as a group and in canonical order (following especially J. Nogalski), three prophets per chapter. The important closing chapter first summarizes the primary themes of prophetic teaching, then briefly discusses when and how the prophets were likely brought into connection with the other writings of the OT, and concludes by describing how different readers appropriate the prophetic message. Christian interpretations are circumscribed by brief mention of “prophets” in the NT, “the God spoken of by the prophets,” “prophecies fulfilled by Jesus” (limited to Matt 1–2), and “the church as the new Israel,” while some of the Sea Scrolls (only 1QpHab is considered) and Philo exemplify “two other Jewish approaches.” The former attaches ongoing significance to prophecy (in the writings it cites as well as in the Teacher of Righteousness) while Philo prefers the Torah to the Latter Prophets. Each chapter includes a number of “questions for reflection” and an annotated bibliography.



Redditt’s work is marked, first of all, by attention to contemporary scholarly discussion, especially in the minor prophets, where he has worked extensively. Second, while he assumes no prior knowledge of the OT on the part of the reader, Redditt’s explanations of various facets of the OT that directly affect one’s understanding of the prophets follow standard critical positions and do not mention possible resolution of the problems on which they focus; for example, when evaluating the Levite-Aaronide question in Ezekiel (p. 165), he does not interact with D. Block’s commentary on that point though it appears in that chapter’s annotated bibliography. Third, the book does not emphasize the historical backgrounds of the prophets, in part because the Twelve are treated in their literary order. While Redditt displays laudable caution in construing the historical settings of the prophets, instructors who adopt this book as a course text may wish to provide further historical material from another source.

Several tenets that guide Redditt’s treatment of the prophets also merit attention. In no particular order, he believes that (1) “historical” and “canonical” readings of the prophets might peaceably coexist (p. xiv); (2) “the texts as we have them were assembled over the years and rose over the centuries in the estimation of their readers to the level of divinely-inspired scripture” (p. xi); (3) “[m]odern readers of the prophets would do well to remember that the books were not written to them, but to ancient Israelites who lived hundreds of years before Jesus” (p. xiv); and (4) readers are free to “draw their own conclusions” about what the prophets meant (p. x).

To begin with the first claim, when Redditt discusses the identity of the Servant in Isa 53, he rejects the NT’s interpretation of the passage as referring to Jesus because it is “another instance where people read the NT back into the Old (e.g., Matt 12:15–21; Acts 8:30–34). A reading of the Servant poems in their context gives the impression that the texts are talking about a contemporary whom the exiles knew, not an unknown figure who would not come for centuries” (p. 100). Were this true, one might

wonder how post-exilic Israelites could be expected to shift without hesitation the atonement concepts they associated with the cult to one of their (human) contemporaries. More importantly, the claim that Isaiah (not Isaiah of Jerusalem, on Reditt's view) is not referring to someone beyond his own time is a dogmatic reticence to recognize the possibility of prophetic foretelling of the future. While Reditt is willing to use the language of "fulfillment" to describe Jesus' relation to the Isaianic Servant texts, he insists that such readings "are *applying* the songs, not *interpreting* them" (p. 101). In other words, the historical meaning of the Isaiah text, particularly the person to whom it refers, is not organically related to the meaning another part of the canon sees *in that same text* as the grounds for identifying Jesus as the Servant.

This dim view of the unity of the divine word, and indeed its divine origin, seems to underlie the other tenets listed above. The second claim implicitly denies inspiration in its classic sense to the authors of the prophetic books, while the third comes close to denying that the ultimate goal of the prophetic word lies beyond the OT (contrast 1 Pet 1:10–12). It is thus not surprising that after denying that the NT is properly in the business of interpreting OT prophecy, Reditt's final claim affirms the reader's epistemological autonomy.

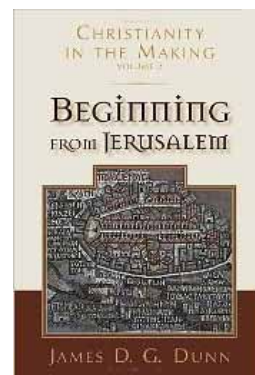
It is difficult to escape the conclusion that historical-critical tenets are deeply woven into Reditt's approach to prophecy and to Scripture itself. In contrast, both the authors of the NT (e.g., John 12:38–41; Heb 1:1–4) and Jesus himself (Luke 4:17–21; 24:44–47) are adamant that the reader is to receive, as a proclamation with divine authority, Scripture's testimony to the person and work of Jesus Christ as the fulfillment and completion of God's prior word through the prophets. While Reditt has laudably written as a believing Christian (p. x), the implications of such belief for interpretation of the prophets are regrettably not in plain view in this volume.

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— NEW TESTAMENT —

James D. G. Dunn. *Beginning from Jerusalem*. Vol. 2 of *Christianity in the Making*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009. xv + 1,347 pp. \$80.00.

In this second volume of his trilogy, *Christianity in the Making*, Professor Dunn traces the first forty years of the history of Christianity. After careful definitions of the terminology of the new movement, Dunn proceeds in an orderly chronological way, all done in a light, even breezy, manner. Dunn identifies the likely sources in the first part of Acts—the story of the Hellenists, the persecutions and the conversion of Saul/Paul, the missions of Peter—and then interestingly traces each in turn. Next he takes us by the hand and leads us through Paul's (sometimes) hidden Syrian-Antiochene years before launching into the Apostle's astonishing Aegean period in the course of which he briefly but seriously examines Galatians, the (four) Corinthian letters, and Romans. Dunn



then follows Paul through the final chapters of Acts ('Paul's Passion'). He concludes with a discussion of the letters of James and 1 Peter. All this in 1,347 pages, copious indices and references included. Congratulations and thanks to Professor Dunn for a truly remarkable achievement, reflecting a lifetime of research, writing, teaching, and supervising.

Throughout Dunn maintains a style that is both readable and erudite but also unfailingly courteous. His vigorous running exegesis of the texts is expanded in a veritable mountain of footnotes engaging with (mostly recent) scholarship. The resulting work is every undergraduate's dream, providing ready lateral access to a vast array of research interest. In consequence this is a text the scholar and the teacher will want to have in a handy place for frequent use, not least as all try to keep up with the mounting pile of secondary literature.

I find myself agreeing with Dunn at many points: his acknowledgement that Jesus was the Christ before the resurrection; his general appreciation of Luke as a historian (though Dunn thinks that Luke's Census and Theudas/Judas references are 'blunders'); his acceptance of the 'we' passages as indicative of Luke's presence in those narratives; his general rejection of the Bousset/Bultmann thesis that Antioch was the source of Paul's theology; his verdict that Galatians was written to 'southern' Galatians and that Second Corinthians is a unity; his recognition of Pauline authorship of Second Thessalonians (though Dunn doesn't attribute Pauline authorship to Ephesians or the Pastorals); his preference for James the Lord's brother as the author of the Letter of James and his openness at least for Petrine authority underlying 1 Peter. In these and many other 'conservative' verdicts Dunn treads a fairly lonely path not trodden by many luminaries today.

Inevitably, in a work of this magnitude there will be differences of opinion and criticism. Here are some of mine. I prefer to follow F. F. Bruce in seeing the private meeting in Jerusalem in Gal 2:1–10 (Acts 11:27–30) as prior to and distinct from the Council in Jerusalem (Acts 15), with Galatians written from Antioch between the two. Further, I found his treatment of Romans unconvincing. While thankfully not following the current fashion of viewing Romans as explained by a Christ-versus-Caesar issue I had hoped that Dunn would have canvassed the intensity and frequency of the 'works'/'law'/'faith' vocabulary in Romans, something that is well explained by Paul's decade-long heated engagement with the Jewish Christian counter-mission that sought to impose circumcision as a 'work' on Gentile converts. Likewise his treatment of Rom 3:21–5:10 only minimally discusses the critical issues of propitiation, expiation, and imputation. This is consistent with his 'new perspective on Paul', which sees the membership of the divine covenant as the reason for the 'works'/'faith' debate. On the contrary, the post-Damascus Paul saw Christ crucified, not law-keeping as the only means to 'life', that is, of 'salvation' and the source of the Spirit's presence. Mishnah *Aboth* 6:7 asserts, 'Great is the Law, for it gives life to them that practice it both in this world and in the world to come . . .'. For Paul, however, 'Christ alone'/'faith alone' 'justifies' the believer at the bar of God's judgment and 'reconciles' the believer to God; covenant inclusion—for the children of Adam, Jew and Greek—is a consequence. Another point of difference is his discussion of women prophesying in 1 Cor 11 and 14 where he suggests that Paul's advice is merely socially conservative in the Corinthian setting (but he was socially radical at so many points).

These and other differences aside, one can but wonder at the task Dunn has set for himself and the remarkable level of achievement it represents. His two volumes of the trilogy locate him within the very select few capable of achieving such great heights.

Is there anything missing in *Beginning from Jerusalem*? While hesitating to envisage an even bigger book I think there are two gaps in Dunn's mega-study. One is the relative absence of engagement with

the ‘world history’ through which the disciples of the Lord passed in those four decades. For example, Paul’s decision at last to go to Rome (in ca. 54) seems to be connected with the news of the death of Claudius, who had expelled the Jews from the Eternal City (in A.D. 49). In fact, there is no reference to Claudius (41–54) in the Index. See F. F. Bruce, *New Testament History* (1971) and E. E. Ellis, *The Making of the New Testament Documents* (1999) for the nexus between salvation history and world history.

Another missing element is the absence of a theory to explain the remarkable growth and spread of Christianity through these forty years. Dunn has helpfully narrated the *that* and the *how* but left this reader wondering about the *why*. The history of so radical and powerful a movement as earliest Christianity cannot be ‘just one thing after another’ (Toynbee), nor does Dunn say it is. It’s true that he raises the ‘why’ question at the beginning (p. 51), but he does not appear to revisit it systematically. Yet this movement would have rapidly dissipated apart from the burning and *ongoing* conviction of the disciples that Jesus was the risen and exalted Saviour-Messiah, Lord and Son of God. In a word Christology was the engine that drove earliest Christianity. So, fascinating and stimulating as it is to learn that ‘this happened’ and ‘that happened’, it would have been good to have been repeatedly reminded *why*.

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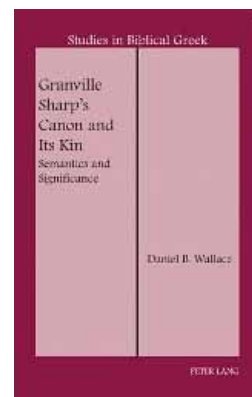
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Daniel B. Wallace. *Granville Sharp’s Canon and Its Kin: Semantics and Significance*. Edited by D. A. Carson. Studies in Biblical Greek 14. New York: Lang, 2009. xxi + 347 pp. £41.80/ \$69.95.

Rarely is a book on Greek syntax enthralling, let alone immensely significant. Daniel Wallace’s new book on the Greek article is both. The book makes a vigorous argument for the validity of Granville Sharp’s rule, and explores the way in which other TSKS constructions (i.e., article-substantive-καί-substantive) function that do not fall under the auspices of Sharp’s rule. After his introduction, Wallace deals with these interests in three parts: “Historical Investigation,” “Linguistic-Phenomenological Analysis,” and “Exegetical Implications and Interactions.”

The introduction raises the problem that the book addresses, namely, the nature of constructions “involving a single article that unites two or more substantives joined by the conjunction *καί* The unity may be, broadly speaking, one of referential identity, overlap, or distinction” (p. 4). The need for the study is fourfold: first, such constructions have a complex semantic range; second, grammarians, exegetes, and theologians are given to making unfounded and erroneous claims about such constructions; third, it is important to clarify the definition of Granville Sharp’s rule, test its validity, and explain its theological implications; and fourth, there are many significant passages that are affected by the meaning of such constructions (pp. 5–7). Wallace also explains the methodology and scope of research.

Part One offers an Historical Investigation, including, in chapter 1, a short biography of Granville Sharp (pp. 31–44)—whom Wallace claims “ought be credited as the force behind Wilberforce, as the ‘father of abolition’ in England” (p. 41)—and the formulation of his rule (pp. 47–54). Chapter 2 canvasses the two centuries of controversy and misunderstanding that followed Sharp’s contribution, culminating



in the abuse and neglect of his canon (pp. 55–78). Chapter 3 notes that Sharp’s rule has begun to be noticed again over the last forty years, though only a few scholars have properly understood it (pp. 79–83).

Part Two offers a Linguistic-Phenomenological Analysis, in which all the various types of TSKS constructions are explored—one type for each chapter. In many ways, Part Two forms the heart of the book, and is the most demanding upon the reader. Chapter 5 is the key—and first—chapter of Part Two (pp. 101–33), as it is here that Wallace examines the TSKS construction that Sharp’s rule addresses. This chapter concludes that Sharp was basically correct (pp. 131–33), though Wallace offers a nuanced restatement of the rule in order to buttress it against exceptions:

In native Greek constructions (i.e., not translation Greek), when a single article modifies *two* substantives connected by *καί* (thus, article-substantive-*καί*-substantive), when both substantives are (1) singular (both grammatically and semantically), (2) personal, (3) and common nouns (not proper names or ordinals), they have the same referent. This rule, as stated, covers *all* the so-called exceptions. (p. 132)

Part Three explores the Exegetical Implications and Interactions of the various types of TSKS constructions in the NT. Wallace unfolds these in the opposite order he examines them in Part Two, such that Part Three climaxes with the significance of Sharp’s rule for christologically significant texts (ch. 12; pp. 233–72). The main issue here has to do with whether christologically significant passages fit the requirements for Sharp’s rule (p. 233); since Wallace has already shown the rule to be valid in chapter 5, the passages that qualify affirm the deity of Christ. A significant question addressed here is whether *θεός* is a proper noun, since proper nouns are excluded from the parameters of the rule (pp. 251–55). After a lengthy discussion, the two passages that qualify are Titus 2:13 and 2 Pet 1:1.

There is much to commend this book. To begin with, who would have supposed that a monograph concerned with a minute issue within Greek syntax could be so enthralling, not to mention theologically significant? The volume is both—and well written to boot. The author writes clearly and with precision, in a way that is generally free of obscure terminology and contorted expression.

The basic argument of the book is compelling, and while there may be an exegetical point here or there over which one may quibble, at no point are the main conclusions compromised. Wallace contends that Granville Sharp was basically correct—when properly understood—and he succeeds in vindicating Sharp in light of his detractors. Wallace helpfully deals with the TSKS constructions that Sharp’s rule does not address, and he provides a nuanced account of what may and may not be said with respect to each of these. Each strand of argumentation is persuasive, though not all exhibit the same flare and significance as the discussions revolving around Sharp’s rule.

Wallace engages in detailed points of exegesis on several occasions in the course of his argumentation, and much of this is helpful. In the course of such exegesis, he mercilessly critiques interlocutors who have either misunderstood Sharp’s rule and/or TSKS constructions or who employ faulty methodology or logic. For example, in his interaction with Gordon Fee regarding Titus 2:13 (pp. 256–64), Wallace deconstructs each element of Fee’s opinion of the verse. On one level, this is presented in a simply matter-of-fact manner, but I doubt Dr Fee will read it that way!

The book successfully contends that certain controversial christological texts explicitly confirm the deity of Christ, and this is due to properly handling their TSKS constructions. To suggest that a subtle

element of Greek syntax could lead to such a bold doctrinal conclusion is nothing short of breathtaking, and the case presented to this end is nothing short of magnificent.

With so much to commend, I can offer only insignificant criticisms. In spite of Wallace's claim to the contrary, the small biography of Granville Sharp (pp. 31–44) is not really needed (not at such length, at least) and does not significantly contribute to the thesis of the book. Nevertheless, it is so interesting that the reader will quickly forgive this indulgence. No doubt Granville Sharp deserves wider recognition than he receives, including for his role in abolition. Furthermore, while Wallace's thoroughness is commendable, this sometimes goes unrestrained. With footnotes up to nearly a page and a half in length (e.g., pp. 27–28n2), it is unlikely that even the most committed reader will engage with all notes. It is also puzzling that Granville Sharp's rule is not actually defined until page 50.

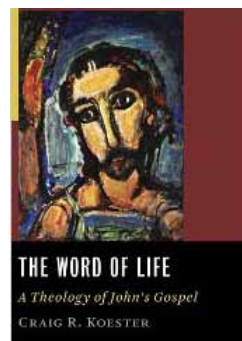
And to conclude with the most trifling of criticisms: I have often wondered about the strength of the acronym TSKS. To my knowledge, no explanation of what the 'T' stands for in TSKS can be found in Wallace's famed grammar (*Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*). Most students assume it means 'the', which makes sense to a point, but I had not been satisfied by this, since Wallace goes to great lengths to demonstrate that the Greek article does not simply mean 'the'. I had wondered if it stood for τó, being the neuter form of the article, but then it was not clear why the neuter would be used. In any case, Wallace answers the question in his new book: 'T' stands for 'the' after all (p. 7n21). I would humbly suggest, however, that 'ASKS' would be a better acronym, with 'A' standing for 'article'.

It is rare to be invited to review a book that is both a landmark and robust to the point of seeming virtually irrefutable. It is a landmark book because it has in my opinion put to rest the debate about Sharp's rule, and it is enormously important both to Greek syntax and theological exegesis of the NT. Truly, the humble Greek article reaches the heights of the deity of Christ! The book is robust in that it is difficult to imagine its key conclusions being overturned any time soon, if ever. If such claims appear grandiose, the following is more so: this book will stand the test of time as one of the best contributions to Greek syntax of the twenty-first century. Dr Wallace is to be congratulated, and all serious students of the Greek NT should read his book and will do so to great profit.

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Craig R. Koester. *The Word of Life: A Theology of John's Gospel*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008. 259 pp. £11.99/\$21.00.

Readers may already be familiar with Koester's recent work on John's Gospel, published in various specialist journals. Building on the author's ongoing encounter with John, the present book reflects his interaction especially with three constituencies: recent Johannine scholarship; witnesses to the Fourth Gospel's wider impact down the centuries; and contemporary readers generally and their responses. Koester is fully conversant with historical questions, but they are not his focus; neither the origins of Johannine theology nor what may be reconstructed of its own development concern him here. Instead, he undertakes



“careful theological work with the present text” in order to provide non-specialists in particular with “a sustained discussion about major aspects of John’s theology” (pp. x–xi). With this intended readership in mind, Koester has put everything extrinsic to his argument in endnotes; love them or hate them, in this case they do the book a real favour by allowing the discussion to flow uninterrupted.

The study begins with a very useful introduction to all things Johannine. There is a well-known balance in this Gospel between the preservation of the Jesus tradition and its interpretation for the first readers. Koester accounts for this through its post-Easter perspective of life in the Spirit, whereby the question of *who Jesus is* everywhere impacts the narrative of *who he was*. He goes on to offer a thoughtful digest of some key theological questions that have either arisen from reading John or been brought into dialogue with the text by readers. Finally, Koester outlines three intentions of the study (which he approaches *theologically*): identify what the Gospel takes for granted, specify the perspective it seeks to promote, and consider what we are to make of it.

Koester then sets about exploring seven topics: God; the world and its people; Jesus; crucifixion and resurrection; the Spirit; faith, present and future; and discipleship in community and world. At first sight these include major elements of the Fourth Gospel but do not provide an exhaustive list of its theological materials. However, in some cases the catch-all title conceals the nuanced correlation of significant themes which Koester in fact provides.

For instance, “The World and Its People” brings together various perspectives on the human condition. Koester considers in detail not just what *kosmos* means or what human life means (seen in relation to Christ and to God), but also the entities and forces that endanger true life, namely, suffering and death, sin (involving unbelief) and evil (including the satan). He also considers human freedom as the opportunity for relationship with God through faith.

Another example is the chapter devoted to Jesus. Koester explores Jesus’ relation to God as Sender and as Father in the opening chapter on God, and he reserves some other important issues for the chapter on Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection, including how his death reveals divine glory or how his resurrection (and therefore status as living One) implies relational questions for any reader. The Gospel’s protagonist is, of course, never far away in any of Koester’s topical discussions, but the title suggests that this chapter, at least, will bring John’s portrait of Jesus into sharp focus. Essentially, this study of Jesus tries to follow the path of discovery taken by the other characters in John’s Gospel; Koester does not begin, therefore, with the prologue but examines various distinct facets of Jesus’ identity as they emerge from 1:19 onwards. He is first of all human being and teacher, since this is uncontroversial for all who meet him (as it still is for all who have an opinion about him). He is also prophet and messiah, aspects which provoke conflict in the story because they capture crucial but disputed elements of his divine vocation. And most controversially, he is Son of God (and, with the prologue, Word of God), with all that is implied in terms of exercising divine power and mediating divine presence. All of this is a staple enough diet of Christology, yet by following the Gospel’s own narrative logic for his presentation the author manages to preserve engagement with the text and, therefore, with John’s (as distinct from Koester’s) Jesus.

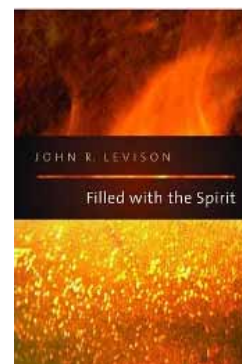
If I were a publisher, I might slightly amend the sub-title of the book to *A Theological Reading of John’s Gospel*. I would do so, not because Koester fails to write a credible and accessible theology of John (for he succeeds rather well), but because he also engages in *reading John’s Gospel theologically* and because this may, in fact, be his main achievement in this book. Koester, it seems to me, rather self-

effacingly manages to let John speak with the theological profundity that characterises this Gospel, and speak for today; *The Word of Life* is as good an orientation to John's Gospel as I have come across.

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John R. Levison. *Filled with the Spirit*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009. xxvii + 463 pp. £29.99/\$45.00.

John Levison is professor of New Testament at Seattle Pacific University. The title of this book is easily misleading if one is accustomed to thinking in normal theological categories. In fact, Paul's classic text on being filled with the Spirit in Eph 5:18 is not even mentioned in the book. Yet Levison chose this title because he believes his study of the literature of the OT, extrabiblical Jewish literature, Greco-Roman materials, and the NT suggests that "filling with the spirit" best describes the spirit's presence in the lives of these ancient people. The uncapitalized "spirit" is deliberate on Levison's part.



Part one deals with Israelite literature—the OT. Levison does not write in a normal academic style, interacting with the text and scholarly literature; instead, we are treated to a rather novel but interesting prose narrative journey through selected OT texts, beginning with the creation account. It is a fascinating journey, filled with the author's idiosyncratic understanding of numerous texts. For instance, when the psalmist pleads, "do not take your holy spirit from me" (Ps 51:11), "holy spirit" is not to be understood in anyway related to the Trinitarian Holy Spirit, but as an aspect of the psalmist himself, similar to the heart (p. 31). Basically, the spirit in the OT is the human spirit. When Bezalel is said to be "filled with the spirit of God" (Exod 31:2), nothing more is meant than Bezalel's human spirit was "richly enhanced with wisdom, insight, and intelligence" (p. 62). Filling with the holy spirit in the OT is about the "expansiveness" of the human spirit within (p. 66).

Part two surveys Jewish literature produced from after the exile until the Christian era. Levison begins with Ben Sira and Susanna and finds, as in the OT, that all references to the spirit, even the holy spirit, are to be identified with the human spirit, not any sort of endowment from God. The same is true for the Wisdom of Solomon. But the Greco-Roman culture of the pre-Christian era challenged this understanding of "spirit." The oracles and prophets of Greece were frequently described as filled with the spirit, although the precise nature of this is unclear. This produced uncontrolled prophetic ecstasy, sometimes described as madness and drunkenness. According to Levison, this caused Jewish writers like Philo to describe "the entire race of Israelite prophets as ecstasies, whose minds are ousted when the divine spirit takes up its tenancy" (p. 176). This influence will be seen in the NT literature.

Part three examines Christian literature. First, Levison tackles the idea of "filling" in the letters of Paul. As I noted earlier, the one place where Paul specifically uses filling language, Eph 5:18, is not even discussed. For Levison any text that speaks of "giving the spirit" or "having the spirit" is subsumed under the idea of "filling." The author takes us on an interesting tour of a number of Pauline texts, but sometimes the search for the origins of Paul's ideas leads to some improbable connections. For instance, after nicely explaining the concepts of "seal" and "pledge" in 2 Corinthians, Levison then argues that Paul borrows these metaphors from the story of Judah and Tamar in Gen 38. This must be the case, says Levison, because Gen 38:18 "is the only instance in the Hebrew Bible where the Hebrew words 'seal'

and ‘pledge’ occur in intimate association with one another” (p. 257). Paul describes the holy spirit so as to reflect the language of the story of Tamar and Judah because their offspring, Perez, was the ancestor of David. Levison also argues that Paul’s ideas about the holy spirit were formed from his acquaintance with the Qumran community (p. 271), even though there is no real evidence that Paul had any contact with this community.

Luke’s understanding of the spirit’s filling is not far from the kinds of ecstatic experiences claimed by the oracles and sibyls of the Greco-Roman world of the first century (p. 331). Paul encountered one of these pythonic spirits in Philippi (Acts 16). He commanded the spirit to leave the slave-girl, not because this was in any way a demonic spirit, but because Paul was simply annoyed by her yelling. She was, strangely enough, actually proclaiming the true gospel.

While this book makes for a remarkable read, it does not really fall in the evangelical tradition. It appears to be a history of religions approach to the idea of the spirit in ancient Israel that developed and was enlarged in the Christian era through the influence of extrabiblical sources such as the Greco-Roman religions and Qumran. Levison’s understanding and explanation of these sources is informative and helpful, but not really convincing as the source of the NT’s teaching about *the Holy Spirit*.

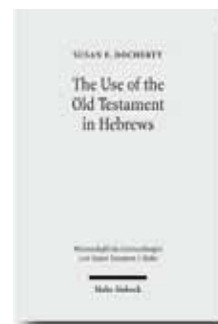
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Susan E. Docherty. *The Use of the Old Testament in Hebrews: A Case Study in Early Jewish Bible Interpretation*. WUNT 2.260. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009. xi + 233 pp. £59.00/\$115.00.

In this revised version of her 2007 PhD thesis, completed at the University of Manchester under the supervision of Philip Alexander, Docherty attempts to fill two ostensible lacunae in Hebrews scholarship—lacunae caused primarily by a failure to treat Hebrews as a thoroughly Jewish piece of literature (pp. 1–2). Docherty seeks to introduce Hebrews scholarship, first, to the most recent work in rabbinic hermeneutics and, second, to the most recent work in Septuagintal studies. To prove the presence of these lacunae and, thus, to justify her project, Docherty’s first chapter comprises an extended literature survey (pp. 9–82) covering twelve major commentaries (spanning five periods since ca. 1850), six monographs on the structure and theology of Hebrews, and nine studies on the use of the OT in Hebrews. Throughout Docherty insists that insufficient attention has been paid to the author’s hermeneutical methods and presuppositions and to the nature of his Greek bible (see, e.g., pp. 16–18, 22, 32–33, 42–43, 49–51, 61–63, 81–82). Docherty’s next two chapters, therefore, present new developments in the study of midrash (ch. 3) and the Septuagint (ch. 4). In the latter, Docherty follows a brief summary of research with an application of her findings to the catena in Hebrews 1 and the use of Ps 94 LXX and Gen 2 in Heb 3–4. It is, however, not until her fifth chapter that Docherty returns to her findings of chapter 3 and applies them to this same material. Docherty rounds out her study with a brief concluding chapter, once more summarizing her conclusions and suggesting a few areas for further work.



The signal contributions of Docherty’s work are the three literature reviews she includes (chs. 2–4), principally the one detailing work on rabbinic hermeneutics (ch. 3). Here Docherty not only

introduces the reader to the leading doyens in this field (Bloch, Vermes, Heinemann, Fishbane, Boyarin, Neusner, Goldberg, Samely, Alexander), nicely summarizing their work, she also surfaces the critical issues (pp. 115–19). Docherty’s application of this work to the study of Hebrews is also useful. She particularly develops the relevance of Alexander Samely’s work on the interpretation of direct speech in the Pentateuchal Targums and his work on the hermeneutical methods evidenced in the Mishnah (see pp. 107–12; also pp. 143–44). When applied to Hebrews, Samely’s work provides new (or more often, *precise*) resources for explaining, for example, the predominance of direct speech in the catena of Heb 1 and the author’s segmenting of Ps 94 LXX in Heb 3–4 (see, e.g., 3:15, 4:3, et al.; ch. 5). To her credit, Docherty does not overindulge in parallelomania, noting on more than one occasion ways in which Hebrews’ use of Scripture is distinct (see, e.g., the note about historical sequence on p. 196; see also pp. 177–79).

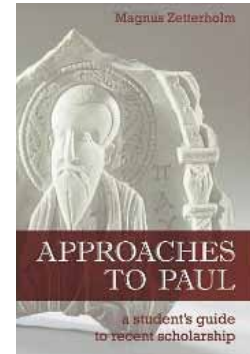
Beyond this, Docherty’s work is helpful for a handful of additional reasons, among which are the following two. First, she draws attention to the reevaluation of the antiquity of Lucianic readings (pp. 127–29; esp. in light of 11QPs^a) and to the discovery of 4QDeut^a and P. Bod. XXIV, demonstrating the significance of these matters for text-critical decisions in Heb 1 and 3–4 (pp. 133–34, 135, 136–39). In doing so, Docherty provides evidence that points against common assumptions about the author of Hebrews’ freedom with his received text and also shows that the author holds presuppositions about Scripture very much in line with what Samely and Alexander found in rabbinic literature (see p. 141n91; cf. pp. 108, 113, 177, 180, 194). Second, Docherty identifies one or two fresh correspondences between the citations in Hebrews. For instance, in discussing the use of Ps 2:7 in Heb 1:5, Docherty suggests a potential link between Ps 2:12 and the citation of Isa 8:17 in Heb 2:13 (περίθω; p. 151, though she misses the link to Isa 8 in 4Q174, see p. 154). In another place, discussing the use of Ps 103:4 LXX in Heb 1:7, Docherty notes the reference to “oil and gladness” in Ps 103:15 LXX and suggests it may further connect this citation with that of Ps 44:8 LXX in Heb 1:9 (p. 163).

Docherty’s work is also open to a few criticisms. First, despite the usefulness and scope of her literature reviews, Docherty’s interaction with secondary literature is, at points, surprisingly incomplete. Docherty makes no reference to Herbert Bateman’s study (P. Lang, 1997), though it covers similar ground. Much the same could be said for Instone-Brewer’s work (Mohr Siebeck, 1992), though Instone-Brewer at least makes an appearance in the bibliography (not an infrequent phenomenon). Moreover, Radu Gheorghita’s in-depth study on the role of the LXX in Hebrews (Mohr Siebeck, 2003) receives relatively little attention (two citations), none at all in the chapter specifically dealing with the author’s *Vorlage*. There it is also surprising not to find mention of Rösen-Weinhold’s work on the Greek Psalter in the NT (Neukirchener, 2004). Other relevant omissions could be noted. Second, and more generally, Docherty’s thesis promises a bit more than it delivers. No doubt part of this may result from the space given to reviewing secondary literature (130+ pp.). In any case, when matters finally turn to Hebrews, the payoff, while helpful, is relatively meager and not entirely original, as the footnotes in one or two places attest (see pp. 135n64; 137n76, 137n79). Perhaps it would have been more helpful to concentrate exclusively on Samely’s work, showing in detail its relevance to the entirety of Hebrews.

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Magnus Zetterholm. *Approaches to Paul: A Student's Guide to Recent Scholarship*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009. 288 pp. \$20.00.

The defining element in the majority of Pauline studies in the twentieth century has been an attempt to answer the question, “What is the apostle’s relationship to Judaism?” The answer given to this question reveals not only one’s perspective on Paul in general but also the approach he or she takes to seminal theological issues such as the nature of justification and the relevance of the Mosaic law for the Christian church. Magnus Zetterholm, Associate Professor of New Testament Studies at Lund University in Sweden, understands the importance of this question and has written an introductory guide that outlines the various answers scholars have given. In eight chapters, he surveys Paul’s life, plots the rise of the standard view of Paul, traces elements that led to a new perspective on the apostle’s writings, and then demonstrates how scholars have built upon, reacted to, and have even gone beyond the new perspective to advocate more radical approaches to Paul.



In chapter one, Zetterholm introduces us to his aim for the book: “to attempt to explain how Paul’s relation to Judaism can be understood in two very different ways and to explore which approach is likely to produce the most historically plausible picture of Paul and the development of the early Jesus movement” (p. 10). To acquaint the reader with the basics of Paul’s life, he gives a brief outline drawn from the book of Acts and key biographical references in the epistles, namely Gal 1 and Phil 3. Zetterholm does not regard all of the letters attributed to Paul as authentic. To err on the side of scholarly caution, he accepts only 1 Thessalonians, Galatians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Romans, Philippians, and Philemon (p. 30).

Chapter two focuses on the rise of the paradigm for understanding Paul that influenced NT scholarship until the middle of the twentieth century. The essence of this paradigm is belief in a sharp line of demarcation between Christianity and Judaism. Zetterholm begins by noting the role played by Hegelian dialectics and the Tübingen School, but the roots of this paradigm are ancient. In Zetterholm’s opinion, the early non-Jewish followers of Jesus relied upon the Jews for their protected status as monotheists. Later, however, due to the rise of anti-Semitism and through the church’s reinterpretation of the OT, Christianity distanced itself from the religion it had depended upon earlier. Zetterholm then shifts the focus to Martin Luther, who interpreted Judaism in light of what he saw in the Roman Catholic Church. This strengthened the belief that Judaism was a legalistic religion and gave rise to the theological model that has prevailed since the Reformation.

Zetterholm devotes chapter three to the study of Rudolf Bultmann’s prominent role in developing “the traditional view of Paul that was firmly established in the middle of the twentieth century” (p. 69). Bultmann’s students, Ernst Käsemann and Günther Bornkamm, also receive attention as they helped to promulgate the standard view of Paul’s relationship to Judaism, a view that rested on the two cornerstones of an anti-Semitic attitude in the church and Luther’s sharp distinctions between the law and the gospel (p. 89). Zetterholm concludes, however, by noting that, though the prevailing attitudes in biblical scholarship favored the standard view of Paul, dissenting voices argued for a different appraisal of Judaism. Among these were Claude Montefiore, Salomon Schechter, and George Foot Moore.

A willingness to reexamine the nature of ancient Judaism and the horror of the Nazi atrocities of World War II set the scholarly and social stage for a different approach, a new perspective on Paul. This

is the subject of chapter four. Zetterholm attributes the necessary exegetical reorientation to Krister Stendahl, but what was needed most was a reevaluation of Judaism. This was the work of E. P. Sanders, who saw Palestinian Judaism not as a religion of legalism but one of covenantal nomism. Building on his new view of Judaism, Sanders began to reinterpret Paul. Others, such as James D. G. Dunn and N. T. Wright, followed suit and became the leaders in the new perspective.

Not content with the new perspective on Paul, some scholars have pushed the envelope further. In chapter five, Zetterholm discusses the views of Lloyd Gaston, Peter J. Tomson, Stanley Stowers, Mark D. Nanos, and Caroline Johnson Hodge, which he labels “the radical new perspective” (p. 161). Unlike traditional and new perspective proponents, “these scholars work from the general assumption that Paul belonged to first-century Judaism—not that he left it” (p. 161).

Not all students of the NT, however, have been convinced to embrace the “new” or “radical new” perspective on Paul. Chapter six surveys the work of four scholars who believe that the basics of the traditional Protestant view of Paul are correct. These include Frank S. Thielman, A. Andrew Das, Simon J. Gathercole, and Stephen Westerholm. Zetterholm notes that the “most striking common denominator” among these writers is “the relationship between exegesis and normative Protestant theology” (p. 192). He goes on to point out “that much of the critique of Sanders from the traditional perspective is worth taking seriously” (p. 193).

Chapter seven, entitled “Braking Boundaries,” looks at the work of various hermeneutical approaches to Paul that are not concerned primarily with solving the problem of his relationship to Judaism. Here we find readings of Paul that rely primarily upon philosophical, postcolonial, or feminist perspectives. The concluding chapter summarizes the book and then looks at the hermeneutical issues involved in arriving at an understanding of Paul. Ultimately Zetterholm opts for a hermeneutic of uncertainty (p. 237). He assumes, however, that the truth about Paul may lie somewhere in the “radical new perspective” school of thought (p. 239).

While Zetterholm ably accomplishes his purpose of introducing students to recent trends in Pauline scholarship, evangelicals will find his denial of the authenticity of a number of Pauline letters disconcerting. Furthermore, Zetterholm bases a number of points in his reconstruction of Paul’s relationship to Judaism on assumptions and possibilities (see, for example, pp. 7, 25, 27, 48, 51–54) rather than exegetical data. One of the most disturbing views of Zetterholm is that there is a direct link between the traditional view of Paul and Hitler’s murder of six million Jews. “The Christian church that almost twenty centuries had defined itself in contrast to a distorted picture of Judaism no doubt shared the responsibility for the worst crime against humanity in history” (p. 95). Strong anti-Semitic views have and, sadly, continue to exist, and some may falsely claim a Christian basis for these views. Perversions of theology are to be blamed for many sins, but to lay the atrocities of the Holocaust at the feet of Christian theology is irresponsible and unbecoming of anyone who attempts to speak as a scholar.

If you are looking for a survey of twentieth century Pauline scholarship, Zetterholm will prove helpful. But if you want a survey that offers more depth, balance, and exegetical probings into the text, a better choice would be Stephen Westerholm’s *Perspectives Old and New on Paul*. Westerholm offers an overview and critique of the same authors as Zetterholm but with more detail and a closer look at Scripture itself.

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Peter Oakes. *Reading Romans in Pompeii: Paul's Letter at Ground Level*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009. 179 pp. £14.99/\$39.00.

Reading Romans in Pompeii explores the likely response to Romans among its original recipients. Chapter one is a whirlwind tour through the archeology of a housing block in Pompeii and is fairly complex for those with no training in archeology. However, it does provide an illuminating window into the material culture of an ancient Roman town (size of houses and workshops, etc.). The picture that emerges is one of subsistence living for the majority of society and a life of luxury for a very small minority.

In chapter two, Oakes attempts to place the findings of the first chapter into the broader socio-economic context of the first-century Roman Empire. We can see that many early Christians were probably very poor, while some were in a sort of middle space, neither abjectly poor nor elite (e.g., a craft-worker who might have lived slightly above the subsistence level, but who had very little social influence).

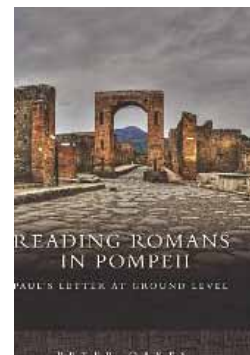
In chapter three Oakes, from the Pompeian archeological data he has analyzed (adjusted for Rome), attempts to provide a greater level of detail about the social situation in Rome than previous approaches to the debate over the purpose of Romans have been able to offer. One of the primary ways Oakes believes his approach sheds light on the letter is that we can now see that the housing space of a typical house church would have been quite small. The primary purpose of Oakes' reconstructions is to provide concrete information about the kinds of real people likely to be among the addressees of Paul's letters.

Chapter four consists in the application of Oakes' archaeological, social, economic, and historical work to a reading of Rom 12. Oakes envisages four specific people who appear to have lived in the various low-income, low-status dwellings at the Pompeian excavation site analyzed in chapter one. Chapter five expands upon the reading in chapter four, attempting to isolate the specific exhortative, theological, and practical matters that would have been most significant for each class of the letter's hearers. Chapter six extends the type of treatment in chapters four and five, but with reference to how a Gentile householder (with minimal exposure to the Bible) would have received a letter with so much scriptural argumentation in it.

Oakes' book is commendable on many points. To begin with, thinking through the conditions of life of the probable audience of the letter cannot but help provide important checks on anachronistic interpretations of Romans. This is not to say that in God's wisdom Romans is irrelevant to God's people in all times, but simply that the original audience mattered and that Paul was quite specific in applying his scriptural gospel to the everyday circumstances of the churches he wrote. The focus on the practical outworking of the teaching of Romans in the real lives of the original audience should be applauded, especially in light of modern scholarly failures to engage sufficiently in this kind of interpretive work.

However, there are some potential problems with the book. First, it is not entirely clear how the probable audience Oakes reconstructs is substantially different from one that could be sketched on the basis of already available scholarly reconstructions of first-century life (primarily based on literary remains). As a minor, related point, many archeological terms are left undefined, which seems unfortunate for a book that appears aimed at non-archeologists.

Second, chapter two, on social and economic status in the first century, jumps straight into a complex debate which seems too ambitious for the mere twenty-three pages allotted to Oakes'



discussion. This chapter may end up distracting from the overall purpose of the book, and it does not seem to add significantly to Oakes' development of the probable reception of Romans even if Oakes' hesitant suggestions are correct about altering how ancient Roman poverty is conceived.

Third, throughout the book Oakes is so extremely tentative in a large number of his descriptions of archeological and socio-economic conditions that his claims for the probable reception of Romans feel burdened with the doubts attendant to such speculation (see for example pp. 57–60; 89–97).

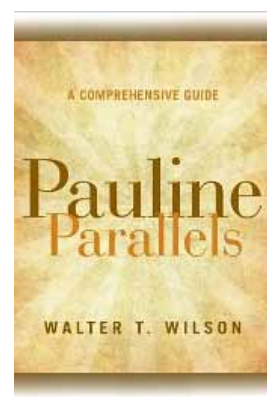
Finally, Oakes describes his book as “an exercise in considering the likely early reception of the letter” (p. 98), although allowing that it can secondarily be seen as shedding light on how Paul intended his letter to be heard. Oakes' consistent focus on probable reception could lead to a dismissal of either the importance of human authorial intention or divine canonical meaning in interpreting Romans if it was isolated as the *only* valid approach to understanding the letter. Oakes does not specifically advocate such conclusions, but neither does he seem to be especially interested in textual meaning, strictly speaking. Understanding the socio-cultural factors that likely shaped the reception of Romans is an important early step in the interpretive process, but by itself is not sufficient and can lead to distortions in interpretations if it becomes the controlling methodology for making sense of the letter.

Reading Romans in Pompeii is an interesting thought-experiment in placing Romans in its first century context, although it seems overly ambitious at points and overly centered on hypothetical reconstructions of possible responses to the letter. However, the book should get readers thinking in terms of what day-to-day life was like for the most likely audience of Paul's letter, a generally non-elite and poor assortment of people who had to deal constantly with many problems and issues that often go unnoticed by affluent, twenty-first-century Christians.

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Walter T. Wilson. *Pauline Parallels: A Comprehensive Guide*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009. xvii + 469 pp. \$49.95.

Pauline Parallels is a reference tool that will be useful for Pauline researchers, seminary students, and pastors who desire to be able to quickly find thematic parallels among Paul's own letters, as well as parallels between Paul and the rest of the NT, the OT, and non-canonical literature Jewish and otherwise. This version is a new edition of an earlier work edited by Fred Francis (first edition 1975) and Paul Sampley (second edition 1984). Wilson has changed the content and format of the work fairly substantially, while keeping the basic idea the same. Wilson uses the NASB instead of the RSV (which was used in the previous editions). This edition includes all thirteen letters that have been traditionally attributed to Paul, which expands the book in size and usefulness since the earlier editions were limited to the ten Pauline books thought by many scholars to be more safely attributable to Paul. Additionally, whereas Francis and Sampley focused primarily on parallels exhibiting similarities in literary structure and form, Wilson's primary criteria for inclusion include “the similarity of specific terms, concepts, and/or images between passages” (p. ix).



The key terms in parallel passages are italicized to make them easy to pick out. In order to save space, no parallels in the immediate context (i.e., immediately preceding or following paragraphs) of a single Pauline letter have been included. Although it is inevitably a subjective enterprise, one particularly helpful feature of the book is the attempt to locate OT allusions and echoes to Pauline passages, rather than being limited to obvious citations. The majority of parallels come from other places in the Pauline corpus and the rest of the NT and OT rather than from Jewish or Hellenistic sources.

Wilson urges readers to use this book in conjunction with other study tools, specifically concordances, since there are many significant terminological and thematic correspondences to any given passage in Paul that require careful comparative work beyond the scope of the material included in *Pauline Parallels*. An overall grasp of the language and main themes of Paul's letters will also make a book such as this one significantly more useful. In essence, Wilson wants to ensure that a book such as his is not used as a shortcut for the laborious—but indispensable—exegetical work that goes into any good sermon or exegetical paper. A particular danger in using a work such as this (a danger the author recognizes) is that one could be led to think that parallels in the English translation of the NASB reflect terminological parallels on the level of the Greek text of the NT. For example, 2 Cor 1:10 NASB translates a specific Greek verb as “deliver.” The parallel passages list Phil 1:19–20 because it uses the English noun “deliverance” (p. 189). However, the Greek root underlying this noun is not related to the Greek verb translated as “deliver” in 2 Cor 1:10. This is inevitable in a work that is completely limited to English parallels, but the exegete must be aware of such potential dangers and not assume that the mere presence of identical English words entails the presence of identical Greek words. The problem is obviously compounded when one moves into English words that are the same in a Pauline and non-Greek work (as in the Hebrew Old Testament or the non-canonical references included in this book). Even when the Greek root underlying a specific parallel English word is the same in both passages, one must be careful to attend to the specific way in which each author is using the word, since there is always a range of contextual meanings possible for any given word. *Pauline Parallels*, as the author recognizes, cannot replace careful lexical study. That being said, the primary benefit of the book is the thematic similarities that it highlights. In this regard, the presence of identical words in Greek or Hebrew is of much more limited importance than the way in which *Pauline Parallels* brings out thematic and conceptual connections such as that between the word “propitiation” in Rom 3:25 and other places in Paul that speak of Christ's death using sacrificial terminology (e.g., Rom 8:3; 1 Cor 5:7; Eph 5:2; cf. p. xiii).

If used carefully, and with other foundational exegetical tools, *Pauline Parallels* will be a helpful book for the pastor or student of Paul. Nothing in the book is particularly groundbreaking, since almost all of the parallels could be easily found by consulting commentaries and Bible dictionaries. Nonetheless, it does helpfully bring together much material that would otherwise be scattered across a wide range of resources.

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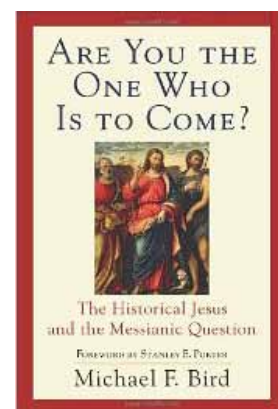
Michael F. Bird. *Are You the One Who Is to Come? The Historical Jesus and the Messianic Question*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009. 207 pp. \$22.99.

Mike Bird embarks on a daring task with this book. Birthed out of a series of articles originally intended for the *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus*, the present volume addresses the so-called “messianic self-consciousness” of Jesus, a topic long abandoned by most scholars. Bird opens his first chapter by providing a concise summary of the ebbs and flows of scholarship on this subject, carefully carving out his own place among the major scholars. Bird shies away from “self-consciousness” language in favor of “messianic self-understanding.” By this he means Jesus’ identifying himself “in a messianic role and couching his activities as messianic in character and purpose” (p. 29).

Chapter 2 overviews the essential factors and general characteristics of messianic expectations from Second Temple Judaism. For all its diversity, Judaism was united to a degree in its identification of its messiah(s?) as eschatological figures raised up to liberate Israel from its perceived travail and suffering. This requires Bird to navigate through and beyond the simple title *meshi’ach* to delineate criteria that “takes into account the texts that were read messianically by Jews and Christians” (p. 43). The thrust here seems to be Bird’s advocacy for movement beyond mere titular ascriptions as the sole, or even primary, category for determining subsequent messianic claims.

Chapter 3 confronts objections to the historical Jesus as a messianic claimant. Here Bird shows commonly posited reasons are lacking. Instead, evidence indicates that while Jesus as the Messiah has a definite pre-Easter history among his disciples and opponents, his response to his Messianic identification remained ambiguous from the very start. This is because Jesus “refused to conform to any particular mold or to any one set of eschatological expectations” (p. 76). Yet, importantly, Jesus acted in such a way as “to quite *deliberately* arouse messianic hopes” (Bird’s emphasis, p. 76). The question, then, is why messianic hopes arise in the pre-Easter period at all if Jesus repudiated the messianic role? Bird addresses this question in the next two chapters.

In chapters 4 and 5, Bird describes and evaluates all the arguments both for and against regarding the historical Jesus as a messianic claimant. First, in chapter 4, the author proposes that Jesus deliberately acted out and played on messianic motifs in the course of his ministry and teaching. Bird is looking for a “smoking gun” that explains the rise of messianic beliefs in the pre-Easter period and finds persuasive evidence that Jesus’ career was “performatively messianic” as opposed to being messianic in the titular sense (p. 78; though, presumably he means *exclusively* titular here). He examines Son of Man language, the depiction of Jesus as the Anointed One of Isaiah, and his “I have come” statements. Bird finds that Jesus was “defining his own role in the saving reign of God that was already bursting in among the political and religious realities of Galilee and Judea” (pp. 114–15). Next, in chapter 5, Bird tries to account historically for the origins of messianic ascriptions at various points in the Gospels (Peter’s confession, the anointing at Bethany, the Triumphal entry, the Trial, even the origins of the term “Christians” [*Christianoi*]). Bird opts for a holistic analysis of the origins of these disparate traditions. He finds in Jesus’ messianic claims, messianic actions, evocation of messianic hopes, a career that could be designated as performatively messianic. In Bird’s estimation, “The only plausible explanation is that a very large number of them, including eyewitnesses and personal contacts, actually believed in the historical reality of these claims” (p. 159). This is followed by a final chapter (ch. 6) where Bird



evaluates what is at stake in this debate for modern theology and what significance can be attached to the confession “Jesus is the Christ.”

This is a very sensible book. Frequently Bird draws attention to the most glaringly obvious holes in long-held arguments and leaves them absurdly inexplicable. At the end of the day, the sayings of Jesus cannot be treated in isolation from the deeds of Jesus when answering the question of Jesus’ messianic self-understanding. Bird shows this must take seriously historically verifiable actions of Jesus, which he finds to be profoundly messianic. The author relentlessly goes back to the authenticity question. Admittedly, some of his arguments are more plausible than others, and it is not always clear that Bird has established the pre-Easter origin or historical authenticity for the traditions he cites. But the cumulative effect of the evidence mulled over in this volume makes a very compelling case indeed. In general, the book is concise yet sufficiently thorough, accessible yet astute, engaging and informed.

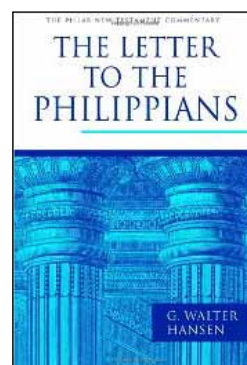
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G. Walter Hansen. *The Letter to the Philippians*. Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009. xxxiii + 355 pp. \$44.00.

In this latest contribution to the Pillar New Testament Commentary series, G. Walter Hansen brings his expertise in the Pauline epistles to Philippians. The result is a helpful exposition of the text that deserves wide use among pastors and theological students.

The introduction treats the standard topics. Hansen takes seriously the “Roman-ness” of Philippi, noting its history and the prominence of the imperial cult. Paul writes a letter of friendship (with elements of deliberative rhetoric) to this Gentile church from prison in Ephesus. In the midst of thanking the Philippians for their financial partnership in gospel-ministry, Paul addresses three problems in the church: disunity, suffering, and opponents. These opponents are divided into four groups: (1) preachers of Christ who are stirring up problems for Paul; (2) Roman opponents intimidating the Philippian believers; (3) Jewish Christians urging Gentile Christians to practice Jewish rituals; and (4) Gentile Christians who live as enemies of the cross because of pressure from their pagan Roman environment. In response Paul stresses two key themes: the gospel of Christ and the community in Christ.

The ultimate test of any Philippians commentary is how one handles the so-called Christ hymn of 2:5–11. Eschewing the false dichotomy between the ethical and doctrinal interpretations, Hansen sees the passage as an early Christian hymn originating from a Hellenistic Jewish-Christian missionary context. Rather than positing one particular framework as the interpretive key, Hansen sees allusions to the Isaianic Servant of the Lord, Adam-Christ typology and even the imperial cult. Based on the contention that the expression “form of God” equals “glory of God” in 2:6 and the echo of Isaiah 45:23–24 in 2:10–11, Hansen concludes that 2:5–11 asserts the full deity of Christ without compromising Jewish monotheism.



Another passage full of exegetical and theological land mines is 3:1–14. Here Hansen shows commendable skill as well. In response to the tension between Paul’s claim to being faultless under the Law (3:6) and his assertion in Gal 3 that all who fail to keep the Law are under a curse, Hansen stresses the very different polemical contexts. Multiple parallels are noted between Paul’s transformation (3:5–11) and Christ’s incarnation-crucifixion-exaltation (2:5–11). According to Hansen, Paul’s reference to his own righteousness (3:9) cannot be limited to his membership in the Jewish nation, but rather includes his own personal achievements under the law.

This commentary shows many strengths. In addition to being well-written, three in particular stand out. First, Hansen steers a wise course between the Scylla of reading the imperial cult behind every sentence and the Charybdis of altogether ignoring its significance for several passages in Philippians. The similarities in vocabulary between the imperial cult and some of the key terms in Philippians means that those living in Roman Philippi would have recognized the challenge that the good news of Jesus as Lord and Savior posed to imperial propaganda. Second, Hansen helpfully culls through the vast secondary literature and draws attention to what is most helpful. The result is a readable exposition of the text that addresses the most important issues without bogging the reader down. Third, Hansen repeatedly notes intertextual connections within the letter itself. This enables the reader to see the threads that tie the letter together as a cohesive discourse.

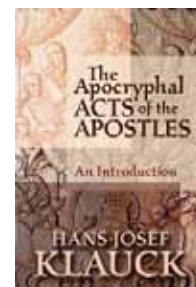
Despite this last strength, Hansen does not do much with the macrostructure of the letter. The outline he proposes captures the major divisions of the letter, but could have done more to show the relationship between the respective sections. The commentary is also thin at points with respect to making connections to other passages in Paul or the rest of Scripture on key themes. While this helps keep the focus on Philippians itself, Hansen occasionally misses opportunities to help the reader see how a particular passage fits into the larger canonical context.

Hansen is to be commended for a good, general-use commentary on the letter. It does not match the technical detail of O’Brien, the careful comprehensiveness of Fee, the concise profundity of Bockmuehl, or the frequent idiosyncrasies of Hawthorne. But it is a worthy addition to the Pillar series and deserves to be consulted by Bible study leaders, Sunday School teachers, theological students, pastors, and scholars as well.

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Hans-Josef Klauck. *The Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles: An Introduction*. Translated by Brian McNeil. Waco: Baylor University Press, 2008. 290 pp. \$39.95.

The writings of the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles are required reading for the student inquiring into the history, culture, and religious sensibilities of earliest Christianity. These writings can be found in the second volume of Wilhelm Schneemelcher’s *New Testament Apocrypha: Writings Related to the Apostles, Apocalypses and Other Subjects* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992). While it is understandable that these texts have been ignored due to the particular theological vision they propound (often in accord with Gnosticism and asceticism), the somewhat bizarre



miracles that the apostles are said to have performed, and the overall critical stance that the mainstream church adopted toward these texts, these writings are an indispensable resource for the student of the NT and early Christianity and provide fascinating material for comparison with the canonical Acts of the Apostles. The serious study of these texts can helpfully demonstrate the canonical decisions made by the early church, the diverse and complex religious environment within which the early Christians participated, and the expression of theological sensibilities that the mainstream early Church considered outside the bounds of orthodoxy.

Hans-Josef Klauck's book, therefore, fills an important lacuna in NT scholarship by providing a detailed introduction to the various writings that make up the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles, the most important being *The Acts of John*, *The Acts of Paul*, *The Acts of Peter*, *The Acts of Andrew*, *The Acts of Thomas*, and *The Pseudo-Clementines*. Klauck, a graduate of the University of Bonn and the University of Munich, now teaches New Testament and Early Christianity at the Divinity School of the University of Chicago. Klauck is uniquely suited for this project given that much of his scholarly research has been devoted to situating the NT writings within the historical and religious environment of the Greco-Roman world.

Klauck structures each chapter, which is devoted to one of the particular Apocryphal Acts, into three parts: context, contents, and evaluation. He also provides helpful bibliographical sections throughout each chapter, which makes further inquiry much more manageable. In each "Context" section, Klauck examines the earliest external witnesses to each particular text. The significance of these texts is demonstrated by an examination of their reception in early Christianity. The reader learns, for example, that Augustine quoted portions of the "dance hymn" from the *Acts of John* (p. 16), that the figure of Thecla from the *Acts of Paul and Thecla* became the most popular female martyr in the early church, and that the Manichaean Psalter frequently quotes from the *Acts of Andrew* (p. 114). One of the frustrating difficulties involved in working with these texts is their complicated compositional history, and Klauck briefly summarizes the details involved therein. Questions of genre, date, and provenance are also discussed in this section.

The bulk of Klauck's work is devoted to describing the "Contents" of each text. This section is not, however, a simple summary but is rather a highly engaging interpretation of the most important components of each work. Thus, Klauck argues that the passion narrative of the *Acts of John* attempts to correct the Synoptic and Johannine narratives by arguing that the Christ did not really suffer (pp. 33–37). Klauck suggests that the baptized lion (cf. 1 Cor. 15:32) in the *Acts of Paul* symbolically portrays, in Platonic language, the redemption and extinction of sexual desire (pp. 63–67). Klauck presents a balanced interpretation of "The Song of the Pearl" in the *Acts of Thomas*, noting its gnostic overtones as well as its allusion to Synoptic parables (pp. 165–67). And Klauck helpfully summarizes and interprets the Marcionite theology of Simon Magus in the *Pseudo-Clementines* (pp. 214–216).

Each chapter ends with a short section devoted to the "Evaluation" of each text. These sections enable Klauck to make some brief comments regarding the importance and purpose of each text. He suggests, for example, that the group behind the *Acts of John* comports well with the description of the opponents of the community behind 1 John (p. 41). The importance of the Christian family and the emphasis on the dangers inherent to pagan religion suggests, says Klauck, that for the author of the *Pseudo-Clementines* "the clash with the pagan world is obviously far from finished" (p. 228). The similarities between Tatian and the *Acts of Thomas* with respect to the renunciation of marriage and sexual activity, the emphasis on the reunification of the human soul with its heavenly spirit, and the

reinterpretation of the rituals of baptism and the Eucharist suggest a common Syrian origin according to Klauck (pp. 177–78).

For most readers, the world of the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles is as fascinating as it is foreign. Klauck's introduction to these texts is a helpful guide for all who would explore the world opened up by these texts. One aspect that makes this book so successful is Klauck's ability to succinctly interpret complex material. Nevertheless, I had hoped that Klauck would address more directly, and in more detail, the complex relationship between these texts and the canonical Acts of the Apostles. For example, were these writings intended as replacements of, or supplements to Acts? Or were they written independently of Acts? Additionally, a discussion of the reason that the Acts of the Apostles was received into the NT canon whereas these texts were excluded would have been illuminating. These minor criticisms do not take anything away, however, from the value of this book. Students and scholars alike will benefit greatly by using this text as a starting point for research and study of the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles.

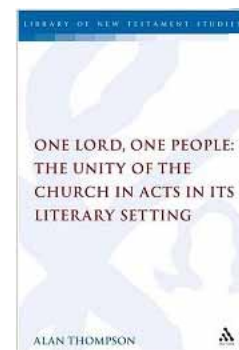
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Alan J. Thompson. *One Lord, One People: The Unity of the Church in Acts in Its Literary Setting*. Library of New Testament Studies 359. New York: T&T Clark, 2008. xiv + 218 pp. \$130.00.

Few students of the Acts of the Apostles are unaware of the long history of interpreters who think that the book is historically inaccurate because it presents an idealized portrait of a unified Christian community that was actually a diverse movement. Numerous monographs and articles have been devoted to select issues (e.g., the Apostolic Council, the Hebrews and Hellenist episode, and the portrait of Paul) where Luke's concerns have supposedly caused him to erase any hint of conflict and instead paint a portrait of the movement as unified and as resolving disputes quickly and peacefully. Most of the literature on this subject, however, has been dominated by either questioning or affirming the historicity of these select episodes, rather than pursuing what Luke's literary interests may have been.

In addition to this neglect of any sustained literary analysis of the theme of unity, the motif of discord and strife has often been ignored. Furthermore, interpretations of Acts have frequently failed to situate the theme of unity and discord within ancient discussions of unity as it relates to constitutions, kings, and rulers. *One Lord, One People*, a reduced version of Alan J. Thompson's dissertation completed at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School under the supervision of David W. Pao, seeks to redress this deficit by asking whether ancient understandings of unity and discord are reflected in Acts' literary portrait of the church and, if so, to what purpose (see his "Unity in Acts: Idealization or Reality?" *JETS* 51 [2008]: 523–42 for further discussion regarding historicity).

In chapter 2, Thompson succinctly demonstrates the prevalence of evaluating rulers and constitutions on the basis of their ability to secure unity for the people. Herodotus, for example, attributes successful military conquests to the unity created by the victorious ruler and attributes defeat to discord (e.g., *Histories* 5.3). The belief that kings were evaluated on the basis of the unity and harmony they brought



to their people lies behind both propagandistic claims for Alexander the Great as well as for the Roman Empire (e.g., Plut., *Alex. fort.* 329; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 2.2.2; 2.11.2). Thompson also demonstrates the prevalence of this theme in the Old Testament. For example, Chronicles is particularly concerned to demonstrate the “unanimous participation of ‘all Israel’ in the kingship of David and Solomon” (p. 31). It is all of Israel who is of “one mind” to exalt David to kingship (1 Chr 12:38); the entire Israelite assembly is present and in agreement to bring back the ark to Jerusalem (13:1–4); and all of Israel is in agreement that Solomon should succeed David as king (29:21–24). Likewise, numerous prophetic texts foresee a day when a messianic ruler will unify the people of God (e.g., Ezek 34:5–23; 37:15–28; Isa 11:10–13; Zech 2:11; 3:10). Not only rulers but also their constitutions were praised or disparaged according to whether they resulted in unity. The Roman constitution, according to Polybius, is superior, for it inspires harmony in its people such that they are consistently successful in repelling menaces to the order (*Historiae* 6.11–18). Plato’s famous advocacy of a community of goods is situated in his wider discussion of how to accomplish perfect unity and eradicate dissension in an ideal state (*Republic* 462–64). In *Against Apion*, Josephus argues that the unity of the Jews is a direct result of the Torah which promotes “friendly relationship with each other . . . and humanity towards the world at large” (2.146).

In chapter 3, Thompson turns to Acts and argues that Luke presents the church and its constitution as embodying true unity (rather than uniformity or unity as an abstract ideal) that is characterized by its common submission to their king—the risen Lord Jesus. Thus, Luke’s glowing description of the unity of the Jerusalem community in 2:42–47 is based upon their submission to their risen and exalted ruler (2:17–41). Thompson notes that Acts 2:33 suggests that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit is a result of the Messiah’s exaltation and that the stretch of Acts 4:32–5:16 reveals the Spirit as a unifying force in the community. The unifying role of the Spirit is indicated in the contrast between the Spirit-filled community who share all things in common and the divisive activity of Ananias and Sapphira who are filled with Satan (5:3) and lie to the Spirit (5:3, 9). Thompson further notes that in ancient discussions, much was often made of the division between Asia and Europe. Thus, it is of great significance that the gospel moves from Asia to Macedonia as a result of the unifying power of “the Spirit of Jesus” (Acts 16:7). Thompson demonstrates that Luke’s narrative presentation of the unity of the early Christians (e.g., 2; 4:32–35; 6:1–7; 8:26–40; 10–11; and 15), situated in its Hellenistic and Roman context, is part of Luke’s claim that “the Christian community is the ‘best’ community in contrast to competing claims from unbelieving Jews and Romans” (p. 82).

In chapter 4, Thompson examines Jewish and Greco-Roman conceptions of unity and discord and demonstrates that in these discussions unity was the primary characteristic of victorious peoples and was necessary for the survival of the city. Discord, on the other hand, characterized the conquered and often led to the city’s defeat. This argument paves the way for Thompson’s analysis of Luke’s description of the conquest of the word in chapter 5. Where Luke demonstrates the conquest of the word in the midst of opposition, he also highlights the unity of the church against the strife and disunity of its opponents. In numerous texts, Thompson notes how the opponents of the word are divided, filled with strife, and provoke riots (e.g., Acts 14:4; 17:5–8; 19:23, 29, 32, 40). Luke never, however, portrays the Christian community in this manner, but often describes it as unified (e.g., Acts 20:17–38). The conclusion is obvious: the unity of the church, in contrast to its opponent’s disunity, demonstrates that it is the people of God.

Thompson's work should be required reading for the student of Acts. His treatment of ancient discussions of unity and discord as the context for reading Luke's descriptions of the same theme is superb. His decision to examine both Greco-Roman and Jewish texts as the context for understanding Luke's thought-world should be commended as he avoids the pitfalls of emphasizing only one set of texts as well as the pitfall of positing questionable direct dependence. While Acts' "unity texts" (2:42–47; 4:32–35) have received an enormous amount of scholarly attention, Thompson generates new insights with his attention to the political language of strife and discord that is present in cities where the word's advance is opposed

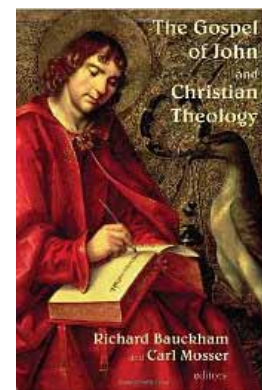
While the work lends itself directly to those interested in Luke's ecclesiology, the work also contributes to Luke's larger christological claim that it is only the risen Lord who can secure true unity. At certain points, more detailed exegesis of select passages would have been welcome, but the competent exegete can easily fill much of this in on his or her own.

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Richard Bauckham and Carl Mosser, eds. *The Gospel of John and Christian Theology*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008. xxiv + 404 pp. £21.99/\$32.00.

The Gospel of John and Christian Theology is a collection of essays initially given at a conference at the University of St. Andrews, Scotland. Richard Bauckham, who hosted the conference and writes the introduction to the volume, states that "the aim was to bring biblical scholars and systematic theologians together in conversation about a biblical text that has played a formative role in Christian Theology through the centuries" (p. x). In this effort, Bauckham and the other contributors collaboratively pursued this overdue conversation and thus endeavored to bridge the great divide between the disciplines of biblical studies and theology. It is in this framework, that biblical scholars and systematic theologians equally employed their theological skills to engage in a variety of topics, including the Gospel of John and our pluralist context, Johannine Christology, recent scholarship on Johannine studies, the contentious phrase "the Jews" in John, the relationship between John and history, issues pertaining to the historical reliability of the Lazarus narrative, and the relevance of the Fourth Gospel to contemporary theological discourse.

These fine essays emphasize the theological, philosophical, and practical implications of the Fourth Gospel. Both Stephen C. Barton and Miroslav Volf contribute essays on the interplay of Johannine dualism and contemporary pluralism. With theological and exegetical sensibility and rigor, Barton and Volf insist that the dualities of John must be analyzed contextually in their historical milieu. They reject the traditional approach that generalizes Johannine conceptual dualities. D. Jeffrey Bingham demonstrates how the Gospel's own testimony on the motif of the divine aseity provided for Irenaeus both the theological and doctrinal resources to refute Gnosticism. Rowan Williams succinctly surveys the Anglican approaches to the Gospel by examining the work of four scholars: B. F. Westcott, John A. T. Robinson, E. C. Hoskyns, and William Temple. Williams concludes, "historical mediation is essential to



a distinctively Christian account of the knowledge of God” (p. 80), which was made possible exclusively through the agency of Jesus. C. Stephen Evans and Richard Bauckham assess the historical reliability of John in light of the involved participants in the narrative. Evans argues that the Gospel of John presents itself as a living testimony, the testimony of the Beloved Disciple, whereas, Bauckham contends that the category of testimony presented in the Gospel of John is “the key to the way in which history and theology relate and cohere in the narrative of this Gospel, and to the way in which historical belief and confessional faith should relate and cohere in Christian reading of this Gospel” (p. 120).

Stephen Motyer, Judith Lieu, Terry Griffith, and Sigve K. Tonstad examine “the Jews,” perhaps the most debatable phrase in the Gospel. Motyer, who has already penned a penetrating monograph on the topic (*Your Father the Devil: A New Approach to John and “The Jews,”* 1997), forcefully contends that “the Jews” refers predominantly to Jews who were the most strict adherents of the Torah. Lieu, however, disagrees with Motyer’s thesis by suggesting different strategic readings of the phrase and its functionality in the Gospel’s narrative. This is followed by a discussion of another controversial topic in the Gospel: the raising of Lazarus. Andrew Lincoln demonstrates the centrality of the Lazarus story to the literary and theological depth of the Gospel. Marianne Meye Thompson analyzes the Lazarus narrative to show what a “theological interpretation” might entail in contrast to a purely “historical reading.”

Johannine Christology is the focus of attention in the next section. Martin Hengel engages with the Prologue of John’s Gospel and argues that it is a highly poetic and theological discourse that articulates God’s revelation through the Incarnate Word as Jesus Christ. He maintains that the Prologue is an original component of the Gospel and the main source material of the early church’s creedal confessions of Jesus as God and Lord. Paul N. Anderson pursues a similar methodology of diachronic and synchronic integration in reading Prologue as in his former work (*The Christology of the Fourth Gospel: Its Unity and Disunity in the Light of John 6*, 1996). He carefully shows the Christological and theological tensions in the Gospel and identifies the dialectics of divine and human aspects of the historical Jesus in relation to his role and function, Johannine particularity and universality, as well as present and future eschatology.

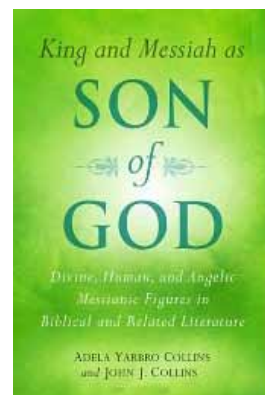
The last division of the book, “Using John in the Theological Task Today,” is an attempt to appropriate the Gospel to theological meaning and implications for constructive Christian theology and Christian living. In a careful analysis, Anastasia Scrutton proposes that the Gospel of John articulates revelation as the means of salvation and communion with God. Jürgen Moltmann employs the notions of space and indwelling to express the dynamic exchange between the Triune God and his creation, particularly of God’s dwelling among his people in ancient Israel that is extended in the Gospel of John. This Johannine *perichoresis*, Moltmann posits, is “mutual indwelling” (“abide in me, I in you”), “the mutual penetration of two heterogenous natures, the divine and the human, in Christ the God-human being” (p. 373).

The book is not without controversy. Of particular attention is the different ways writers address Christology and “the Jews.” However, this collection of essays celebrates and witnesses the present state and future potential of biblical studies and Christian theology. *The Gospel of John and Christian Theology* demonstrates the benefit of interdisciplinary study and helps to bridge the gap between Christian theology and biblical studies. We can only hope such dialogue will continue.

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Adela Yarbro Collins and John J. Collins. *King and Messiah as Son of God: Divine, Human, and Angelic Messianic Figures in Biblical and Related Literature*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008. xiv + 261 pp. £18.99/\$28.00.

This work began as a series of Oxford lectures in 2006 and represents a collaborative effort by two of the brighter lights in the contemporary scholarly firmament. What makes the book unique and sets it apart from other recent studies on messianism is its avowed focus on “the specific question of the divinity of the messiah” (pp. x–xi) and how “Christian belief in the divinity of Jesus must be seen to have emerged in the context of the fluid and changing Jewish conceptions of the messiah around the turn of the era” (p. xi; cf. p. xiv). To that end, and playing to their respective areas of expertise, the book contains four chapters on the Old Testament by John J. Collins and four on the NT by Adela Yarbro Collins.



The first four chapters describe how pre-exilic Israelite religion viewed kings as divine, largely as the result of Egyptian influence, and how remnants of this thinking can be found in some of the royal psalms (ch. 1). The deuteronomists and prophets vigorously repudiated this view of the monarchy, though a trace of it survived in the otherwise anomalous depiction of king Hezekiah’s birth as a “mighty god” in Isa 9:6 (ch. 2). The LXX translators, influenced by the ubiquitous ruler cult, found the older view of kingship congenial and therefore translated the older divine kingship passages literally (e.g., Pss 2; 45; 89; 110); and the DSS (i.e., 4Q174; 4Q246) similarly ascribe divine status to the Jewish messianic king (ch. 3). This trend continues in the developing son of man tradition in which a variety of (sometimes amalgamated) angelic (e.g., Dan 7) and messianic figures are portrayed as having divine status (ch. 4).

The burden of the first four chapters is thus to show that kings in the ancient world were variously styled “god” or “son of god” or “begotten by god” and given divine honors; that Judaism, in spite of the vigorous repudiation of deuteronomists and prophets, likewise viewed its kings as divine; and that Judaism viewed the messiah as the superlative eschatological king (pp. 1–2, 42–43, 71). The upshot, with a proviso regarding the diversity and lack of “orthodoxy” within ancient Jewish messianic conceptions (p. 100; cf. p. 45), is that nothing could be more natural or Jewish than to view the messiah, *qua* king, as divine: “In the context of first-century-CE Judaism, it is not surprising or anomalous that divine status should be attributed to someone who was believed by his followers to be the messiah” (p. 100; cf. p. 206). The fact that substantial sectors of first-century Judaism apparently did react, precisely on this score, toward the apostolic kerygma with what might drolly be termed “surprise” is not explained, unless their reaction reflected “the dominant attitude in biblical tradition” (one is tempted to call it orthodoxy) that “insists on a sharp distinction between divinity and humanity” (p. 24; cf. p. 115).

The last four chapters describe how this trajectory continues into the NT such that to speak of a person as messiah is tantamount to affirming that person’s divinity. The NT contains a variety of formally contradictory “early christologies” (p. 149), yet all of them affirm Jesus’ divinity—a sort of common denominator between them. This remains the case whether Jesus is viewed as messiah (a divine king), son of man, or son of God—three epithets that are “equivalent” and interchangeable (p. 104; cf. p. 183)—or whether he is viewed as wisdom, the logos of Hellenistic Jewish speculation, an agent of God, or an angel (i.e., as the first and greatest creature of God). The upshot of these four

chapters is, again, that nothing could be more natural or Jewish than viewing the messiah as divine: “In the Hellenistic ruler cults and especially in the imperial cults, men who were once human beings were honored and worshipped as gods. . . . Given the practices of the imperial cults, it is not surprising that Jesus was viewed as a god and that worship of him became an alternative to the worship of the emperor” (p. 174). The impact of this cultural environment on Judaism (cf. pp. 131–32) is especially conspicuous in the nativity stories, which are analogous to, inspired by, and evocative of Greek and Roman stories about gods “fathering sons by human women” (pp. 137–38, 145). These stories, however, were demythologized and “adapted to a Jewish context” (p. 138) in part by viewing the holy spirit (lower case) as an impersonal “divine force or power” (p. 136; cf. p. 145) and not as a divine person or “a heavenly being” (p. 190n67).

Alongside this vigorous insistence on the divinity of Jesus throughout the NT, two important caveats are noted. First, this does not mean that Jesus was God or that he was equal to God or that he was the second person of the Trinity (cf. p. 180n27). He was indeed “divine” but only to a lesser degree; and, correspondingly, he was not worshipped “in the full sense” but was given only relative worship or obeisance (p. 212; cf. pp. 100, 206–7). Second, while the NT pervasively affirms Christ’s divinity, the bulk of it does not portray Christ as preexistent. There is, for example, no evidence for his preexistence in the Synoptic Gospels (pp. xiii, 209) and none in the book of Romans (p. 121n74). Only once, in the prose hymn of Phil 2, does Paul clearly affirm Christ’s preexistence (pp. 116, 147).

Christ is surely preexistent in Phil 2, though the conclusion is obtained somewhat circuitously: Jesus was not “equal to God”; he existed, however, “in the form of God,” which is taken to mean that he had “a divine form” (p. 115) and was “the preexistent messiah” (pp. 148, 208), that is, a preexistent (divine) king. The proffered interpretation of Phil 2 would have benefited greatly from interaction with N. T. Wright’s definitive essay on the passage as well as from interaction with some of the major commentaries (none are referred to here). The same could be said of the proffered interpretation of Romans. The lack of such dialogue partners may be understandable in a lecture format but is less so in a published work, especially one containing what some might see as a number of remarkable, if not radical, assertions.

At a more systemic level, the book may also raise one or more of the following concerns for some readers: (1) The authors do not always avoid a certain kind of parallelomania (or trajectory-mania). The connections between different texts, traditions, corpora, layers of redaction, and variant readings occasionally appears to be stretched quite thin. (2) There is a fairly endemic definitional problem (pp. 22–24 and 213 notwithstanding) with reference to “divinity,” what it means to be God and not someone (or something) else, what it means to be “divine” as over against merely “divine-like” or divine “in some sense,” whether divinity permits of degrees, and whether a being who is more powerful or heavenly or transcendent or preexistent or supernatural than others is *ipso facto* more divine than others. (3) Finally, the book leads inexorably to the conclusion, *de rigueur* now in much contemporary scholarship, that Nicene (orthodox) Christianity has no real basis in the NT; but perhaps that is only to be expected when the christologies of the NT themselves are said to have no real basis in the life or teachings of Jesus, who saw himself only as a prophet and not as a king or as the messiah or as the son of man whose future coming he anticipated (pp. 166, 171–73) or, presumably, as divine in any sense of the word. Prophet that he was, on this view, one suspects that he might have vigorously repudiated both sets of subsequent developments as the speculations of those who (to borrow a turn of phrase) exchange the truth of the historical Jesus for a lie and worship and serve the creature.

The book remains quite readable in spite of its density and erudition and is must reading for anyone interested in the Old Testament and ANE view of kingship or in the christology (or christologies) of the NT. It would especially make profitable reading alongside the opposing construals of Hurtado or Bauckham, with whom there is, regrettably, all too little interaction (one paragraph). The book lays out a remarkable trajectory indeed, and readers of all kinds will doubtless be in for an interesting ride.

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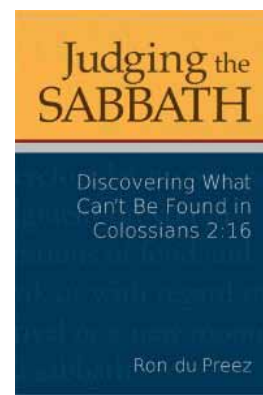
Ron du Preez. *Judging the Sabbath: Discovering What Can't Be Found in Colossians 2:16*. Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2008. 190 pp. \$19.99.

Ron du Preez has a ThD in theological ethics from the University of South Africa, a DMin in missions from Andrews University, and is currently a PhD candidate in New Testament Studies at the University of Western Cape. He has taught theology and ethics in colleges and universities in North America and Africa. The clearest statement of the author's thesis is that "the 'sabbath' of Colossians 2:16 must necessarily be understood to refer to the ceremonial sabbaths of the ancient Hebrew religion, and not to the seventh-day Sabbath enshrined explicitly in the Decalogue" (p. 89).

The author develops his case in two parts. He writes the first part (chs. 1–9) for all readers and the second part (chs. 10–14) for more technical readers. Chapter one is a history of interpretation of Col 2:16. Chapter two analyzes the 111 occurrences of *šabbāt* in the Hebrew Bible and provides linguistic markers for distinguishing the different types of sabbaths. Specific terms (keep, the, day, holy, My) signal a reference to the Seventh-Day Sabbath, while other terms (afflict, weeks, of the land, her/its/she, your) show that another Sabbath is in view (pp. 19–21). Chapter three challenges the claim that the LXX uses the phrase *sabbata sabbatōn* as a designation for the ceremonial sabbaths. Chapter four examines the sixty-nine uses of "sabbath" (*sabbaton* or *sabbata*) in NT Greek. Chapter five surveys the use of *šabbāt* and *sabbata* in relation to the ceremonial sabbaths of the ancient Jewish calendar (i.e., the Day of Atonement, the Day of Trumpets, and the Sabbatical Years).

Chapter six surveys and calls into question the scholarship concerning the calendar sequence and exegesis used to support the common "yearly-monthly-weekly" interpretive paradigm of most commentators. Chapter seven examines the use of the Hebrew *hag* and the Greek equivalent *heortē* in relation to the Hebrew and Greek terms for "sabbaths." Chapter eight looks at the immediate context of Col 2:16 and how the ceremonial sabbaths are a shadow of things to come. Chapter nine summarizes part one.

Chapter ten begins part two of the study with a look at Paul's use of the Old Testament. Chapter eleven surveys the connections between Col 2:16 and Hos 2:11. Chapter twelve examines the chiasmic parallelisms in Hosea and how this awareness influences one's interpretation of Hos 2:11. Chapter thirteen looks at the literary, structural, and grammatical factors that support his reading of Col 2:16 in relation to Hos 2:11. Chapter fourteen offers a concluding summary. He also includes four appendixes.



This book is perhaps the best defense to date of a Sabbatarian perspective concerning Col 2:16. Interpreters of this crucial text cannot simply dismiss du Preez's case without taking time to interact with his thesis and his arguments. The book has a logical layout that aids in the development of the thesis. It is also user-friendly in the sense that the author is sensitive to the needs of both technical and non-technical readers.

Though this book is a vigorous defense of the Sabbatarian reading, the present reviewer would classify it as a vigorous defense of a very weak position. There is simply too much stacked against this reading to make a successful defense of it. The author acknowledges the challenge of ascribing a ceremonial meaning to *sabbatōn* in Col 2:16 (pp. 41–42). His proposed reading is rare to say the least; it is the only alleged example of this meaning out of sixty-nine occurrences.

Furthermore, the reader sometimes will sense that the author is guilty of special pleading or elaborate exegetical gymnastics in order to defend his reading. For example, large segments of the book tackle the issue of identifying the Old Testament parallels behind Col 2:16. His chapter on the use of the Old Testament in Paul claims that Hosea is the obvious candidate because Paul quotes Hosea three times and alludes to it once, while he only alludes to Ezekiel three times and never utilizes Nehemiah or Chronicles (pp. 100–101). The present reviewer questions the minimalistic nature of these statistics and this overall methodology.

The author engages in these comparisons because he sets his sights on dismissing the traditional “yearly, monthly, weekly” interpretive scheme for the phrase “festival or a new moon or a Sabbath” (Col 2:16 ESV). He observes that eighty-eight of the ninety-two commentaries he surveys (from 1861 to 2005) defend the yearly-monthly-weekly sequential reading of Colossians 2:16 (p. 56). The traditional reading frequently appeals to Old Testament precedents for this sequence in eight passages (Num 28–29; 1 Chr 23:29–31; 2 Chr 2:4; 8:12–13; 31:3; Neh 10:33; Ezek 45:17; Hos 2:11). The author dismisses the first seven passages as true parallels because they have four or five items in the sequence instead of three (p. 59, 63). Chapter 11 argues that only Hos 2:11 is a real parallel for Col 2:16 because it consists of three items in the same sequence and has similar semantic markers (see his six reasons on p. 106).

This analysis is problematic for three reasons. First, the author does not sufficiently take Lev 23:2 into account. Here the Hebrew term for “appointed times” (*moed*) serves as an inclusive term for the wider Jewish system, which includes the Seventh-Day Sabbath (Lev 23:3). Second, the inclusive nature of “all her appointed times” (*moed*) in Hos 2:11 could show that God will put an end to the wider Jewish system of Lev 23, which includes the Seventh-Day Sabbath. Third, it is questionable to assume that Paul could not have multiple parallels in mind in Col 2:16. Why does an additional item in the sequence eliminate similar texts from consideration?

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J. R. Daniel Kirk. *Unlocking Romans: Resurrection and the Justification of God*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008. 245 pp. \$19.99.

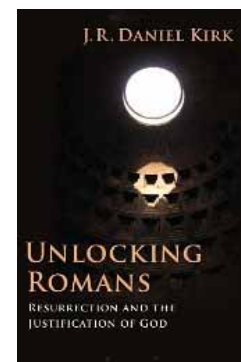
J. R. Daniel Kirk is assistant professor of New Testament at Fuller Theological Seminary. This book represents a revision of his doctoral thesis under the supervision of R. B. Hays at Duke University. The preface is important because Kirk asserts that the work of three of his former professors exercised a formative influence upon his thinking: R. B. Gaffin, E. P. Sanders, and R. B. Hays. He highlights that his “debt to the exegetical and theological insight of both Profs. Hays and Sanders is evident throughout” (p. x).

The book’s title provides the reader with a helpful tool for remembering the book’s thesis. In *Unlocking Romans: Resurrection and the Justification of God*, Kirk asserts that the resurrection of Jesus functions as a unique interpretive key for unlocking the book of Romans. Kirk clarifies this claim in the sense that the resurrection serves “to probe Romans in a more coherent manner than can be done using traditional focus points such as justification or union with Christ” (p. 204). He also uses sweeping substitute phrases for the word “key” such as “the focal point of Romans” (p. 217).

The second part of the subtitle reveals the author’s case that Romans is essentially a theodicy. The key issue behind this theodicy is the interpretation of God’s promises to Israel (p. 10). Therefore, if Romans is a theodicy relating to God’s promises to Israel and if the resurrection is “the focal point of Romans” (p. 217), then that begs this question: As the focal point, what role does resurrection play in the theodicy of Romans with regard to God’s promises to Israel? This is his clearest answer: “resurrection is the most pervasive theme of the letter and it functions throughout as a hermeneutical key for reinterpreting the Scriptures and stories of Israel” (p. 8). Therefore, the resurrection “serves the purpose of vindicating God as faithful to Israel despite all appearances” (p. 10). In this way, he claims that his study reaches the same point that Richard B. Hays reached in his reading of Romans: “Paul’s argument is primarily an argument about theodicy, not about soteriology” (p. 216).

This book has both significant strengths and weaknesses. In terms of strengths, Kirk brings the resurrection into clear focus with tenacious consistency. He has a helpful chapter on the various roles that the resurrection concept played in early Judaism followed by chapters devoted to in-depth exegetical discussions of key resurrection passages in Romans. This detailed exegetical approach allows the resurrection refrain to gain a gradual degree of familiarity to the reader. This awareness creates an atmosphere that is conducive for following Paul’s flow of thought. Detecting this unsung theme helps to ensure that it will not continue to suffer from scholarly neglect (cf. p. 11n40).

He also strikes a balance in showing that the resurrection is both a *frequent* theme (Rom 1:4, 16–17; 4:16–23; 5:9–10, 15–21; 6:1–23; 7:1–6; 8:1–39; 10:1–13; 11:13–15; 13:8–14; 14:1–12; 15:12) and a *controlling* theme in that it “casts a shadow over the letter that is longer than the particular verses that mention it explicitly” (p. 11). I agree with his assessment that “some of these references are clearer than others” (p. 11). Scholars will continue to question some of them, but the fact of the resurrection’s sheer frequency in Romans is not open to debate. Furthermore, he perceptively contrasts this frequency with the relatively infrequent ways the same theme shows up in somewhat similar letters like Galatians. These strengths stand regardless of one’s conclusion on the precise part the resurrection plays with regard to soteriology or theodicy.



The book also has significant weaknesses. One could question exegetical decisions (like “the one who is righteous by faith” [Rom 1:17] or “the one who has died” [Rom 6:7] as references to Christ, see pp. 47–48; 113) or disagree with points of application (like Protestants asking Catholics for forgiveness in our pursuit of ecclesiological unity, see pp. 233–34). However, perhaps the most perplexing weakness is that he often assumes the New Perspective interpretation of Paul without further discussion. Kirk occasionally refers to dissenting opinions from Moo’s commentary on Romans or Francis Watson, but one looks in vain for detailed interaction with other authors or works like the two volumes on *Justification and Variegated Nomism* or others of the “Lutheran” Perspective on Paul.

An author needs to ask if his or her view can defend itself in the intellectual coliseum called Pauline studies. Making a successful defense means at a minimum that one must advance counterarguments that accurately assess the strengths and weaknesses of the contrasting perspective. Kirk’s approach seems out of touch at this very point. Have we really moved to a Post-New Perspective era in which dissenting voices are marginalized and ignored and the NPP is assumed? If we have reached such a time, then I apologize for missing the memo.

Therefore, an honest evaluation of this work points in two directions at once. On the one hand, although this work fills a lacuna in Romans studies at one level, it is also difficult to avoid the conclusion that this work falls into the ditch of “one-sided scholarship” at another level.

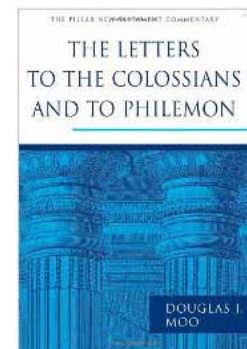
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Douglas J. Moo. *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*. Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008. 480 pp. \$44.00.

Douglas J. Moo is Blanchard Professor of New Testament at Wheaton Graduate School. His previous commentaries include the NICNT and NIVAC volumes on Romans, the NIVAC volume on 2 Peter and Jude, and the PNTC and TNTC volumes on James. This review begins by summarizing Moo’s conclusions on some introductory matters in Colossians and Philemon. I also survey the body of the commentary in order to survey Moo’s conclusions on notable exegetical issues in both letters. Finally, I offer a concluding assessment of the commentary.

Concerning introductory issues in Colossians, Moo presents a very full defense of Pauline authorship (pp. 28–41), slightly favors the position that Paul is writing from a Roman imprisonment in A.D. 60–61 (pp. 41–45), and adopts Clinton Arnold’s proposal concerning the “Colossian heresy” as a syncretistic mix of “Phrygian folk belief, local folk Judaism and Christianity” (p. 57). Moo also has an excellent analysis of the letter’s theology concerning Christ, cosmology and the powers, the church, the gospel, eschatology, and the Christian life (pp. 60–71). These theological emphases are “polemical thrusts” designed to persuade the Colossian Christians from falling prey to false teaching in Colossae (pp. 60–61).

Concerning introductory issues in Philemon, Moo concludes that Paul is the author (p. 361) and the primary recipient Philemon (but the other recipients named show that this issue is not merely a private matter) (p. 362). Paul wrote the “private” letter of Philemon and the general letter to the Colossians



from an imprisonment in Rome in A.D. 60–61, and then Tychicus carried them both to Colossae (pp. 363–64). Moo leans slightly toward the “runaway slave” hypothesis as opposed to the more recent “dispute mediation” hypothesis for two reasons: (1) Paul’s preference to keep Onesimus demonstrates that sending him back is a difficult step, which does not fit the scenario of Onesimus himself planning to go back after the dispute had reached a satisfactory resolution, and (2) Paul’s emphasis on the “changed spiritual condition” of Onesimus appears to show the main issue is not a “past quarrel,” but a new situation arising from Onesimus’ conversion (pp. 368–69).

In terms of notable exegetical issues in Colossians, I begin with the most famous passage in the letter: Colossians 1:15–20, which Moo calls a “veritable academic cottage industry” (p. 109). Concerning the origin of the hymn, many debates rage over whether Paul has written, quoted, or redacted this “hymn.” Moo favors the latter option in saying that Paul has “quoted and redacted an earlier hymn” (p. 110). In terms of its purpose, Paul placed it at this point so that the high Christology of the “hymn” would undercut the tendency of the false teachers to “question Christ’s exclusive role in providing spiritual growth and security, and, thereby, his exclusive role in the universe at large” (p. 111). In terms of sources, he posits that the “wisdom/word” tradition and the creation story from Genesis form the two main background sources of the hymn (pp. 112–13). In terms of structure, the hymn has two main stanzas (vv. 15–16, 18b–20) and a transitional stanza between (vv. 17–18a).

Concerning other exegetical issues in Colossians, Moo argues that the “powers” are personal beings, not demythologized societal institutions (pp. 65, 123), even though he takes the *stoicheia* as a reference to “cosmological elements,” not “spiritual beings” (pp. 189–90). Moo sees Paul’s suffering in Col 1:24 as responding to what is lacking in Christ’s affliction because Paul’s suffering is an “extension of Christ’s work in the world” (p. 152). These sufferings are not redemptive; they represent the inevitable corollary of his apostolic commission (p. 153). Moo favors the subjective genitive view of Col 2:12—the circumcision Christ performs as a metaphor for conversion (pp. 198–200). He states that Col 2:16 calls Sabbath observance into question for Christians (p. 222), and he concludes that Col 2:18 is an objective genitive—“worship offered to angels” (p. 227).

Concerning exegetical issues in Philemon, Moo divides the letter into four parts: introduction (vv. 1–3), thanksgiving (vv. 4–7), letter body (vv. 8–20), and letter closing (vv. 21–25). Moo reads verses 16 and 21 as a reference to Paul’s subtle request to grant Onesimus his manumission (pp. 424, 436). His comments on whether Paul endorses slavery are very balanced in both Col 3:22–4:1 and the whole of Philemon. Moo argues that Paul undermines the institution of slavery even though he never explicitly commands all Christian slave owners to release their slaves. He suggests that NT authors like Paul “did not always recognize all the implications of the theological principles that they themselves enunciated” (p. 377). Moo is quick to note, however, that the book of Philemon is not ultimately about slavery, but about “the fellowship that is the product of our mutual faith in Christ” (p. 378).

It is impossible to write a commentary that will persuade all readers to adopt all of one’s conclusions. For example, I remain unconvinced concerning his position on the Colossian heresy, I doubt that the *stoicheia* can be limited to “cosmological elements,” and I would also read the genitives differently in Col 2:12 and 2:18. However, let me be quick to add that readers should not turn to commentaries for their conclusions but for their arguments. Moo’s commentary shines at just this point. Moo is a top-tier commentator because he carefully and fairly canvases other views, evaluates their strengths and weaknesses, and then clearly and judiciously shares the reasons that cause him to adopt one position over the others. Moo also has a welcome ability to see and share contemporary application that grows

organically out of his exegetical conclusions, while still adhering to the standards of the commentary series, which seeks to avoid “confusing the commentary with the sermon” (p. viii). For these reasons, I commend Moo’s commentary very highly.

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Pablo T. Gadenz. *Called from the Jews and from the Gentiles: Pauline Ecclesiology in Romans 9–11*. Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2.267. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009. xi + 393 pp. \$157.50.

Father Gadenz (b. 1967) is a Roman Catholic priest, ordained since 1996, and Assistant Professor of Biblical Studies at the Immaculate Conception Seminary School of Theology at Seton Hall University in South Orange, New Jersey. He earned an MDiv and MA from St. Charles Borromeo Seminary, an SSL from Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome, and an STD from Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome. This monograph slightly updates his doctoral dissertation, which he defended in June 2008.



Gadenz is not testing a thesis but instead approaches Rom 9–11 inductively. His objective is “to investigate Paul’s ecclesiology in Rom 9–11, as it is communicated through his discussion of the network of relationships between Israel and the nations” (p. 3). There are three such relationships: Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians; non-Christian Jews and Gentile Christians; and non-Christian Jews and Jewish Christians (pp. 2, 316–17). He argues that his approach to Rom 9–11 makes a distinctive contribution because he uses rhetorical analysis and appreciates how Jewish traditions of Paul’s time influence how Paul reads the OT (pp. 3–7). In particular, he concludes that the Jewish traditions Paul draws on include three themes from “restoration eschatology”: regathering the twelve tribes of Israel, saving the nations, and expecting the Davidic Messiah (pp. 6–7).

His investigation proceeds in three steps:

1. He overviews Rom 9–11 (70 pp.). Gadenz follows a common threefold division of Rom 9–11 (9:6–29; 9:30–10:21; 11:1–32) with an introduction and conclusion (9:1–5; 11:33–36).
2. He analyzes Rom 9:6–29 (51 pp.); 9:30–10:21 (31 pp.); and 11:1–32 (151 pp.), focusing most on how the “remnant” and the people of God in 9:24–29 and 11:1–32 relate to others inside and outside the church. He interprets $\pi\acute{\alpha}\varsigma$ Ἰσραήλ in Rom 11:26a as every individual Israelite Christian throughout history plus a significant number of the non-Christian Israelites who are alive at the time Christ returns (pp. 275–80).
3. He draws conclusions about Rom 9–11 in four areas: rhetorical analysis, restoration eschatology and OT background, exegesis, and ecclesiology (11 pp.).

Gadenz’s research is generally very good. He is preoccupied with the Greek text of Rom 9–11, though primarily at the level of rhetorical criticism, and he responsibly interacts with most of the significant secondary literature on Rom 9–11, including occasional references to evangelicals like Douglas J. Moo and Thomas R. Schreiner. He relies most heavily—and perhaps too heavily—on the French publications

of his *Doktorvater*, Jean-Noël Aletti. Other than calling it the *peroratio*, he virtually ignores the significance of Rom 11:33–36 (though I am probably biased because I am writing a dissertation on Paul’s use of the OT in Rom 11:34–35).

His exegesis is unconvincing at some key points. For example, he denies that Rom 9:6a (“But it is not as though the word of God has failed”) is the overarching thesis of all three chapters (pp. 9, 30–33, 83, 88). Instead, he thinks that Rom 9–11 is primarily about the implications of Israelites rejecting Jesus. So he argues that rather than being a theodicy, Rom 9–11 primarily encapsulates Paul’s ecclesiology with reference to Israelite and Gentile relationships. But that is a theme that Paul does not develop until chapter 11, so Gadenz calls chapters 9–10 “digressions” that eliminate anticipated objections before addressing the main issue.

I was hoping to observe how Gadenz’s exegesis of Rom 9:30–10:21 compares theologically with Protestants, particularly regarding righteousness, the law, works, faith, and salvation. But his exegesis of this section is selective; he qualifies, “Our interest here focuses on the contrast between ‘Israel’ and ‘nations’ described in the units at the beginning (9,30–33) and at the end (10,18–21) of the subsection” (p. 136).

Disagreements aside, Gadenz’s research is valuable for technical studies of Rom 9–11 and the various relationships between Israelites and Gentiles in the early church.

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David Luckensmeyer. *The Eschatology of First Thessalonians*. Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus; Studien zur Umwelt des Neuen Testaments Band 71. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009. xi + 463 pp. £80.00/\$116.00.

This is a substantially rewritten version of the author’s 2005 PhD dissertation from the University of Queensland. The central thesis of the book is that ‘eschatology is the best hermeneutical key to interpret Paul’s pattern of exhortation in First Thessalonians’ (p. 2). Eschatology, argues Luckensmeyer, gives Paul the ability to ‘explain why the Thessalonians are experiencing conflict *and* encourage them to a constructive new community identity’ (p. 4). So, for example, in 1:8–10 we have both a ‘rupture between the Thessalonians’ previous idol-worship and subsequent turning to serve the living and true God (v. 9)’ and the ‘essential elements of integration’ whereby community members wait for God’s son to come and deliver them from wrath (v. 10; p. 4). Further, Luckensmeyer argues that eschatology is the only category ‘in which *all* the systematic concerns of the letter may be incorporated’ and is ‘*the* key concept’ of the letter (p. 18).



In treating the eschatology of the letter, the volume fills an important lacuna in studies of 1 Thessalonians. However, it does more than that because, as Luckensmeyer argues, since eschatology is the hermeneutical key to the entire letter, a work on this topic will provide a significant contribution to our understanding of the letter as a whole.

In the introduction, Luckensmeyer provides a review of secondary literature through the lens of other important topics for the letter (e.g., ‘expectation of salvation and resurrection’; ‘word of the Lord’; ‘conflict’). These are briefly examined to determine ‘how well [the particular] topic is able to explain the systematic concerns’ of the letter (p. 18).

In chapter 2, Luckensmeyer gives an epistolary analysis of the letter. Here he seeks to combine epistolary and rhetorical analyses and thus move towards a consensus on the structure of the letter as well as to explore ‘the relationship between form and function’ (p. 47). Luckensmeyer argues that the customary label ‘letter-body’ should be eliminated and the term ‘main part’ employed which can be analysed in a way appropriate for each individual letter (p. 72). Luckensmeyer analyses the ‘main part’ of 1 Thessalonians as follows: letter-thanksgiving (1:2–10), disclosure of past-present relationship (2:1–16), apostolic parousia (2:17–3:13), and letter-paraenesis (4:1–5:22). Luckensmeyer argues that the structure he offers ‘reveals the rhetorical significance of eschatological motifs *in virtually every epistolary section* of First Thessalonians’ and so ‘offers tangible evidence’ that his thesis is correct (p. 48).

In chapters 3–6, Luckensmeyer provides detailed exegesis of four texts (1:9–10; 2:13–16; 4:13–18; and 5:1–11) that stand as ‘fundamental representatives of the eschatological discourse in the letter’ (p. 5). Although he deals with other texts in passing, Luckensmeyer concentrates on these texts because of their distinct content, their position and structure, and their debated interpretations throughout history (p. 5). A number of these passages contain contentious issues, and Luckensmeyer often provides very extensive summaries of the different positions. So on 4:13–18, he provides an excursus in tabular form laying out the different proposals (from Peterson in 1930 to Ascough in 2004) concerning the Thessalonians’ problem(s); Paul’s answer(s); the referent of λόγος κυρίου in 4:15; and the question of Jewish and/or Hellenistic influence in the passage (pp. 192–211).

In the conclusion to the book (ch. 7), Luckensmeyer again contends that Paul’s eschatological emphasis underpins his pattern of exhortation, which explains the community’s disintegration and encourages their new communal identity (pp. 325–26). He ends with a call to apply his conclusions to discussions of Paul’s eschatology in other letters and, more broadly, to the earliest Christian *kérygmata*.

The general thesis of the book is convincing. Luckensmeyer shows the centrality and pervasiveness of eschatology as well as the way that Paul employs it to explain the Thessalonians’ predicament and to encourage their identity. Eschatology is not merely an important topic but woven into the fabric of the letter at the deepest level. Perhaps, however, the greatest strength of the book is the thoroughness with which Luckensmeyer deals with the passages he examines. Though one may not agree with all his exegetical conclusions, the meticulous treatment of both the text and the secondary literature is exceptional.

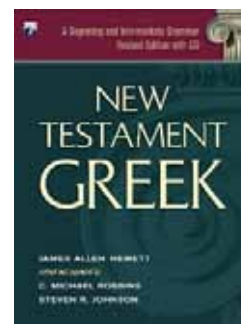
However, there is one serious problem with the book. While Luckensmeyer stops short of suggesting that Paul simply constructs the eschatology that he employs (p. 45), at the same time he rejects the ‘erroneous conclusion’ that the eschatological occurrences Paul depicts (e.g., the apocalyptic end of the world, the resurrection of the just and the unjust, etc.) are ‘literally expected’ (p. 315). He suggests that ‘Paul uses eschatological motifs to develop a contemporary and powerful rhetorical message for his recipients’ so that, for example, the *parousia* of the Lord should be understood as a ‘metaphorical expression of eschatological expectation’ (p. 315). While this truncated understanding of the relationship between Paul’s rhetoric and extra-textual reality may not actually hinder Luckensmeyer’s analysis of the text, it prevents the work from exposing the full theological depth and power of Paul’s letter.

Though the volume is expensive, it is a helpful resource and is recommended for those working on 1 Thessalonians—especially the texts in question. This book will stand as a significant point of departure for Thessalonian studies for a number of years to come.

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James Allen Hewett. *New Testament Greek: A Beginning and Intermediate Grammar, Revised Edition with CD*. Revised and expanded by C. Michael Robbins and Steven R. Johnson. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2009. xxiv + 326 pp. \$34.95.

I won't soon forget my first dining room table Greek lesson with my beloved and learned Uncle Gene. As the long-time curator of the Rare Book Room at the University of Illinois, he read many languages, and he agreed to teach me a little Greek. The grammar he put before me was a slim, red, nondescript volume called simply *New Testament Greek: A Beginning and Intermediate Grammar* by James Hewett. I don't think I made it very far in the grammar before moving on to seemingly more important matters in my twenty-year-old life, but I've always had that book around my office. When offered the opportunity, now twenty years later as a Greek professor, to review a revised and expanded edition of this grammar, I jumped at the chance. Like many other teachers, whenever a new Greek grammar appears I eagerly search it, hoping in a Austen-ish way that it will be "the One," only to be disappointed. The first two chapters of this grammar stirred my forlorn heart to hope again. Overall, the grammar does have much to commend, but alas, my search must continue.



As the title indicates, this book is indeed a significantly revised and expanded edition. While the original structure of the book is basically the same (and this will prove its greatest weakness), the chapters have been rewritten to simplify and clarify and with an ear to "more recent discussions in Greek grammar" (p. xiv). There are many additional tables and charts, and there is a greater sensitivity to page layout so that paradigms don't break across pages as was typical in most grammars before the 1990's. The new edition has a nice feel and stays open when laid on a desk, unlike the original. English to Greek exercises have also been added. In continuity with the first edition, vocabulary words in each chapter are helpfully grouped by part of speech (contra Mounce or Croy). Accents are still found throughout the book, but their rules have been moved to an appendix. Also, as is typical of grammars today, the book includes a CD that contains additional resources. In this case, there are PDF documents of the book's appendices and a key to the exercises. There is also a group of pedagogical software programs ("Greek Tools") for learning the alphabet, vocabulary, pronunciation, and parsing. These programs seem well enough made, but nothing revolutionary compared to many other such programs readily available elsewhere.

The biggest and most helpful additions are the two new introductory chapters and the way that paradigms are presented with a greater sensitivity to morphology. The first chapter provides a simple and linguistically aware introduction to basic English grammar. This will serve students well and replaces the need for a supplemental text for this purpose. Most welcome is the editors' new chapter 2,

“Meaning,” which deftly introduces readers to the issues of semantics in a very readable eight pages. This clears important ground for students as they begin their Greek study and is something I have not seen discussed in any other grammar. On the issue of morphology, when they introduce verbal paradigms, the editors strike a nice balance between the morphology of the “true” uncontracted endings (e.g., -, ζ, -, μεν, τε, σι[ν]) and the traditional full, contracted paradigm (e.g., λύω(λύεις, etc.). They present both, giving the uncontracted forms as the endings, but then also providing the actual paradigm as it appears already contracted with the connecting vowels. I appreciate that both are given as this allows students to learn and teachers to teach as they would desire, while avoiding the rhetoric of some who would argue that only a purely morphological approach makes sense (I teach a hybrid, requiring memorization of the contracted paradigms while explaining morphological patterns all along). One oddity is that the authors do not follow the same pattern when presenting noun paradigms, instead providing only the contracted forms.

Despite the positives noted above, I think this grammar in its present form has some pedagogical defects. First, it is unclear what the authors think about verbal aspect. Their discussion shows signs of understanding something of the contours of the debate (though with no footnoted references, it is hard to tell), yet at the same time they basically present an *Aktionsart* view under the rubric of “verbal aspect.” This is not uncommon in elementary grammars today, but one always hopes for a more updated discussion.

The much bigger issue concerns the structure and ordering of the chapters. In addition to some oddities such as presenting -μι verbs (ch. 18) before the ever-important participles (chapters 19–21), the decisions about what to include in each chapter need to be reconsidered. Simply put, there are too few chapters, and they contain too much information; the book has 23 Greek-teaching chapters, compared to 30 in Mounce and 32 in Croy. In this the editors follow Hewett’s original pattern but to their detriment. For example, chapter 5 contains an explanation of the full nominal case system, the second declension noun paradigm, the introduction of adjectives, the various adjectival positions, and the verb εἶμί. Similarly, chapter 13 presents the “Verbal System: Primary Middle Endings, Indicative Mood; Deponent Verbs; Future of εἶμί; Nominal System: Reciprocal Pronouns.” This pattern continues throughout the book. For most students this is too much of a hodge-podge to take in during one class period and maybe even during one week. The response may be that the teacher is supposed to break up the chapter across more than one class period. However, then the teacher would be in the infelicitous position of having to teach a portion of the chapter per class period but then being unable to assign the exercises since they assume *all* the material in the chapter. Why not break up the material into smaller, more manageable chapters, each with their own exercises? It would be far better to have more and smaller chapters with more exercises for each. Indeed, for such long chapters with so many new concepts in each, a mere fifteen sentences are given for practice (plus some in English to Greek), and most if not all of these appear to come only from the NT. Thus, the students have many concepts to deal with at once but with little translation practice, the bread and butter of language learning. I fear the end result of this little translation work—especially coming only from familiar texts such as the NT—will be a shallow grasp of the language. The authors might defend the density of the chapters by referencing the book’s subtitle, “A Beginning and Intermediate Grammar.” While there is some information that goes beyond most elementary grammars, it is certainly far from an intermediate-level discussion. Additionally, in some of the chapter headings, the material is presented as “The Basics” versus “A Step Beyond,” but in the actual text of the chapters, this distinction is lost, not being marked as such. Moreover, this seems at times an overly arbitrary distinction. For example, 6.7 presents first

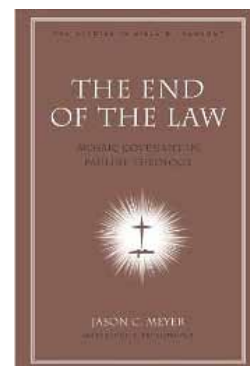
class conditionals as basic information (is this really necessary at this early stage?), while 5.9 classifies as “A Step Beyond” the important knowledge that in translation there will often be the need to supply certain words.

In sum, then, while the content of this grammar is generally good and basically on par with other grammars available, the structuring of the content and the paucity of translation practice makes this volume, in my opinion, not one’s best choice available for Koine Greek instruction.

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Jason C. Meyer. *The End of the Law: Mosaic Covenant in Pauline Theology*. NAC Studies in Bible and Theology 6. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2009. xx + 331 pp. \$19.99/£12.99.

Theological students risk drowning under the tsunami of recently published books on the topic of the Mosaic law. This is one text that is worth reading since it is something of a lifeboat to sanity on a tortuously convoluted subject. Meyer’s thesis is that “Paul conceives of the Mosaic (old) covenant as fundamentally non-eschatological in contrast to the eschatological nature of the new covenant” (p. 1). This means that Meyer believes there is a fundamental discontinuity between the dispensation of Israel living under the Mosaic law and a Christian believer alive today. The Mosaic law failed to impart spiritual power and life. The New Covenant imparts the Holy Spirit’s power to all who put their faith in Jesus. The framework Meyer utilizes to interpret Scripture clearly subscribes to much continuity as well, but he emphasizes discontinuity to a degree more pronounced than is usual in evangelical circles. Notwithstanding, his book presents a compelling case that his position—far from being eccentric—is the view of the NT.



The opening chapter sets the theological scene by sketching the approaches taken to the Mosaic law by scholars. Meyer correctly points out that few writers explain what precisely is ‘old’ about the old covenant. They promulgate a spectrum of views on continuity and discontinuity. The covenantal nomism which is the fountainhead of much modern writing on the law ‘fails to explain fully the differences between the “old” and “new” covenants because of a faulty understanding of grace’ (p. 5).

The second and third chapters outline how Paul views continuity and discontinuity and methods he uses to speak of the law when not actually using the word. These chapters helpfully orient readers. They are lucid, concise, and far more concerned to understand what Paul really said than many other modern texts which aspire to that mantle. Helpful though they are, these chapters are merely the prelude; the real meat of the book is found in chapters four through seven.

These four chapters are detailed, but not dense, exegesis. They look at the Mosaic law as represented in 2 Cor 3–4, Gal 3–4, Rom 9–11, and the Old Testament. Meyer’s view is not a slur on the Mosaic law. The law ‘kills not because it is inherently evil, but precisely the opposite, because it is inherently good’ (pp. 83–84). Believing that the new covenant is superior to the old covenant was what inspired Paul with confidence: ‘Paul’s confidence and boldness result from his belief that his ministry is qualitatively

superior to Moses', precisely because of the contrasting inherent natures of the two respective covenants' (p. 114).

Meyer is clearly a well-trained exegete. These chapters cover some of the most complex texts in the NT. They are a pleasure to read not only due to his deft interpretive judgments, but because he combines just the correct amount of lexical study with the necessary big-picture framework. Meyer's consideration of the Mosaic law in the Old Testament itself (ch. 7) forces him to be highly selective in which arguments he explores. His conclusions are reliable, but one hopes there will be a future work expanding his many unspoken insights upon the Old Testament issues. He summarizes that Deuteronomy commands Israel to circumcise their hearts while Jeremiah promises that God will do this to them. The image of circumcising the heart 'first appears as a command issued in order to safeguard against exile. God's people never fulfill this obligation and suffer the curses of the covenant. Yahweh himself must circumcise and transform the heart' (p. 261–62).

The final chapter summarizes the thesis and applies it to various modern issues. The most humbling of these applications is that much more spiritual power is available to modern Christians than old covenant Israel: 'It is indeed a sad reality when the church of Jesus Christ under the new covenant looks and lives too much like the people of Israel under the old covenant' (p. 279). Some reasons that Meyers mentions include modern evangelistic techniques and membership policies. His passing mention of approaches to church membership and discipline would need expansion or qualification, as there is some diversity of opinion within evangelicalism, but the foundational critique hits home. With regard to ethics, Meyer dismisses most contemporary writing on the topic as overly rationalistic. Ethicists tend to focus on discerning what is morally right or wrong. The Bible fills the gap between knowing and doing the good, by giving Christians the spiritual power to become somebody good (p. 280). Even where we fail to do what we know is good, a theology such as Meyer outlines enables us to understand the reasons for our failures.

The NT speaks often of the Mosaic law. Enabling Christians to think correctly about it is a fundamental part of helping believers to mature and enter fully into the experience of all that Christ's death procured for them. The theological perspective of this book is that advocated by Richard Sibbes in the Puritan era and both Douglas Moo and Michael Horton in the modern. That is, that the Mosaic law was a temporary covenant which lacked the spiritual power offered in the new covenant. Many today look at the Mosaic law through the lens of the New Perspective, Reformed scholasticism, or deontological ethics. This book is essential reading because it challenges us to try looking at the Mosaic law through the lens of the NT. Take a peek; it is liberating.

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Andreas J. Köstenberger, L. Scott Kellum, and Charles L. Quarles. *The Cradle, the Cross, and the Crown: An Introduction to the New Testament*. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2009. xxi + 945 pp. \$59.99.

Numerous introductions to the NT continue to appear, which is hardly surprising since they serve as textbooks in beginning NT classes. The volume under consideration may be the best of the recent crop. The work begins with a useful study of Scripture and the canon, which is fitting given the claims made by the documents studied. The second chapter ably surveys the historical context in which the NT was written, which is a very helpful addition for professors who want to expose students to the NT world but do not wish to add another book to the required reading list.



The heart and soul of the work examines each book in the NT, and the authors are to be commended for creativity and appropriate depth. The outline for each chapter is the same: they examine history (author, date, situation), literature (structure, outline and survey of the book), and theology (key theological themes). The book is nicely packaged with a creative layout so that the reader is treated to maps, sidebars, charts, and other features that are inviting. Introductions are not typically exciting books to read, but the authors have done a fine job of writing in a style that is accessible for ordinary readers. For instance, each chapter begins by distinguishing between basic, intermediate, and advanced knowledge of the subject matter, explaining clearly what level of knowledge fits with each category. Another feature that makes the book user-friendly is a chart at the beginning of each chapter that itemizes key facts, such as, author, date, provenance, destination, occasion, theme, purpose, theme, and key verses. Each chapter also concludes with bullet points that summarize what the book in question contributes to the canon and then lists a number of study questions that assist the reader in reviewing major points in the chapter. Each chapter also contains a section called “Something to Think About,” which applies some truth of the book to the reader.

The book is not only user-friendly; it represents careful and up-to-date scholarship. For instance, they helpfully survey and evaluate the quests of the historical Jesus (including the third quest), the recent spate of alternate Gospels (mainly gnostic) that are proposed today, and the New Perspective on Paul. These discussions will surely prove to be useful to students as they navigate current controversies. Many introductions treat only historical issues, and the authors of this volume engage such questions with appropriate depth. The book is enriched, however, by the study of the major theological themes of each book, which I found to be particularly helpful. Furthermore, the bibliographies that conclude each chapter are up-to-date and useful.

Theologically, the authors are clearly conservative evangelicals. They defend the historical reliability of the Gospels and the authenticity of the sayings of Jesus. Acts is not merely an edifying narrative but is also true to history. Many scholars now accept pseudonymity in the NT, particularly in 2 Peter and the Pastoral Epistles, but the authors of this volume (rightly in my judgment) reject pseudepigraphy, arguing that pseudonymous documents were not accepted as canonical. The approach of the authors hermeneutically is quite traditional: each chapter particularly focuses on the history of the document under consideration. The influence of Guthrie and more recently Carson, Moo, and Morris is evident. The focus on history, though denigrated by some today, is salutary since the NT books are earthed in a particular historical and social context.

No book is perfect of course. History and theology are handled very well in this volume, but it would be helpful if the literary structure of each book received more discussion. Typically this section of the book is quite brief and is followed by an outline of the book and a survey of its contents. The book is already quite long, and so one can understand that the authors did not want to lengthen it further. Perhaps, though, the history section could be abbreviated and the authors could tackle more profoundly the literary arrangement of each book.

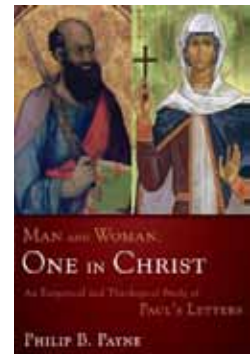
I was a bit surprised that in the discussion of eschatology in Thessalonians that the writers affirm that premillennialism is supported by the teaching that church will suffer near the end (p. 455). Whatever one's view on the millennium, it is mystifying why this argument fits only with premillennialism. Virtually all amillennialists think the church will suffer greater persecution before Christ returns as well. I also found the discussion on how faith and works cohere in Paul and James a bit thin (pp. 721–22).

Certainly no one will agree with everything in a book that is so comprehensive. We can be thankful for the scholarship, the reverence for God's word, and the accessibility of this volume. I suspect it will be adopted as a text in many classes.

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Philip B. Payne. *Man and Woman, One in Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Paul's Letters*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009. 511 pp. \$29.99.

Philip Payne has studied and worked on the issue of the role of women in the home and the church for thirty-six years. It can be said, then, that this work is the culmination of a lifetime of study and represents his *magnum opus*. Those who are familiar with Payne's work will know that he is an egalitarian, and here he argues forcefully for an egalitarian reading of all the major texts in Paul. Payne's approach differs from William Webb's, for the latter endorses a complementarian reading of the major texts but argues on the basis of his trajectory hermeneutic that the application of the biblical text must go beyond the scriptural word. Payne never mentions Webb and contends instead that the biblical text from the beginning supports an egalitarian reading. In Payne's view, then, there is no need to go beyond the Bible. In that sense he is an old-fashioned egalitarian, for he thinks a straightforward reading of the Bible supports his interpretation.



Much of what Payne says in the book is not new, representing arguments that he and others have made for many years. On the other hand, a multitude of arguments are given in support of the proffered thesis. It not surprising, then, that Payne concludes that the evidence supporting his view “is as strong as an avalanche” (p. 462). A sampling of some of the arguments presented should be helpful. In contrast to the Hellenistic and Jewish culture of his day Paul's view of women was more progressive. Therefore, Paul appropriated, according to Payne, the egalitarian vision enunciated in Gen 1–2 and the rest of the Old Testament Scriptures. Galatians 3:28 proclaims the equality of men and women in Christ, and the text cannot be restricted to soteriology. Social and cultural implications follow from Paul's bold declaration in Galatians. The fundamental equality of married couples is confirmed by 1 Cor 7. Ephesians 5:22–33

in no way contradicts this since the text teaches mutual submission (Eph 5:21). Furthermore, the word *kephalē* is understood to mean “source” instead of “authority over.”

Probably the most significant contribution of the book centers on Payne’s study of 1 Cor 11:2–16 and 14:34–35. What stands out is Payne’s long discussion on whether Paul refers to a veil/shawl or the need for women to wear their hair bound up on their heads. Payne supports the latter option with an array of arguments. When it comes to 1 Cor 14:34–35 Payne maintains that it is an interpolation. According to Payne, the text must be interpolated because the Western text tradition would not have placed the verses after verse 40 if they were part of the original text. Furthermore, the distigme (“two horizontally aligned dots in the margin,” p. 232) in Codex Vaticanus support an interpolation. Payne also detects support for an interpolation from Codex Fuldensis and MS 88.

Payne’s reading of 1 Tim 2:11–15 does not break new ground, though he again rehearses some of his former work. The present tense “I do not permit” in 2:12 refers to a temporary prohibition. The *oude* linking “teach” and *authentēin* signifies a single coherent idea. Paul prohibits women from wrongly assuming authority that was not delegated to them. The “for” in 2:13 does not provide a reason that women should not teach but is illustrative. Most important, Eve’s deception is related to the women in Ephesus who were purveying the false teaching (2:14). Paul’s restrictions on women were never intended to be comprehensive but address a particular situation in which women were promulgating heresy. The promise of salvation through childbirth refers to the salvation that is ours through the incarnation (2:15).

Payne valiantly defends the egalitarian cause. Much of what he says could be accepted by complementarians. For instance, complementarians also believe that men and women are equal in Christ and fully share the divine image. One could endorse the notion that there are social implications to Gal 3:28, though complementarians would differ from Payne regarding the nature of those implications. I found Payne’s long defense of a reference to “hair” rather than a shawl or a veil in 1 Cor 11:2–16 quite fascinating. One’s view on that matter, however, says nothing about whether one is a complementarian or an egalitarian. Complementarians could even agree that 1 Cor 14:34–35 is an interpolation (though see below) and derive their view of male/female roles from other texts.

Payne hopes that his book will bring consensus, but that is highly doubtful. His “avalanche” approach sometimes has the feel of throwing in everything but the kitchen sink to support his view. I suppose all of us in the debate are partisans, but Payne’s frequent listing of all the reasons that support his view often smacks of overkill, particularly because some of the reasons given are not terribly strong. Payne falls prey to lexical, grammatical, and interpretive mistakes in his interpretation of 1 Tim 2:11–15, so it seems to me that the objections raised against an egalitarian reading in my earlier essay still stand (“1 Timothy 2:9–15: A Dialogue with Scholarship,” in *Women in the Church: An Analysis and Application of 1 Timothy 2:9–15*, pp. 85–120, 235–57).

Perhaps one other issue should be addressed briefly. Readers might think that the evidence supporting an interpolation is quite impressive after reading Payne’s discussion of 1 Cor 14:34–35. But the evidence is scarcely as strong as Payne suggests. The unwary reader may fail to recognize that the verses are not missing in any of the manuscripts. Peter Head has recently suggested at SBL (New Orleans, 2009) that the distigmai were added in the sixteenth century. In any case, the verses are *included* in Codex Vaticanus. Payne’s reading of Fuldensis and MS 88 is debatable. Whatever one makes of such evidence, it is hardly overwhelming. Payne and others think it is impossible that scribes would

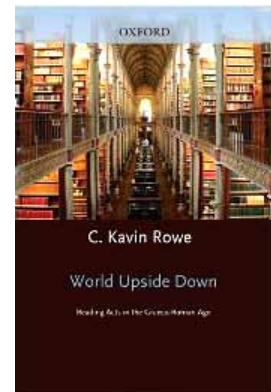
move the verses, but I would argue that a scribe may have done this very thing to keep the discussion on prophecy together.

Payne is to be thanked for the tone of his book, for he is fair and respectful (even though he feels very strongly about this matter!) with those with whom he disagrees. Furthermore, complementarians will be gratified to see his high view of scripture. I suspect that Payne's book will not have a great impact. Most of what he says is not new, and his egalitarian readings are unpersuasive. Surely he will convince some, for many in our culture today ardently desire egalitarianism to be true. But it will not hit the scholarly world like an avalanche. It is closer to being another drizzly day in Portland, Oregon.

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C. Kavin Rowe. *World Upside Down: Reading Acts in the Graeco-Roman Age*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009. 300 pp. \$65.00.

C. Kavin Rowe, Assistant Professor of New Testament at Duke University Divinity School and recent winner of the John Templeton Prize for Theological Promise, continues to demonstrate an unusual display of theological wisdom, wide reading in the vast haunts of secondary literature, and a rather shrewd sense regarding the complex issues surrounding the rise of early Christianity. These competencies are on full display in his recent work, *World Upside Down*, a book that is, among other things, as much about the early Christians as the Romans saw them as well as the Romans as seen by the early Christians. Fundamentally, however, *World Upside Down* "is about the inextricable connection between an irreducibly particular way of knowing and a total way of life" (p. 3).



What characterizes the work is its refusal to fall into the gullies of sullied and fraudulent dichotomies. Rowe's "critically constructive reappraisal of Acts' ecclesiological vision" follows neither the dominant trend of seeing Acts as a tract for harmonious existence with the imperial machinery of Rome, nor the currently in vogue counter-imperial readings. Instead, Rowe reads Acts as Luke's "attempt to form communities that witness to God's apocalypse" and "construction of an alternative total way of life" that "runs counter to the life-patterns of the Graeco-Roman world." Acts, for Rowe, is thus a "culture-forming narrative" (p. 4).

After an introduction that situates the project ("Reading Acts"), the first substantive chapter is entitled, "Collision: Explicating Divine Identity." Rowe suggests "the clash of the gods ultimately determined the shape of the collision between (emerging) Christianity and paganism" (p. 17). The "narrative outworking" in Acts of the earlier claim established in Luke "that the salvation of God comes through Jesus Christ as an apocalypse to the gentiles" would have been viewed as a rival vision by those in the Graeco-Roman world. Rowe highlights Acts 14, 16, 17, and 19 as demonstrations of "a profound incommensurability between the life-shape of Christianity in the Graeco-Roman world and the larger pattern of pagan religiousness" (p. 50).

"*Dikaios*: Rejecting Statecraft" builds upon the findings of the previous chapter with the perspective of outsiders and their construal of Christianity as seditious or treasonous. By sampling

Paul's trials before Gallio, Claudius, Lysias, Felix, and Festus, Rowe sees Luke's program gliding along the tension of the competing realities of Christianity and Graeco-Roman culture, while narrating "the threat of the Christian mission in such a way as to eliminate the possibility of conceiving it as in direct competition with the Roman state" (p. 5). This "rejection of insurrection does not simultaneously entail an endorsement of the present world order" (p. 88), however; no, Acts "re-describes theologically the cultural collapse that attends the Christian mission as the light and forgiveness of God" (p. 89). As Rowe repeats throughout the book, "New culture, yes—coup, no."

"World Upside Down: Practicing Theological Knowledge" locates the origin of the tension created in the previous two chapters in Luke's narration of three core and mutually interdependent ecclesial practices: "the confession of Jesus as Lord of all," "the universal mission of light," and "the formation of Christian communities as the tangible presence of a people set apart" (p. 92).

The concluding chapter, "The Apocalypse of Acts and the Life of Truth," wrestles with the "serious questions regarding the place of [Acts] in religious/political thought today" (p. 139). Rowe brings Charles Taylor, Jan Assmann, Alasdair MacIntyre, and several other theorists into dialogue with the heart of the book's constructive proposal and argument: "Acts offers a coherent vision of the apocalypse of God. Because this vision is nothing short of an alternative total way of life, the book of Acts narrates the formation of a new culture" (p. 140). Indeed, it is the very identity of God that "receives new cultural explication in the formation of a community whose moral or metaphysical order requires an alternative way of life" (p. 146). On pages 162–76, Rowe concludes with five reflections on the potentially troubling questions evoked by the truth and politics in relation to the universal vision narrated in Acts.

With nearly ninety pages of endnotes—reading the eight-hundred-plus notes are well worth the inevitable paper cuts you will accrue in the constant flipping back and forth between text and endnotes—the untranslated German, Greek, French, and Latin scattered throughout the main body of the text, and the interaction with complicated bibliographies, *World Upside Down* is a challenging read. But the challenge is well worth it. There is so much happening in these pages that a slow and careful read will provoke sustained thoughts on a variety of subjects of ecclesial interest ranging from Christianity and culture to issues of tolerance and political theology.

My criticisms, questions really, are only three and entirely petty. First, I suspect a development of chapters two and three could well be extended to the issue of Luke as historian. Whereas, for example, the legitimization of the Julio-Claudian dynasty might guide Virgil's "eschatology" in the *Aeneid*, Luke's history is guided by the profound *novum* of resurrection. In other words, there are hermeneutical commitments at work in Luke that set him apart from other historians of antiquity. Rowe, of course, does this in a host of ways, but a sustained treatment would add to his thesis. Second, it strikes me that Acts must be read in light of Luke's wider restorationist concerns (cf. Acts 15:16). Rowe has constructed a forceful and compelling reading of Acts within a Graeco-Roman milieu, but I couldn't help but wonder how the whole picture fits together. Luke, for example, seems quite interested in the Samaritan ingathering (Luke 9:51–55; 10:28–37; 17:11–19; Acts 1:6–8; 8:4–25; 9:31; cf. Isa 49:6). It is this restored community (of scattered Israel) now centered on Christ and opened to the Gentiles that is the cultural explication of God's identity to a watching Graeco-Roman world. Third, and particularly aimed at the final chapter, there is a rather pronounced evolution in the ecclesial situation of Acts and that current in the twenty-first century. Again, Rowe knows this and alludes to it in various places, but how can a text from a marginal community written in the shadow of the Roman imperial machine speak to an

age where the church has, in effect, conquered (become?) Rome? In some cases, it would seem that the polemical edge of Acts could be turned against the contemporary church itself.

But these are minor and petty issues, more akin to wishing the author back on stage to say more. With many promising years ahead of him, we will no doubt hear much more from this young juggernaut.

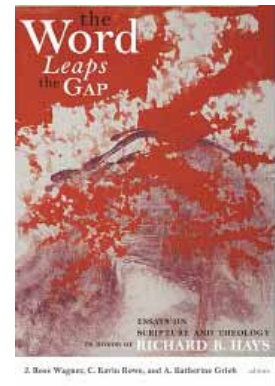
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J. Ross Wagner, C. Kevin Rowe, and A. Katherine Grieb, eds. *The Word Leaps the Gap: Essays on Scripture and Theology in Honor of Richard B. Hays*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008. 732 pp. \$70.00.

Richard Hays is one of the more influential NT scholars of this generation, and the editors of *The Word Leaps the Gap* should be commended for producing a fitting tribute to this great man's legacy and scholarship. The volume is a helpful introduction to his work and thought, as well as an advance in the "important conversations about the Bible, Christian theology, and the shape of the Christian life" (p. xxii).

In the first chapter, "Why 'The Way the Words Run' Matters: Reflections on Becoming a 'Major Biblical Scholar,'" Stanley Hauerwas responds to earlier criticism from Hays to his work in *Unleashing Scripture*, largely on the grounds of hermeneutical incoherence. In "Echoes of the Ancient Near East? Intertextuality and the Comparative Study of the Old Testament," Christopher B. Hays builds upon the work of Stefan Alkier and Richard Hays on intertextuality, widening the seven criteria for recognizing echoes of the Old Testament in Paul for Old Testament and ANE studies (pp. 36–41). The third chapter, "On Interpreting the Mind of God: The Theological Significance of the Flood Narrative (Gen 6–9)," by Walter Mobely, works through the "evil-thought clause" within Gen 8:21 and its awkward surface relation to 6:5 and the declaration of Noah as righteous in light of the world and context of the scribe "responsible for the clause" (p. 56). Gary A. Anderson, "The Book of Tobit and the Canonical Ordering of the Book of the Twelve," explores Tobit's knowledge of Nineveh's impending fall through a text-critical engagement of 14:3–4 as well as the canonical shaping of the Minor Prophets scroll, resulting in the suggestion that the "canonical ordering of the biblical books does make a difference for the interpreter" (p. 74). Anderson's contribution is characteristically clever and convincing. In "Faithfulness and Fear, Stumbling and Salvation: Receptions of LXX Isa 8:11–18 in the New Testament," J. Ross Wagner examines the "meaningful potential" of the Greek text of LXX 8:11–18 through its use in Romans, 1 Peter, and Hebrews.

Joel Marcus follows with the lively "Idolatry in the New Testament." Marcus traces the opposition of idolatry as the central message of the Old Testament through its appropriations and transformations through the second temple period and into the NT. In "Healing in the Wings of His Garment: The Synoptics and Malachi 4:2," Dale C. Allison Jr. outflanks "exegetical amnesia" by summarizing seven possible interpretations posed by the historical engagement with Mark 6:56, while, with his usual erudition, works through Pseudo-Epiphanius, *Test.* 7:30 to show how Mark 6:56 may be evoking Mal 4:2. Bruce N. Fisk's chapter, "See My Tears: A Lament for Jerusalem (Luke 13:31–35; 19:41–44)," reads



the potentiality of Jesus' lament throughout Luke as well as into what will no doubt be judged to be controversial and charged comments regarding the contemporary political situation of Israel and Palestine (pp. 176–78). David P. Moessner's essay, "Managing the Audience': The Rhetoric of Authorial Intent and Audience Comprehension in the Narrative Epistemology of Polybius of Megalopolis, Diodorus Siculus, and Luke the Evangelist," is a careful navigation between "effects" and "authorially designed interpretations" of ancient texts.

"In Our Own Language': Pentecost, Babel, and the Shaping of Christian Community in Acts 2:1–13," by Joel B. Green, suggests "Luke's account constitutes a profoundly theological and political statement displacing Babel- and Jerusalem- and Rome-centered visions of a unified world in favor of an altogether different sort of community" (p. 199). Stephen B. Chapman, in "Saul / Paul Onomastics, Typology, and Christian Scripture," asks why the *narrative* of Acts consistently refers to "Saul" prior to Acts 13:9 and "Paul" thereafter. In this clever piece, Chapman suggests a link with Saul of Kish and the Gentile mission while stating that biblical "names themselves open up space for contemporary intertextual reflection and symbolic cross-fertilization between the Testaments" (p. 241). C. Kavin Rowe continues to publish small miracles. This time, in "The Book of Acts and the Cultural Explication of the Identity of God," Rowe traces the "clash of the gods" in early Christian and pagan contexts, while chiefly focusing on the narrative of Acts as an exposition of Christian ecclesial life as the cultural witness to God's name (cf. 15:14). Read everything you can by Rowe.

Marianne Meye Thompson, "They Bear Witness to Me": The Psalms in the Passion Narrative of the Gospel of John," focuses on the role of the Psalms in the so-called Book of Passion as part of John's "apologetic agenda" and as instructions for "following Jesus." Luke Timothy Johnson, "John and *Thomas* in Context: An Exercise in Canonical Criticism," discusses the nexus of "canon formation" and "community identity" through an imaginative thought experiment: viz., what if *Thomas* had been canonized? How would it affect community identity and canonical shape? The experiment is naturally "artificial" (p. 287), but quite interesting! D. Moody Smith follows with an investigation into "The Historical Figure of Jesus in 1 John," primarily through an analysis of *archē* in the Epistle.

E. P. Sanders asks, "Did Paul's Theology Develop?" For Sanders, Paul is "coherent, unsystematic, not notably inconsistent" (p. 328). Paul was "an intelligent and reactive human, who worked in an unprecedented environment" (p. 334) so naturally there was "organic growth" (p. 337n25). James D. G. Dunn, in "ΕΚ ΠΙΣΤΕΩΣ: A Key to the Meaning of ΠΙΣΤΙΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ," challenges Hays's subjective-genitive reading of *pistis Christou*. Dunn agrees that "narrative elements . . . undergird Paul's thought" (p. 352), but demurs to seeing the story of Jesus as dependent upon a particular reading of *pistis Christou*. The essay is set in the warm form of a personal letter, emphasizing the importance of *ek pisteōs* in Paul's writings as illustrative of Paul's wider use of *pistis*. Douglas A. Campbell, "An Echo of Scripture in Paul, and Its Implications," recants from his previous aversion (*Rhetoric of Righteousness in Romans 3:21–26*, 1992) of Ps 98:2–3 (97:2–3 LXX) informing Rom 1:17 as argued earlier by Hays. Campbell develops Hays's original insight by way of divine kingship, and the "inauguration of the age to come by way of Christ's enthroning resurrection" (p. 390), the "liberative and eschatological act of God in Christ" (p. 391). Beverly Roberts Gaventa, "From Toxic Speech to the Redemption of Doxology in Paul's Letter to the Romans," traces the symphonic outworkings of human speech in Romans. John M. G. Barclay, "Manna and the Circulation of Grace: A Study of 2 Corinthians 8:1–15," gives us a sneak peak of his larger forthcoming work on Paul and grace with a reading of *isotēs* in 2 Cor 8 and its allusion to Exod 16:18 that consists of a "dynamic of mutuality" (p. 423). Reciprocity within the scheme of Paul's

subversive honor code and unity are therefore not ends in themselves, but “part of a larger shared commitment to processes of mutual construction” (p. 425). Susan Eastman, “Imitating Christ Imitating Us: Paul’s Educational Project in Philippians,” advances a twofold thesis of Phil 2:6–11: Christ assumes the post-fall Adamic role “on the stage of human history,” and Paul’s call to “be my fellow imitators” is educational, bringing his readers “onstage with himself, as a fellow ‘mime’ of Christ” (p. 430). Though some will remain unconvinced of her reading, the essay is breathtaking at points.

Francis Watson, “Resurrection and the Limits of Paulinism,” outlines the methodological error of “Paulinism,” viz., “the hermeneutical privileging of the Pauline texts” that “is always characterized by [an] anthropomorphic bias toward the present, so that every statement about Jesus the Son of God must demonstrate its value *pro me*” (p. 467) through a reading of *Epistle to Rheginus*. N. T. Wright’s chapter, “Faith, Virtue, Justification, and the Journey to Freedom,” is everything we’ve come to expect from the Bishop: bold moves in beautiful prose, shrewd judgments with sprawling compass, and clever twists that will no doubt prove to be controversial all around. He claims “no intention of smuggling in works by the back door,” but wants to name *pistis* as a virtue in eschatological shade, whilst situating it within now/not now tension of justification (p. 489). His brief articulation of justification will no doubt fall under heavy scrutiny (489–94) while other communities may object to his virtue scheme. “The Conversion of Desire in St. Paul’s Hermeneutics,” by Markus Bockmuehl, challenges Hays’s designation of “imagination” as the proper faculty converted in seeing one’s identity “anew in the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ” (p. 500, citing Hays), with a counterproposal, in conversation with Martha Nussbaum, of “desire.” The concluding three pages offer much for creative future constructions of Paul’s hermeneutic.

Brian E. Daley kicks off a string of historical essays with “Walking through the Word of God: Gregory of Nazianzus as a Biblical Interpreter.” David C. Steinmetz’s chapter, “The Domestication of Prophecy in the Early Reformation,” is difficult to summarize but easy to recommend. “The Bard and the Book: Shakespeare’s Interpretation of Scripture,” by A. Katherine Grieb,” is an interesting essay that suggests “Shakespeare’s use of Scripture is an area where literary and biblical criticism might profitably combine forces” (p. 545). Leander E. Keck follows with a critical appraisal of Matthew Arnold’s reading of Paul (“Is Matthew Arnold Also Among the Prophets? A Victorian Critic Interprets Paul”).

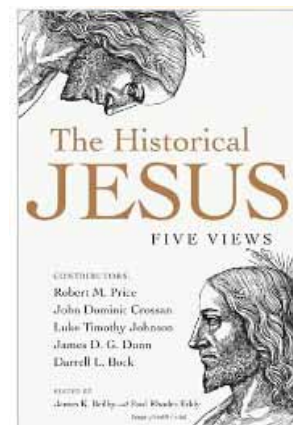
Allen Verhey, in “Neither Devils nor Angels: Peace, Justice, and Defending the Innocent,” quarrels with Hays’s “rejection of violence in the defense of justice” (p. 600) by way of “something like the just war tradition” in the Augustinian tradition (p. 600). Ellen F. Davis, “The Poetics of Generosity,” and Richard B. Hays and Judith C. Hays, “The Christian Practice of Growing Old: The Witness of Scripture,” round out the volume along with Sarah Hays Coomer’s powerful homage to her father, “A Resting Place.”

The essays in this volume are delightful in themselves, but read together in a sustained dedication to Richard B. Hays make this volume an absolute treat.

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James K. Beilby and Paul Rhodes Eddy, eds. *The Historical Jesus: Five Views*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2009. 312 pp. £14.99/\$26.00.

Both of the editors of this book are professors at Bethel University in St. Paul, Minnesota. They kick off the discussion with a substantial essay, “The Quest for the Historical Jesus: An Introduction” (pp. 9–54). This covers the history of the quest starting with Reimarus and his precursors. It then moves to the current state of play—“play” too often being an apt word to describe an academic enterprise that has cast Jesus in some eighteen different identities, from “an eschatological prophet” to “an Essene conspirator” to “a paradoxical Messianic claimant,” to name just a few (p. 53). In addition, some Jesus-understandings combine one or more categories. The result is an ideological agora at times having more points of contact with a flea market than with an intellectually serious academic exchange. Beilby and Eddy do a good job of bringing order to the chaos. Relatively full footnotes complement the essay’s terse descriptions and comparisons of positions. In the end, this excellent introduction could serve as the skeleton for a course syllabus on the subject of historical Jesus studies.



The meat of the volume, however, is the interchange between five scholars who are generally well known for their publications in historical Jesus research: Robert M. Price, John Dominic Crossan, Luke Timothy Johnson, James Dunn, and Darrell Bock. The exception here is Price (“Jesus at the Vanishing Point”), who does not think Jesus existed. It could be questioned whether his quirky claims, often wielded with a dismissive attitude, deserve to be dignified alongside the relatively plausible construals advanced by other contributors. The answer is probably yes, for two reasons. First, more and more people grow up with little exposure to the Bible and biblical history. They are susceptible to the arguments that writers on the fringe like Price dredge up. Second, non-Christian apologists, and in particular some Muslims, will continue to find ideas drawn from Western “Christian” writers like Price useful in their attacks on the integrity of the NT’s presentation of Jesus. It is instructive to observe how a range of scholars as wide as Crossan, Johnson, Dunn, and Bock respond to the proposition that none of the ancient evidence suffices to demonstrate that Jesus of Nazareth existed. This is an issue that could creep out of the margins of discussion and toward the center in years ahead, much as atheism has currently become a focal point of discussion after decades of relative dormancy. This book does well to take seriously the outlook Price represents.

Specialists will find little new in this book, but that is not the aim of a “five views” format. Informed lay and student readers are obviously the target audience, and they are well served. Even Price’s essay bears reading, as he resurrects D. F. Strauss’ attempt to dissolve NT narrative into midrash, cavalierly dismisses evidence troublesome to his cause, and relies heavily on *ad absurdum* argumentation.

Turning to Crossan’s essay, “Jesus and the Challenge of Collaborative Eschatology,” a new generation of readers can sample his distinctive hermeneutic in approaching the Jesus-question, without having to wade through the numerous prolix volumes he has produced over the past generation. Then after his and every essay, there is the advantage of immediate cross-examination from other scholars, as Johnson, for example, notes regarding Crossan, “it may be the force of the ideological framework that makes Crossan’s arguments appear to work, more than the actual historical evidence” (pp. 138–39).

Johnson (“Learning the Human Jesus”) is pessimistic about the value of the four Gospels “as sources for historical reconstruction” (p. 176) and seeks refuge in a literary approach. Bock insightfully responds, “A carefully balanced both/and approach takes one farther than Johnson’s either-or choice between the literary and historical approaches” (p. 197).

Dunn (“Remembering Jesus”) takes historical Jesus research to task at key points and offers his own constructive counter-proposals. For example, Dunn protests “the assumption that ‘the Christ of faith’ is a perversion of ‘the historical Jesus’” (p. 200). Crossan counters that the “Jesus of history” who taught love of enemies in the Sermon on the Mount (a Jesus whom Crossan reveres) is “*perverted* by the Christ of faith who will return as a transcendental killer in the book of Revelation” (p. 234, Crossan’s italics). Crossan pits NT texts and traditions against each other in ways Dunn does not find justified.

Bock (“The Historical Jesus: An Evangelical View”) in his preliminary remarks seeks to show how historical Jesus research can be fruitful within an evangelical outlook, “even if its results will always be limited in scope” (p. 253). Crossan responds by reasserting that “Jesus proclaimed and incarnated the nonviolent power of God’s kingdom as here and now present on this earth in direct confrontation with Rome’s Empire” (p. 291). Bock’s Jesus is about divine dominion and soteriology; Crossan’s is about politics. Johnson dismisses Bock with the withering declaration that Bock “has not yet grasped what historical analysis requires” (p. 296); the requisite entailment is presumably that Bock affirm Johnson’s view of historical analysis. Dunn finds various ways to restate Johnson’s charge against Bock; Bock’s essay moves Dunn to pontificate on the need for “responsible evangelical scholars” (in contrast to Bock?) to defend rigorous historical inquiry “in a day when *evangelical*, and even *Christian*, is often identified with a strongly right-wing, conservative and even fundamentalist attitude to the Bible” (p. 300, Dunn’s italics). And so the book ends, thanks to Dunn, with Bock being associated with this problem and Dunn nobly transcending it.

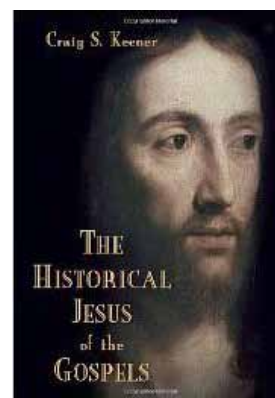
This is an adequately diverse, informative, and stimulating interactive display of recent approaches to “the historical Jesus” question. It accomplishes all that could be hoped for in such brief compass.

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Craig S. Keener. *The Historical Jesus of the Gospels*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009. 831 pp. £40.99/\$60.00.

The famous missiologist and NT scholar Stephen Neill proposed that every aspiring theological student should study closely J. B. Lightfoot’s treatment of the apostolic fathers. This would instill, Neill thought, habits of exegesis and historical reasoning that would serve students well for a lifetime of interaction with biblical writings.

Something similar could be said of Craig Keener’s *The Historical Jesus of the Gospels*. Keener models an exemplary approach to the canonical Gospels, the background material both Jewish and otherwise, and the voluminous scholarship touching on these literatures. He has rendered a valuable service for any trying to make sense of Jesus studies in its multifarious and often bewildering contemporary forms.



The book appears so massive that one could despair of reading it. Never fear: the book proper ends at p. 393. Swelling the volume to its fuller imposing stature are detailed endnotes (over 200 pp.), bibliography (109 pp.), and indices (117 pp.). In addition, there are 43 pages of appendices on topics like Burton Mack's theory of a Wisdom Q, Jewish biographical conventions, Roman capital punishment in Judea, and Jesus' empty tomb.

The book proper is divided into three sections. "Disparate Views about Jesus" (pp. 1–69) sifts the history of Jesus scholarship. Here, as throughout the book, Keener reduces vast quantities of data into bite-sized presentations. For example, he describes the rise of Morton Smith's "Secret Gospel of Mark" and outlines its exposure as the fraudulent document it is now known to be (p. 60). This entire section is a valuable accounting and assessment of major scholars, periods, and topics in Life of Jesus studies beginning roughly with Reimarus (1694–1768).

Section two, "The Character of the Gospels" (pp. 71–161), airs the most critical issues surrounding Gospel genre and features. Are our Gospels biography, and if so, in what sense and to what extent? Are they history, and what did "history" mean to writers of the NT era? What about "rhetoric" and the Gospels? And what about the source question, written and oral? Keener treats each of these questions in a full and methodical way. The extensive endnotes and bibliography enable the reader to dig deeper, whether into contemporary discussion or into key ancient sources.

Section three is by far the longest and deals with "What We Can Learn about Jesus from the Best Sources" (pp. 163–349). Significantly, for Keener that is a declaration and not a question. Those "best sources," it turns out, are the four Gospels themselves. A significant contribution of this book is to have shown how background data and scholarly theories can inform Gospels-interpretation without overwhelming and replacing what the Gospels themselves say. Keener concludes that the Gospels are first-century documents, dependent on eyewitnesses. "There is much we can know about Jesus historically, and . . . the first-century Gospels preserved by the church remain by far the best source of this information" (p. 349).

One major subject missing from the book is that of miracles *per se* (cf. p. xxxii). Keener apologizes for this but avers it would have made the book unbearably long. He is doubtless correct. Nor does he claim comprehensiveness on the topics he does treat (in contrast to, say, Raymond Brown or John P. Meier in some of their respective treatments of Gospel- or Jesus-matters). Keener's aim is rather sufficiently thorough treatment of subjects like (in section three) "Jesus the Teacher," "Jesus' Jewish Ethics," "Jesus as Messiah?" and "The Resurrection."

A helpful feature of the book is Keener's allusions to his former atheism (e.g., pp. xxxv, 383–88). This material lends the spice of human interest to the entire volume. It also reminds the reader of the historiographical and hermeneutical fact that no reading of the Gospel is without its authorial baggage. By clarifying his own, Keener helps the reader gauge the possible distance between Keener's observations about the subject matter, on the one hand, and what the subject matter actually signifies, on the other. With so many competing portraits of Jesus on offer in recent decades, many of the scholars active in the debate must be somewhat off the mark in their representations. Readers will have to decide for themselves whether Keener has brought fresh light or yet more obscurity to the discussion.

From my point of view, he succeeds at showing why his former atheism lacked intellectual rigor and persuasive force and why his settled, more mature, "high" view of Gospel-veracity has a great deal to commend it. More broadly, Keener has furnished one of the fuller, not to say saner, digests of Jesus

studies to appear in the last couple of decades. Students, professors, and intellectually engaged pastors will turn to this book frequently and with great profit.

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— HISTORY AND HISTORICAL THEOLOGY —

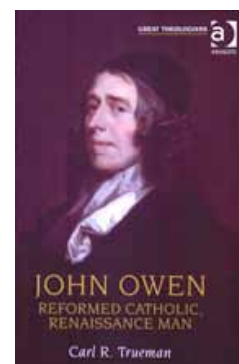
Carl R. Trueman. *John Owen: Reformed Catholic, Renaissance Man*. Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2007. 132 pp. \$29.95.

Carl R. Trueman has two published monographs on John Owen: *The Claims of Truth: John Owen's Trinitarian Theology* (Paternoster, 1998) and now *John Owen: Reformed Catholic, Renaissance Man*, part of Ashgate Publishing's Great Theologians Series.

Trueman opens with a brief biographical sketch of Owen. One of the ironic things about Owen is that though he “was without doubt the most significant theological intellect in England in the third quarter of the seventeenth century” (p. 1), he remains a little known figure outside of a small circle of conservative evangelical churches and an even smaller circle of early modern intellectual historians. Happily, Trueman informs us that the literature on Owen is growing, a fact that should bring his life and thought to more readers.

The bulk of chapter one discusses the historical and theological context in which Owen was educated, thought, and wrote. Trueman asks this question: “Owen: Puritan or Reformed?” He argues that the term “Puritan” is too limiting and opts instead for the phrase “Reformed orthodoxy” to describe the school of thought to which Owen belongs. This terminology is easier to define and less limiting than the term “Puritan.” Trueman defines “Reformed orthodoxy” as “the tradition of Protestant thought which found its creedal expression on the continent in such documents as, among others, the *Belgic Confession*, the *Heidelberg Catechism* and the *Canons of Dordt*, and in Britain in the Westminster Assembly's *Confession of Faith* and *Larger and Shorter Catechisms*” (p. 6).

Trueman also views Reformed orthodoxy as one link in the chain “of the wider ongoing Western tradition of theological and philosophical thought” (p. 6). Following Richard Muller's lead in his monumental *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, Trueman places Owen in the third phase of Reformed orthodox development, “that of High Orthodoxy (c. 1640–1700)” (p. 7). This phase was characterized by Roman Catholic, Arminian, and Socinian polemics and was the high point of the systematic elaboration of Reformed theology prior to the onslaught of the Enlightenment and the post-Enlightenment critical era. Owen “articulates his theology in terms of both careful exegesis and of constructive dialogue with the exegetical and theological traditions of the church” (p. 7). Unlike some scholars in previous generations, Trueman views Reformed orthodoxy in a positive light, not blindly committed to Aristotelianism, nor to a presupposed central-dogma, nor to careless proof-texting. In fact, Trueman asserts that “the seventeenth century witnessed a remarkable flourishing of linguistic



and exegetical studies, driven by both the positive and the polemical exigencies of Protestantism's commitment to scripture, in the original languages, as being the very Word—and words—of God" (p. 9).

In chapter two, "The Knowledge of the Trinitarian God," Trueman reminds us that Owen is working within a theological tradition, namely, the Reformed orthodox tradition that itself is a part of the Western Christian tradition. His doctrine of God "is not *his* in any real sense of the word" (p. 35). Owen works within "the established trajectories of thinking on the doctrine" (p. 35). For instance, Owen, as a Reformed orthodox theologian, "makes a basic distinction between archetypal and ectypal theology" (p. 36). Archetypal theology is God's perfect, exhaustive knowledge of himself. Ectypal theology is the knowledge of God that men can possess as finite creatures, "a finite theology which co-ordinates with their finite capacity to know God" (p. 36). Also, Owen adheres tenaciously to the *Sola Scriptura* principle of Reformed orthodoxy. This means that he "identified scripture as the sole normative cognitive foundation for theology" (p. 37). This led to "the development of highly sophisticated linguistic studies in the seventeenth century" and to an exegetically based theology (p. 37). Trueman says,

A high view of the authority and integrity of the biblical text as God's word written was [a] major factor in fueling the development of careful attention both to the biblical languages and other cognate tongues, and to issues of textual history and criticism. The idea that the seventeenth-century Reformed were interested neither in careful exegesis nor in the literary and linguistic contexts of the Bible is simply untrue. Indeed, the linguistic and exegetical work of this century was far more elaborate than that which had marked the earlier Reformation. . . . the exegesis of the Reformed Orthodox is far from the dogmatically-driven Procusteanism [*sic*] of popular mythology. (p. 37)

Trueman looks at divine simplicity, immensity, vindictory justice, and the doctrines of the Trinity and creation. Each discussion is set within the context of Owen's thought, seventeenth-century intramural and polemical discussions, and the wider Western theological and philosophical context, namely, the post-apostolic church fathers, medieval scholastics, Reformed theologians, and Renaissance philosophers.

Chapter 3, "Divine Covenants and Catholic Christology," discusses, among other things, the covenant of works, the development in Owen's thought of the doctrine of the covenant of redemption, and the incarnation and ministry of the Holy Spirit. Trueman debunks the often touted claim that the Reformed orthodox viewed the concept of covenant in terms of "contract" alone. This is far from the case. In fact, based on linguistic studies and exegetical and theological considerations, the Reformed orthodox viewed covenant as a very complex concept. Trueman says of Patrick Gillespie, for instance, "Gillespie (and he is not untypical of the Reformed Orthodox tradition at this point) shows clearly that he understands the term covenant to be both linguistically and conceptually complex" (p. 72). Gillespie wrote a five-volume work on covenant theology. Owen wrote a preface in 1677 to Gillespie's *The Ark of the Covenant Opened; or, A Treatise of the Covenant of Redemption between God and Christ as the Foundation of the Covenant of Grace*. Trueman cites Gillespie, John Ball, and Thomas Blake (we can include Owen as well) as seventeenth-century examples of Reformed orthodox theologians who did not reduce the concept of covenant to contract but instead understood it in a highly nuanced sense.

Chapter 4 discusses the doctrine of justification. After setting the doctrine in the context of discussions prior to Owen, Trueman discusses Owen's views on double imputation, eternal justification, and faith and works. On all three doctrinal fronts, Owen interacted and debated with Richard Baxter.

Baxter did not hold orthodox views on the doctrines of atonement or justification, and he and Owen came into conflict over these issues on more than one occasion.

In the Conclusion, Trueman reveals the burden of his monograph in the following words:

Indeed, if the burden of this monograph has been to demonstrate that the analytic categories of earlier scholarship are not in themselves subtle enough to yield a truly satisfying historical explanation of Puritan theology in general, and Owen's theology in particular, then there can be no better demonstration of this than his work on communion with God where all these strands [i.e., catholic, anti-Pelagian, Protestant, Reformed, and Puritan] come together. (p. 124)

I recommend this book very highly. Anyone interested in John Owen, the Puritans, the confessional era of Reformed orthodoxy, and historical theology in general should view this as a must-read. Trueman provides penetrating analysis of Owen and other relevant primary sources, historical, theological, philosophical, and cultural awareness, and further debunking of the Calvin versus the Calvinists myth. *John Owen*, therefore, stands as a much-needed corrective to the historical revisionism that has taken place concerning seventeenth-century Reformed theology. Trueman has gone *ad fontes* (as have many others in recent years) and placed the writings of the seventeenth-century Reformed orthodox in their proper historical, theological, philosophical, and cultural contexts. What results is a necessary correction to generations of wrong-headed ideas about the theological methodology of Reformed orthodoxy and, in this case, of John Owen. For this, I thank Dr. Trueman!

On a sad note (and no fault of Dr. Trueman), this book was poorly edited for print. The book is 132 pages long, including the index. The first formatting or typographical error I found is on page six, the last on page 132, and at least twenty-five others in between. It is hoped that the publisher will correct these errors before selling one more copy. This book is too important to be left as is.

Desiring to close this review on a positive note, I leave you with these words of Dr. Trueman:

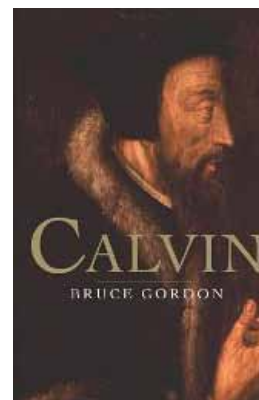
It is not within the scope of this book either to go over the tired old territory of refuting the charges of systematic central dogmas, crass Aristotelianism, and lack of any exegetical sensitivity that a previous generation routinely hurled at the heads of the Reformed Orthodox. Suffice it to say at this point that Owen's work gives no evidence of being organized around a single doctrine (whether predestination or any other); and that his use of the language associated with the language of Aristotelian commentary tradition is simply indicative of the fact that he was raised and educated in a system of education with roots in the Middle Ages and the pedagogical literature of the Renaissance—indeed, given the universal acceptance of this language in the realm of intellectual life at the time, and the fact that it was used by Protestants, Catholics, Remonstrants etc., one wonders what alternative vocabulary he might reasonably be expected to have used? As to exegetical endeavours, much debunking has already been done with regard to the ignorance of the Reformed Orthodox regarding their sensitivity to the Bible as a book containing many genres and styles, and the old clichés about proof-texting, the Bible as a manual of systematic theology just there for the blunt systematizing thereof, and so on, are dying a slow, painful, but nonetheless decisive death. In fact, the seventeenth century witnessed a remarkable flourishing of linguistic and exegetical studies, driven by both the positive and the polemical exigencies of Protestantism's commitment to

scripture, in the original languages, as being the very Word—and words—of God. (pp. 8–9)

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Bruce Gordon. *Calvin*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009. xvi + 398 pp. \$35.00.

The year 2009 brought the five hundredth birthday of John Calvin (1509–1564) and with it a host of biographies. One biography that must not go unnoticed, due to its fine scholarship, is Bruce Gordon's. His exhaustive treatment begins with Calvin's sixteenth-century Reformation-context and ends at the deathbed of the colossal reformer. Gordon portrays a man who not only established a Reformed system to be carried on by his predecessors but birthed a biblical worldview to be emulated for centuries. Gordon clearly articulates that since Calvin's day the church has yet to see a theologian and pastor of his magnitude and importance.



Several themes in Gordon's work give the reader a taste of his treatment of Calvin. First, the biography appropriately draws attention to Calvin's *big* God. As is so evident in Calvin's commentary on Romans, he found himself appropriating what the apostle Paul so clearly taught, namely, that God is Lord over all and does whatever he pleases. As demonstrated in Rom 9 ("Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated," Rom 9:13), Calvin taught that "God's choice was made before the twins were born; it was not on account of any good or bad on their part that the decision was made." Moreover, "although both sons were initiated into the covenant by circumcision, God's grace was not equally distributed" (p. 114). Therefore, as Calvin states, "There is no basis for this election other than the goodness of God alone" (p. 114). While Calvin's doctrine of predestination caused much controversy, he refused to waver, for his teaching on predestination was exactly what the apostle Paul taught. Like Paul, Calvin was accused of making God the author of evil. In response, Calvin turned to Paul again and, arguing from the example of Pharaoh, he proved that even "Pharaoh was a tool in the hands of a God who not only knew in advance what the Egyptian ruler would do, but caused it to happen" (p. 116). To the contrary, Calvin's understanding of predestination did not impute injustice to God but preserved the majesty, sovereignty, and glory of God. God is a debtor to no one and salvation must be by grace alone lest God be robbed of his glory. However, it is not the case that Calvin's sovereign God is an impersonal, remote deity. As Gordon observes, "Calvin had moved away from the teaching of the Stoic philosophers who held that God was a distant, remote figure, in favour of the divinity he found in scripture" (p. 57). God is near, indwelling his people by his Spirit, accompanying his children in the midst of their suffering. In a parallel fashion to Calvin's conversion, God is intimate and comforting, near to his exiles who journey home for the ultimate fulfillment of their union with Christ.

Second, Gordon shows that Calvin had a profound sense of pastoral calling. Calvin was not merely a theologian but a pastor-theologian. Calvin was on his way to become an academic when Guillaume Farel confronted Calvin with the cause of the reformation in Geneva. With a fear of God that could not be avoided, Calvin found himself, like the prophets of old, called to pastor a flock in need of help.

Though Calvin was excommunicated from Geneva, he could not resist their plea for his return, led by Pierre Viret and Farel. What was Calvin's response? "But it would be far preferable to perish for eternity than be tormented in that place" (p. 121). Nevertheless, Calvin returned to Geneva and died there, exhausted by his pastoral duties, yet found to be a faithful steward of the responsibilities handed to him by God.

Third, Gordon rightly emphasizes the impeccable intellect of Calvin in the midst of theological controversy. Whether it was the Placards or the Caroli affair, the Sadoletto debate, or the Bolsec dispute, Calvin knew how to execute a faulty argument. However, one should not get the impression that Calvin was a divisive man. While Calvin knew how to dismantle heresy, Calvin also knew how to preserve orthodoxy and keep common minded reformers at peace with one another, an equally difficult if not impossible task. As Gordon notes, in the mid-1550s Calvin strenuously sought to present a "united Protestant front" that tried to unite Lutherans and Zwinglians. And yet Calvin had to simultaneously combat opponents like the relentless Westphal. Unfortunately, while Calvin almost always successfully defeated his opponents due to his theological acumen, he could not get battling reformers to agree on issues like the Lord's Supper (p. 249).

Fourth, Gordon's biography fearlessly presents Calvin as a human. Gordon does not hesitate to demonstrate that this mammoth reformer made mistakes and was himself flawed. Perhaps the most famous example is the Servetus affair. While Calvin tried to reason with Servetus, nevertheless, Gordon reveals Calvin's growing and final frustration with Servetus, a "worthless man" and "monster" who rakes up impiety from the "infernal regions" because he is a "pestiferous poison" (p. 220–21). Indeed, even Heinrich Bullinger condemned Servetus as a "demon from hell" (p. 221). To Calvin's credit, he sought to alter the form of execution at the last minute but to no prevail. Despite all his faults, Calvin was not the court, and as a pastor Calvin did not want Servetus to die but rather to recant, as demonstrated in Calvin's words at the verdict of Servetus: "I reminded him gently how I had risked my life more than sixteen years before to gain him for our savior" (p. 223).

Finally, perhaps one of the most important aspects of Calvin's life was his commitment to the study, teaching, and preaching of Scripture. As Gordon notes, Calvin's life was characterized by an extremely hard work ethic and dedication to studying Scripture and articulating theology. While not conducive to his health, Calvin rose at 4 a.m. and, as Beza states, stayed up till midnight to study if illness did not prevent him (p. 22). Such a work ethic was not characterized merely by rigorous exegesis and theological analysis, but also by prayer. Calvin was a man of Christian piety because he communed with the triune God. He was a man subdued by God and, having tasted true godliness, Calvin stated that he was forever "inflamed with so intense a desire to make progress therein" (p. 33). Such progress was evident not only in Calvin's private life, through personal study and prayer for others, but also in his relentless effort to further the cause of the Reformation. Calvin feared God and knew he had been called by God to pastor a people. Therefore, such a prophetic role motivated Calvin so that he worked day and night, seeking to provide God's people with translations of the Bible, biblical commentaries on Scripture, and a theological system from which to teach. Moreover, Calvin's dedication to the study of Scripture proved to be a key mechanism in equipping him with the ability to instruct God's people as "a learned interpreter of the Word" (p. 62). Calvin's studies were not only for the sake of his own piety or for the multitude of publications he produced, but Calvin was first and foremost a preacher of God's Word. Calvin's rigorous exegesis is demonstrated in his commentaries, and the profit of such work is observable in his sermons, preached multiple times a week in order to train God's people in the way

they should go. At the end of Calvin's life, he was very aware of his approaching death, and yet even on his deathbed, he read from the Bible, declaring to his colleagues "his dissatisfaction with some of the marginal notes" (p. 333).

Nevertheless, despite the major strengths of Gordon's work, there are at least four significant weaknesses. First, while Gordon draws an appropriate amount of attention to the various controversies surrounding Calvin, Gordon hardly mentions the debate Calvin had with Albertus Pighius over the freedom and bondage of the will in salvation. Like Luther's debate with Erasmus on the bondage of the will, Calvin's debate with Pighius is very important, for it demonstrates not only the theology that would later become known as "Calvinism" but also Calvin's masterful use of the church fathers and ability to reason not only biblically but philosophically, a skill overlooked by most biographers.

Second, it is surprising how little Gordon discusses Calvin's emphasis on the doctrine of justification by grace alone through faith alone. While Gordon's purpose is not first and foremost to provide a thorough overview of Calvin's theology, still, the doctrine of justification was the material principle of the Reformation, and Calvin, a second-generation reformer, had much to say on such a topic that defined him as a premier Protestant reformer. While Gordon does mention Calvin's "impressive" skills in debating justification at Worms and his rejection of Trent's view of justification (p. 175), overall Gordon's attention to Calvin's focus on justification is miniscule. Consequently, Gordon spends more time on less noteworthy matters. Such an omission is unfortunate given the fact that Calvin's understanding of justification was quintessentially the most important doctrine that separated him from Rome and would be one of the doctrines that would impact later Protestants the most.

Third, at the very beginning of his biography, Gordon paints Calvin as being ruthless, an outstanding hater, physically imposing, dominating of others, manipulating in friendships, a bully, vindictive, cruel, one who concealed the truth, obsessed with self-justification, an ego-maniac, uncompromising, and as being a difficult person who had a troubled conscience (pp. vii, x). Perhaps out of all of these accusations, the one that Gordon seems to return to the most is Calvin's instinctive hatred for others, especially his opponents. However, such character judgments are not only over-the-top and unfair at times, but Gordon's biography actually seems to prove the exact opposite. Yes, Calvin did not always exercise patience or proper tact, and at times he did express his utter frustration and disappointment with others. Yet Gordon's biography again and again demonstrates Calvin's extreme love for those loyal to himself and most importantly to Christ. When Calvin does act in a way that could be seen as angry or fierce, it is usually for the cause of the Reformation, and Calvin's frustration is always with those who seem to impede its progress. Moreover, such character judgments by Gordon are surprising when Gordon himself admits that Calvin did not keep a running journal of his inner motivations but was consistently focused on the welfare of the Protestant cause—not on himself. In truth, we have very little material where Calvin unveils his thoughts and motivations to the reader. Therefore, Gordon's speculations that call Calvin's Christian character into question tend to be unfair. Such a tendency on Gordon's part is surprising since so much of Gordon's biography evidences a Calvin who is exhausted at the expense of others, spent for the sake of Protestant unity, sensitive to the criticisms of his peers, pastorally sacrificial for his congregation, and humble to the point of insisting on an unmarked grave at death. Calvin was not merely a reformer who taught true doctrine but a pastor who applied right doctrine, though not always perfectly, to his own life in an effort to reform his own Christian character.

Finally, while Gordon rightly demonstrates the importance of Calvin's doctrine of predestination for the *Institutes*, Geneva, and Calvin's successors (especially Beza), Gordon argues that the reason

Geneva accepted Calvin's predestination and providence was that Geneva lived in a "world over which they had little control" (p. x). No doubt Genevans did live in a world filled with sickness, death, and religious and political violence, all factors that should make every Christian cling to the God who is in sovereign control of all things. However, one gets the impression that Gordon thinks this is *precisely* why Calvin's audience accepted such doctrines. To the contrary, Gordon does not give Calvin and Calvin's congregation enough credit. Yes, their social circumstances impacted their theology, but Protestants in general were known to be those who went against the tides of their time, leaving Rome even at the cost of death in order to stand by what they believed the Bible taught to be true. Calvin's congregation believed in predestination and providence not because they needed an immutable fix to get them through uncertain weather, but rather because they were convinced that the Bible taught God's meticulous sovereignty. Many in Calvin's audience were exiles and refugees who fled to Geneva precisely because they affirmed *sola Scriptura*, the formal principle of the Reformation. Consequently, Calvin did not get lucky that his times fit his doctrine (the impression Gordon gives). Rather, Calvin's audience was most impressed by what the Scriptures have to say, and as it turns out the Scriptures have much to say about predestination and providence.

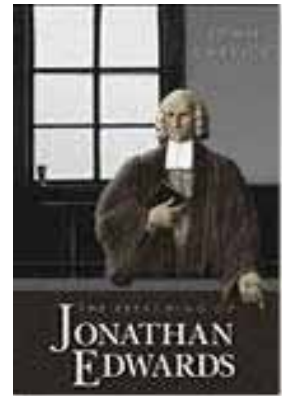
In conclusion, though there are several significant areas where Gordon's life of Calvin could be improved, overall, Gordon's biography of Calvin serves as a needed piece of scholarship in many respects and is another reminder of the reformer whose theology was "crucial to the Reformed tradition" (p. 339).

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John Carrick. *The Preaching of Jonathan Edwards*. Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 2008. xii + 465 pp. £17.00/\$28.00.

Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758) is remembered for many reasons today. He is upheld as America's greatest theologian and author of the influential *Freedom of the Will*. He is praised for his role in promoting revivalism and his teaching on "religious affections." John Carrick reminds us in *The Preaching of Jonathan Edwards* that we ought also to remember him for his contributions as a preacher.

Carrick begins by showing that studies—even in Reformed circles—tend to focus on Edwards's theology and intellect, not his preaching. In engaging the historiography, he acknowledges Wilson Kimnach's analysis of Edwards to be "the most thorough and incisive" work on Edwards's preaching, yet also charges that Kimnach's work is hampered by its tendency to "reduc[e] Edwards' preaching to rhetorical theory" (p. 20). Carrick aims to fill the lacuna by approaching Edwards's preaching from a spiritual and homiletical, rather than literary, perspective. He seeks to provide "a comprehensive analysis of Jonathan Edwards' preaching" and to "interact, both appreciatively and critically, with the now completed definitive edition of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* produced by Yale" (p. 20). Carrick also evaluates Edwards's preaching for pastors today, recommending some practices and criticizing others. As a Professor of Homiletics at Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary who spent fifteen



years in pastoral ministry, Carrick brings his preaching background and a three-decade interest in Edwards to bear on this work.

In discussing major themes in Edwards's sermons, Carrick emphasizes that Edwards preached from a theocentric perspective, firmly upheld God's sovereignty, and focused on Christ, providing "some of the loveliest detailed descriptions of Christ in the whole range of homiletical literature" (p. 103). Edwards was not stuck in the clouds though. He also preached on man's responsibility before God, warned of hell's judgments, and extolled heaven's blessings.

By juxtaposing a focus on God with a call to renewal, Edwards exhibits his desire for theology to inform daily living. This thinking is reflected in the structure of Edwards's sermons, which adhere to the Puritan sermon form of text-doctrine-application. Carrick also demonstrates that Edwards employed a diversity of useful homiletical tools. He expounded biblical texts and grounded his doctrines in Scripture. He addressed his listeners according to their age, gender, or spiritual condition. He answered common objections, appealed to his hearers' motives of love and fear, and presented biblical and historical examples to illustrate his teaching in flesh and blood. And Edwards used the interrogative, "one of his most powerful homiletical weapons," to call people to examine themselves (p. 299).

Carrick goes on to argue against the reigning image of Edwards as a dull, monotone preacher, and points to "the overwhelming evidence from Edwards' own manuscripts" that shows he increasingly moved in the direction of "diligent and extemporaneous delivery" (p. 410). Carrick further reminds us that Edwards understood his preaching to be effective only by the sovereign will of God. If the Holy Spirit did not move, his preaching would fail. Thus Carrick laments the "essentially naturalistic, indeed reductionistic, lines" along which Edwards is often interpreted among historians (p. 447).

Even so, Carrick warns against "the temptation to slavish imitation of Edwards" and specifically criticizes his limited practice of visitation and overly strict regimen of study (p. 457). Still, in the end Carrick calls Edwards "an intellectual, theological, philosophical, spiritual, and homiletical *supernova*, the brilliance of whose light still continues to illuminate and bless those that will sit at his feet two and a half centuries later" (p. 460).

Carrick's volume is welcomed. While Edwards's theological treatises are significant, he was foremost a pastor, and his preaching deserves far greater attention. He delivered hour-long sermons three times every week, and his extant corpus includes more than 1,200 sermons, a reality that testifies both to the importance of studying Edwards's preaching and to the monumental task Carrick assumed.

The chapter on Edwards's "Delivery" is perhaps Carrick's most valuable contribution to Edwards studies, bringing to light the fuller evidence of Edwards's ability to communicate from the pulpit. He also does well to draw attention to Edwards's supernaturalist grid—the Word and Spirit serve as more foundational elements to his preaching than the socio-economic or psychological factors often cited.

The volume is deterred, however, by a lack of organization. The book's twenty-eight chapters are not subdivided into sections, though some seem apparent (e.g., homiletical form, themes, and strategies). Chapters that would fit well together are not collected in order. With no obvious progression, the flow feels somewhat haphazard.

Finally, Carrick does not quite achieve his stated aim. While he engages extensively with Edwards's published sermons, his volume does not constitute "a comprehensive analysis of Jonathan Edwards' preaching." The printed Yale *Works* provides only 158 sermons, just over one-eighth of Edwards's extant sermon corpus. Carrick accesses some additional sermons through the Hickman *Works* (Banner of Truth Trust), but makes no mention—and evidently no use—of the hundreds of unpublished sermons

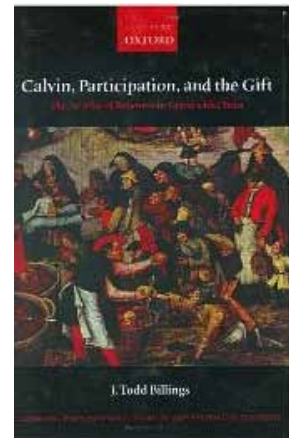
available at Yale University's Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library (recently made available online: <http://edwards.yale.edu/research/sermon-index>). It is difficult thus to claim "a comprehensive analysis."

Despite these drawbacks, Carrick provides a helpful volume both for considering how pastors can utilize Edwards's methods and emphases in preaching today and for understanding Edwards as a preacher. For those who have the commonly propagated image of Edwards as a hellfire preacher, the collective impact of Carrick's detailed descriptions paints a fuller, more accurate—even if not comprehensive—picture of the preacher Jonathan Edwards.

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J. Todd Billings. *Calvin, Participation, and the Gift: The Activity of Believers in Union with Christ*. Edited by Sarah Coakley and Richard Cross. Changing Paradigms in Historical and Systematic Theology. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007. 218 pp. \$120.00.

Recent Calvin scholarship has seen a spate of new literature examining the nature and function of union with Christ within Calvin's applied soteriology. *Calvin, Participation, and the Gift* is one of two dissertations recently published on the subject, the other being Mark Garcia's *Life in Christ: Union with Christ and Twofold Grace in Calvin's Theology*, each of which employs the same thread in Calvin's theology, while weaving somewhat different garments. Billings's work is unique because of its interest in contemporary theological and ethical debate on the meaning and significance of gift-giving, the complexities of which he first encountered as a community development worker in Uganda. "In this capacity, I was taught to be suspicious of gifts as a condescending response to poverty; yet, as a Christian, I also confessed that there is something like a 'free gift' in Christian salvation that is empowering" (p. v). Investing himself in contemporary scholarship on the social and theological problems of gift-giving, Billings found that these discussions all too frequently and unjustly cast Calvin as the embodiment of a radical unilateralism. Because Calvin's God is a God of unilateral gifts, it is often argued, Calvin's theology engenders a suspicion of reciprocity, which finally embodies itself in an ecclesial and social culture that enshrines "the economic logic of gift, debt, and counter-gift" (p. 6). *Calvin, Participation, and the Gift* is Billings's attempt to unseat this reading of Calvin by drawing attention to the neglected theme of participation in Christ—a theme that Billings believes to reveal the true robustness of Calvin's theology of the gift of salvation.



After a brief chapter summarizing uses of Calvin in the contemporary gift discussion, Billings moves on to examine Calvin's theology of participation on its own terms. Contrary to many contemporary accounts that stress the radical opposition between nature and grace in Calvin's metaphysics, Billings finds Calvin's theology to be metaphysically eclectic and complex. Calvin finds the fulfillment of humanity in the life of gratitude enabled by the believer's "substantial" union with Christ. While this union does not involve any ontological "leakage" between God and man, Calvin gradually began to employ the

language of “substance” in order to contrast his own view of participation from those espousing a “mere imitation” of Christ (pp. 53–65). Moreover, as Billings demonstrates in chapter three, Calvin’s reversal on the use of the term “substance” took place within the larger context of his growing awareness of the biblical theme of participation with Christ, a theme that presents itself with increased frequency and importance throughout the development of his *Institutio* and commentaries.

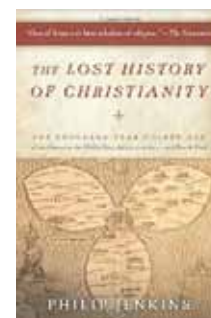
Billings rounds out his treatment by examining Calvin’s understanding of how participation in Christ functions to free both the Christian and society for a life of gratitude in response to God’s grace. In chapter four, Billings interprets Calvin’s theology of participation with respect to the sacraments and prayer, arguing that each is integrally tied to the believer’s experience of the two-fold grace of union with Christ—justification and sanctification. The gifts of justification and sanctification, so far from being unilateral gifts disinterested in mutuality, actually establish and open communion between God and sinners. Likewise, in chapter five, Billings argues that Calvin’s theology of the law is not intended primarily to enslave or indebt humanity, but to lead them to “voluntary, joyful love of God and neighbour,” for in this way “believers are ‘one’ with Christ and ‘one’ with each other” (p. 184).

Calvin, Participation, and the Gift concludes with a chapter assessing several contemporary uses of Calvin, which Billings exposes as mere caricatures in light of the textured theology of participation expounded in the previous chapters. Billings makes his case compellingly. His writing is crystal clear, full of insight and sound judgment; but it is somewhat difficult to be optimistic about the impact his book will make. Readings of Calvin as the theologian against humanity are deeply entrenched in western scholarship, and it seems unrealistic to expect that this book will finally upend that state of affairs. Though some might find points of Billings’s account to be overly generous or optimistic, no one who interacts critically with him can contest that the Calvin of the “unilateral gift” is actually just a paper doll. But if Billings’s work is taken seriously and is emblematic of the future of Calvin studies, then there is perhaps good reason to hope that Calvin’s writings will enjoy a renewal in twenty-first-century Christian theology.

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Philip Jenkins. *The Lost History of Christianity: The Thousand-Year Golden Age of the Church in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia—and How It Died*. New York: HarperOne, 2008. 262 pp. \$15.99

Philip Jenkins is well-known for his influential 2002-work, *The Next Christendom*, in which he explores how the explosive growth of non-Western Christianity is reshaping the nature, practice, and influence of Christianity at the beginning of the twenty-first century. In his latest book, Jenkins sets himself a rather different task by exploring what he regards as some one thousand years of lost Christian history in the Middle East, Africa, and most especially Asia. Despite the focus on ancient rather than contemporary history, Jenkins again displays an admiring eye for forms of Christian belief and practice that differ radically from contemporary Western expressions of Christianity. Despite the subtitle, the history of Christianity in Africa is a relatively minor emphasis, as Jenkins’s focus falls primarily on the Nestorian and Jacobite forms of



Monophysite Christianity that flourished from the Mediterranean across Asia to the Pacific. Jenkins documents in often striking detail the extent and intellectual vibrancy of these forms of Christianity whose scope dwarfed that of European Christianity for nearly one thousand years. But if Jenkins's book itself attests that the *history* of Christianity in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia is not completely lost, his admiration for these unfamiliar forms of faith turns to lament in recording how in these regions *Christianity itself* was lost, reduced to remnants by the early fourteenth century in the face of Islamic advance, before succumbing to extinction in a series of violent, sometimes genocidal episodes in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

There are several things that are noteworthy about Jenkins's work. First, Jenkins further consolidates the growing disquiet with the conventional telling of the Christian story as one of progress and steady expansion from the Middle East into Europe and thence to the world. The book of Acts is often read in a way that disposes the unsuspecting to this account, as Jenkins notes, although some like Richard Bauckham have argued that the episode of the Ethiopian eunuch signals the reader of Acts that Luke intends his account of the westward expansion of the gospel through the missionary activities of Paul to be merely representative of the expansion that was taking place in other directions. This is not Jenkins's point, but he does make a similar one by demonstrating the comparative ease with which Christianity spread eastward at the earliest stages, flourishing to an extent not realized in Europe until many hundreds of years later. Furthermore, not only does the conventional history of steady expansion to the West and then to the rest overlook the early and even more significant expansion to the East through Asia and to the South across North Africa, it also fails to account for the fact that a significant, often untold part of Christian history is a story of retraction and extinction. The history of ancient Christianity in Asia is not a triumphant record of how the blood of the martyrs became the seed of the church, but the story of how an important stream of Christian faith and practice came to a permanent and tragic end.

Second, Jenkins's account of the displacement of Christianity with Islam in the Middle East, North Africa, and Asia follows neither the approach of many conservative Christians that regards Islam as inherently violent nor the more liberal approach that depicts Islam as essentially tolerant and peace-loving. Against the latter, Jenkins argues that Muslim violence against Christian populations in conquered areas is indeed a central feature of the story of Christian collapse, but the reason for this is not an intractable commitment to *jihad*. Muslim regimes did at times prove remarkably tolerant toward Christian communities under their rule, but they also often suppressed, subjugated, and even eradicated Christian populations whose numbers consequently plummeted. Jenkins is quick to note that such discriminatory practices, even when defended with religious terms, may be readily paralleled by the persecution that often took place under Christian regimes.

Third, in his treatment of Africa, Jenkins's work may be usefully compared to Thomas Oden's *How Africa Shaped the Christian Mind: Rediscovering the African Seedbed of Western Christianity*. In Oden's account, in terms of theological influence, the expansion of Christianity must be understood as a movement from South to North. In one sense this dovetails nicely with Jenkins's suggestion that even when Christianity becomes extinct, it may still leave traces, "ghosts" of the past. Perhaps Oden would be happy with this description of what happened with the theology of early African Christianity. Jenkins, however, is not thinking of enduring theological influence but rather of the lasting imprint of Christianity in architecture and even in Islamic religious forms that remained long after the practice of Christian faith was extinguished. Jenkins acknowledges the lasting theological contribution of early African theologians. However, outside of Africa, Jenkins's contention is not that early Christianity in the Middle East and Asia served as a seedbed for later Christian theology even though the practice of Christianity

in those places eventually came to an end. Jenkins argues, rather, that the end of Christianity in the Middle East and Asia brought a theological tradition to an end. More importantly, whereas Oden seeks to establish the African *bona fides* of early Christianity, Jenkins argues that the reason that Christianity in North Africa collapsed so quickly with the arrival of Islam was that it never really became rooted in local languages and cultures. The early Christians in Africa were predominately Latin-speaking provincials, so when the Muslims arrived, the Christians simply left. Christianity remained a “colonists’ religion,” and “Muslims did not have to eradicate African Christianity, because its believers had already left” (p. 230). The primary exception to this is the remarkable durability of Christianity in Egypt that despite Islamic pressure survives to the present because it was practiced in an African language and marked by African assimilation.

Jenkins sets forth a fresh and well-crafted argument. However, a few reservations must be registered. First, in relation to Africa, the case for a more extensive and indigenous early Christian presence in Africa may be rather stronger than Jenkins’s work suggests. Jenkins notes that Augustine focused on the cities of Rome and Carthage but “expressed no interest in the rural areas or peoples of his diocese” (p. 230). Nevertheless, there may be more evidence than Jenkins allows for early Christian penetration into the African interior, for greater dissemination of Christian faith in African languages, and for a more lasting Christian presence, even after the Islamic incursions of the eighth century. The fact that Ethiopian Christianity (which Jenkins mistakenly dubs “monophysite”) fits rather poorly in Jenkins’s overall scheme suggests that the broad strokes he necessarily uses in telling a story that spans two continents and more than a thousand years may at times lead to a measure of distortion, especially in his treatment of early African Christianity.

Second, as we come to a greater appreciation of the startling diversity of Christian expression and practice, both ancient and modern, it is important to bear in mind that not all forms are created equal. This is not to say that only the best, “pure” forms survive but rather that doctrine does matter. Jenkins seems to acknowledge this when he cautions against the tendency to regard success as irrefutable evidence of divine favor. But Jenkins is reluctant to explore areas of theological weakness that may have left Christian groups particularly vulnerable to pressure. Perhaps, as Jenkins suggests, it is wrong to regard decline as *prima facie* evidence of divine punishment for unfaithfulness. Jenkins is uncomfortable with a deity who “would allow his mildly erring servants to suffer massacre, rape, and oppression” (p. 252). But surely it is worth asking whether particular instances of decline may be connected in part with theological commitments. Might the ascetic ideal and attendant mysticism that flourished in the East have contributed to low expectations of the laity and reduced the penetration of Christianity into the worldview of ordinary Christians? Might a Christianity comfortably aligned or even identified with state power have succumbed to a triumphalism that marginalizes the cross as the center of Christian existence? Might a loss of missionary zeal have been not simply a consequence but a cause of retraction? This last question takes on particular importance in the light of one emphasis that is largely missing from Jenkins’s book. In redressing the relative neglect of the mostly forgotten history of Christianity in regions where it experienced decline and disappearance under pressure from Islam, Jenkins does not give corresponding attention to the fact that then as now Christianity often experienced its earlier remarkable expansion and growth in the face of pressure and persecution.

Finally, Jenkins projects a pluralist vision in which he calls for a Christian reassessment of Islam along the lines of the reappraisal that have led many contemporary Christian theologies to “accept the eternal value of God’s covenant with Israel, with the implication that Christian evangelism of Jews is

unnecessary and unacceptable” (p. 259). Just so, Jenkins believes a similar reassessment of Islam must now be undertaken. Somewhat wistfully, Jenkins asks whether Christians might “someday accept that Islam fulfills a positive role, and that its growth in history represents another form of divine revelation, one that complements but does not replace the Christian message” (p. 258). One wonders, though, whether such a stance would gut both Christianity and Islam of the dignity of their respective truth claims. If it is possible to say that both are true, then, *on its own terms*, is either? The heart of the Christian gospel is that God’s self-revelation has reached its definitive and final articulation in the Christ-event. Jenkins has helped us remember an often forgotten history. But if the Christians whose mission gave birth to that history had believed that Christ was but one of several complementary divine revelations, that history would truly be lost, for it would never have happened.

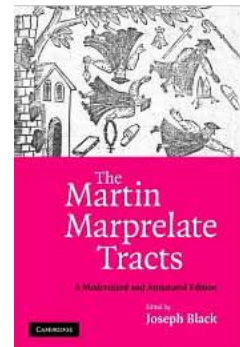
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Joseph L. Black, ed. *The Martin Marprelate Tracts: A Modernized and Annotated Edition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008. cxvi + 315 pp. £75/ \$125.

In 1588 and 1589, seven anonymous tracts were printed by a secret press which called for further, far-reaching reforms within the Elizabethan Church of England. These satirical tracts were to be a landmark in English literature, as well as a pivotal moment in puritan efforts to replace hierarchical episcopacy with the Presbyterian ‘discipline.’ The tracts were written through the literary persona of Martin Marprelate, a thoroughly scurrilous comic character, who was prepared to name names in his abuse of the English bishops. The Marprelate polemic was something new to a reading public: they broke with convention in presenting the puritan platform in a way which many saw as irreligious and deeply inappropriate given the subject matter. Many prominent puritans were horrified at seeing their cause furthered by such notoriously controversial writing. For most observers, serious subject matter necessitated a serious form and style.



The authorities used the tracts as a reason for placing severe pressure on puritan nonconformity, citing Marprelate for a seditious challenging of divinely-ordained episcopacy. The government of Elizabeth decided to fight fire with fire and commissioned writers to produce anti-Martinist literature in the same ribald vein. Many deplored this tactic, including Sir Francis Bacon, who lamented that the lofty matter of the organisation of the Christian Church was dragged down to “this immodest and deformed manner of writing lately entertained” (p. lxxii). Many saw beyond the purely ecclesiological implications of the Marprelate tracts and recognised that the authorities’ response was legitimating the oppositional party and ensured the controversy would be self-perpetuating. Others realised that the authors of the discipline were writing for an increasingly literate and confident audience who could think through the issues for themselves and not accept the standard arguments for episcopacy simply higher authority imposed it. The opponents of the puritans recognised a growing tendency towards egalitarian thinking that was prepared to challenge imposed authority and officially-sanctioned orthodoxy. Younger puritans, frustrated with failed attempts to produce reforms via official channels, sought to remove polemic debates from the rarefied atmosphere of the academic cloister to the wider

public sphere of popular debate. In that sense, the Marprelate tracts were a success. In terms of achieving the goal of replacing episcopacy with the Presbyterian polity in the English Church, the tracts were doomed to failure. Indeed, savage repression followed their printing. Black follows a growing consensus that the tracts were written by Job Throkmorton and John Penry, though authorship of the tracts is still inconclusive, despite an intensive investigation by Elizabethan authorities.

This volume has been published nearly a century after the pioneering work of William Pierce, who produced an edition of the Marprelate Tracts at the beginning of the twentieth century. Black's new and definitive edition is a welcome replacement for that standard work and his substantial—and pleasingly objective—ninety-page introduction places the tracts in their proper historical context, though focusing more on their literary influence than any theological or ecclesiological importance. Much of the older scholarship had been partisan. Black has shown that the Marprelate tracts need to be seen in the perspective of anticlerical and nonconformist literature going back to Wycliffe and the Lollards, but also assessing their continuing influence into the seventeenth century and the trauma of the English Civil War. It is poignantly ironic to note that other puritans in the 1640s invoked Marprelate's attack on ecclesiastical authority against what was seen as the newly triumphant Presbyterianism of the Westminster Assembly: "numerous anti-Presbyterian pamphlets of the mid-1640s consequently asserted a continuity from the Episcopal past to the Presbyterian present" (p. lxxxix). Polemic literature had, and still has, a nasty habit of being utilised in very different situations than that in which it was first penned.

The actual tracts themselves are printed lightly modernised and regularised in their spelling and punctuation, and this will surely facilitate a wider readership. Those wanting to read the original texts should consult the facsimile edition published by Scholar Press in 1967 or the digitised form available at the Early English Books Online (EEBO) website. Each individual tract is given a short working introduction, which indicates some of the history of its clandestine publication. Nearly eighty pages of endnotes give further helpful information and allow the reader to read the tracts themselves without complicated academic apparatus. This is not to be lightly dismissed, as the tracts are far more often cited and discussed than actually read on their own merits.

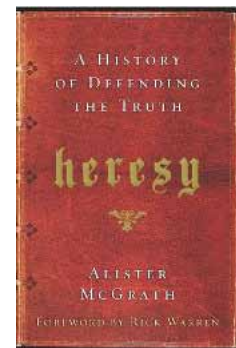
The Marprelate tracts raise important contemporary issues for the church today beyond their immediate sixteenth-century milieu: In what ways should form suit content? When does satire go too far in promoting the gospel? What are the correct channels for ecclesiastical reform? Are personal attacks ever justifiable? When and how should church authorities be challenged? Modern evangelicals would do well to learn the lessons of the past.

This splendid new edition of the Marprelate tracts will go a long way in making accessible a fascinating and provocative period of ecclesiastical history. Black's sensitive and authoritative editing should allow the voice of Martin Marprelate to be heard loud and clear by a new generation of readers.

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Alistair McGrath. *Heresy: A History of Defending the Truth*. New York: HarperOne, 2009. 282 pp. \$24.99.

Alistair McGrath is an impressive fellow. A longtime professor at Oxford who now teaches at the University of London, McGrath writes intelligently on history, biochemistry, and theology. No small feat. And he writes often. A quick look at his Amazon page shows eleven books issuing from his pen since 2004. *Heresy: A History of Defending the Truth* is the latest.



Heresy, says McGrath, has been “sprinkled with stardust” because a (largely mistaken) notion of heresy fits the cultural mood (p. 1). Orthodoxy is thought to be pedestrian and reactionary, nothing more than the theology of the conquerors, who, no doubt, oppressed those whom they arbitrarily deemed heterodox. Heresy, on the other hand, is exciting and liberating, a subversion of authoritarianism and a vindication for victims of the past. The accomplishment of this book is that McGrath patiently demonstrates that this assumed narrative is terrifically misguided. Heretics were sometimes more patriarchal, more ascetic, and more authoritarian than their orthodox rivals. The good guys weren’t always so bad, and the bad guys weren’t always that good. Somebody tell Dan Brown.

The book, compromised of ten chapters with an introduction and conclusion, divides into four parts. In Part One (What is Heresy?), McGrath defines heresy as “a doctrine that ultimately destroys, destabilizes, or distorts a mystery rather than preserving it” (p. 31). He explains that heresy is not unbelief. Heretics are confessing Christians who threaten the church from the inside by (usually) unintentionally leading people into unsafe theological pastures.

In Part Two (The Roots of Heresy), McGrath sets his sights on the Bauer Thesis. Originally raised by Walter Bauer in 1934, the thesis asserts that “heresy” and orthodoxy” were both present from the beginning of Christianity and that “heresy” was the predominant form of Christianity down to the end of the second century when Rome suppressed it. Although revisionist scholars like Elaine Pagels and Bart Ehrman continue to proffer versions of the Bauer Thesis, the boat won’t float anymore. McGrath shows why: (1) Rome didn’t have this kind of power, and (2) a shared core of theological beliefs—a proto-orthodoxy—existed in the church’s earliest days. McGrath goes to considerable lengths to show that though doctrine developed in the early church, its growth was “as a seed, over an extended period of time. All the fundamental themes that would be woven into the fabric of orthodoxy were there from the beginning” (p. 79).

Part Three introduces the major heresies of the first four centuries: Ebionitism, Docetism, Valentinism (Gnosticism), Marcionism, Arianism, Donatism, and Pelegianism.

Part Four is a hodge-podge. Chapter Eight provides a succinct five-point summary of why heresies happen: cultural norms, rational norms, social identity, religious accommodation, and ethical concerns. But the following chapter on the history of heresy from the patristics to the present revisits too much of the same Walter Bauer ground. The last chapter—on Islam’s understanding of Christianity—is intriguing, but talking about the Qur’an’s rejection of heretical versions of Christianity feels like a strange parting gift.

Heresy is valuable because it overturns a number of popular misconceptions (like “heresy is the orthodoxy that lost” or “early Christianity had no orthodox core”) and evangelical myths (like “heretics were clandestine devils intent on destroying the church” or “the doctrine of the church has never changed”). McGrath’s arguments are always careful and nuanced. He covers the important heresies and

deals with the most crucial debates. And he does so as “a classic protestant” obviously sympathetic to the orthodox faith.

The book, however, is not without flaws. First, I wish McGrath had done more to relate ancient heresies to current distortions and had championed orthodoxy more explicitly. The book closes with McGrath saying the real challenge is to demonstrate that orthodoxy is “imaginatively compelling, emotionally engaging, aesthetically enhancing, and personally liberating.” Amen to that. But here’s the very last line: “We await this development with eager anticipation” (p. 234). Talk about anticlimax.

Second, the writing, while lucid, bogs down in repetition. It felt like the chapters were written at intervals far apart so that the ground covered in distinct chapters was easily forgotten. The propensity to end sections or chapters with “to which we now turn” is a pet peeve of mine (e.g., pp. 13, 159) as is the (scholarly? editorial?) habit of telling the reader often that you will later tell them something (pp. 59, 97, 172, 179, 191).

Third, *Heresy*, by McGrath’s own admission, breaks no new academic ground, but only synthesizes current scholarship (p. 11). This is perfectly fine, but the book is still too academic (36 pages of end notes) for a wide popular audience. I can’t fault McGrath for not writing the kind of book I would have written, but I can wish that it were more accessible, especially if it doesn’t aim to be cutting-edge scholarship.

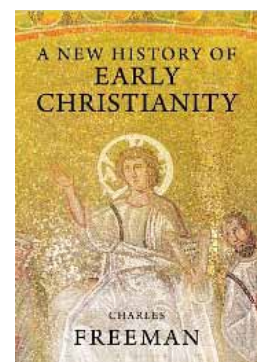
These small criticisms notwithstanding, *Heresy* is a very good book, provided you understand what kind of book it is. The best audience will be theologically-minded pastors and students. They will find that McGrath concisely introduces the major heresies, debunks popular misconceptions about orthodoxy, and makes a compelling and even-handed case for the importance, viability, and antiquity of the historic Christian faith.

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Charles Freeman. *A New History of Early Christianity*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009. xvi + 400 pp. £25.00/\$35.00.

Charles Freeman’s *A New History of Early Christianity* describes the various movements and controversies surrounding Christ and the early church. Freeman divides the book into three parts. The first part, which is also the most controversial, offers a picture of Christ, his first disciples, and the organization of the canon. Freeman argues that the historical Jesus is different from the Jesus presented in the Gospels. The most significant contribution in the first part is Freeman’s furthering the theory that the body of Christ was stolen. He reasons that Caiaphas had the body stolen in order to discourage the disciples so they would go back to Galilee, a region outside of his jurisdiction.

The second part demonstrates the difficult decisions the first Christians had to make, stressing the church’s dilemma of whether it would align itself with Greek philosophy or the Hebrew Scriptures. His chapters discussing the significance of Origen and the new findings at Nag Hammadi are insightful. Another contribution in this section is Freeman’s description of the many



differences among various Christians and their attitudes toward synthesizing the Christian faith and Greek philosophy (Plato, Aristotle, Stoicism).

The third part focuses on the new challenges that faced the church and the state after Constantine. This section describes the ecumenical councils and the rise of the bishop's significance that gave a permanent definition to Orthodox theology. Freeman correctly determines that the ecumenical councils did not end the debates over the nature of Jesus and that the debate was not as simple as is often presented. The two latter sections introduce a number of key leaders in the early church and the manner in which they contributed to the growing variety of teaching found in the early church. Beyond the contents of the chapters, the book includes glossaries of significance people and terms from the early church, a comprehensive timeline, and a list for further reading.

Freeman's main contention is that it is impossible to find a "secure foundation" upon which one can define and defend a single Christianity: "there is no clear line between heresy and orthodoxy" (p. 156). The first part begins by challenging the idea of a single orthodoxy by arguing that it is impossible to come to a consensus on the true identity of Jesus. The four Gospels, he argues, were chosen out of many available and have no more authority than the rest. The second part argues that the first churches that organized were too diverse in their beliefs, influences, and selections of Scripture to find a single form of Christianity. Some of the groups he includes in his survey of Christian churches have loose connections to Christianity; one of the most extreme is the worshippers described in the Apocryphon, whose connection is simply their practice of baptism. The third part argues that the imperial powers influenced the councils to define orthodoxy in order to secure stability in the Empire. The groups that were eventually considered heretical had as much claim to being followers of Christ as the orthodox and, according to Freeman, had a closer connection to the Jesus of the gospels.

Freeman begins the work by labeling it historical in contrast to theological (pp. xiv–xv). This distinction proves difficult for him to maintain when writing on an issue such as the nature of the church and the worship of Christ. He makes numerous theological judgments on the resurrection, the divinity of the Son, the nature of God, and Scripture. First, he denies that Scripture presents Christ as divine and that Jesus saw himself as distinct from the Father. Second, he criticizes the early Trinitarian doctrine as inconsistent and confusing. Third, he argues that the Jesus presented in the early orthodox creeds was established in order to solidify the Roman state. The true Jesus was a threat to imperial stability because he fought against the state, which then killed him. This is a theological judgment that logically determines that the established orthodox position is wrong for exalting Christ. It logically leads one to conclude that the orthodox position is really heretical.

Freeman's work provides clear arguments concerning the identity of Christ and the nature of the church. The first section will be the least helpful for evangelicals because of the strong dichotomy he creates between the historical Jesus and the Gospels. Yet this section is still helpful in terms of historical background in the Gospels. His summaries of early Christian leaders and the variety of approaches of relating Christianity to Greek philosophy and the state are the book's most helpful contribution. These figures and their struggles with contextualization can provide helpful examples for how the church today can continue to think about relating the gospel to the culture.

Keith Goad

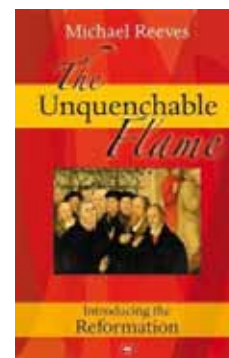
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Michael Reeves. *The Unquenchable Flame: Introducing the Reformation*. Nottingham, England: IVP, 2009; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2010. 192 pp. £8.99/\$14.99.

This book is the best concise introduction to the Reformation for students and laypeople who are new to the issues. Reeves portrays the spirit of the Reformation with grittiness, verve, and humour.

Six chapters cover the key components of Reformation history: the context (amusingly titled “Going Medieval on Religion”), Luther, Zwingli and the Radicals, Calvin, England, and the Puritans. A final chapter takes the issues further by considering the strengths and weaknesses of proposals by Mark Noll, who claims that the Reformation disputes are settled.

The book aims to be clear, readable, and accessible, and it makes intriguing theological and historical connections. For example, it compares Erasmian views of doctrine to Luther’s approach (pp. 54–55). Reeves later uses Erasmus to make a penetrating observation about the death cries of Servetus, who denied the deity of Jesus and so shouted out in death, “Oh Jesus, son of eternal God, have pity on me.” Reeves notes, “Had he been prepared to cry, ‘Oh Jesus, eternal Son of God,’ he would never have been burned. The two confessions are poles apart; but the fact that today we struggle to see that only displays how totally the doctrine-light spirit of Erasmus has conquered” (p.107).



One rarely feels the need to comment on the layout and typesetting of a book, but in this case it is worth mentioning that this book makes excellent use of illustrations and windows of text, which add vignettes of detail. The narrative of each chapter is broken up by (relevant) meanderings up the byways of Reformation history, so the chapter on Puritans (helpfully pictured as “Reforming the Reformation”) includes asides on Baxter’s evangelism, Sibbes’s anti-moralism, Ussher’s scholarship, and Bunyan’s allegory. For such a concise book, this is an impressive level of coverage.

The final chapter examines Mark Noll’s case that evangelicals and Roman Catholics are now in essential agreement over key doctrinal issues and that the Reformation is over. Reeves does an excellent job of showing the flaws in this argument, utilising the Roman Catholic catechism, the Council of Trent, and the music of Bach to make his point.

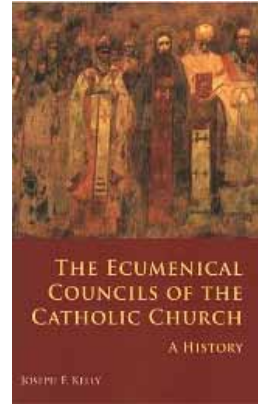
The book does not leave the Reformation as a subject for mere scholarly investigation. It was a doctrinal dispute over the most important issues facing humans. Reeves challenges us to reflect on how far we evangelicals have drifted from Reformation concerns; in many ways the spirit of Erasmus lives on: “Because he was unwilling to engage with deeper, doctrinal issues, he could never bring about more than cosmetic changes. . . . As long as doctrine is ignored, we must remain captives of the ruling system or the spirit of the age, whatever that may be” (p.182).

This book makes one want to read more about the Reformation; the spirit of the Reformation lives on in this text, but it is only an appetiser. Further reading is suggested at the end of the book, and hopefully many readers will read on. The original writings of Luther, Calvin, the Puritans and others are widely available today. May their doctrine be an “unquenchable flame.”

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Joseph F. Kelly. *The Ecumenical Councils of the Catholic Church: A History*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2009. xii + 216 pp. \$24.95.

The history of the Christian church is in many ways a history of theological debate. From its inception, the church has faced doctrinal and practical challenges that have threatened the message of the gospel and the unity of the church. These challenges required believers to define doctrine clearly and develop strategies for disseminating orthodox Christianity in various contexts and among various people groups. For centuries now, church leaders have followed the example the apostles left in Acts 15 in addressing difficult questions by means of a church council. There have been many such councils throughout the history of the church, but many believers are largely unfamiliar with their history and significance. Joseph Kelly's *The Ecumenical Councils of the Catholic Church* attempts to reverse this by surveying the key figures, events, and decisions of the twenty-one ecumenical councils recognized by the Roman Catholic Church.



Written more for the general reader than the scholar, Kelly's book seeks to "focus on the councils and try to illuminate their historical situations so that we can see each council against the backdrop of its era but without overburdening the historical record" (p. 9). In pursuing this purpose, Kelly concisely presents the reader with a brief sketch of the events leading up to each council, a description of the council's proceedings, and an analysis of its lasting effects. Because most council decisions had ramifications for later councils, Kelly's treatment flows nicely from one council to the next and resembles in many ways an introduction to church history generally since these councils take place in virtually every major period of church history.

Tracing and analyzing each council as Kelly presents it exceeds the limits of this appraisal. Therefore, the remainder of this review focuses on two of Kelly's theological presuppositions through which he interprets the councils and that influence his conclusions.

First, Kelly presupposes that Scripture and theological tradition have equal authority:

As currently constituted, that is, in union with the pope, the ecumenical council is the supreme teaching authority in the Catholic Church. Its doctrinal decisions have, for Catholics, the same authority as Scripture and the traditional teachings of the episcopal *magisterium*, that is, the bishops' role as teachers in the church. (p. 3)

This quotation reveals how much importance Roman Catholics place on the ecumenical councils, and it helps the reader understand why Kelly wishes to inform the laity about the decisions of the councils. Decisions made by ecumenical councils, according to Kelly, are "the supreme teaching authority in the Catholic Church." This presupposition naturally impacts the author's evaluation of the respective councils in that the councils are not necessarily judged in relationship to their affinity to Scripture itself. A Protestant who is committed to the principle of *sola Scriptura* will no doubt evaluate the councils differently, focusing on whether a council's decision has biblical warrant. Fortunately, this presupposition remains largely in the background and does not normally detract from the presentation of historical events.

Second, Kelly presupposes doctrinal development. This concept has its roots in the teaching of John Henry Newman (1801–90), who taught that the church's doctrine can and does change in accordance

with new scientific and intellectual discoveries. Kelly illustrates the point by appealing to the fact that an Augustinian concept of original sin can no longer be accepted by the church since evolutionary science has demonstrated that the Genesis account, with its tale of Adam and Eve, is not true history (pp. 3–4). The idea of doctrinal development naturally has profound ramifications for a history of church councils. For Kelly, the councils are capable of producing new doctrine, and some of the instances of doctrinal developments he considers are rather surprising. Kelly writes,

For example, trinitarian references or allusions to Christ’s divinity abound in the New Testament, and so the bishops claimed that their teaching drew out what the Bible did not say fully, but, at the same time, they recognized that they had indeed taught something new. Later generations would call this process the doctrine of development (p. 25).

Here Kelly makes it sound as if the doctrine of Christ’s deity was, at least in some way, a new belief for the church beginning around A.D. 325. A few pages later, Kelly notes that even the Gospel of John reflects the “growing belief in Christ’s divinity” that would become universal in the next century (p. 34). Doctrinal development also becomes important in Kelly’s understanding of the Reformation in that he attributes the rapid growth of Protestantism to lay people not understanding the nuances of doctrinal development. He writes, “Since the Catholics relied upon development of doctrine for much of the elements of their faith, Luther’s Bible showed Germans that many Catholic teachings and practices, such as the seven sacraments, had no explicit biblical foundation” (p. 130). Finally, Kelly’s commitment to doctrinal development impacts his treatment of Vatican I and Vatican II: Vatican I is “anti-Modernist” (p. 178), while Vatican II “embraced the modern world” (p. 202).

While Protestant readers will rightly have serious objections to Kelly’s two presuppositions, they will still profit from reading what is a good overall treatment of the ecumenical councils.

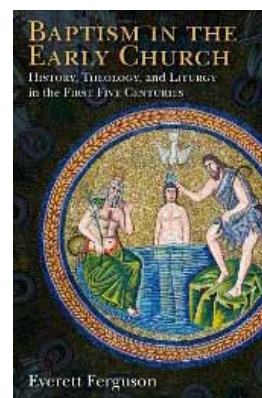
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Everett Ferguson. *Baptism in the Early Church: History, Theology and Liturgy in the First Five Centuries*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009. 860 pp. \$60.00.

Everett Ferguson, the esteemed patristics authority who is now Emeritus professor of Church History at Abilene Christian University, has amply demonstrated how fruitful a scholar’s retirement years can be with the release of *Baptism in the Early Church*. This compendious volume traces the development of baptismal thought and practice by century, by geographic region, and in inscriptions, artwork and church architecture across a half-millennium of Mediterranean life. One finds reflected here whole decades of Ferguson’s research, earlier writing, and extensive interaction with the work of others. One could say that no stone has been left unturned!

The release of the volume is timely, coming as it does in the midst of a resurgence of interest in the Early Church manifested within the Protestantism of North America and beyond. Readers spurred on by this resurgence, and who read in the hope of



mining riches from Christianity's early centuries will not go away disappointed. This work will serve as the stepping-stone for many towards independent researches of their own.

But as surely as we who read approach the book in this context of expanded interest in the Early Church, Ferguson has himself worked from within an identifiable context. That context is his active participation in a branch of the Christian tradition that, styling itself "restorationist," has from its early nineteenth-century foundation, aimed to replicate the life and worship of the Christianity of the apostolic age. It is only fair to note that this magisterial volume discloses what may be called an "apologetic" interest which, while it stops short of commending one particular branch of the church, is nevertheless concerned to burnish restorationist themes. These themes include the following three: (1) Christian baptism from its origin invariably involved dipping or immersion (pp. 59 ff); (2) the baptism of the infant children of Christian parents is non-apostolic and occurred only as a later interpolation (pp. 138 ff.); and (3) "the modern evangelical understanding that faith effects . . . new life, with baptism being a subsequent human work" (p. 164) deserves to be opposed since the Christian experience of forgiveness of sins is, in both apostolic and Patristic periods, always associated with baptism. Ferguson knows his Greek; his historical researches are unparalleled; yet these restorationist loyalties are scarcely concealed throughout. Ferguson's apologetic interest does not mean that his writing is polemical or adversarial. It is a monumental work of historical investigation, unlikely to be equaled in the foreseeable future. In its field it will prove to be the source first consulted by scholars representing a wide range of expressions of Christianity.

Ferguson's linguistic and historical skills brought to bear on these biblical and historical materials pertaining to baptism are indeed formidable. Yet these are not the *only* skills which might be used in the investigation of these same materials. Ferguson sees a preponderant continuity of understanding about baptism and its significance *within* the writings of the NT as well as in the centuries beyond. He allows that the administration of baptism certainly grew more elaborate and even embroidered (with the practice of triple emersion, the use of oil and salt, and the near exclusive agency of bishops who baptized chiefly at Easter). Nevertheless, in Ferguson's view, the orthodox consistently believed that "the person baptized received forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit" (p. 854). I was helped by recalling the more restrained view of the NT exegete and theologian C.K. Barrett, who in 1985 argued that the writings of the NT do not present this unified view of the sacraments, with the apostles John and Paul characterized by very relaxed views. On the basis of 1 Cor 1:17, Barrett maintains that in Paul's mind, baptism is distinctly auxiliary to proclamation. All this to say that NT theology will be inclined to see more hues of color on this question than Ferguson has detected.

Ferguson's work also lacks sufficient theological reflection, especially as it pertains to the development of doctrine. Generally speaking, Protestant historians of theology have noted a strong tendency by Apostolic Fathers and those after them to misjudge the mind of the Apostles in certain respects. But Ferguson, pressing the opinion that there is only continuity of understanding about baptism from apostolic through patristic periods, offers no caution about the steady tendency of early Christian theology to over-identify the saving operation of the Holy Spirit with the administration of baptism. In consequence, regeneration came to be over-identified with the rite (he notes the almost uniform understanding of John 3:5 in this way) such that the former was reckoned to be unfailingly produced through the latter. Such an understanding also slighted the Holy Spirit's work antecedent to conversion (1 Cor 1:26), the role of personal faith considered by itself (Mark 5:34), the role of faith in regeneration-conversion (John 1:12), and also the clear central instrumentality of the Word or spoken gospel in this

all-important quickening of the human heart and conscience (Acts 16:14; James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23). The Early Church tendency to “collapse” the application of redemption into baptism unwittingly set the stage for later difficulties. The imbalanced Messalian movement (chap. 47) perceived this inadequacy; the major phenomenon of delay of baptism unwittingly testified to the inferences many drew from the too-close equating of baptism and forgiveness.

Our readiness to reckon the patristic period to have been definitive in providing the classic articulation of the doctrines of the Trinity, the two natures of Christ, and sin and grace does not require us to believe also that *all* major doctrines received comparable definitive treatment in the same period. The eventual recovery and clarification of the Pauline doctrine of justifying faith, a faith reliant upon the hearing of the Word, was, by and large, still centuries in the future. When it came, the exaggerated conception of baptism that Ferguson documents in the first five centuries would undergo long-overdue modifications; it would then no longer be understood to infallibly and inevitably apply, by mere virtue of its administration, the blessing it exhibited.

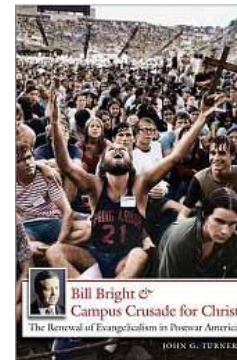
In sum, readers will find here things about which to demur as well as things to embrace. Baptists will not, on the whole, be amenable to his insistence that the NT teaches that forgiveness is not enjoyed apart from baptism. Paedobaptists will wince at his curt dismissals of the “household” baptisms of Acts and 1 Corinthians as a plausible precedent for the practice of infant baptism, just as they will at his insistence that paedobaptism entered the church only late in the second century as a concession toward dying infants. Yet who is there who does not need to ponder his insistence that it was the near-universal insistence on infant baptism from Emperor Justinian onward that ensured that baptismal pools would give way to lavers and that thorough catechetical preparation of candidates for baptism would give way to ceremonies in which presenting parents gave answer to baptismal questions earlier intended for those who had been expected to answer for themselves?

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John G. Turner. *Bill Bright and Campus Crusade for Christ: The Renewal of Evangelicalism in Postwar America*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008. 288 pp. \$19.95.

John G. Turner is assistant professor of history at the University of South Alabama in Mobile, Alabama. He is a PhD graduate of the University of Notre Dame, where he completed his dissertation on Bill Bright under professor George Marsden. *Bill Bright and Campus Crusade for Christ* is his first monograph.

The text, winner of a 2009 *Christianity Today* book award, is a parallel study of Bill Bright and the parachurch organization he founded, Campus Crusade for Christ. In the field of modern evangelical studies, it finds itself in the company of such notable texts as Garth M. Rosell’s *The Surprising Work of God: Harold John Ockenga, Billy Graham, and the Rebirth of Evangelicalism*, John A. D’Elia’s *A Place at the Table: George Eldon Ladd and the Rehabilitation of Evangelical Scholarship in America*, and Barry Hankins’s *Francis Schaeffer and the Shaping of Evangelical America*. Turner finds Bright’s Campus Crusade a profitable avenue of study due to the important but oft-overlooked role



parachurch organizations play in evangelical life. “It is difficult,” he argues, “to overstate the significance of parachurch organizations in contemporary American evangelicalism, as they structure and direct billions of evangelical dollars toward humanitarianism, political advocacy, and evangelism” (p. 3).

Turner’s “mostly chronological history” of *Crusade* examines three major areas: the influence of evangelicals on the American college campus, the interaction between evangelicalism and politics, and the prevailing views of gender held by conservative Christians since 1945 (pp. 7–9). His study, mixing elements of biographical, institutional, social, and intellectual history, ultimately analyzes the interplay between evangelicals and the broader culture, showing how in prioritizing “only a small number of theological essentials,” Campus Crusade has “kept their gospel an attractive product in the marketplace of American religions” (p. 12).

In chapter one, “God May Choose a Country Boy,” Turner surveys Bright’s early life. Educated in a one-room schoolhouse in Coweta, Oklahoma, in his childhood, Bright went on to Northeastern State College in Tahlequah. Active on campus—a harbinger of things to come, to say the least—Bright was nonetheless “reserved in personality and demeanor, suspicious of intellectuals from elite universities, and devoted to small-town ‘values’” (p. 16). Seeking an acting career, Bright came under the tutelage of evangelical luminaries Henrietta Mears and Charles Fuller, host of *The Old-Fashioned Revival Hour*. He found Christ through Mears’s teaching and later enrolled at the fledgling Fuller Theological Seminary after hearing a stirring address by Harold John Ockenga, Fuller’s first president. Bright struggled to keep his focus, however, as he observed the ministry-fruitfulness of men like Billy Graham, a similarly bright young man with a popularizing bent. Viewing academic study as a privilege that “threatened to distract Christians from more immediate tasks,” he moved on, even as he and his wife Vonette navigated a “brief marital crisis” (p. 37). After a conversation with iconic evangelical leader Wilbur Smith (who actually came up with the name of CC), Bright launched out with the idea of taking back America’s colleges and universities through a ministry named “Campus Crusade for Christ” (p. 38).

Bill Bright and Campus Crusade for Christ looks into the early days of Crusade in chapter two, “Campus Ministry at America’s ‘Trojan Horse.’” Drawing off popular militaristic themes, Bright’s “crusade” stormed the campus of UCLA and succeeded in drawing a number of high-profile converts whom Bright coveted (pp. 46–47). Bright worked hard to hone the message, according to Turner, and pored over business books to sharpen his methods. The ministry was structured along the lines of traditional gender roles, though it is clear that women played an active role in the parachurch ministry from an early point. Though his analysis is critical, Turner takes pains to note, “the early success of Campus Crusade . . . represents much more than a temporary religious response to geopolitical fears and a revival of superficial ‘interest in religion’” (p. 66). Rather, the organization called for high-commitment Christianity that required students to stand and be counted with Christ. This approach created a movement.

The “Sibling Rivalries” of various parachurch ministries are the focus of chapter three. “During the 1950s and early 1960s,” Turner suggests, “Campus Crusade confronted several intra-evangelical fissures, including parachurch competition on the campus, the clash between fundamentalists and evangelicals, and the uneasy relationship of evangelicals with Pentecostal and charismatic Christians” (p. 69). Here Turner illuminates tensions between CC and Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship, Bob Jones and Bright, and fundamentalists and charismatics. Perhaps most noteworthy—and most troubling—is the corrosive, even alarming, feud between Bob Jones, both senior and junior, and Bright.

Chapter four, “The Conservative Impulses of the Early 1960s,” examines Bright’s growing interest in conservative causes during a decade of social turmoil. In the midst of this growing burden, Bright streamlined his gospel-presentation, formulating “The Four Spiritual Laws” approach that so many evangelicals cut their teeth on. Of further note is the institutionalization of Crusade; as Bright’s fundraising instincts kicked in, the ministry morphed from a booming grassroots movement to an organization with a board of directors and a massive campus in Arrowhead Springs, California (pp. 106–7, 112–17). Bright concentrated much energy on political causes in this era, as “the pull of political anticommunism exerted a decided and sometimes divisive impact on the organization in the early 1960s” (p. 111).

The exploding “Jesus Movement” comes into view in chapter five, “The Jesus Revolution from Berkeley to Dallas.” Turner illuminates the spiritual wackiness of the late 1960s and early 1970s as Crusade, a ministry led by a diminutive, soft-spoken man with a manicured mustache and an oilman’s fiscal ingenuity, spearheaded efforts—many of them fruitful—to reach the counterculture on campuses like the University of California-Berkeley. Working its way through internal conflict in this time, Crusade launched outreaches like *Explo ’72*, a kind of evangelical Woodstock. The event hit the mark, drawing The Man in Black, Johnny Cash, Billy Graham, and 85,000 young people, showing just one example of “the dynamic and adaptive evangelicalism that was beginning to attract the attention of secular America” (p. 145).

Chapter six, “The Evangelical Bicentennial,” examines the turbulent political culture of the 1970s and the activity of evangelicals like Bright within it. In this period, argues Turner, “evangelical political efforts in the mid-1970s became far more influential and noteworthy” (p. 148). Fueling this newfound influence “was the dramatic growth of evangelical institutions” like Crusade. The ministry retrenched its views on the home, society, and gender during this period, which saw Bright expend great effort in attempting to commemorate the “evangelical bicentennial” in 1976. At Bright’s initiative, Crusade launched a touring evangelistic program called “Here’s Life, America” that changed a purported 535,000 lives and, according to the leader, decreased both the crime and divorce rates in America (pp. 168–69). Heady times, these were, with heady claims to match.

Despite the mixed success of some of Crusade’s events and programs, Bright pushed for a “massive acceleration” of its work in the late 1970s and early 1980s, an emphasis covered in “America and the World for Jesus,” chapter seven (p. 175). To fuel this growth, Bright sought \$1 billion in contributions, a marketing thrust that “resulted in a sharp increase in large donations” (p. 177). Turner approaches such efforts with admirable equanimity; he does not score cheap points against Bright in areas where he might interpret him in a solely negative light. “Bright excelled at fund-raising,” he notes, “because of his ability to form personal relationships with evangelical businessmen, his experimentation with fund-raising strategies, and his incorporation of anticommunist and politically conservative themes.” However, “At the core of Bright’s ability to recruit staff members and connect with affluent donors was his personal practice of evangelism. Even as his executive responsibilities expanded, Bright lived out his insistence that Christians regularly talk about their faith in Jesus Christ” (p. 179). The author gives an example of how Bright interrupted a very busy day to plead with an unrepentant sinner to flee to Christ. His promotion of the *Jesus* film, a worldwide phenomenon, stemmed from this same impetus.

Chapter eight, “Kingdoms at War,” focuses on Bright’s labor to cure problems he believed afflicted America. One of the more engrossing stories in an already compelling text involves Bright’s efforts to launch a world-class evangelical university to counter secular academia, initially labeled the

International Christian Graduate University (p. 206). The school never really took root due to various financial struggles, though it did take over The King's College, resurgent in the current day under the leadership of Marvin Olasky and others. Turner devotes considerable space to the gender views of Crusade, which despite some accommodation to progressive gender-thought continued to reflect those of conservative evangelicalism. *Bill Bright and Campus Crusade for Christ* moves at its close to examine the campus presence of Crusade in this day, noting that it has over 1,000 chapters nationwide and over 40,000 students involved annually (p. 220). "Despite its struggles to convert non-Christian students and impact the broader trajectory of American higher education, Campus Crusade has helped reestablish evangelicalism as a permanent fixture at major American universities" (p. 224). Partly because of such "creative and persistent efforts," Turner concludes, "it is no longer reasonable to conceive of American higher education as moving inexorably toward a secular, or post-Christian future (p. 225).

John Turner's *Bill Bright and Campus Crusade for Christ* is essential reading for Christians interested in the development of one of evangelicalism's most influential parachurch ministries and the man who drove it. Turner is, as mentioned, generally even-handed to an admirable degree. Though the skeptically deconstructionist tendencies of his intended audience, scholars and educated students of American religious history, impel some biographers of evangelicals to distrust or unfairly color their subjects, Turner regularly resists this trend. He neither ignores nor overdoes Bright's complexity. Thankfully, his is not a psychological profile of the man; instead, Turner locates the major motive of all that the innovator did in his faith. Because it is fair, even generous, *Bill Bright and Campus Crusade for Christ* merits a wide audience.

The text is well-researched, smoothly written, and impressively comprehensive. In the style of much recent scholarship in the field of religious history, it studies not one, not two, but three weighty subjects: Bill Bright, Campus Crusade for Christ, and the renewal of evangelicalism. It attempts to offer something of a biography, an institutional history, and a social history in just 240 pages of prose. As is common to institutional histories, the text preoccupies itself with the major leaders and significant decisions of the parachurch ministry, necessitating the exclusion of many anecdotes and examples of Bright's constant soul-winning, for example. The book's ambitious program leaves the reader thankful for multidimensional research if wishing for further coverage and analysis of the core subjects of the text.

Turner handles the political work of Bright with charity and a lack of hyperbole. His work throws into relief the occasionally odd initiatives of a ministry ostensibly dedicated to campus outreach, but generally resists easy shots at the conservative politics and social views of Bright and the ministry he led. The author makes much of the gender views of Campus Crusade, though in the end, the present reviewer concluded that there seems to be less noteworthy material on this subject than was promised. Bright and his staffers did acquiesce in small ways to cultural mores, and Vonette Bright clearly played a much larger role in the ministry than one might think. But beyond these findings, the text presents little in this area that comes across to this reader as groundbreaking.

The text is manifestly helpful on the subject of parachurch ministry and its role within evangelicalism. For students of American evangelicalism, it is gratifying to see historians like Turner pay serious attention to parachurch organizations. Such ministries often accomplish tasks and carry out work that can in some cases pose challenges for churches. Since many churches were either forced off or ignored university campuses in the early twentieth century, groups like Crusade filled a needed niche in ministering to college students. If conservative evangelicals give thanks for renewed emphasis

among churches and denominations on church-centered campus ministry (see, for example, Reformed University Fellowship of the PCA, a model ministry for campus outreach), they must also remember that Crusade and other organizations carried the torch when others did not.

Bill Bright and Campus Crusade for Christ by John Turner reminds us that scholars do not have to choose between informing the academy or invigorating the church. One is left enlightened by the monograph even as those who agree with Bright's gospel-promotion will find fresh encouragement to prioritize the Great Commission. Turner's work shows the human side of Bright and the weaknesses of Crusade though it fundamentally leaves the evangelical reader thankful for a faithful man and a courageous, gospel-preaching ministry. Whether working on the college campus or praying for it, Christians will do well to remember passionate witnesses like Bill Bright and the work, now heightened and broadened, they began.

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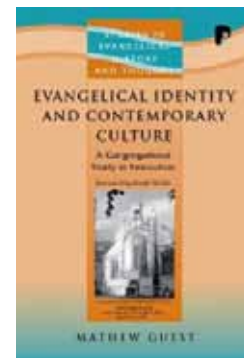
Matthew Guest. *Evangelical Identity and Contemporary Culture*. Studies in Evangelical History and Thought. Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2007. xvi + 263 pp. £24.99/\$39.99.

The material in this book was originally produced for a doctorate in sociology at Lancaster University between 1998 and 2001. The author's aim in carrying out this research project was "to challenge the widely held assumption that the forces of modernity inevitably erode the boundaries of religious community" and to "explore how the resources of the evangelical tradition are mobilised in negotiating the challenges presented by contemporary British society." The focus of his study was one of the most prominent evangelical Anglican churches in the North-east of England, St Michael-le-Belfrey in York.

The prologue vividly and colourfully describes this sixteenth-century Anglican church from his first visit in January (1998?). After visiting that fairly standard charismatic evangelical service, he attended a "Visions" group meeting that same evening. "Visions" is a multimedia, highly visual, alternative style of worship that appeals to a small group of people with, according to their identity statement, "major interests in the visual arts, dance music, technology and Christian spirituality" (p. xxiv). Guest provided extensive details about these services in order to convey a clear impression of the range of spiritual expressions found in the two congregations of this local church.

His first chapter, "Evangelical Christianity in a Post-Christian World," explains his methodology and utilises insights from the sociological models of, for example, Peter Berger, James Davidson Hunter, and Christian Smith. Guest is well-read in the social-science literature that covers congregational studies and the sociology of religion. He explains it clearly to readers who might not be as familiar with their insights.

His second chapter, "Growth and Change: The Evangelical Movement since the 1960s," provides a helpful guide to some of the main people and initiatives that contributed to the development of this movement over a roughly forty-year period. Guest draws attention to some of the major changes in its



emphases such as the importance of Alpha courses and the rise of organisations like CARE and Jubilee, together with the embrace of popular culture at events like the Greenbelt Festival and the emergence of alternative styles of worship designed to attract individuals unable or unwilling to associate with mainstream congregations.

After these helpful general chapters, the remainder of the book concentrates on a detailed study of the life of this particular congregation. Chapter three covers the history of this church since the arrival of David Watson and briefly analyses the type of evangelicals who attend St Michael's. Guest uses structured interviews and detailed questionnaires to analyse the theological views of a representative number of the congregation. The chapter "Innovations at the Margins: The Post Evangelical Pathway" explores the work of "Visions" and its relationship with its parent congregation. The author also draws attention to the importance of small groups in building and maintaining the quality of community-life in this cause and then places developments at St Michael's in the context of the influence of the wider evangelical community in which it operates.

Guest highlights that the different waves of charismatic renewal have provided challenges for the church's unity. He provides evidence that the leadership of the congregation has had a clear strategy for handling diversity of theological opinions within their ranks, together with a surprising degree of cultural accommodation. He claims that they had deliberately emphasised unity in their public pronouncements, concentrating in sermons, for example, on uncontentious Christian themes while avoiding raising issues that might be a potential source of division. He contrasts the clearly post-evangelical "Visions" group with the more culturally and theologically conservative parent-congregation. However, he claims that the main congregation holds more liberal theological views and is open to a broader engagement and accommodation to the wider secular culture than might be deduced from the public statements of church leaders. It is a very detailed and thorough sociological study by a researcher who described himself as "a sympathetic agnostic" (pp. 153, 186).

Unfortunately, this work is frustrating at times. It appears that the author, although well-versed in evangelical historiography, has a rather rigid view of the nature of this movement, assuming that it is more uniformly conservative, traditionalist, and resistant to the wider culture. It is possible that a lack of familiarity with the changing patterns of Christian worship and the breadth of theological opinions in a typical evangelical congregation over this time period, which regular worshippers would assume, has influenced some of his judgements. Guest expresses his surprise at the presence of a "progressive worship group" and the extent of social activism in the congregation (p. xxv). Despite the fact that the congregation is composed of mainly highly educated people, he was also surprised at their "critical thinking" about a variety of issues, together with their openness to varied forms of Christian spirituality. He wrongly assumes that these developments are necessarily a capitulation to a more liberal form of Christianity. On occasions they may be evidence of a more effective engagement with the wider community and culture, but without necessarily departing from a conservative theological position.

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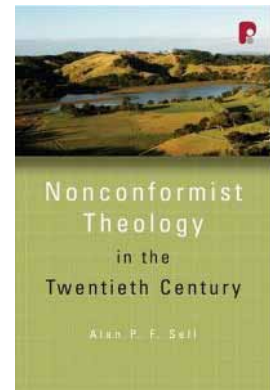
Alan P. E. Sell. *Nonconformist Theology in the Twentieth Century*. Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2006. 239 pp. £18.99/\$35.99.

This work is based on Sell's 2006 Didsbury Lectures, delivered at the Nazarene College, Manchester. The author aims to provide the first comprehensive study of the systematic, doctrinal, and constructive theology produced within the major Nonconformist traditions in the United Kingdom during the twentieth century. His range includes Congregational, Baptist, Presbyterian, Unitarian, Methodist, and United Reformed theologians working primarily in these fields, but omitting others whose primary works are in biblical, moral, pastoral, and liturgical studies.

In his opening lecture, "Surveying the Landscape," the author begins by highlighting the dramatic changes in opinions held in theological colleges in the late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The strict confessional Calvinism in which many of these theologians or their predecessors had been brought up in Presbyterian, Baptist, or Congregational circles became a distant memory. A focus on the Fatherhood of God replaced old dogmas emphasising God's sovereignty. The rise of a more liberal understanding of biblical truth led to a dearth of scholars interested in producing works of systematic theology (p. 11). The major concerns of the twentieth century began with the challenge of R. J. Campbell's *The New Theology*, followed by the impact of the First World War on a society that was convinced of the upward evolutionary progress of humankind and by the anthropocentric liberal theology that accompanied it. The influence of Karl Barth was particularly powerful in arresting the influence of this humanistic dogma. Sell also draws attention to the work of the process theologians and the "Death of God" exponents in the 1960s, together with the Christological challenge of John Hick and others from the 1970s onwards, which brought about significant discussions on the credibility of exclusive truth claims for any one religion in a world of religious pluralism.

The second lecture, "Doctrinal Peaks," covers contributions on the doctrines of the person and work of Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the Trinity. Sell argues that significant attention was given to the atonement earlier in the century, but in the last couple of decades the Trinity has rightly been the subject of even more studies. Many of the contributors rejected the historic penal substitution model of the atonement as unworthy of God. They also held very different views of sin and the efficacy of the death of Jesus. P. T. Forsyth, by contrast, was the major figure challenging these subjective interpretations of this doctrine. At a time when a majority of theologians were particularly elevating the incarnation of Jesus, Forsyth stood firmly as the theologian of the cross (p. 47). Colin Gunton and Baptist Paul Fiddes were the major contributors to this doctrine in the latter part of the century. Sell gives much less space to contributions on the person of Christ and the Trinity, and a particular weakness is his treatment of the Holy Spirit. All the works he cites come from scholars in the older Free Churches, but no contributions come from classic Pentecostals or writers from the more recent independent charismatic Churches; and, especially significant, no works cited are from the second half of the century.

The third lecture, "Ecclesiological Thickets," addresses ecclesiology. Sell pays particular attention to the Genevan school (in Congregational ranks) that emphasised that the church meeting is a theocracy not a democracy (p. 102). His judicious selection of sources on the theology of baptism represents a range of primarily Baptist writers. He devotes much greater space to ecumenical relations between the



churches. This is clearly a particular interest of the author, and the scholars whose work he discusses are usually ardently committed to the modern ecumenical movement. Sell is clearly a master of the vast literature on ecumenism, but students new to this field may struggle with the large amount of information he provides.

The fourth and final lecture is entitled “Rivers, Rivulets—and Encroaching Desert?” His focus here is mainly with eschatology. A major part of the presentation hints at books and authors that space precludes him from including. His final section laments the declining numbers of Nonconformists publishing significant works in systematic, doctrinal, or constructive theology from a base in a Nonconformist theological college, and the virtual absence of earned Doctor of Divinity degrees amongst its ministers, together with less rigorous training courses for ministry in theological colleges at the end of the twentieth century. This reviewer, while recognising the trends Sell identifies, suggests that the future of theological studies is not as bleak as he implies. Overall, while recognising the value of this work, the contributions of conservative evangelical scholars are notably absent—a choice Sell consciously makes (p. 2). He completely omits, for example, the Reformed theological revival in the second half of the twentieth century. Likewise, the discussion of the person and work of the Holy Spirit without a mention of Pentecostal or Charismatic contributions appears rather inadequate. The importance of this book will be as a valuable reference to the theological output of scholars in the older Free Churches in the last century.

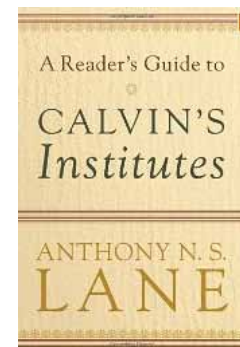
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Anthony N. S. Lane. *A Reader's Guide to Calvin's Institutes*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009. 174 pp. \$14.99/£9.08.

With the celebration of John Calvin's five hundredth birthday in 2009, numerous publications have commemorated the life and thought of the great Genevan reformer. An extremely helpful addition to the growing Calviniana is Anthony N. S. Lane's *A Reader's Guide to Calvin's Institutes*. Lane has produced a relatively brief aid for the potentially overwhelmed reader of what is arguably Calvin's magnum opus.

Lane's contribution is not the only summary of the *Institutes* ever written. One could say that there has been a cottage industry of sorts in this area. Even in Calvin's own lifetime, various authors provided condensations. One of the more recent analyses of the *Institutes* was authored by Ford Lewis Battles, translator of the most commonly used McNeill/Battles edition of the *Institutes*, upon which Lane's *Guide* is based.

The author provides helpful instruction in how to use his *Guide* (pp. 9–10) and follows that with a chapter on John Calvin and the history and purpose of the *Institutes* (pp. 11–22). The book proper follows the order of the four books of the *Institutes* and divides up the material into thirty-two readings. These readings focus on Calvin's positive theology, and the readings average eighteen pages in length. The author provides an overview of the whole reading schedule in the book's only appendix (pp. 173–74). Lane explains,



The *Institutes* is divided into thirty-two portions, in addition to Calvin's introductory material. From each of these an average of some eighteen pages has been selected to be read. These selections are designed to cover the whole range of the *Institutes*, to cover all of Calvin's positive theology, while missing most of his polemics against his opponents and most of the historical material. My notes concentrate on the sections chosen for reading but also contain brief summaries of the other material (9–10).

Lane offers pithy summations of each of the sections of each chapter of each book, focusing, as he notes in the citation given above, on the positive theology of the *Institutes*. This is an excellent aid to comprehension of Calvin. It is not a replacement, however, for the *Institutes* themselves, but an aid to understanding a theological masterpiece.

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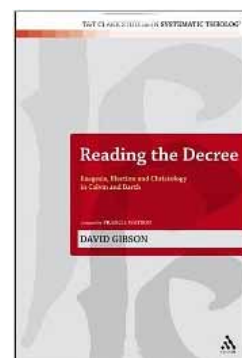
— SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY AND BIOETHICS —

David Gibson. *Reading the Decree: Exegesis, Election, and Christology in Calvin and Barth*. Edited by John Webster, Ian McFarland, and Ivor Davidson. T&T Clark Studies in Systematic Theology 4. London: T&T Clark, 2009. xiv + 221 pp. £65.00/\$130.00.

This latest volume in the T&T Clark Studies in Systematic Theology series shrewdly analyzes the “role of text-reception in theological construction” by John Calvin and Karl Barth (p. 11), focusing on the exegetical contours of their very different doctrines of election. Originally prepared as a PhD dissertation at the University of Aberdeen under the supervision of Francis Watson, Gibson's first book deserves a wide audience as an impressive work in historical theology employed for the sake of contemporary dogmatic reflection.

What does it mean to be a “christocentric” theologian? Richard Muller has drawn a distinction between two forms: “soteriological christocentrism,” which opposes synergism by affirming that redemption is *solus Christus*; and “principlial christocentrism,” which battles correlationist epistemologies by stating that Jesus Christ is the one Word of God. Gibson shows that Calvin demonstrates a “soteriological christocentrism,” while Barth pushes toward a “principlial christocentrism” (in addition to affirming “soteriological christocentrism”). To this distinction, Gibson adds another:

To describe a hermeneutic as christologically extensive means that the Christology clearly defines the hermeneutical approach, but the centre of Christology points outwards to other doctrinal *loci* which have space and scope to exist in themselves Conversely, to describe a hermeneutic as christologically intensive means that the christological centre defines all else within its circumference. (p. 15)



Gibson argues that these distinctive uses of Christ-centeredness can be seen throughout the works of Calvin and Barth: extensive in the former, intensive in the latter. Gibson makes his point by expositing their texts (both intensively and extensively!).

Gibson traces these two distinctions through three major areas: Christology, election, and hermeneutics. He shows that Calvin and Barth employ many of the same terms and texts, even as they fashion very different theological systems. In both cases, however, he seeks to highlight the exegetical reasoning that lies behind their structures. Eventually, in a very helpful chapter on hermeneutics, Gibson shows (rightly, to my mind) that divergent doctrines of revelation ground the other dogmatic differences between Calvin and Barth. Even here, however, their *appropriation* of revelation shapes their *doctrines* of revelation.

Some areas of reflection are not probed to a satisfying degree. First, Gibson notes that both exegetical and polemical interests led to Calvin's restructuring of his doctrine of predestination in the 1559 edition of the *Institutes* (p. 164). More widely, however, his book focuses solely on the role of exegesis in shaping the differing theologies of Calvin and Barth. To grasp further nuances of their distinctiveness, polemical differences would have to be explored at greater length (especially to appreciate the nature of Barth's "principal christocentrism" as a protest to theology done after Kant).

Second, reflection on other gospel texts is surely called for since Calvin and Barth read the life of Jesus in very different ways. Where Calvin sees Christ as both savior and judge (and, thus, interacting with two groups), Barth sees both roles focused upon Christ himself (and, derivatively, on a single group that encompasses all of humanity). To put it bluntly, Barth simply reads the story of Jesus very differently from Calvin (indeed, from virtually the whole of the Christian tradition).

Third, interpreters of Barth and Calvin must ask why Barth seems to care so much more about issues regarding the immanent life of God (known as revealed by the economy of God's works and by no other means), a doctrinal focus so rarely considered by Calvin? Gibson shows the few places where Calvin traces back the eternal implications of the nature of God's economy (pp. 83n197, 174). What theological resources, exegetical considerations, or polemical concerns lead Barth to focus on this area of reflection? As reflecting on the actions of God and showing how they reflect God's very character is one of Barth's most innovative maneuvers, this line of analysis would surely bear further fruit.

Fourth, what other resources in Calvin and the later Reformed tradition serve the function that election does for Barth? Here it might be useful to reflect on whether the doctrine of the covenant in Calvin links the economy of God's works revealed in Scripture and the eternal being of God (surely the later Reformed doctrine of the "covenant of redemption" was taken in just this direction and, perhaps, it was preceded by hints of such concern in Calvin's theology of the covenant).

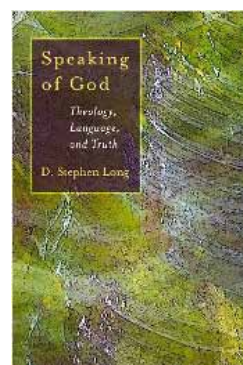
These calls for further reflection, however, should not be read as dismissals or denigrations of Gibson's work. Quite to the contrary, this is a fine book that deserves a wide reading from students of Calvin, Barth, and the Reformed tradition, as well as all those interested in the doctrines of Christ and election. Gibson shows familiarity with the works of Calvin (both commentaries and the *Institutes*) and Barth as well as the vast secondary literature; he also sees the limits in many scholarly tendencies (e.g., the tendency to see primarily philosophical grounds for both Calvin's and Barth's doctrine of election). Above all, he shows acuity in tracing the underappreciated influence of exegesis upon two master

theologians. One can only hope that many will follow Gibson's example in showing the way in which biblical exegesis has shaped dogmatic reasoning on various topics within the Christian tradition, and we might pray that many more will be inspired to imitate this biblical pursuit.

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D. Stephen Long. *Speaking of God: Theology, Language, and Truth*. Eerdmans Ekklesia Series. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009. ix + 341 pp. \$32.00.

Long's latest book advocates a recovery of metaphysics for theology, eschewing the post-metaphysical onslaught of recent systematic and philosophical theology. As the third volume in the newly launched Eerdmans Ekklesia Series (a work of the Ekklesia Project: www.ekkleiaproject.org), a key focus is the political impulse of basic metaphysical tenets of the Christian faith. To address metaphysics and public reasoning, he offers chapters on speaking of God in the modern context, faith and reason, the divine names, language, and truth.



What does he combat? He sees four ills in the modern milieu: fideism, projectionism, ontotheology, and a post-Tridentine version of the *analogia entis* (p. 80). In short, the temptation is to view knowledge of God as totally removed from other intellectual endeavors or to conflate it with other rational work. Many have viewed the metaphysical approach to God as an anthropological game of maximizing human ideals, projecting them onto God, identifying them with human powers, and justifying social ills and inequalities. To combat social injustice and to distance God from the pains of the political arena, many moderns have jettisoned that God of the classical Christian tradition as so much Hellenism. Long is not convinced.

How does he respond? Historically, Long views this rejection of metaphysics as less a careful reading of the Bible than a tradition misinformed by the so-called “Hellenization thesis,” the hypothesis that the early church quickly succumbed to the straightjacket of Greek thinking and thereby morphed the Hebrew story of Jesus into the dogma of the creeds, councils, and schoolmen. The problem, as Long says, is that this history is bunk (pp. 183–85, 187–88). The Christian tradition Christianized Hellenism (a phrase cited from Robert Louis Wilken), not the other way around. In chapter three, the dogmatic center of the whole book, Long shows that the divine name given in Exod 3:14 undergirds this metaphysical framework, implying a whole host of dogmatic tenets: impassibility, simplicity, infinity, eternity, etc. He relies on a recent spate of good archaeological work by Janet Martin Soskice, Fergus Kerr, Matthew Levering, and others to explain the revealed nature of the classical divine attributes (what he calls the “divine names”), focusing especially on their place in the theology of Thomas Aquinas.

Theologically, Long argues that the incarnation provides a model for speaking about God. In Jesus, we see that the human nature can be with God without itself becoming divine; here the continuing integrity of the two natures is crucial (pp. 14–15, 85–86, 226, 258, 295). As he says, “Jesus Christ is the ‘way’ or ‘logic’ of our speaking of God, for he is the Procession who takes on creatureliness without confusing it with divinity in the concretion of his one Person” (p. 177). So all theology is anthropology, as Long says, but all anthropology is Christologically focused (p. 40, drawing on Victor Preller).

By continuing to reflect on the two natures of Christ's person, Long is able to honor the adequacy of theological language without denying the distinction between divine and human life.

The strengths of the book are many. Long rightly responds to the overwhelmingly post-metaphysical trends in contemporary theology. He references a cadre of thinkers who protest this groundswell, especially William Desmond, Fergus Kerr, and Matthew Levering, engaging with varying interpretations of the doctrine of God in the Thomistic tradition. However, two limits of the book appear here. One wishes that he engaged the iconoclastic proposals of Bruce McCormack or that he addressed debates among those influenced by Barth in greater detail. He consistently mentions Barth, but he restricts his analysis of Barthian scholarship largely to that offered by Hans Urs von Balthasar. While this is no doubt an important ecumenical and dogmatic conversation to note, perhaps the most heated debate about the classical metaphysical tradition is presently occurring amongst Barthians. Even more important, however, is the lack of biblical exegesis in Long's text. He does make the programmatic and historical point that the divine names tradition flows from biblical texts; that is, Thomas was a biblical and exegetical theologian. Furthermore, he shows the importance of a couple texts (Exod 3:14; John 14:6). But a successful response to post-metaphysical theology is going to have to offer more than this in the way of biblical commentary. The whole warp and woof of Scripture points to and presupposes a particular metaphysics. If ever it was necessary to go text by text, theme by theme, the time is surely now. This reader left Long's book wanting more by way of exegesis.

Long also succeeds in tying metaphysical inquiry to political engagement (see esp. chap. 5). Among other things, he challenges Mark Lilla and others in their too frequent claim that dogmatic religion necessarily leads to violence and, thus, must be replaced by a secular pluralism. Against this now popular view of ancient and early modern history (popularized by Bart Ehrman, Dan Brown, and so many popular periodicals), Long observes that "this analysis of violence gets the cause of violence in modernity exactly backwards" (p. 263). He shows that the divine names tradition does not justify the power and violence of human kings indiscriminately; rather, if God is the universal sovereign, no other ruler can claim that role.

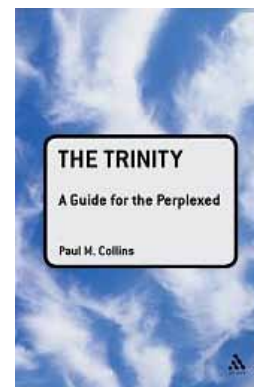
All told, then, Long's book is a useful entry into recent discussions of theological metaphysics, linguistic philosophy, and the doctrine of revelation. He also addresses the political implications of classic Christian orthodoxy. He reads Thomas in the most plausible way possible, making the most of recent scholarship and drawing a number of synthetic judgments that are helpful. The book reads largely like a survey of Thomistic scholarship, but it is survey of the best kind and with sane judgment. It will be especially useful as a launching pad to send students and scholars alike deeper into the Western theological tradition, where they can see Thomas and others reading the Bible with metaphysical interests.

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Paul M. Collins. *The Trinity: A Guide for the Perplexed*. Guides for the Perplexed. London: T&T Clark, 2008. 194 pp. £13.99/\$24.95.

T&T Clark describes their Guides for the Perplexed series as offering “clear, concise and accessible introductions to thinkers, writers and subjects that students and readers can find especially challenging.” The aim is to guide readers “towards a thorough understanding of demanding material.” However, the reader should be aware that Collins’s

intention in writing this guide is not so much to provide answers as to equip the reader in framing good questions of Scripture and tradition and those who seek to interpret them. This guide is not like other introductions to the doctrine of the Trinity. It assumes a basic working knowledge of the doctrine and scholarly discourse concerning it. (p. 5)



Therefore, the reader is often left to resolve the issues or questions raised within the book.

After a brief introduction, Collins begins chapter 1 with attention to the person of Christ and the Holy Spirit in the NT as well as the experience of mystery. For Collins, “the doctrine of the Trinity arises from human reflection upon the experience or encounter with mystery, the witness of the Scripture to the events of revelation and the tradition of Nicene orthodoxy” (p. 26). It is an “ecclesial doctrine” (p. 8) and “is to be understood in relation to the activity of God in the Christ event and the event of Pentecost” (p. 25).

Chapter 2 provides a sketch of “four moments” in the hermeneutical history of the Trinity. In reverse chronological order, Collins begins with the “de Regnon paradigm,” which argues that Eastern trinitarianism begins with the three persons and has a social or communal emphasis, whereas the West begins with the divine unity and focuses on the individual. Collins also offers a brief genealogy of Social Trinitarianism and the appeal to relationality or social understandings of the Godhead. The problem of Socinus, the Schism of 1054, and Arianism form the final three “moments” which serve as examples in which the trinitarian discourse developed. For example, Collins argues that the “disputes concerning Socinianism . . . have influenced the ways in which Nicene orthodoxy is perceived and received” (p. 42).

Chapter 3, the “heart of the book,” focuses on the technical language and major frameworks that are essential and make up the doctrine of the Trinity. Collins surveys the use of trinitarian terminology such as *homoousion* and *prosopon* among others. Space is given to a discussion of personhood in modernity in the theology of Karl Rahner, Karl Barth, and particularly John Zizioulas. Collins offers a lengthy treatment of *perichoresis* followed by a survey of the feminist critique of gendered language.

Most of the attention in chapter 4 is given to “event conceptuality,” which instead of seeing the being of God in terms of changelessness argues for an interpretation of “the encounter with the divine in the economy in terms of ‘event’” (p. 116). For Collins, event-conceptuality “has the potential to earth speculation on the inner divine life in the experience of the human encounter with the Divine Three” (p. 117). In contrast to Barth and others, Zizioulas is presented as the theologian who has used event-conceptuality in the most promising way.

The final chapter is much more constructive and concentrates on the relevance of the Trinity. Collins accomplishes this through a discussion of the place of “the Other” in theological reflection on the Trinity. Zizioulas’s “ontology of otherness” enters the dialogue and demonstrates “an answer to the

critique that the appeal to communion eliminates otherness” (p. 128). The chapter ends by surveying the identification of Church and Trinity in the ecclesiology of several theologians of the twentieth century. Finally, Collins argues, “as the Eucharist makes the Church, the Church encounters the Divine Three and enters into communion with them” (p. 142).

Collins’ ability to explain the differences and similarities between Eastern and Western views of the Trinity is a great strength of this work. By engaging not only Eastern Orthodox but Roman Catholic theologians as well, the book’s ecumenical approach is a welcomed addition amid other introductions and surveys.

Unfortunately, this book lacks a clear target audience. Is this intended for Europeans, Americans, evangelicals, mainstream, or all of the above? As a priest in the Church of England, is he writing to those within his church or to academics in general? The series in which this book is located would appear to imply that he is writing for students in general, but this is still unclear. The reader should know that this book is not a book for beginners and is more appropriate for a graduate level course on the Trinity due to the expectation that the reader is familiar with thinkers such as Barth, LaCugna, Zizioulas, Derrida, and others.

Additionally, a significant limitation of this guide is that it does not deliver a “thorough understanding of demanding material.” The significance of Wolfhart Pannenberg, Robert W. Jenson, and T. F. Torrance are given very little mention. Most of all, however, more space should have been given to Paul Molnar’s important contribution to this field, especially in *Divine Freedom and the Doctrine of the Immanent Trinity* (T&T Clark, 2002).

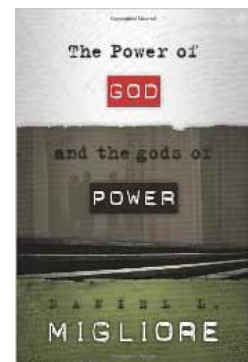
Despite these shortcomings, I would recommend this work to readers who are interested in an ecumenical approach that gives significant attention to modern and social trinitarian issues and thinkers.

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Daniel L. Migliore. *The Power of God and the Gods of Power*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008. ix + 141 pp. \$16.95.

Previously published in 1983, Daniel Migliore of Princeton Theological Seminary has revised and expanded this work as a result of the considerable changes in our world over the past twenty-five years. Migliore calls Christians to rethink the nature of God’s power, which is rooted in Scripture based on the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus. The book is written for “beginners in theology” and each chapter ends with questions for discussion.

Chapter 1 places the idea of power within the arena of three spheres: personal development; social, economic, and political contexts; and the natural environment. Human sin and the misuse of power have consequences in these global, institutional, and personal settings. Following Luther, Migliore argues, “whatever we look to as the ultimate power capable of giving our lives meaning and fulfillment is our God” (p. 10). Therefore, Christians must distinguish and make a choice between the true God and idols.



In agreement with Calvin, chapter 2 argues that knowledge of God and knowledge of ourselves are inseparable and that a distorted understanding of either one will result in a flawed understanding of the other. American culture reflects these distortions by viewing God as sheer almightiness (e.g., a superhero), captive power (e.g., a business partner or magician), and as an inept or indifferent God (e.g., the God of deism). All three views are idolatrous and reflect an inadequate view of God's power.

Chapter 3 focuses on the power of God in Scripture. In agreement with Frei, the biblical witness should not be searched for the historical facts behind the text, nor should it be harvested for its universal moral teachings. Instead of reading the Bible as a textbook in science, a source of prophecy, or as a springboard for novels and movies that purport to disclose some secret about the life of Jesus (pp. 38–39), the Bible “is more like an epic drama” (p. 40) and “contains a chorus of voices rather than one solitary voice” (p. 42). As it relates to God's power, the Bible presents us “not with a single image of God and God's power but with a rich diversity of images” (p. 42).

Chapter 4 compares the God of the Bible and the God of the philosophers (Pascal). Migliore is appreciative but ultimately critical of scholastic theology that describes God's attributes by way of negation, eminence, and analogy. While “helpful and even unavoidable,” these descriptions “fall short of a distinctively Christian understanding of God” (p. 63). After evaluating God's omnipotence, immutability, and impassibility in light of the gospel-story, Migliore concludes that Jesus reveals a different side of God's redeeming power, suffering love, and that God changes in surprising ways.

The doctrine of the Trinity is the focus of chapter 5, where Migliore argues that the power of God is a “shared power.” As the living God whose life is communal or social by nature, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are “the power of self-giving love” (p. 82). This is a suffering yet victorious love where “God is victor as well as victim” (p. 87). Finally, the act of God's free and willing suffering “is the deepest message of Scripture regarding human suffering” and provides hope for the coming reign of God.

Chapter 6 connects the power of God to the Christian life by giving attention to forgiveness, hospitality to strangers, and prayer for God's coming reign. Forgiveness “is a participation in and reflection of the creative and redemptive power of God” (p. 97) and transforms us so that we “reach out in love and friendship to others, especially those who seem disturbingly different” (p. 105). Christians are to have hope in the coming power of God.

In the final and completely new chapter, Migliore moves toward a Christian-Muslim dialogue. He is clear that “Christians and Muslims have profound agreements and disagreements” (p. 130). Nevertheless, he argues that we should have two goals in mind: (1) the ethical goal of achieving peace and justice within the world and (2) a theological goal that strives for a better understanding of each faith. Migliore demonstrates this by addressing the interpretation of Scripture, the oneness of God, idolatry, and the Trinity.

Overall, Migliore presents a balanced understanding of the power of God according to the biblical witness. His use of stories and helpful examples adds to its accessibility, and his penetrating analysis of idolatry in Western culture is a welcome challenge. However, Migliore could have spent more time clarifying or strengthening his critique of scholastic theology and the divine attributes (pp. 62–66). Also, he recognizes that there were multiple “schools,” yet the impression is given that *all* of the “later Middle Ages” and “post-Reformation period” theology presents a “cold and distant” God (p. 66). While space is limited in this book, such a statement is too simplistic and simply not true.

Furthermore, Migliore argues that “all of our images of God must be radically revised in light of Jesus Christ the crucified and risen Lord” (p. 72). Consequently, the attributes of omnipotence, immutability,

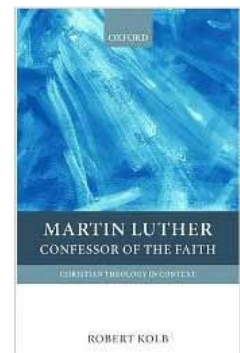
and impassibility are revised. While his revisions are often welcomed, how far should they go? If we can speak of “suffering love,” then does Jesus’ death play a role in defining the identity and being of God? How far do the human experiences of Jesus extend to the being and attributes of God?

While Migliore’s book cannot understandably answer every question, he provides a great deal of pastoral, biblical, and theological wisdom that will be of value to pastors, students, and discussion groups. Therefore, I highly recommend this concise work since there is still much to gain from it even if one does not always agree with the author.

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Robert T. Kolb. *Martin Luther: Confessor of the Faith*. Christian Theology in Context. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009. 208 pp. £16.99/\$35.00.

Oxford’s “Christian Theology in Context” is a series on a tightrope, attempting to tread that thin line between adequate treatment of both the theological contributions of major Christian thinkers and the historical contexts in which their thought developed. Attending to either of these concerns is a task unto itself, but balancing them, as Robert Kolb has managed to do in his recent installment in this series, is quite difficult, especially in two hundred pages or less. Yet because Kolb’s treatment of Luther seeks to place Luther’s *theology* in context, the book is primarily oriented theologically, rather than biographically.



In the first five chapters, Kolb focuses on the development of Luther as a reformer and theologian, giving special attention to influences that shaped his world of thought. Luther, he argues, does not fit neatly or consistently into any single school of thought common to the sixteenth century, but appears rather to have drawn eclectically from several existing traditions. German mystics enriched Luther’s understanding of faith as dependence upon God; the scholasticism of William of Ockham provided a foundation for thinking about God’s sovereignty, and Augustine for human inability and the need for grace. Yet as a Doctor of Exegesis, no influence quite approximated the importance that Scripture itself played in the development of Luther’s theology. Kolb considers the development of the “Wittenberg way” of reading Scripture, a “way” founded on the creative power of God’s Word, focused on God’s promise present in the Word, and implemented in a reform program that centered on the preaching and catechesis of the Word.

Each of the final five chapters is concerned with the dogmatic dimensions of Luther’s theology. In chapter six, Kolb briefly treats Luther’s anthropology, focusing on his Augustinian roots, his frustrations with Aristotelian metaphysics, and his tension between the sovereignty of God and the existence of evil. Kolb only briefly treats the much-discussed Finnish interpretation of Luther’s doctrine of union with Christ, drawing on Luther’s wedding imagery as support for a unity within differentiation (pp. 127–29). In the following chapter, Kolb traverses a wide amount of research, considering various interpretations of Luther’s Christology, especially his language surrounding the atonement. Luther has often been appropriated as belonging to this or that theory of the atonement, but Kolb rightly points out, “The atonement occasioned no controversies in the sixteenth century, and, therefore, elicited less than exact

work on its formulation.” Consequently, “reading Luther in context reveals that he highlighted precisely those images of Christ’s work that spoke most directly to the pastoral problem specific sermons, treatises, or lectures were addressing” (118).

Kolb treats Luther’s theology of the oral and sacramental forms of the Word of God in chapter 8, “One Little Word Can Slay Him.” This chapter is a bit thin on the oral and scriptural form of God’s Word, but Kolb sufficiently weaves these themes throughout his treatment, clearing ground to treat the sacraments more thoroughly. The Eucharistic debates of the sixteenth century turned up a massive body of complex and sophisticated contemplation on the relationship between God’s presence and his Word. Though the author would certainly have wished to treat this topic more thoroughly, Kolb nicely distills the relevant points of debate within these twenty pages. The last two chapters consider the life of the Church in the world (its nature, purpose in history, and its spiritual warfare) and the Christian life (Luther’s ethic of love at work in familial, economic, and political contexts).

The whole value of a book like this is in the balance it strikes between length and depth. Surveying a field of study to which many scholars commit their lives is tricky business. The author is passing rapid judgment on massive tracts of interpretation within a page, a paragraph, or perhaps even a sentence! Yet this is precisely what makes Robert Kolb’s work here so salutary: in two hundred pages he manages to produce a sound, even-handed survey of the critical points of Luther’s theology in a minimally reductive manner, making the book ideal for those seeking introductory acquaintance with Luther’s theology. Brevity is lost on many modern authors; this book reminds us of its virtue.

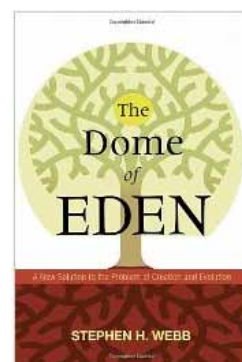
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Stephen H. Webb. *The Dome of Eden: A New Solution to the Problem of Creation and Evolution*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2010. vii + 366 pp.

Stephen H. Webb is Professor of Religion and Philosophy at Wabash College in Crawfordsville, Indiana. He has an evangelical background and recently became a Roman Catholic.

Webb starts off with the basic premises that God created the world, that the Bible is reliable, and that evolution occurs. Taking issue with Darwinism, theistic evolution, Intelligent Design, and creationism, Webb offers a new theory of how creation and evolution can both be true.

One major concern with Darwinism is that, more than most scientific theories, it is intimately dependent upon various moral, philosophical, and theological assumptions. Webb claims that there is little empirical evidence for natural selection. Indeed, much of biology is based on inferential reasoning rather than empirical evidence (p. 47). Moreover, transitional forms in the fossil record are incredibly rare, and Darwinism lacks predictive value (p. 51). Darwinists deny purpose in nature, yet their language describing nature is filled with inscribing purpose (e.g., the selfish gene). Thus, Webb asks, if we cannot describe nature without inscribing it with purpose, how do we know that there is a nature beyond our language that is not purposeful (p. 66)?



A major focus of this book is the mystery of natural evil. Darwinian Evolution is random and violent. Thus, any attempt to envision this process as the direct will of God (i.e., theistic evolution) will have a domino effect on every other Christian doctrine (p. 67). Webb argues that the problem of natural evil—particularly animal suffering not due to human causes—poses difficulties for both theistic evolution and intelligent design. The God of theistic evolution causes both life-affirming growth and death-dealing corruption. Such a God, who is both good and evil, cannot be the God of the Bible (p. 110). As to the intelligent design movement, if it is willing to make inference to a *good* intelligent designer, should it not likewise make inferences to an *evil* intelligent designer (p. 121)?

Creation science also gets its share of critique. Webb, who believes in an old earth, contends that creation science theorists read Genesis anachronistically, as a response to Darwin. Consequently, they tie the meaning of Genesis too closely to questions raised by evolution and treat the Bible as if it were a fount of scientific information (p. 126). Further, creation science attributes natural evil to human sin. According to Webb, it is unjust to punish animals for human sin (p. 131), and, further, their punishment is disproportionate to the human crime. Finally, if God changes animals into predators, he is responsible for natural evil (p. 133).

Having disposed of these alternatives, Webb presents his own proposal. Following C. S. Lewis, Webb suggests that Satan fell long before Adam and corrupted the world outside Eden. Eden was a special place, protected from the rest of the world by a dome (i.e., the firmament of Gen 1). The animals in Eden were the prototypes of all animals, which Satan tried to mimic, replicate, and destroy in the battle over evolution (p. 142). Thus, Satan is responsible for both natural and moral evil. Evolution is to natural evil as freedom is to moral evil. Evolution is a battlefield for the struggle of good and evil (p. 147). God creates directly, without need of any biological mechanism. Satan, on the other hand, cannot create *ex nihilo*; he can only manipulate and distort what God has created. Satan tries to mimic, mock, and parody God's creation. Since evolution is marked by blood and anguish, it is primarily a work of Satan, even though it occurs by divine permission. In Eden, however, evolution proceeded under God's good guidance.

Thus, Webb makes a valiant attempt to solve the perplexing problem of creation, evolution, and natural evil. Yet Webb's position has its own shortcomings. First of all, since it is somewhat of a compromise, it is doubtful whether his solution will satisfy many Christians. Part of the difficulty is that the relation between Eden and evolution is ambiguous. On the one hand, Webb tells us that God directly created Adam (p. 161) and the Edenic animals (p. 223). On the other hand, we are told that God used bacteria and other building blocks of life to create the creatures of Eden (p. 161). So which is it? Did God use evolution in Eden or not? Further, if God created Adam directly, how are we to view the evidence for common ancestry between humans and other animals? These are points that Webb does not address adequately. There are also exegetical difficulties. Most commentators believe that Gen 1 refers to the creation of the whole earth, not just Eden. Similarly, the fact that God declares this finished creation, after Adam, as "very good" is widely taken to indicate that Satan has not yet corrupted it.

The book is well-written. Webb offers excellent critiques of naturalism, Darwinism, theistic evolution, Intelligent Design, and creationism. He rightly underscores the importance of the problem of natural evil and the substantial theological consequences that flow from proposed solutions to it. He has deep insights regarding the primacy of Jesus Christ in creation, the biblical view on animals, and the philosophical deficiencies of naturalism.

In sum, this is an interesting read, giving much food for thought—even for those who may not ultimately be convinced.

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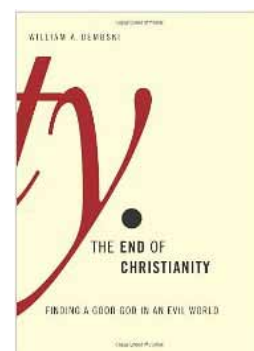
William A. Dembski. *The End of Christianity: Finding a Good God in an Evil World*. Nashville: Broadman & Holman; Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2009. xviii + 238 pp. \$22.99.

Always winter but never Christmas! Thus C. S. Lewis portrays a fallen world in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, the opening volume in his *Narnia Chronicles*. The Scriptures tell us that the ground is accursed because of human sin and that “the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now” (Gen 3:17–19; Rom 8:22 *ESV*). The expression “together” is best taken as a reference to the entire creation, that is, the universe in all its parts, which is suffering in birth pangs, waiting along with humanity, which also “groans inwardly” for full redemption (Rom 8:23).

Few Christians have any problem admitting that nature is fallen. From earthquakes to disease and famine, dangerous predators and devastating tsunamis, an empirical look at the creation gives us anything but the peaceful world Rousseau observed in his *Reveries of a Solitary Walker* (1778). But how does this malevolent condition of the natural world connect to human sinfulness? The difficulty has been compounded ever since the likelihood of an ancient universe has become the dominant view. How can the sin of our first ancestors affect the chaos of the world for thousands of years before they walked on the planet? Most important of all, in the light of nature’s fall, how can we affirm that God is both the good and powerful creator? In a word, we are discussing *theodicy*. Although the term itself was not coined until G. W. Leibnitz (1646–1716), puzzling out the dilemma of a just God in the face of evil is as old as the ancient writers, who cried out, “Why, O Lord?” (Ps 10:1; Hab 1:13).

William Dembski is well-known in certain circles as the defender of *intelligent design*. At the same time he is a critic of *creationism*, which advocates a young earth (reading the days of Gen 1 as comprising only twenty-four hours). In *The End of Christianity*, he sets himself the task of establishing a theodicy. The curious title is meant to get the attention of those who wish that were true. When they read the book and observe the world, they will have to decide that that was only wishful thinking. Dembski dutifully attacks the new atheists, Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens et al, but his real concern is to mesh the traditional doctrine of Adam’s fall and its effect on nature with the reality of pain and suffering long before Adam.

His basic argument is as follows. The cross of Christ is the answer to the problem of evil. It is also the ultimate demonstration of the goodness (or benevolence, as he prefers) of God in creation. Evil came into the world because of the “personal evil” of the first humans. Although we do not know all of the reasons God could allow natural evil in relation to human sin, the basic one is “to get our attention” (p. 45). That is, the presence of evil in the world underscores the gravity of sin, so that we will be all the more aware of the cost of Christ’s work for our salvation.



Although this approach is fairly common, where things get interesting is the way Dembski connects the evils in nature, which existed long before the creation of humankind, to the sins of our first parents. The problem is that the earth, and its evils, have existed millions of years before Adam and Eve. How can our first parents be a cause, in any meaningful sense, of the evils in a world that they did not inhabit? How could the fall affect not only the future but the past? His answer comes by being able to distinguish between two concepts of time: *kairos* as opposed to *chronos*. The first is something like “purposeful time,” whereas the latter is chronological time. He compares the difference to the visible realm and the invisible realm (p. 125). The visible realm operates according to the simple, sequential order of chronological time. But the invisible realm operates according to *kairos*, which is “the ordering of reality according to divine purposes.”

So how does this help us attribute human sin to the fall of nature well before the existence of humans? Because God is above time, that is, chronological time. God, then, acts by anticipating the fall. He can do this because causality is an *infinite dialectic* whereby God anticipates novel events by divine action in the realm of *kairos*, which is not time-bound, and interacts with human agency, which is not predetermined, but free (p. 140). Accordingly, Gen 1 does not record chronological time but purposeful or *kairological* time.

In the bargain, God remains good and powerful, even though human beings have freely chosen to go astray. Dembski argues that we live in a “double creation,” whereby all things are created twice: first the concept, then the realization. God has a general plan the way a playwright conceives of his theatre, but then the actors must perform. And in the case of the earth, the actors did not perform properly. But that is all right, because God can still “rewrite history” in order to save us. “God can rewrite our story while it is being performed and even change the entire backdrop against which it is performed—that includes past, present and future.” Not only can he thus make the effects of the fall retroactive, but he can (indeed, he must) act to undo the damage (pp. 110–11). And he manages to do this without violating the freedom of the actors.

The argument is intriguing. And the book is quite brilliant, full of learned references to both science and literature, to theology as well as history and mathematics. It is an unusual and creative apologetic. But I am afraid it does not succeed.

For one thing, Dembski never explains the kind of a world we are in, wherein God would make human beings responsible for such a catastrophic disorder as the fall of nature. Although he gives the image of God plenty of mention, he does not explain how human beings were created to be “vice-regents,” ruling the world under God’s greater lordship. Nor does he discuss the mandate to replenish the earth and subdue it (Gen 1:26 ff.). Had he done so it might have supported his argument for the relationship between human action and their implications for the natural realm.

Several other significant problems face us as we interact with Dembski’s fascinating text. The central one is the way he relates the Creator to the creature. Despite claims to the contrary, his God is less than fully sovereign. He is the God of the (Arminian) free-will defense, who creates the world perfect, but leaves it free to wander down the wrong path. God is thus off the hook, and yet he may still intervene for his good purposes. Furthermore, although God is omniscient and omnipotent, he gives up some of that knowledge and power in order to ensure the reality of human experience. God’s power must be “tempered” with wisdom, otherwise it would “rip the fabric of creation” (p. 140). More than that, he can invest the full powers of salvation in his Son because Christ is a unique connector between the human and the divine order of things. How can Christ take on the sins of the whole world when his actual

passion was of short duration? Back to *kairological* time. Because the cross of Christ is only a “window” into a deeper reality of divine suffering, the full sufferings of humanity is somehow funneled into the “mere six hours” of Jesus’ hanging on the cross (p. 21).

It’s a delicate, I would say, impossible dance. Dembski attempts to explain it with the use of various formulas, including what he calls the “infinite dialectic.” Most of them are rather labored attempts at having it both ways: a sovereign God and a free creation. The world is fragile, he asserts, and so lots of causes can bring about lots of effects, but never in a straight line. God intervenes, constantly correcting things, not as a “cause” but as a “cause of causes.” This way his purposes can be fulfilled even though he is working with a strong measure of autonomy. Although different from Karl Barth’s dialectic, it is hard to miss certain affinities.

Of course, autonomy can no more be partial than a woman can be a little pregnant. And God can no more give up his knowledge and power and remain God than a fish can live out of water. To be sure, the problem of relating a responsible human agent to an all-powerful God is very old and very difficult. To have a fully sovereign God will always appear, to our rationalist mind, incompatible with a free creation. Perhaps, indeed, this is *the* philosophical problem. As K. Scott Oliphint puts it,

The problem is creation. No matter how many or what kind of arguments are given to show the incommensurability, if not the outright contradiction, between God’s essential existence and other aspects of that existence, or other aspects of creation, the tension inherent in every one of these arguments is located in the attempt to come to grips with the relationship of God to creation. (*Reasons for Faith: Philosophy in the Service of Theology* [Phillipsburg: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2006], p. 209)

Although no one, surely, has all the answers to this relationship, the assertions coming out of the Augustinian and Reformed tradition are more satisfying than many. First, there is a refusal to lessen either “side.” God cannot reduce or even “temper” his knowledge and power and still remain God. At the creation of the world, God invested full significance to the universe without giving up an iota of his omniscience or omnipotence. Even in the incarnation, if we follow Chalcedon, Christ remains truly God, while adding humanity to himself. While he did humble himself and subject himself to the limits of humanness, yet he was able to do so without becoming less God.

So, then, how can the creation have any real significance? The second assertion must be no less firm. There is abundant Scriptural evidence for the reality of human free will. “Choose this day whom you will serve,” Joshua tells the people (Josh 24:15). There are even those remarkable texts suggesting that with respect to human decision, God himself changes his mind, as he did when he regretted having made humanity (Gen 6:6) or when he relented to judge repentant Nineveh (Jonah 3:10). This is a stubborn biblical fact as God’s sovereignty. It won’t do to try and downplay human agency. If we are sorry, God repents!

So how can this be? In one way, we simply do not know. We’re too limited. Yet we are not entirely without guidelines. What we must assert, somehow, is that God is so powerful that he is able to create a world that is responsible. He does not do this as one might in a human contract: I’ll give you money if you’ll sell me your automobile. There is no trade-off in which God loses something to build a world outside of himself. It is a both-and. The creeds and classic Reformational confessions state that whereas God ordains everything immutably, according to his own free counsel, he does so in a way “as thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, *but rather established*” (*Westminster Confession of Faith*

III.1). The Aristotelian language of “second causes” should not lessen what is being said: the reality, the integrity, indeed, the accountability of causation in the created world are not lessened by God’s omnipotence, but are made possible by it. Mystery? Certainly. Impossibility? Apparently not. Both are true, and require each other.

Another way to put things is to assert that while God does not (and cannot) change *ontologically*, he does change with respect to his covenant relationship with his creation. The case of prayer may not settle it, but it comes close. Why pray when God not only knows but has determined what is going to come to pass? Because he has established a covenant with his creation whereby he *makes it* real. So when he answers prayer, it is not a simple case of appearances. He really hears and really responds. And when he regrets or relents, while those are not a contradiction of his being, still they are absolutely real. It’s not *as if* he were sorry, using human language because he could not actually change. No, he is sorry and does change with respect to human history. We might admit that all of this originates in the secret places where the Spirit and counsel of the Lord cannot be measured (Isa 40:13). So the rationalist mind is ill-equipped to fathom the relationship between God and his creation. But we can be assured there is a reason. Rationalism, no, rationality, yes! Creation is real.

That is why Dembski’s suggestion that God acts backwards in time is not successful. Such an assertion removes the significance of creation. It makes the world malleable with no established second causes. At times this picture resembles Gnosticism more than historic Christianity. Bolstering the argument, as he does, by saying God is above time does not help. Although God is indeed eternal, he has *decided* to honor his creation by entering into time for its sake. He will not violate earthly sequential history simply to apply judgments or blessings anachronistically. And using, as he does, the case of Israel being saved before the historical event of the atonement is not convincing either. Again, classical theology recognizes that God favored the people of the OT in anticipation of the atonement, but yet their salvation was not actualized until the cross and the resurrection. And it won’t be fully realized, for them or for us, until the resurrection.

So then, how does one explain pain and death in the natural realm before the fall? This one is not so easy either. Perhaps a few remarks can help. The whole question deserves far lengthier treatment than can be given here. First, I do agree with Dembski that the fall of nature must be a consequence of Adam’s sin. That is what the biblical evidence compels us to believe. It would have helped him to show how the image of God requires such a responsibility, as I mentioned above. Second, though, can we be sure that all pain and death in the natural realm are *evil*, as he argues? If we think so, and if we reject, as I do, Dembski’s idea of applying the fall backwards by anticipation, then we are forced somehow to identify a pre-fallen world without predators, a world without animal death, or perhaps even without death of some flora. I have heard such arguments, and they appear strained, to say the least. Mosquitoes would have stung only leaves, not people! Animals would have lived together in a pre-fallen “peaceable kingdom,” much as they are promised to do later. Volcanoes would not erupt, or if they did, there would be no destruction.

But consider instead the possibility that pain and death is not always a moral catastrophe. Are they not often portrayed in Scripture as part of the way things are? Psalm 104, a commentary on Gen 1, tells us, “The young lions roar for their prey, seeking their food from God,” without a hint of abnormally (Ps 104:21). And where would be the force of one of Paul’s illustrations as he argues for the resurrection, which accuses us of folly if we do not recognize that what is sown does not come to life unless it dies? (1 Cor 15:36). We recently visited a marvelous aquarium on Maui Island. There we saw hundreds of fish

cleverly evading their predators and hundreds of others outsmarting them so they could feed. At first, we thought, what a cruel world we are in. Then we thought again: maybe our modern sensibilities are too ready to define the good as simply the absence of predation. Certainly violence among human beings is unacceptable, no doubt a result of the fall. But is the same true for the animal world? Should Christians all be vegetarians? Surely not. That does not mean that all animal suffering is morally inconsequential. Surely there is a line, though, between hunting animals for food and being perversely cruel to them.

Biblical scholars like Bruce Waltke suggest that the creation was “very good” but yet not entirely tame. Even after the creation was finished, there could be what he calls “surd evil,” a hostility to life not connected with sin (see his *Genesis* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001], p. 68). Going a step further, perhaps this untamed creation is itself a statement, not only of the power of God, but of his purposes. Geerhardus Vos finds an eschatology in the original creation. Although “perfect,” the world Adam and Eve inhabited was not yet fully mature. It required a probation that when passed would lead humanity and the world with it to consummate bliss, eternal life. In the occasion, our first parents failed the test, bringing death and misery into the world, including an intensification of pain in the natural world. But by his great love, God provided another way; the probation was put to his Son, who not only passed, but joined us to himself, now, and then in the resurrection, where there will be no more tears and where death will have no power. Animal death in heaven? We don’t know. Isaiah suggests not, in his account where the wolf and the lamb dwell together (Isa 11:6).

Despite this central criticism, I found much of value in Dembski’s book. My favorite part of his theodicy is what he calls the “problem of good.” Whatever we might think of the way evil comes about, he fully recognizes the intrusion of God’s goodness (his benevolence) into our present fallen world. Though there are Hitlers and Stalins, there are also Wilberforces and Franks. Even in our dark world, we have many choices and can follow Christ into working for justice and beauty. And there is a lot to thank God for, despite the fall. Dembski eloquently celebrates devotion and self-sacrifice. With Dante he invites the reader to “contemplate with joy that Master’s art, who in himself so loves it that never doth his eye depart from it.” That is the best place to go, when we cannot fully understand all of the Master’s purposes.

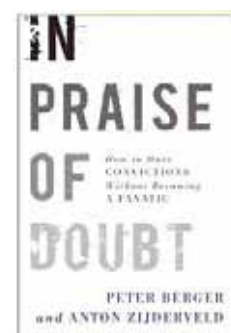
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Peter L. Berger and Anton Zijderveld. *In Praise of Doubt: How to Have Convictions Without Becoming a Fanatic*. San Francisco: HarperOne, 2009. 177 pp. \$13.99.

To paraphrase Mark Twain, the rumors of the death of religion were highly exaggerated. Through the 1960s a host of sociologists and pundits had predicted the slow disappearance of religious faith and the certain emergence of secularization in its stead. Simply stated, as mankind matured, religion would no longer serve the most pressing needs of a modern society. Modernity would lead to plurality, plurality would lead to pluralism and then to relativism, making any kind of religious or moral certainly unlikely.



Today, forty years later, that has all changed. Empirically, religion has never been more prevalent throughout the world. The only two possible exceptions are geographical (particularly Europe) and sociological (the intellectual elite found in various positions, universities, media, etc.). Not only are churches and mosques spreading at an unprecedented rate, but less formal religions are popping up all over the place, including New Age, Pentecostalism, the “health and wealth gospel,” churches meeting in homes, mix-and-match religions, etc. Further, religion is a prominent force in public life. The Roman Catholic church played a critical role in the overthrow of Communism from Poland and from much of Europe. Evangelical Protestantism has been a major factor shaping a part of the American political landscape. Several Muslim countries are ruled by clerics.

How did the earlier sociologists get it wrong? Certainly ideology played a role. Prescription is not far behind description in some cases. Sociology as a discipline owes much to Auguste Comte, whose eschatology included moving from ages of superstition to an age of science, followed by utopia. Analytically, though, sociologists made a major mistake when they assumed that pluralization always leads to secularization. The logic seemed impeccable. In a globalizing world, the sheer volume of people living close together with neighbors who do not share their religious or cultural backgrounds was supposed to predict two trends: (1) the complete privatization of religion, thus its impotence in the public square, and (2) a lowest common denominator of beliefs and values. Believing that one way is true is implausible in a world where you daily confront people from vastly different horizons. Some of that leveling happened. But mostly, even though so many options became available, contrary to sociological predictions of secularization, people have made choices that are deeply religious.

So pluralization does not necessarily predict secularization. Still, something has changed with the present exponential increase in diversity. It is the temptation either to become relativistic or fundamentalist. *Plurality* is a social fact. It refers simply to the multiplication in the modern world of viewpoints, ethnic backgrounds, and options. Pluralization feeds into urbanization, and vice-versa. But *pluralism* is more value-laden. At the extreme it refers to an ideology of diversity. In reaction to this we face the other temptation: fundamentalist extremism. And that is the challenge of this fascinating book. Can we be plural without being pluralistic or fundamentalist?

Peter Berger, the preeminent sociologist of religion today, has been concerned to voice a “third way” between relativism and fundamentalism for a long time and has written voluminously on the subject throughout his productive career. The present volume, written with the collaboration of philosopher Anton Zilderveld, is surely one of his best efforts to date. Elegantly and provocatively written as always, the book boils down some rather sophisticated sociological and philosophical material into a most accessible form.

The opening chapter, “The Many Gods of Modernity,” explains how the pluralizing dynamic intrudes on everything. One of the features of our plural world is the increased pressure to choose. This in part is because of the lessening role of institutions. The Church is no longer a monopoly but a voluntary organization. People are no longer required to stay in the particular denomination they grew up in, but they can choose to opt out of one and into another. Indeed the very term “denomination” is a rather recent one, and aptly describes the diminishing monopoly of a single communion of faith. The change brings with it not only doctrinal confrontations, but more especially the clash of moral convictions. While sharp differences over the significance of the Eucharist are not likely to divide people, let alone lead to hostility between them, disagreements over abortion or gay rights are. Where many Westerners

do not care very much about whether God is One or One in Three, they do care passionately about polygamy or wearing the Burqua in public.

In such an atmosphere where religion is a strong factor (though not as institutionalized as before) and where ethical convictions are volatile, the two easiest options seem to be relativism or fundamentalism. Either downplay any absolutes or else raise them to a collective status, imposing them on others.

The second chapter, “The Dynamics of Relativization,” brilliantly describes the first option. Simply put, “Relativization is the process whereby the absolute status of something is weakened or, in the extreme case, obliterated” (p. 26). The authors trace the shift from an era where the reaction to a question is “of course” to one where there is more tolerance. If you asked earlier whether one man should be married to one woman, the answer would have been “of course.” Today, the question receives a more open kind of answer: heterosexual marriage may be a preference or an option, but there are others. In matters of religion, there is an increasing tendency to move from exclusivism to inclusivism: my church, my truth, is not the only way to salvation.

The authors then show the impossibility and undesirability of relativism. The most prominent relativists, including the postmodernists and the ideologues, always manage to sneak in an absolute. It may be an “epistemological elite.” For Marx, it was the proletariat; for Lenin, the Communist Party; for the Third Worldists, the poor; for Gramsci, the intelligentsia. Needless to say, each of these not-so-hidden absolutes became oppressive to the point where any kind of claimed egalitarian relativism became implausible. The authors worry about the hidden whiplash of postmodern terms such as “narrative,” which appears to derive all values from a particular story, never a “metanarrative,” but in the end leads to a black hole. For our authors, this is not simply an intellectual inconsistency, but a sign of social decadence.

They then turn their guns on fundamentalism. After looking briefly at American fundamentalism’s history, they characterize it as reactive, if specifically modern. In addition, fundamentalism is anti-traditionalist. In an amusing illustration of the difference, they cite the episode where Napoleon III, accompanied by the Empress Eugenie, were hosted by Queen Victoria. Eugenie did not have an aristocratic background. Victoria took her to the opera one night, and after Eugenie appeared in the royal box and greeted the audience, she turned around to find her chair. Victoria then entered, greeted the audience, but simply backed into her chair. She did not have to look, for she knew it was there. Similarly, fundamentalists, the authors argue, are insecure about their “chair,” whereas true traditionalists take it for granted.

The ensuing pages I found to be somewhat mixed. The authors write probingly on totalitarianism, economic control, and theocracy. They rightly cite the failure of the Soviet Union to control the flow of information with the result that outside ideas filtered in and the regime opened up and eventually collapsed. They critique the sects that depend for their health on forbidding all communication with outsiders. They include NT Christians in their purview, citing Paul’s admonition not to be “unequally yoked together with unbelievers” (2 Cor 6:14). I don’t want to sound defensive here, but in the larger context of the Corinthian epistles, the point is not to enjoin sectarian separatism, but to avert moral compromise. In 1 Cor 5:9–10, the apostle explains that by not associating with immoral people he did not mean all sinners, “since then you would need to go out of the world.” Apologetics, say the authors, is a way to liquidate doubts “by immersion in a comprehensive theory that both explains and denies them” (p. 85). As someone who is paid to teach Christian apologetics, I take issue with the implications that our field is prone to liquidating others!

Things do not improve much in the following chapter, which treats certainty and doubt. The authors do admit of truths that should qualify as absolute, but on the whole they are so basic (Pythagorean math, for instance, and a vague idea of human rights) that no one will find them offensive. Most of the chapter is a series of warnings against the fanatical refusal of doubt. Communism once more comes in for scrutiny, as does the French Revolution. But so also does Calvinism. Again, while not wanting to be defensive, I do not think the authors have given brother Calvin his due. They call him a fanatic and his regime theocratic and disciplinarian. They parade the usual suspects as evidence: Castellio and Servetus. Of course, the sixteenth century was not the twenty-first, nor was Geneva completely free from the medieval confusion of church and state. But most historians, whether they like him or not, generally credit Calvin with preaching grace and in the bargain helping the West to take giant steps forward toward democracy, regulated capitalism, and mercy on refugees.

This overreach should not detract from the overall argument of the book, which is most valuable. The authors plead for a civil society in which honest debate replaces coercion. They lay out the contours of proper choice-making and celebrate the right kind of plurality. They finish with chapters on the limits of doubt and the politics of moderation. Certainty is based on fundamental human rights, whereas “doubt” is how to work out the details of living together when we don’t agree on secondary issues. In ethical matters they end up with a variant on natural law, with its own kind of certitude: “Such certitude is based on a historically developing perception of what it means to be human, which, once attained, implies universality” (p. 127). They give several examples of how certainty and doubt could help resolve moral issues. One of them encourages Europeans in the best way to live with Muslim immigrants. Certainty should rule in forbidding honor killings, genital mutilation, and violent jihad. Society should also be fully liberal on allowing prayer for Muslims during working hours, wearing veils in public, and so on. “Doubt” should be reserved for gray areas like coed sports, blasphemy laws, etc.

We might be tempted to ask our authors, how do you know what is certain and what is doubtful? They answer with a caution. Once you get to sharp rules, you are no longer allowing for any doubt. Doubt by definition is a work in progress. Democracy itself must never become absolute. *Democratism* is as dangerous an ideology as any “ism.” When that happens, we cannot attain the highest ideal, which is the “positive freedom to act creatively in all spheres” (p. 150).

In the end this provocative little book, full of insights and sound arguments, represents only a part of the picture. It cries out for some kind of transcendental foundation that promotes both the certainty of perennial moral values and the humility (a better term than doubt) to know how to work them out in a pluralizing world where we do not all agree on what it means to be human.

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Edgar Andrews. *Who Made God? Searching for a Theory of Everything*. Darlington, England: EP Books, 2009. 307 pp. \$17.95.

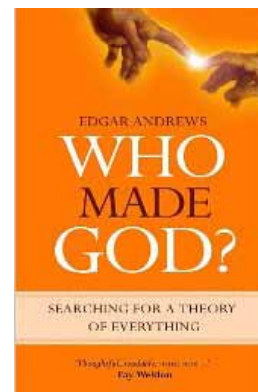
Within the world of physics there has been a movement to discover a ‘theory of everything’ (TOE) that will embrace every physical process and phenomenon in the cosmos. This effort, by and large, is driven by those who embrace an evolutionary worldview and, therefore, are expecting to find a theory that will disprove the existence of God or at best make God ‘redundant.’ As Richard Dawkins claims Darwinian Evolution has done in biology, many physicists (and Dawkins) have high hopes that this yet-to-be-discovered TOE will do the same in physics.

In this wonderfully written book, Professor Andrews doesn’t seek simply to expose the weakness of the ‘new atheistic’ arguments (which he does). He desires to present a logically consistent and sufficiently more satisfying alternative to anything the Evolutionary Biologist or Atheistic Physicist will ‘discover.’ Professor Andrews demonstrates that there is more to the cosmos than matter, and, therefore, as a result any TOE will have to explain not only the material cosmos, but also realms of the heart, mind, conscience, and spirit.

Throughout the book Professor Andrews seeks to test the various hypotheses offered over and against what he calls ‘the hypothesis of God.’ If this were a technical apologetics book, Professor Andrew’s methodology would be generally referred to as ‘Presuppositional Apologetics,’ a term he does not use. He skillfully avoids using parochial jargon as much as possible, and yet this is essentially the approach taken. By looking at the evidence offered and then analyzing the evidence, he asks, ‘Which hypothesis best explains reality?’ Only when one presumes the God of the Bible as he has revealed himself can one actually make sense of the world, humanity, science, etc. (See pp. 58–62 for the formal explanation of his ‘hypothesis.’) Professor Andrews’ qualifications to write a book such as this are quite substantial.

Professor Edgar H. Andrews (BSc, PhD, DSc, FInstP, FIMMM, CEng, CPhys) is Emeritus Professor of Materials at the University of London and an international expert on the science of large molecules. In 1967, he set up the Department of Materials at Queen Mary College, University of London, and served both as its Head and later as Dean of Engineering. He has published well over one hundred scientific research papers and books, together with two Bible commentaries and various works on science and religion and on theology. His book *From Nothing to Nature* has been translated into ten languages. At the Oxford Union ‘Huxley Memorial Debate’ in 1986, he debated Richard Dawkins on the motion ‘that the doctrine of creation is more valid than the theory of evolution.’ (More on professor Andrews and this book can be found at <http://whomadegod.org>.)

For rather obvious reasons, one would expect an author with the above qualifications to write a book that only an expert in science would be able to understand. This is far from the case. With chapter headings like ‘Sooty and the universe,’ ‘Yogurt, cereal, and toast,’ ‘Ferrets and fallacies,’ and ‘Information, stupid!’, Professor Andrews combines gentle humour, pointed wit, and simple language with expert knowledge to accomplish his aim. However, in a book like this, it is inevitable that the author will need to use terms and concepts possibly unfamiliar to the average reader. In order to help in this area, each chapter begins with a brief summary of the main concept and a list of new terms with their definitions. As a result, the reader is equipped to follow the argument within each chapter and the overall thesis of the book.



This is a book I would happily give to Christians and non-Christians alike. Professor Andrews has managed to write what, I believe, will be one of the most important books published in 2009 and 2010. As the wave of literature produced by the new atheists continues to grow, the church has been further equipped with a tool to reach those who are confused. Professor Andrews more than adequately deals with the scientific arguments while simultaneously pointing the reader to the sufficiency of God, his Word, and (most important of all) the person and work of Christ.

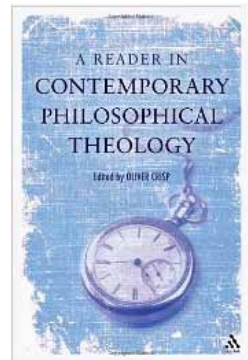
In the final chapter, Professor Andrews concludes the book in a thoroughly theological manner. He capably addresses the moral argument for God while at the same time addressing the accusations of ‘new atheists’ against God himself as being immoral. In this, he demonstrates that although the moral argument for God is helpful, it is not adequate to convince a person of the truths of Christianity. He concludes the chapter and the book with the following:

The hypothesis of God predicts that man’s sinful heart can never be changed by mere instruction, no matter how good and noble that teaching may be. It can only be changed by a ‘new birth’ in which the Spirit of God himself takes up residence in the person’s heart and mind—‘writing’ there the moral law and empowering the recipient to love and obey God. This work of the new birth is accompanied by the forgiveness of man’s ‘sins and lawless deeds’ on the grounds of Jesus Christ’s atoning death and justifying resurrection. . . . I therefore end this book at the beginning of another story. Read more about it in ‘the Gospel according to St John.’ (p. 278)

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Oliver Crisp, ed. *A Reader in Contemporary Philosophical Theology*. London: Continuum, 2009. x + 379 pp. £25.00/\$39.95.

The last several decades have witnessed an onslaught of literature applying philosophy in the analytic tradition to traditional Christian doctrines. But, as editor Oliver Crisp notes, “until now there has been no single volume that gives the student and scholar a sample of this literature. This book,” he says, “is an attempt to remedy that lacuna” (p. 2). Indeed, this void has been filled by the present volume as well as two additional volumes released in 2009 through Oxford (edited by Michael Rea). The two-volume Oxford reader is over twice as long as Crisp’s and lacks a section devoted to the doctrine of sin; it does, however, discuss two doctrines that Crisp’s volume omits: providence and the resurrection. Of course, no one volume (or two, in the case of the Oxford reader) can account for the vast amount of literature in the field of philosophical theology, nor is that the intention of either of these books.



Crisp begins each section in the book with a brief introduction to the topic at hand followed by a brief summary of each of the articles to follow. These short, helpful forewords orient new students to the central problems in the various loci of philosophical theology before immersing them in the deluge

of arguments to follow. Moreover, following each section-introduction is a list of suggested reading that will point the reader to other essential works on the various topics contained in the volume.

The first section of the compendium is comprised of essays discussing the inspiration and authority of Scripture. Alvin Plantinga's article looks at the pitfalls of historical criticism and shows that objectivist critiques of Christian revelation do not stand on as strong a foundation as they claim. Stephen T. Davis and Nicholas Wolterstorff both write essays that are related to the truth of Scripture, and Paul Helm argues for a certain conception of the infallibility of Scripture.

The second section of the reader deals with the doctrine of the Trinity. Cornelius Plantinga proposes a model of the Trinity that, in his assessment, accounts for the witness of Scripture by emphasizing the threeness of the Trinity as a community of distinct persons. Some critics will see this view as a clever (or not so clever) form of ditheism. In contrast, Brian Leftow argues for what is (on his understanding) a "Latin" version of the Trinity that emphasizes divine unity (numerical sameness), so much so that some will wonder if the charge of modalism applies to this model. Moreover, some will question whether Leftow's Trinity is truly "Latin." Finally, Peter van Anlagen intriguingly argues that employing the logic of relative identity yields the explanatory force to eliminate the most common objection to Trinitarian doctrine, namely, that it is self-contradictory to say that God is both three and one.

Next, the doctrine of the incarnation is handled by several capable philosophical theologians. First, Peter Forrest proposes what he sees to be a strict "kenotic" version—as opposed to "quasi-kenotic" versions—of the incarnation wherein the Word "gave up" some of his divine powers in his coming to earth. Eleonore Stump recounts Thomas Aquinas' account of the incarnation, by which the *logos* assumes a human body and soul, thereby forming a composite individual. Thomas Flint and Thomas Morris make use of Muslimism and "two-minds" Christology, respectively, in order to deal with objections to and problems in Christology.

The doctrine of sin is the focus of the fourth section of the reader. Robert Adams's discussion of original sin uses various conceptions of the doctrine in the history of Christian thought as a sort of case study regarding the interplay between philosophy and theology in Christian tradition. Next, Marilyn Adams sees sin as a specifically theological concept and argues that, fundamentally, sin is uncleanness. And finally, Keith Wyma discusses original sin as it relates to divine justice.

The last section of the reader is devoted to the atonement. Oliver Crisp's excellent article attempts to reconsider the governmental theory of the atonement as an (incomplete) alternative to satisfaction and penal substitution theories of the atonement. David Lewis takes a closer look at penal substitution, and Philip Quinn seeks to do justice to the deeply profound Abelardian theory of the atonement by arguing that most treatments of this view quickly dismiss it as "exemplarist" without showing that it truly is so. Finally, Richard Swinburne sketches his own view of the atonement, making use of Thomas Aquinas and the book of Hebrews.

One could criticize this volume as a whole only by taking issue with the specific articles chosen to be included in it. However, the articles chosen represent a fair sampling from the fields contained in the work. For instance, the section on the Trinity contains an article from each of the major explanatory options available in contemporary philosophical theology: Social Trinitarianism, Latin Trinitarianism, and Relative Trinitarianism.

Yet, some theologians remain suspect of the renewal of "analytic theology." While there are certainly questions that need to be and are being asked and while there are issues of prolegomena with which to deal, this volume offers a sampling of the fruit of rigorous analytic argumentation applied to the

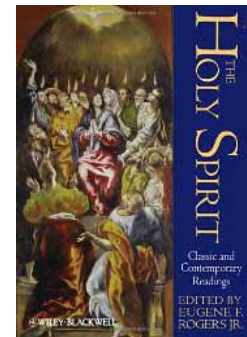
discipline of theology. It should be the individual proposals that receive criticism, not the discipline itself.

Overall, this volume is a welcome addition to the burst of recent literature in the field of philosophical theology. While no newly published essays are contained in the volume, Crisp has done students, professors, and educated pastors and laymen alike a favor by compiling these must-read articles in the blossoming field of philosophical theology into one accessible, low-priced volume.

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Eugene F. Rogers Jr., ed. *The Holy Spirit: Classic and Contemporary Readings*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009. xvi + 340 pp. £19.99/\$39.95.

Eugene Rogers, editor of *The Holy Spirit: Classic and Contemporary Readings*, conceives of this collection as a companion to his constructive work on the Holy Spirit, *After the Spirit: A Constructive Pneumatology from Resources Outside the Modern West*, and indeed, the latter title hints at the nature of the selections collected in the former. Comprised of thirty-two readings, the collection is bookended with contemporary readings in two sections called “Late Twentieth-Century Questions” and “Late Twentieth-Century Applications.” Between these two one encounters readings organized as “Syriac Sources,” “Early Greek Resources,” “Latin Resources,” “German Resources,” “Russian and Romanian Resources,” and “Mystical Resources.”



“Diverse” is probably the best word to describe this collection. This diversity can be charted on various axes. In it one encounters familiar names such as Athanasius, Augustine, Luther, and von Balthasar as well as more obscure authors such as Gueric of Igny, Pavel Florensky, and John Ruusbroec. The collection also covers the broad sweep of Christian history by including readings from as early as the fourth century in selections by Cyril of Jerusalem and Ephrem the Syrian to as late as 2000 in works by Rowan Williams and Bruce Marshall with stops in the Middle Ages and the Reformation along the way. While some of the Greek, Latin, and German sources may be familiar to many readers, the Syriac, Russian and Romanian, and Mystical resources will likely be unfamiliar to all but the most widely read. Additionally, there is a diversity of genre and length with essays, sermons, hymns, denominational documents, and even pictures represented.

For the most part, this diversity is a strength for this collection. It serves the readers by exposing them to traditions, eras, modes of theological reflection, and approaches to biblical interpretation that they are not likely to encounter elsewhere. This is perhaps more valuable than any specific ideas about the Spirit that one may glean from the reading. While this would be a strength of any such collection, it is particularly valuable for a collection on the Holy Spirit. Polarization in discussions of the Spirit in the contemporary theological milieu has often silenced dialogue to the mutual detriment of the dialogue partners or allowed specific issues to dominate the conversation.

Two traditions in particular that are likely to be new to most readers are the Syriac and the Orthodox traditions. Given his prefatory comments for these works, Rogers clearly believes these that resources

helpfully correct some of the imbalances that he perceives in Western pneumatological thought. What this means practically is that the average reader is not likely to find much in these selections that resonates with their current understanding of the Spirit. Each reader must decide whether that is good or bad.

Perhaps the greatest strength of this book is Rogers's introduction to each selection. He deftly orients the selections within broader historical and theological frameworks, and he frequently situates the theologians in their historical context or within particular theological movements. This is especially helpful with those lesser known authors (at least to this reviewer). One may learn as much from the introductions as from the readings.

Obviously no collection can be truly comprehensive, so there are themes that one might have expected to encounter here that are minor or absent. While the issue of the gender of the Spirit is mentioned in passing in a few places, none of the selections address this topic directly, nor does the collection more broadly offer much direction in considering that question. A Scripture index attests to the importance of Scripture for the readings, yet no particular reading is an extended reflection on any "classic" Spirit passage. A selection from a commentary would have been a solid addition.

In a few of the readings it is difficult to "find" the Spirit or to understand precisely the rationale for the selection's inclusion. In others, perhaps most notably the selections by Hans Urs von Balthasar and Jürgen Moltmann, the excision of the passage from its context ("Mysterium Paschale" and "The Trinity and the Kingdom," respectively) weakens the impact of the ideas by divorcing them from the larger flow of thought in their context. These selections may be disorienting to some readers.

The organization of the material is curious as well. Unlike some of the historical texts, the contemporary articles presuppose an awareness of some of the deeper questions in Pneumatology today. That the collection starts with such challenging texts could be off-putting to the more casual reader. Many of the selections are challenging reads because of the theological depth, writing style, or just the mode of theological discourse. Many are not for the theologically faint of heart.

The work is diverse enough that there is likely something for everyone to like but also equally likely that there is something to dislike. Many theologically conservative readers may find the mystical writings in particular to be less than compelling. Unfortunately, the content of many of the readings presupposes a level of familiarity with narrow issues within Pneumatology, which reduces the usefulness of this collection to the scholar or the seminary classroom. While the book could certainly work as a supplemental text in a graduate-level class on the Spirit, its intentional design as a collection of texts outside of the "western canon" limits its usefulness as a primary text.

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Paul D. Jones. *The Humanity of Christ: Christology in Karl Barth's Church Dogmatics*. New York: T&T Clark, 2008. 290 pp. \$130.00.

The Humanity of Christ is a revision of Paul Jones' dissertation, written at the Harvard Divinity School. While prudence may have counseled Jones to select a narrower and safer topic, it is good that he paid it no heed, for this book is a solid contribution to Barth studies, bearing the signs of a mature scholar.

Surveying the Christology of any great theologian is a significant task since, along with the doctrines of the Trinity and the atonement, it lies at the very heart of the Christian faith. In Barth's case, however, the task is all the greater for several reasons. First, Barth's thought develops considerably on this issue throughout his career, demanding familiarity with his corpus as a whole (as though mastering the *CD* weren't a mammoth task by itself). Second, to make matters more complicated, the chief christological developments lie at the intersection of several doctrines, such that an adequate survey necessarily takes on the guise of a mini-systematic theology, including the doctrines of the Trinity, election, and reconciliation. Finally, Barth is in constant dialogue with a wide array of theologians, such that versatility with the history of church doctrine is vital for understanding the context of some of his more significant arguments. Jones intentionally structures his argument so as to take these factors into as full an account as possible, and does so with a consistently thorough analysis.

If the above task is not sufficiently daunting, it is also worth noting that Barth's Christology is the most highly contested turf in today's Barth studies, with McCormack, Hunsinger, Molnar, Hector, van Driel, and a host of others filling up the table of contents in many of the best theology journals. The self-confidence with which Jones navigates these waters, offering his own exposition without getting so caught up in the discussion as to forgo a due treatment of other issues, is of itself ample indication that Jones is a scholar in his own right and that his work will continue to be of value long after the current debates have lost their ardor.

While Jones surveys Barth's mature Christology, he does so by paying particularly "close attention to his description of Jesus Christ as a human being" (p. 3), describing and analyzing "his construal of Christ as a human who lives and acts in 'correspondence' to God's prevenient direction" (p. 5). The nuances and trajectories Jones expounds are so numerous that it is impossible to list them. Broadly speaking, however, Jones devotes the first chapter to Barth's early thought, the second to Barth's doctrine of election, and the third to expositing *CD* IV/2 and IV/1. The fourth chapter brings together many of the strands of the argument via an exploration of certain key elements of Barth's primarily judicial or forensic understanding of the atonement, with a particular emphasis on Barth's excursions on Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane.

While the book covers a vast amount of material, I did notice one lacuna in particular concerning which I would have appreciated some exploration. Though Jones duly notes what Christ does for us in a substitutionary sense, he seems to pass by some of Barth's stronger claims in which we are included in the work of Christ. Barth writes, for example, "then and there, in the person of Christ taking our place, we were present being crucified and dying with Him. We died. This has to be understood quite concretely and literally" (*CD* IV/1, 295). But what does such a claim entail for understanding both who Jesus Christ is and who we are? An engagement with this strand of Barth's thought would be, I think, a



significant contribution to understanding Barth's Christology and, no doubt, an important step towards studies relating Barth's thought with that of T. F. Torrance.

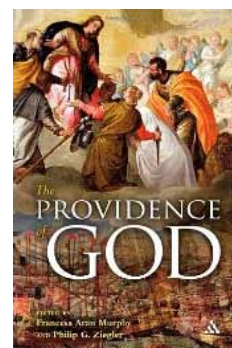
On a lighter note, Jones begins and ends his book by drawing comparisons between Barth's *CD* and different novels (pp. 1, 264), but expresses some reserve that Barth would not appreciate "having his theological efforts compared with a novel" (p. 1). I doubt that Barth would mind this move in the least, as he jokingly referred to his *Dogmatik* as his "Moby Dick" in reference to the work of Kornelis Miskotte, which drew that parallel (*Letters: 1961–1968*, pp. 5–6, 57).

This book will be of particular interest to those who seek a thorough understanding of Barth's Christology and come equipped with extensive background in Christology studies generally or a good working knowledge of Barth's thought. Those who approach this book without being equipped in either of these ways face a difficult (though not insurmountable) task, though one that promises a deep and thorough introduction to this central aspect of Barth's thought and thus his thought as a whole.

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Francesca Aran Murphy and Philip G. Ziegler, eds. *The Providence of God: Deus Habet Concilium*. London: T&T Clark, 2009. 338 pp. \$39.95.

This is a substantial volume arising from a conference on providence organised at the University of Aberdeen. The papers look at the topic from a number of different angles and offer fresh and varied treatments which are, in the main, interesting and instructive. The titles of the chapters and their authors are as follows:



Part I: History of the Doctrine of Providence:

1. Matthew Levering, 'Aquinas on the Book of Job: Providence and Presumption'
2. David Bentley Hart, 'Providence and Causality: On Divine Innocence'
3. Francesca Aran Murphy, 'Providence in 1 Samuel'
4. Cyril O'Regan, 'Hegel, Theodicy and the Invisibility of Waste'
5. Andrew McGowan, 'Providence and Common Grace'

Part II: Doctrines of Providence: Systematic Theology

6. Douglas Knight, 'Time and Persons in the Economy of God'
7. Katherine Sonderegger, 'The Doctrine of Providence'
8. John Webster, 'On the Theology of Providence'

Part III: Science and Providence

9. Sarah Coakley, 'Providence and the Evolutionary Phenomenon of "Cooperation": A Systematic Proposal'
10. Alister E. McGrath, 'The Secularization of Providence: Theological Reflections on the Appeal to Darwinism in Recent Atheist Apologetics'
11. Nicholas J. Healy, 'Creation, Predestination and Divine Providence'

Part IV: Providence, Politics, and Ethics

12. Stephen H. Webb, 'From Prudentius to President Bush: Providence, Empire and Paranoia'
13. Charles Mathewes, 'Providence and Political Discernment'
14. John Swinton, 'Patience and Lament: Living Faithfully in the Presence of Suffering'
15. Hans S. Reinders, 'Why This? Why Me? A Theological Reflection on Ethics and Providence'
16. Philip G. Ziegler, 'The Uses of Providence in Public Theology'

There is an epilogue by David Fergusson.

Given my own interests in Calvin and providence, and in divine causality more generally, my attention was first drawn to the two papers that feature these topics. Andrew McGowan discusses the common-grace views of the Dutch Calvinists Bavinck and Kuyper. While they, and McGowan, think that the notion of common grace warrants a positive relationship between the Christian and culture, it is not obvious why natural law, a much more prominent theme in Calvin, after all, does not do the same. The neo-Calvinists' idea that natural law is necessarily 'Pelagian' does not stand up to scrutiny. In one of two papers on providence and suffering (the other is by John Swinton), particularly the suffering that arises from various kinds of disability, Hans Reinders reflects helpfully on Calvin's view of providence in its practical operation, providence as 'trust and obey'. He skirts the theme of abandonment to divine providence, a theme which surprisingly is not otherwise treated in this book. The material on divine causation in providence (chaps. 1–3) shows a dislike for the very idea, but has nothing much to put in its place. There are, after all, a limited number of options in this area, and by now they are pretty well-worn.

I enjoyed the papers on politics. Philip Siegler juxtaposes the Puritan Putney debates about discerning the mind of God in politics with that of Barth and the German Church movement. The Puritan debates highlight how pathetic they once were, for all their godliness and love of the Scriptures, in failing to realise in practice what they knew in theory, that the secret things belong to the Lord our God and the revealed things to ourselves. Puritan politics became a game of trying to second-guess what the Lord would do next and trying to align themselves with it. Such a project, and the mentality that it expresses, was doomed to failure. The Lord may have been on their side, but not in quite the way that they believed and no doubt at last realized. Stephen Webb shows that the same difficulty about being on the right side of the course of providence afflicted the politics of President George W. Bush.

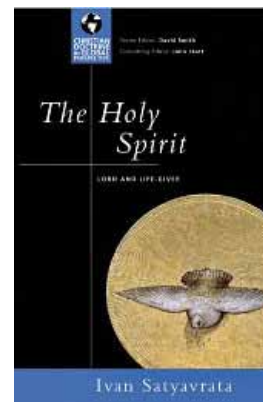
Besides the chapters which I have chosen to comment on, I thought that the paper of John Webster's, who also skirts the issue of activity and passivity in relation to providence, is particularly fine.

As will have become clear, this is a volume to dip into and one that (because of its variety and the generally high standard of the contributions) may confidently be used as a resource for teaching a course in providence. However, in one place the book is marred by language used by David Bentley Hart about views of divine causality different from his own: the views are 'degenerate' theology, guilty of 'absurdity' and 'moral idiocy'; 'sterile', 'repellent'. Such language has no place in the adult discussion of difficult ideas, let alone in Christian courtesy, and the editors ought not to have let it pass.

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Ivan Satyavrata. *The Holy Spirit: Lord and Giver of Life*. Christian Doctrine in Global Perspective. Downers Grove: IVP, 2009. 182 pp. \$16.00.

Ivan Satyavrata's *The Holy Spirit: Lord and Giver of Life* forms part of a series called "Christian Doctrine in Global Perspective," edited by David Smith and John Stott. In the series introduction, the editors note and lament that in spite of the geographical shift of Christianity away from the West and toward the East and South, the preponderance of theological writing is still of Western provenance. What is needed is a surge of theological reflection from within non-western sectors of Christianity not only for their own enrichment but for the nourishment of Western Christianity as well. Accordingly, the series attempts to allow "distinct voices [to] bring fresh insight to the traditional theological categories" (back flap) in hopes of bringing an "injection of non-Western Christian vitality" to the many decaying Western churches (p. 10). Though not the first book in the series, there is certainly no better place to start such an ambitious project than with the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.



Satyavrata begins by orienting his treatment to the contemporary situation in the world and the church. In chapter one he discusses both the advantages and challenges of the increased openness to the "spiritual" in the world today. In particular, he notes that this resurgence of the spiritual compels Christian theology to articulate carefully the distinctly Christian understanding of the Spirit. In a second conversation-orienting chapter, the author surveys the broad sweep of Christian history to demonstrate both the vast and rich theological resources the church can lay claim to but also to show that there is nothing new about the differences of doctrinal opinion that characterize much of Christian Holy Spirit talk today. In this second chapter, Satyavrata displays the ability to survey material concisely and readably.

In chapter three the author puts this skill to work once again in a brief but remarkably thorough treatment of the role of the Holy Spirit in the OT. He rightly observes the oft-overlooked fact that the OT presentation of a creative, enabling, prophetic, and messianic Spirit is necessary background if one hopes to construe the NT witness to the Spirit rightly.

Turning to more specifically theological concerns, in chapters four and five Satyavrata discusses the personhood and deity of the Holy Spirit as well as the relation of the Spirit to the other members of the Godhead. If there is a weakness here, it is the slender amount of space accorded to such major issues. In discussing the personhood of the Spirit, for example, he addresses only briefly the way the biblical idea of the personhood of the Holy Spirit contradicts notions of spirit in other religions and in the culture more broadly. After raising the issue of the challenges of increased spirit-talk in the introduction, one might have expected a more detailed treatment of this issue.

Satyavrata dedicates a further chapter to the relationship between the Spirit and the word. While he rightly notes the Spirit's involvement at every point in the process from revelation to inspiration to canonization to illumination, the chapter reads more like a classic bibliology than a Pneumatology.

Two more chapters deal with other standard topics in Pneumatology: the work of the Spirit in salvation and in the church. While Satyavrata is well aware of the thorny issues involved in these areas, he attempts to steer clear of the debates regarding experience of the Spirit subsequent to salvation and

sign gifts, choosing instead to emphasize the considerable common ground that the various camps share. This is certainly in keeping with the survey-nature of the text but may leave some readers dissatisfied.

This effort at an irenic tone, though appreciated by this reviewer at one level, is confusing somewhat with regard to the book's intended audience. For good or for ill, many readers of works on Pneumatology read them for their insights on just these sorts of issues. Unfortunately, not only does he not present the various positions in any detail, he does not even make his own position clear. Further, it is at places such as this in the book that the lack of a clearly "global" perspective is most disappointing. The categories and boundaries of these arguments have been so firmly drawn in the English-speaking debate that forward progress is doubtful. This reader hoped for a different perspective through the eyes of a different culture.

Herein lies my main critique of the book. Clear evidence of a unique, global perspective seems in short supply. The organization of the material is fairly standard, as are the topics discussed. Apart from the fact that many of the illustrations that the author uses are drawn from his personal experiences as a member of another culture, there is not much that sets this book apart from other introductory level texts on the Holy Spirit.

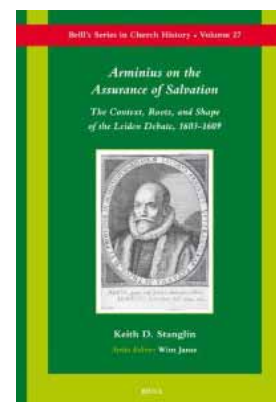
Satyavrata writes very clearly and his use of personal examples at the beginning of many chapters to set up discussions of the various topics makes the text readable and engaging. As an introduction to issues and questions in Pneumatology, the work surveys no new ground but provides a readable non-technical treatment accessible to the layperson. As a contribution to theology in global perspective, however, it falls short of its goal.

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Keith D. Stanglin. *Arminius on the Assurance of Salvation: The Context, Roots, and Shape of the Leiden Debate, 1603–1609*. Brill's Series in Church History 27. Leiden: Brill, 2007. xviii + 285 pages. \$148.00.

As Keith D. Stanglin points out, it is amazing that "a figure who was so influential and controversial in his own day and continues to be invoked in a variety of theological and ecclesiastical communities in our day has nevertheless received such slight attention from historians" (p. xiii). Despite the fact that many Christians are called "Arminians" even into the twenty-first century, there is precious little work that helps us understand who Arminius was and just what the controversies were all about. Both defenders and detractors of "Arminianism" often proceed with woefully ill-informed notions of the issues and persons involved, and far too much of the available secondary literature perpetuates misunderstandings. Stanglin sets himself to the task of addressing the need for careful scholarly attention to Arminius, and *Arminius on the Assurance of Salvation* is a significant step forward.

Stanglin first notes this lack of reliable scholarship on Arminius. He sets aside immediately the "Arminius of mythical lore," either the "free thinking, enlightened hero who put his Calvinist oppressors in their place with his irrefutable biblical theology" or "the deceptive heretic who resurrected Pelagianism and made anthropocentric religion, Enlightenment rationalism, and anti-Trinitarianism acceptable"



(p. 1). Pointing out that responsible scholarship must both use the appropriate sources (and not only those conveniently translated into English) and contextualize Arminius, Stanglin interprets Arminius as a scholastic theologian who was working with what were then the standard tools of the trade while attempting to be both pastorally sensitive and faithful to Scripture.

Stanglin then sets Arminius within the early seventeenth-century theological context (specifically in the Staten College at the University of Leiden and particularly in conversation with Franciscus Gomarus, Lucas Trelcatius Jr., and Johannes Kuchlinus). He locates areas of agreement with his Reformed contemporaries, and he observes as well the areas of disagreement. Stanglin rightly observes that the real and important points of disagreement came not in the understandings of the human condition but rather with respect to the understandings of grace. Arminius ascribes to God's grace "the origin, the continuance, and the fulfillment of all good," and he denies that anyone can think, will, or do anything good apart from divine grace (p. 80). The real and important difference, then, concerns this divine grace: "the only difference is located here, whether God's grace be an irresistible force" (p. 81).

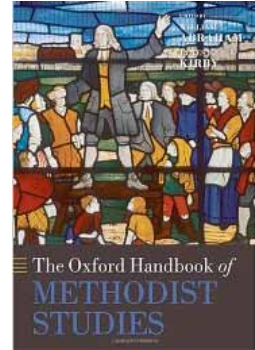
After noting the continuities and discontinuities regarding grace, predestination (especially that there is "no meaningful differences" regarding justification), sanctification, perfection, and apostasy, Stanglin moves to the heart of his discussion: the topic of assurance. While some latter-day partisans in the debates over "Calvinism" and "Arminianism" may question whether Arminius even *had* a doctrine of assurance, Stanglin argues that it was a driving force in his theology. He was deeply concerned with what he saw as the logical outcome of the Reformed account of election and reprobation. He was exercised to avoid both *desperatio* and *securitas* (understood as carelessness), and he was convinced that any theology should avoid these extremes and find *certitudo* (p. 195). As for the grounds of this assurance, there are two major grounds for it: the *a posteriori* (the *sensus fidei* and the testimony of the Holy Spirit, the wrestling or *lucta* and the good works that are the result of justification) and the *a priori* (which for the Reformed are in God's inscrutable decree). Arminius does not differ from the Reformed regarding the *a posteriori* conditions, but he takes leave regarding the *a priori*. For all of this is, on Arminius's account, founded upon the *duplex amor*: the love of God for himself and righteousness, and the love of God for creatures and their blessedness (p. 219).

I can hardly say enough good about this book. Stanglin engages the sources (both primary and secondary, in Latin, Dutch, and French as well as English), places Arminius squarely within his immediate social and theological context, and clearly explains his thought as it developed in the context of a pastorally-sensitive scholastic theology. It deserves a place right alongside Richard A. Muller's groundbreaking and important *God, Creation, and Providence in the Thought of Jacob Arminius: Sources and Directions in Scholastic Protestantism in the Era of Early Orthodoxy* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991). To understand Arminius on salvation or, more generally, Reformed theology at Leiden during this period, this is the best resource available.

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William J. Abraham and James E. Kirby, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of Methodist Studies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009. xvii + 761 pp. \$150.00.

William J. Abraham and James E. Kirby have produced a massive and very helpful resource for the vast field of “Methodist studies.” Part 1 surveys the history of Methodism, and here essays include discussions of the eighteenth-century context, the history of the Wesley brothers (and their relationship), the importance of Francis Asbury and the beginnings of American Methodism, as well as the changes within Methodism during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in Britain, the United States, and globally, the relationship of the Evangelical United Brethren to the Methodist movement, and the oft-neglected but important element of African-American Methodism.



Part 2 (“Ecclesial Forms and Structures”) deals with the sometimes messy and oft-perplexing challenges that early Methodism faced, and it helpfully overviews some of the decisions made and some of the diversity now evident with respect to church order and discipline. While the first two parts of the book are in the main quite well done, Part 3 (“Worship: Sacraments, Liturgy, Hymnody, Preaching”) is more of a mixed bag. Lester Ruth’s essay on “Liturgical Revolutions” discusses many of the major changes from the Anglican liturgical tradition that was favored and treasured by the Wesleys themselves to the low-church elements of primitive American Methodism. It is both illuminating and fascinating, and it is a highlight of the book. Similarly, Geoffrey Wainwright’s essay on the sacraments is very helpful, as is Karen Westerfield Tucker’s work on “Mainstream Liturgical Developments.” Swee Hing Lim’s essay on “Music and Hymnody,” on the other hand, gives an interesting overview of some contemporary developments within Asian Methodism, but somehow manages only to mention the hymns of the Wesleys themselves in two sentences (and with no discussion of the use and impact of these hymns in the development of the global Wesleyan movement).

Part 4 (“Spiritual Experiences, Evangelism, Mission, Ecumenism”) takes some steps toward exploring the thrust for evangelism and mission within Methodism, but despite an excellent contribution from Philip Meadows (“The Journey of Evangelism”), it nonetheless fails to give a clear vision of either the history or rationale of the historic Methodist commitment to evangelism and mission (“nothing to do but save souls”). Part 5 is focused upon theological issues, and here we are treated to essays on the doctrine of revelation and the nature and role of Scripture, the doctrine of the Trinity, original sin and grace, Christology, Pneumatology, as well as doctrines related to salvation: Christian perfection, assurance, and predestination and election. The essays by Elmer Colyer (Trinity), Jason Vickers (Christology), Barry Bryant (original sin), Kenneth Collins (assurance), Billy Abraham (perfection), and Jerry Walls (predestination) are all excellent contributions. Part 6 deals with “Ethics and Politics,” and here the standout essays are by D. Stephen Long and Stanley Hauerwas and David Bebbington.

This book leaves me with several nagging concerns and questions about it and, alas, a few critical observations. First, I observe that the scope of the book is not always obvious. Much of the book seems to be implicitly focused upon what is now called “United Methodism” (in the United States) and its immediate family (earlier relatives and global sister churches). This raises the question of the relation of Methodism to the broader “Wesleyan” tradition: Just what are we to make of the smaller groups within that tradition? Donald Dayton’s essay discusses the nineteenth-century holiness movement, and Abraham’s essay mentions the Church of the Nazarene, but much of the volume basically ignores such

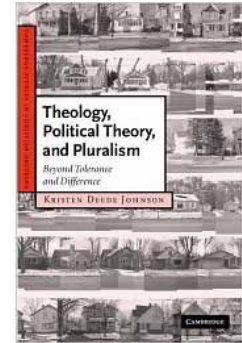
movements. Now this is perfectly understandable if the intent is to focus the discussion somewhat more narrowly. But just what (or who) is the referent of the label “Methodist?” There is as well an almost dizzying range of theological perspectives in the book. This accurately reflects contemporary Methodist theology, of course, and as such the range of views is in one sense helpful. But sometimes this is not so helpful, for it does not allow us to see the internal consistency of the various Methodist theological options. While the process Wesleyan understanding of, say, prevenient grace may be internally consistent, it is very different from prevenient grace as it is understood by orthodox Wesleyans. Worse yet, the differing theological perspectives contradict one another in the same volume, but without any explicit recognition of that fact and with both views claiming to represent “the” Wesleyan perspective. For instance, Marjorie Suchocki claims that Wesley held that humans suffer only corruption from original sin (rather than guilt) (p. 547), while Barry Bryant observes that Wesley understood his own view to be not a “hair’s breadth” different than Calvin (p. 534) on this point (Bryant is undoubtedly correct, for Wesley’s *Original Sin* defends the federalism of the Westminster Confession of Faith). More troubling, however, there is no treatment of the *ordo* (or *via*) *salutis*. There are discussions of various issues related to soteriology broadly conceived: predestination, sanctification, and other matters are addressed. But there is no treatment as such of what Wesley referred to as “the Scripture way of salvation.” Again this deficit may reflect the current state of Methodist theology, but it does not reflect Wesley’s own convictions (nor those of the historic Wesleyan tradition). Surely the book would benefit from a focused and penetrating discussion of justification and the new birth (and how these relate to the other important soteriological *loci*).

These criticisms should not, however, distract us from the several significant strengths of this book. Its breadth is impressive, and it is generally very well organized (although we could quibble with the placement of a few essays, and we are left unsure just what the difference is between “theological ethics” and “moral theology”). It addresses historical, missiological, liturgical, ethical, and theological matters, and it provides a very helpful overview and introduction both to the importance and the complexity of these issues. Abraham and Kirby have drawn together an impressive array of experts, and they have marshaled them well. In doing so, they have done a great service to all who wish to understand the massive but sometimes bewildering Methodist movement.

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Kristen Deede Johnson. *Theology, Political Theory, and Pluralism: Beyond Tolerance and Difference*. Cambridge Studies in Christian Doctrine. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007. xii + 276 pp. £53.00/\$104.00.

Ever since the European wars of religion tore societies and families apart, disabusing Western culture from the notion that confessionalism was a sound basis for politics, modern liberalism has been the obvious and mostly unchallenged political heir-apparent to Christendom. Foundational to this theory is the belief in a neutral or natural human reason that operates independently of revealed religion and so forms an unbiased basis for public discourse and interchange. Religious convictions, consequently, are relegated to the private or personal sphere, having no public purchase (hence, the very modern conversation about the relationship between faith and reason). Tolerance becomes the ethic for handling particularities such as religion. Humans are noble on account of their rationality, the instrument of societal harmony, and thus in keeping with that hope for rational harmony, all humans deserve society's patience (tolerance) as they come to a better mind.



While non-religious wars of the last two centuries have stunned the modern liberal dream, acute globalization and pluralism have brought the tradition to a philosophical crisis. Contemporary culture can no longer escape the fact that all human rationality is culturally situated and conditioned. Diversity accordingly has replaced unity as the mark of genuine society. And so liberation of particulars once muted by modern universal reason supplants tolerance as the moral imperative of society. After all, modern reason was no universal human faculty unaffected by circumstance, but simply the expression of a culture, the culture of white, Western men. The modern concern for unity is thus unmasked as oppressive, just an attempt of one culture to suppress and swallow others.

The clash of modern and postmodern political theories has generated considerable debate, the effects of which are readily observable in the growing inability of politicians and political commentators to comprehend, much less respond to, each other. In keeping with the contemporary trend of theological politics, author Kristen Johnson believes that the long silenced tradition of Christianity, once thought to be the source of all societal unrest, possesses resources capable of addressing the current political crisis.

Johnson begins by exploring tolerance in recent liberal political theory, using John Rawls and Richard Rorty as the primary interlocutors. The shift from tolerance to difference is the subject of chapter 3. Here, she focuses on the thought of Chantal Mouffe and William Connolly. Agonistic political theory, she observes, helpfully exposes the ontology of political liberalism as fundamentally intolerant. Moreover, in resorting to metaphysical explanation, it opens the door for theological description and thus represents an opportunity for Christian theology to regain its voice. Yet in the end, the politics of difference appear unsatisfying as conflict and coercion are made metaphysically basic. Unsurprisingly, the aforementioned program of liberation can be hostile to those traditions that have enjoyed mainstream societal respect and recognition as it seeks to create space for marginalized cultures and traditions. Many Christians, for example, are shocked to find themselves suddenly disparaged in today's culture. Yet, because hostility and power are basic to the world, violent dethronement of an established cultural form is necessary for empowering minorities. "Could it be," asks Johnson, suggesting the way forward, "that a Trinitarian ontology would enable us to imagine communities of harmony that respect the universal and the particular?" (p. 139).

Answering this question affirmatively is the task of the remaining two chapters. For those familiar with the current trend of theological politics, it should come as little surprise that Johnson turns to St. Augustine. His *City of God* is explored in chapter 4, with Johnson highlighting how he has a vision of the created order whose multiformity is due to the fecundity of God's life and is harmoniously ordered by love to that triune life. Peace, harmony, and love are thus metaphysically basic, not chaos, strife, and discord. Furthermore, Augustine's doctrine of original sin marks a distinction between the Earthly City and the Heavenly City such that the Earthly City cannot attain the goods of the Heavenly City autonomously, that is, apart from the redemption wrought in Jesus Christ and effective in his body, the Church. In this way, modern liberalism has a mistaken view of the unity of society, aspires for something beyond its capability, and tries to achieve it against the grain of God's created order restored in Christ. Agonistic political theory, on the other hand, is fatalistic and hopeless, not recognizing that peace is the fabric of the created order.

The final chapter attempts to apply Augustine's vision to the contemporary dilemma of difference and unity. Curiously, however, Johnson focuses more on conversations in theological politics than on the philosophical conversation with which she began the book. The basic shape of the answer seems to be that Christians, as citizens of the Heavenly City, can contribute to the goods of the Earthly City by bringing the distinctive life of the Church to bear on the Earthly City all the while recognizing that pure peace is presently impossible.

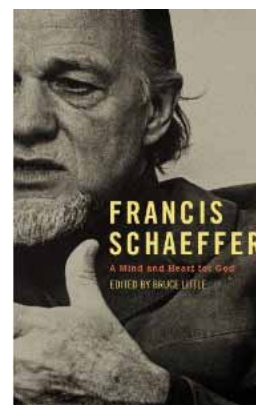
What began as an interesting task with potential thus seems to fizzle. Johnson shows herself informed by the work of major contemporary theologians of politics like John Milbank and Oliver O'Donovan. She writes engagingly and clearly. Yet her conclusions appear to fall short of their intended targets, and, as far as I can tell, do not advance the conversations to which she hoped to contribute.

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Bruce A. Little, ed. *Francis Schaeffer: A Mind and Heart for God*. Phillipsburg: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2010. xiv + 108 pp. \$12.99.

I never had the opportunity to spend time with or even meet the late Francis Schaeffer. Nonetheless, after reading through his published works and listening to hundreds of hours of his lectures in the context of living and working in L'Abri, I sometimes feel as if I did know him. In this light, I can think of no higher compliment than to say that this rather taut volume of just five chapters has helped me to know Francis Schaeffer even better. And for that alone I am deeply thankful.

Bruce Little, professor of philosophy and director of the L. Russ Bush Center for Faith and Culture at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina, has edited an enthusiastic series of lectures originally delivered at a 2008 conference focused upon the thought of Francis Schaeffer and its relevance for today. The contributors, who each worked with Schaeffer and have continued to



expand and augment his cultural apologetic, provide a sympathetic yet honest and beneficial discussion of Schaeffer's continuing applicability.

Udo Middleman, president of the Francis A. Schaeffer Foundation and Schaeffer's son-in-law, leads off by unpacking Schaeffer's basic ministry perspective and explaining why so many still look back to him. Middleman emphasizes Schaeffer's confidence in the Bible as inerrant revelation and as the sole provider of a fitting interpretation of the real world; his belief in the power of ideas as shaping the beliefs and actions of humanity; and his genuine willingness to doubt and question—an attitude and perspective that seems to have enabled others to engage Schaeffer and to be helped by him.

Jerram Barrs, founder and resident scholar of the Francis A. Schaeffer Institute, contributes two chapters. The first addresses Schaeffer's apologetics and the second his legacy and influence on evangelicalism. The essays gently critique three persistent criticisms of Schaeffer's apologetic approach, clarify the question of Schaeffer's apologetic methodology, and outline eight important themes or characteristics of Francis and Edith's ministry. That Barrs shares so much of his own story admirably underscores Schaeffer's commitment to people over developing or defending a particular apologetic methodology.

Ranald Macaulay, another son-in-law, former L'Abri worker, and now director of Christian Heritage Cambridge, speaks to Schaeffer's prescience concerning cultural currents and ideas. In relatively short compass, Macaulay raises and answers an assemblage of questions: If Schaeffer were with us here and now, what would he say? What, based upon the West's Christian lineage (and in light of Schaeffer's own understanding of the flow of ideas), awaits us? How much attention did evangelicals in the UK and the USA pay to Schaeffer's message? Was Schaeffer too pessimistic? How would he explain our culture's severance from its religious roots and contemporary evangelicalism's apparent powerlessness to redeem the situation?

The concluding chapter of this volume, authored by Dick Keyes, long-time L'Abri worker and director of Southborough L'Abri, does not talk about Francis Schaeffer the man or treat some characteristic aspect of his message. Instead, Keyes provides an example of how to evaluate and speak back to a specific facet of present culture in Schaeffer-like fashion. The most sagacious cultural apologist in North America today, Keyes targets sentimentality as a largely unnoticed threat to Christian faith. Upon describing what he means by 'sentimentality,' Keyes evaluates the three defining characteristics of sentimentality. He then warns of two particular problems that sentimentality presents to Christian faith. And finally, by engaging the Bible and revealing what manner of people we become when sentimentality reigns, Keyes leads us into greater honesty and into the hope of the gospel.

For a short book, *Francis Schaeffer: A Mind and Heart for God* covers a lot of valuable ground. It provides a compelling portrait of Schaeffer as churchman, evangelist, deep-thinker, and a most compassionate individual. It offers important vantage points from which to view Schaeffer's ministry, especially his remarkable ability to convey biblical truth to so many whether Christian or not. It shows an awareness of Schaeffer's legacy beyond L'Abri and beyond formal ministries dedicated to apologetics and outreach. And more than simply looking backwards, this volume explores ways in which Schaeffer might aid Christians today in holding out the gospel to a lost and decaying culture.

Of course, the book's strength (covering so much so briefly) is also its Achilles heel. Although this compact volume must certainly be considered a vital resource for understanding Schaeffer and his legacy, it is not a "stand alone" resource. To understand Schaeffer the man, one will still need to read Colin Duriez's biography: *Francis Schaeffer: An Authentic Life* (Crossway, 2008). Similarly, to appreciate

Schaeffer's apologetic, one will need to read Bryan Follis, *Truth With Love: The Apologetics of Francis Schaeffer* (Crossway, 2006). As is always the case, one will also need to read Schaeffer himself!

Ultimately, one must judge a volume against its own intended aims and purposes. Far from attempting comprehensiveness, this book and the conference that gave rise to its contents intends to acquaint a generation of evangelicals unfamiliar with Schaeffer with his life and ministry while promoting Schaeffer's emphases and approach as a model of cultural engagement that is both relevant and simultaneously faithful to the Christian gospel. Weighed in these scales, this short, accessible, and thoroughly enjoyable volume succeeds on both counts. I hope many read this and are aided in developing their own mind and heart for God.

Mark P. Ryan

Crossroads Fellowship

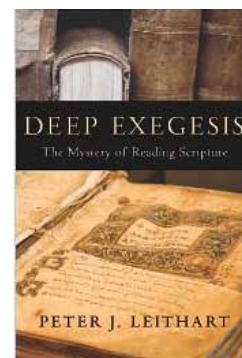
St. Louis, Missouri, USA

Peter Leithart. *Deep Exegesis: The Mystery of Reading Scripture*. Waco: Baylor University Press, 2009. 253 pp. \$29.95.

In this lively and learned volume, American Presbyterian theologian Peter Leithart points beyond the reductionistic, historico-grammatical exegesis of modern hermeneutics toward a hermeneutics that is at once apostolic, patristic, medieval, and interdisciplinary. Drawing widely on literary studies, film, music, philosophy, and history, as well as close readings of various biblical texts, Leithart proposes and exemplifies a "hermeneutics of the letter," an apostolic-patristic way of reading that celebrates the richness of the Bible's "letters"—their literary tropes, allusions, and structures.

In his first chapter, "The Text Is a Husk," Leithart criticizes the grammatical-historical exegesis that has dominated biblical hermeneutics since early modernity and, despite some signs of improvement, continues to prevail. In Spinoza and his modernist heirs, this predominantly "ethical" focus not only eclipsed the literal, allegorical, and anagogical concerns that had been included in patristic and medieval exegesis but also led to the development of a "hermeneutical method that detach[ed] the truth and meaning of Scripture from its verbal expression" (p. 10). According to the "husk-kernel" image of Scripture, the reader must strip away mytho-poetic expression and scientifically false accretions in order to reveal an inner moral teaching. This dualistic image of Scripture and the method it inspired goes astray, he concludes, chiefly because "the Bible's message . . . comes to us in a particular form, using particular categories, introducing a particular language. It is the power of salvation for whole humans—for their languages and institutions, their imaginations and poetry, their art and architecture—as much as for their souls" (p. 34).

Chapter Two, "Texts Are Events," stresses the importance of time in the reading of texts. In the first place, drawing on apostolic example and recent philosophy of history, Leithart points out that just as an historical event changes when "brought into relation with subsequent events" (p. 43), likewise a text "becomes more meaningful, differently meaningful, as it is reread in new circumstances" (p. 49). He then considers the event of reading itself, showing how the meaning of a novel or a film is largely constituted by the "movement of hope and despair," that is, the reader's movement from the



development of expectation to its fulfillment or disappointment (p. 56). In short, textual “meaning is temporally unfolded” (p. 53) within the “event” of interpretation.

In “Words Are Players,” Leithart points out the metaphorical depth of language and the role it ought to play in interpretation. Against the excessive caution of Biblical semanticists, Leithart calls attention to the capacity of words to “link” with one another and “surprise” us with new meaning “because they do not conform to our expectations” (p. 80). Examples from Jane Austen, Dylan Thomas, Homer, and Heidegger show that “[e]ach word has its particular history, sense, and normal contexts of use, but putting them in the same beaker creates a new compound” (p. 81). Although some kinds of texts call for precise interpretation, many others call for readers to “examine context not mainly to pare away meanings but to enrich them” (p. 85). Finally, a close reading of John 9 finds the apostle himself practicing the semantics of “deep exegesis”: commenting on the latter’s “translation” of the word *Siloam* in 9:7, Leithart demonstrates that for John, “‘Translated’ does not mean translated, but interpreted or etymologized” (p. 101).

Leithart titles his next chapter, which is concerned with intertextuality, “The Text Is a Joke,” since texts, like jokes, allude to sources, places, and others texts. Although contemporary biblical exegetes usually sternly warned against “eisegesis,” Leithart points out that “[a] good reader not only brings knowledge of historical information and the vocabulary and grammar of the language to his reading but also brings knowledge of earlier portions of the text he is interpreting, as well as knowledge of other texts, and these also shed light on the particular text he is studying.” Such “eisegesis” is appropriate, indeed necessary, because “every great writer, and many lesser ones, knew of other texts in that tradition and wrote against the background of that tradition” (p. 118). This latter point is aptly demonstrated by numerous examples drawn from the Western literature and the NT.

In “Texts Are Music” Leithart argues that texts can tell multiple stories at the same time with the same words reading according to different but equally valid structures. Glancing briefly at examples from jokes, film, and literature, he demonstrates the important ways by which “non-identical repetition” of syntactical or verbal elements contributes to the meaning of texts. For instance, many jokes work by building up anticipation through repeated structure, only to surprise us by deviating from that structure. However, the chapter centers upon explorations of structure in musical works by Bach and Mozart. It concludes with a summary of several different structural analyses of John 9 and its surrounding context and how this textual “music” deepens John’s meaning by indicating typological significance.

In his final chapter, “Text Are about Christ: Application,” Leithart returns to the very issue of *tropological* focus for which he indicted modern theology in chapter one. Only now the “ethical” meaning of Scripture becomes richer when set against the background afforded by typological, semantic, and structural analyses. Focusing again on John 9, Leithart argues that it concerns not only the power of Jesus to forgive sins but also the Church (the *totus Christus*), individual faith, infant baptism, a warning to would-be Pharisees and bystanders (such as the blind man’s parents), and much more

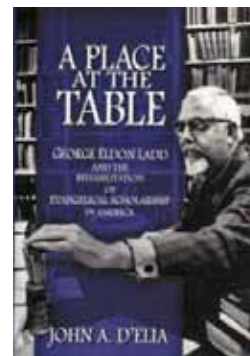
Despite several weaknesses—the sometimes abrupt veering between subtopics and the tendency to ignore distinctions between biblical and other literature or between written and other media—*Deep Exegesis* offers a welcome expansion of typical hermeneutical resources and of what it means to “read” Scripture or indeed any text.

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John A. D'Elia. *A Place at the Table: George Eldon Ladd and the Rehabilitation of Evangelical Scholarship in America*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008. 304 pp. \$45.00.

John A. D'Elia is the senior minister of the American Church in London and a graduate of the University of Stirling. David Bebbington supervised D'Elia's PhD dissertation on Ladd.

A Place at the Table concentrates on the life and work of George Eldon Ladd, longtime professor of New Testament at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California. The monograph "traces the development of Ladd's thought over the course of his life and pays special attention to the forces that animated that evolution and inspired his contribution to evangelical scholarship." The study, critical but generally appreciative, mixes personal biography, social history, and intellectual history to tell the inspiring if troubling story of Ladd



and the scholarly movement he helped to fuel. It thus builds on texts like George Marsden's *Reforming Fundamentalism* (Eerdmans, 1987) and Rudolph Nelson's *The Making and Unmaking of an Evangelical Mind* (Cambridge, 1987).

The text unfolds along chronological lines. Chapter one, "Early Life and Academic Preparation (1911–1950)," covers the early years of Ladd and roots his life in a struggle for authentic manhood. Apparently, Ladd grew up in an unhappy home that caused him to seek solace in Zane Grey novels. Whether or not this psychological cast fits the scholar, Ladd had an unhappy childhood. Converted in his teenage years, he matriculated at Gordon College before earning a BD at Gordon Divinity School. He married Winifred Webber in 1933, and he commenced a period of academic struggle in which he sought to earn higher credentials. He eventually earned a doctorate at Harvard University and became a full professor of New Testament at Gordon in 1949.

In chapter two, "The Emergence of a Strategy (1950–1954)," D'Elia covers the beginning of Ladd's teaching career at Fuller even as he outlines how Ladd distanced himself from dispensational premillennialism early in his ministry. D'Elia notes that it was in this period that Ladd began to see himself as a scholar "who could lift conservative scholarship out of its lowly place" (p. 59). This quest consumed the rest of his days.

"Old Battles and Partial Victories (1954–1959)," chapter three, works through further battles surrounding Ladd's "already-not yet" position on the return of Christ. The publication of *The Blessed Hope* (1956) cemented Ladd's reputation as a careful if controversial thinker, even if its publishing came at great cost to Ladd's family.

D'Elia traces Ladd's attempt to push outside of the evangelical academy in chapter four, "Beyond the Borders (1959–1963)." The author deftly analyzes how Ladd studied and critiqued the thought of German NT scholar Rudolf Bultmann, observing that this very effort represented a step forward for evangelicals. In tackling, for example, Bultmann's problematic conception of history, Ladd employed "serious reflection and attention to detail," traits that "modeled a new style of evangelical engagement with divergent theological views" (pp. 101, 105). Some readers will differ with D'Elia's interpretation of Fuller's inerrancy controversy and agree with the critique and understandable concern of faculty members like Harold Ockenga and Harold Lindsell.

A Place at the Table examines Ladd's most strenuous attempt to establish himself as a presence in the extra-evangelical world in chapter five, "The Costs of Engagement (1963–1966)." Based on

his previous publishing successes, Ladd secured a contract for his monumental work *Jesus and the Kingdom* (1964) from the secular publishing house Harper and Row. Everything came crashing down, however, when British scholar Norman Perrin authored a scathing review of the book in *Interpretation*. So crushing was the review that Ladd experienced bodily shock when he received it. He wrote to his friend Calvin Schonhoven, “I’m going back to Eerdmans and fundamentalist consumption, and I can no longer in good conscience be the faculty agent trying to promote sympathetic interaction. The other crowd doesn’t want it” (p. 143).

Chapter six, “Surrendering the Quest (1966–1982),” closes the story of Ladd’s life and ministry. Based on interviews with friends and family, D’Elia argues, “The last fifteen years of Ladd’s life, while giving the appearance of being productive, saw the man tumble through a process of emotional, physical, and spiritual disintegration” (p. 149). It is difficult to sort out just how damaged Ladd was because he managed to publish a number of notable texts in this time, including the widely esteemed *Theology of the New Testament* (1974). Ladd suffered various health setbacks in the 1970s before passing away in October 1982.

D’Elia concludes the book with this reflection about Ladd: “He set a standard that later evangelical scholars would have to reach or exceed if their work was to find acceptance in the broader academy. Generations of highly regarded evangelical scholars owe an unpaid debt to George Ladd for opening doors to them at the highest levels of academic discourse, and making possible their place at the table” (p. 182).

A Place at the Table is a rewarding study of an essential but overlooked figure, George Eldon Ladd. The text is elegantly written, insightful, and an authoritative source on Ladd and the movement to which he devoted his career. Ranging over the turbulent life and ministry of one of evangelicalism’s greatest scholars, *A Place at the Table* simultaneously enlightens, informs, and involves the reader.

There are many topics that present themselves for further consideration in D’Elia’s engrossing study. We have space for comment on just one feature of *A Place at the Table*. Among inquiry into multiple collections, D’Elia relies heavily on oral interviews for his book, which allows the testimony of Ladd’s family and peers to shape his conception of the scholar. This relates to D’Elia’s portrayal of Ladd as a broken man at the end of his career. It seems that Ladd was quite affected by his perceived scholarly failures, and he seems to have plunged into alcoholism and familial neglect. But the critical reader is left unsure of the accuracy of D’Elia’s portrayal of Ladd due to the lack of traditional data to reinforce it. The rewarding text suffers from an overly psychological tint, a problem endemic to the aforementioned study of E. J. Carnell by Rudolph Nelson, *The Making and Unmaking of an Evangelical Mind*.

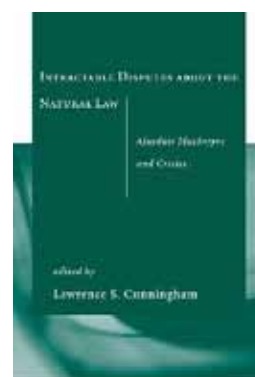
With these concerns noted, *A Place at the Table* offers much food for thought, particularly on the matter of the scholarly evangelical mind. Contemporary evangelicals connected to the academy are left deeply appreciative of the pioneering work of Ladd, among others. The “place at the table” that many evangelical scholars enjoy today clearly came at a price. This is true in the case of Ladd, Carnell, Henry, Ockenga, and many others of the neo-evangelical movement. The evangelical reader of D’Elia’s engrossing monograph cannot help but give thanks for the hard-won victories of Ladd and his peers, which demonstrated, contrary to the belief of some in the ambient culture, that acceptance of the gospel of Christ did not paralyze intellectual faculties and render them mute in the face of secular argument, but rather enlivened and inspired them to take intellectual dominion of every inch of the academic world.

In the final analysis, the reader—particularly the scholarly Christian reader—finds in the life of Ladd a needed warning. What will it profit a scholar, we might ask, to gain eminence and acclaim but to lose his family? Ladd's example encourages scholars to avoid insipid Christian scholarship on the one hand and on the other to treasure our families and churches and to find our identity not in our CV or credibility in the wider academy, but in the finished work of Christ applied to our hearts. That, beyond anything else, is the place at the table that we, with all people, must have.

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Lawrence S. Cunningham, ed. *Intractable Disputes about the Natural Law: Alasdair MacIntyre and Critics*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009. 374 pp. \$30.00.

In 2004, Josef Ratzinger, then the prefect of the Congregation for the Defense of the Faith, asked the University of Notre Dame to undertake a symposium to address the problem of finding a common denominator for the moral principles held by all people. In response, the eminent moral philosopher and Notre Dame professor Alasdair MacIntyre produced the essay that comprises the first chapter of this volume. Eight other scholars, most of them also from Notre Dame, were asked to respond to MacIntyre or to develop his arguments. These responses comprise chapters 2–9. MacIntyre engages these essays in the final chapter. The result is an important and unique resource for anybody interested in the fundamental moral disputes of contemporary society, the role of natural law within these disputes, and the Christian's task in negotiating them.



My comments will focus upon four essays, the two by MacIntyre and those by Jean Porter and Gerald McKenny. I do so because Porter and McKenny deal most specifically with the claims of MacIntyre's original essay and because MacIntyre gives them the most attention in his concluding essay. These four chapters thus give the book its central thread.

MacIntyre's opening essay analyzes moral disagreements and to what extent they can be resolved. The big problem is that Thomists, utilitarians, and Kantians all appeal to reason, yet they are unable to persuade many other rational people. MacIntyre focuses upon Thomism and utilitarianism and describes their views of rationality and the moral conclusions that each generates. He concludes that there is no set of neutral standards, equally available to both traditions, that can show one side to be true and the other false. MacIntyre therefore turns to each tradition's historical record. If one makes better progress dealing with its own problems and also explaining the other's problems, then it is rationally superior. He then outlines numerous problems afflicting utilitarianism and argues that it is only within the Thomistic Aristotelian tradition that its predicament can be understood. Yet the reluctance of utilitarians to agree with this conclusion is explainable: given their basic presuppositions, they are not open to arguments that would be fatal to their whole project. The precepts of the (Thomistic) natural law must therefore not be defended by trying to demonstrate the falsity of others' conclusions but by attending to others' premises and trying to undermine their belief in them through demonstrating their flaws and confusions.

Porter challenges MacIntyre's conception that natural law precepts are universal at a specific level. She claims that the natural law, for Aquinas, is not tantamount to normative precepts that are both specific enough to be practiced and binding everywhere upon all. Thus, natural law itself does not resolve all moral disputes. Many contrary moral views may in fact be alternative and rationally legitimate ways of ordering behavior in accord with natural law. For Christians, specifying the general precepts of the natural law requires building to some degree on theological foundations. Moral disputes, therefore, should not be negotiated by trying to *find* a pre-existing moral code but by seeking to *construct* a set of mutually agreeable norms.

McKenny compares and contrasts the views of MacIntyre and Ratzinger on how Christian claims about moral reason can be maintained in the face of moral disagreement. McKenny thinks that MacIntyre makes a coherent case against moral relativism, but his views entail a certain relativism in practice. For MacIntyre, people have no rationally compelling grounds to accept his view of natural law as long as their own tradition has reasons for not giving up its premises. McKenny fears that MacIntyre's view cannot avoid the moral standstills that have provoked calls for the allegedly neutral spectator to resolve disputes (along the lines of the liberalism that MacIntyre has long opposed).

MacIntyre's closing essay engages each of the other authors, but especially Porter and McKenny. In response to Porter, he further defends his recognition of more universal and specific precepts of the natural law than she would allow. In response to McKenny, he critiques Ratzinger's view that natural law claims are not fully credible or persuasive apart from their embodiment in a particular tradition or community and defends a stronger conception of the powers of reason.

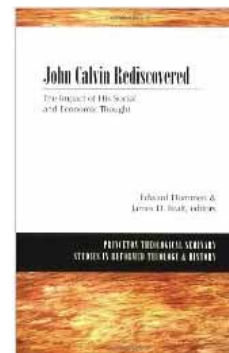
This book is a success simply as a high-level scholarly discourse about important matters, in which the interlocutors deal with each other's work seriously and respectfully and yet engage their disagreements openly. The volume will prove immensely useful for anyone wishing to understand the contemporary state of Roman Catholic debates about natural law and its significance for social life. Though this book does not represent all prominent Roman Catholic voices, it opens a window into a world of discussion.

The volume is useful and important not only for Roman Catholics seeking self-understanding but also for Protestants with any inkling of interest in natural law and Christian engagement in social life. Many Protestants have a caricatured view of what Roman Catholics believe about natural law, and a close read of this volume should help to dispel misconceptions and facilitate more accurate evaluation. The Roman Catholic authors in this book, contrary to stereotypes about Thomistic natural law as built upon autonomous human reason, debate the importance of the basic presuppositions underlying moral traditions, the effects of sin upon moral reasoning, the role of theological convictions in applying the natural law, and the significance of natural law being embodied in concrete historical communities. These are the very sorts of issues that have made many contemporary Protestants wary of the idea of natural law. MacIntyre concludes the volume with an invitation to other people, including "Reformed and Lutheran thinkers," to join their conversation. Since many matters that are of concern to Protestants are already on the table, and since they have natural law traditions of their own waiting again to be tapped, I believe the invitation should be accepted. Reformation theology, in my judgment, provides a surer foundation for natural law than Roman Catholic thought, but Protestants have some catching up to do in current discussions.

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Edward Dommen and James D. Bratt, eds. *John Calvin Rediscovered: The Impact of His Social and Economic Thought*. Princeton Theological Seminary Studies in Reformed Theology and History. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007. 161 pp. £19.31/\$29.95.

The year 2009 was redolent with various celebrations of the five hundredth birthday of Genevan Reformer John Calvin. Calvin, known for his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* and various biblical commentaries, is also known for the impact of his thought in areas beyond the strict limits of theology. In fact, Calvin's name is often connected with the rise of republican democracy and capitalism. This book, *John Calvin Rediscovered: The Impact of His Social and Economic Thought*, preceded the five-hundredth birthday celebrations by two years and is the result of a conference sponsored by World Alliance of Reformed Churches, the University of Geneva Faculty of Theology, and the John Knox International Reformed Center held on November 3–6, 2004, to celebrate the publication of the English translation of André Biéler's seminal work *La Pensée économique et sociale de Calvin (Calvin's Economic and Social Thought)*.



John Calvin Rediscovered is comprised of eleven chapters divided into three sections. Following the introduction by Edward Dommen, part one looks at “Calvin and His Age.” The highlight of part one for this reviewer was Robert Kingdon’s “Calvin and Church Discipline” (pp. 25–31). In this essay Kingdon delves into the role of the Genevan consistory. The consistory (what most Presbyterian churches refer to as the “session”) had oversight of marriage and sexual morality issues. Interestingly, the consistory also handled family and business disputes (p. 27). The consistory also looked out to eliminate residual Roman Catholic devotional practices. Another of its responsibilities was the discipline of those who showed disrespect for those in authority. As Kingdon points out, most Genevans (perhaps surprisingly) came to accept the role of the consistory in keeping the discipline of the community or removed themselves from the city (p. 28). Fascinatingly, while Calvin inculcated church discipline, he never included it in his marks of the true church. Later Calvinists would learn from Calvin’s practice and would maintain three marks of the true church: the pure preaching of the Word of God, the due administration of the sacraments, and the right use of discipline (pp. 30–31).

In part two on “Calvin’s Global Influence,” there were several interesting yet problematic chapters. In addition to gems like James Bratt’s “Abraham Kuyper’s Calvinism,” one finds Eduardo Golasso Faria’s “Calvin and Reformed Social Thought in Latin America” (pp. 93–108). Unfortunately, Faria begins by supporting the faulty Calvin-versus-the Calvinists historiography:

It is my intention to demonstrate how the American Presbyterian missionary vector in the nineteenth century, which was fundamental in shaping Latin American Protestantism, was rooted in deviations from Calvin’s thought which were current since the seventeenth-century Calvinism, but that it recovered in large part its “Calvinian” identity in the twentieth century. (p. 93)

This reader sought in vain for an argument to the effect that, for instance, Old Princeton had departed from Calvin’s thought. What one finds instead is the gratuitous assumption that it is so. Readers should be encouraged to turn to the work of Richard Muller others for an alternative assessment of the validity of the Calvin-versus-the Calvinists perspective. It is sad that Faria should start off on such a wrong foot.

I would like to say he corrects himself. While the chapter is fascinating in revealing the history of the Liberal Protestant church in Latin America (and so it is not without value and interest on that score), there is no detailed discussion of what influence Calvin actually has had on the Latin American church beyond the claimed *ressourcement* of Calvin by missionary statesman Richard Shaull. Given Faria's read on the Calvin-versus-the Calvinists historiography, this reader is not sanguine about the use of Calvin by Shaull. Throughout this essay there is a facile equation of the Christian message (i.e., the gospel) and social revolution, and somehow Calvin furthers into this equation.

The third section of the book, "Challenges in Translating John Calvin," contains two very brief but intriguing chapters on translating Calvin into English and German. Peter Optiz's "Translating Calvin into German" (pp. 143–49) illustrates that the hermeneutical obstacles to accurate translation are not limited to the Bible. Optiz discusses the intricacies of translating the words *doctrina* and *religio*. We are reminded that words are meaningful in actual usage and that this requires an awareness and familiarity with the cultural and historical context in which words are used. It was good to see that Optiz does not resort to skepticism about the possibility of translating one language into another. However, successful translation does require sensitivity to many linguistic and non-linguistic factors.

John Calvin Rediscovered is a mix of both good and poor essays. However, if you are looking for a book that unpacks Calvin's teaching on social and economic ethics and then traces out his impact on the world since his own time, you will do better to start with a book like David Hall's *The Legacy of John Calvin: His Influence on the Modern World* (Presbyterian & Reformed, 2008).

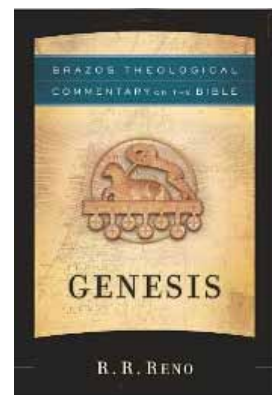
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R. R. Reno. *Genesis*. Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible. Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2010. 304 pp. \$32.99.

Source criticism and historical criticism have created a dilemma for how individual Christians and the church use the Bible. How can this poorly-cobbled-together collection of inconsistent traditions speak to us? How can accounts of events that probably did not happen be authoritative? A further dilemma is posed by the charge of bias: none of us reads what the Bible says but rather what our tradition and context dictate it "must" say.

There are many proposed solutions to these challenges. Some dispute the "assured results" of criticism. Another leaves aside the messy issue of textual origins and takes the text received by a particular community as starting point. This commentary attempts a different approach. It takes what it sees as the Nicean theological tradition—the current of theological tradition that flows within churches accepting the Nicean Creed—as the starting point from which to look back upon the text. This accentuates the problem raised above: can the Bible be heard above the tradition?

It also raises the question of whether there is a unified approach flowing from Nicea. With specific reference to a commentary it can be asked another way. Is not looking at the Bible through the lens of tradition a specifically Catholic approach and as such a repudiation of the Protestant assertion of the



authority of Scripture over tradition? I ask the question well aware that, while this particular author sits within the Catholic tradition, there are writers within the series who do not. I do not pass judgement on how other writers meet this challenge. Rather I ask whether the Catholic approach of this commentary is fully to be expected in terms of the task.

There is a neither “fish-nor-fowl” aspect to the work. There is no thorough consideration of how the Ancient Church viewed Genesis. If Augustine were not extensively cited, that would be a very minor part of the commentary. Protestant views are occasionally given, but one of the two references to Calvin occurs on the same page (p. 154) where he contends that the church’s sacraments continue Christ’s priestly office—hardly a Calvinistic view. Yet to be fair, while the institutional Catholic church is defended at many points, an ecumenically inclined Catholicism emerges. He declares that both Protestant and Catholic views of justification are correct (p. 160). He strongly affirms the doctrine of election (pp. 217–22) and when he cites the Council of Trent, he interprets it with Augustinian tendencies rather than semi-Pelagian ones.

The most significant—and yet most frustrating—aspect of the commentary is its treatment of the challenge of criticism. It seems as though Reno uncritically accepts the Documentary Hypothesis (e.g., the two creation stories represent P and J [p. 33]). However, he declares that texts that the Documentary Hypothesis views as duplicates are meaningful repetitions (pp. 147, 192, 223). I suspect that this ambiguity can survive because the text serves as a basis from which issues significant for the tradition can be raised, rather than the text being significant in its own right. Further evidence of this is that the commentary deals with selected passages and not the whole text. It often reads more as a set of theological/ethical/philosophical meditations on selected texts than as a commentary. A disappointing result of Reno’s selectivity is that he ignores the sophistication and subtlety of Hebrew biblical narrative, which Alter and others have highlighted.

Is Genesis about events that actually happened? Reno sees eschatology as built into the text and into the purposes of God. He stresses that the blessings that lie before us are real and tangible and not merely spiritualised imagination (p. 177). The logical corollary would seem to be that the beginning was also real and tangible. Yet here he is at his most frustrating; though he never commits himself explicitly, I think he implies that the beginning of Genesis is myth. He does not explain how the real emerges from the non-real. Further, this raises Augustine’s often-quoted philosophical problem with creation as a series of temporally distinct acts, but did the entire “Nicean tradition” see no temporal significance in the original creation? Are we seeing the text through the lens of the Nicean tradition or through the lens of an author trying to balance developed Catholicism and modernity? To add to the confusion, I found some of the discussion of the crucial opening chapters close to incomprehensible. He writes as though he sees God as “ground-of-being” rather than the creator (pp. 33–42). It seems he accepts that Gen 1:2 is a version of the myth where the deity(ies) create(s) out of pre-existing matter, but he then defends *ex nihilo* creation as implied by the logic of the Bible’s monotheism (pp. 39–46). Is this confusion or the text’s or church’s later view triumphing over original myth? As in the case of source criticism, I was frustrated by Reno’s failure to confront the tension between his beliefs, based on other parts of the text, and the “assured results” of criticism. Yet does the very aim of this set of commentaries imply that tension?

Once the section on origins is passed, there is much interesting reflection on life and reality, even if some seems allegorical. Reno’s connection to other texts is sometimes instructive, sometimes unconvincing. Hence, if one wants the thoughts of an intelligent and sensitive Catholic, this work

is valuable. Yet I cannot see it as contributing to an understanding of Genesis. Can we come to an understanding of the text without confronting the issues raised by criticism? I suggest that that is a particularly acute question for Protestants, but the ambiguities of this work raise it for Catholics also.

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— **Book Notes** —

D. A. Carson. *Scandalous: The Cross and Resurrection of Jesus*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2010. 173 pp. £7.99/\$15.99.

In this book, Don Carson focuses on first things. Given that the central message of Scripture is the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, he seeks to help the reader understand what happened surrounding these astonishing events and what they mean for us today. Chapter one, for instance, explains the many ironies of the cross in Matt 27:27–51a. Jesus is mocked as a king, and yet he *is* the king (vv. 27–31); at the cross, he is perceived as completely powerless, and yet he *is* powerful (vv. 32–40); he is dismissed for not being able to save himself, and yet he saves others (vv. 41–42); and even as he cries out in despair, he is trusting God (43–51a). Carson is not trying to be creative or original; instead, he draws the reader into a familiar text and then brings out its theological poignancy and surprising riches. So too with the other four chapters in the book (on Rom 3:21–26; Rev 12; John 11:1–53; and John 20:24–31). These five chapters originated as a series of talks given at the Resurgence conference at Mars Hill Church in Seattle in December 2008. And you can tell—the writing preserves a devotional, sermonic, and pastoral style as Carson offers careful exposition of key passages in the NT. All Christians everywhere will benefit from this small but weighty book.



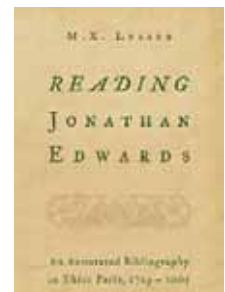
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M. X. Lesser. *Reading Jonathan Edwards: An Annotated Bibliography in Three Parts, 1729–2005*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008. xii + 691 pp. £96.99/\$145.00.

This book came out two years ago, but it is worth bringing to the attention of readers of this journal. Edwards scholars will obviously want to own a copy, but pastors and others interested in Edwardsean theology will also want to be aware of this resource, not least because of the recent formation of the new Jonathan Edwards Center at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (in conjunction with the main Edwards Center at Yale). M. X. Lesser is English professor emeritus at Northeastern University, and he has put us all in his debt with this comprehensive archive of virtually all the existing commentary on Jonathan Edwards from 1729 to 2005. This work includes a reprint



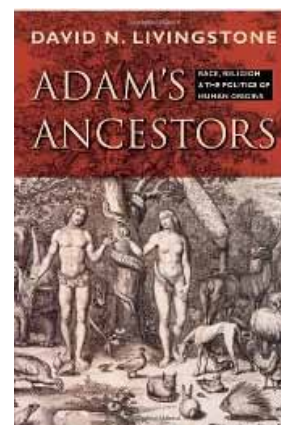
of two earlier bibliographies, *Jonathan Edwards: A Reference Guide* (published in 1981 and covers 1729–1978) and *Jonathan Edwards: An Annotated Bibliography* (published in 1994 and covers 1979–1993). The new material in this heavy volume covers 1994–2005. You will find just about every article, book, dissertation, essay, paper, introduction, book review, etc., published on the life and work of Jonathan Edwards since 1729, and Lesser adds his own annotations, which are brief but usually perceptive. After an introduction, the material is listed in chronological order, and there is a very helpful author and title index at the end. Readers of this journal will rightly balk at the astronomical price of this reference work. It is time to be creative: consult a local library, scour used book stores, sell a car, or find a wealthy relative. The book is worth it.

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David N. Livingstone. *Adam's Ancestors: Race, Religion, and the Politics of Human Origins*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008. 301 pp. £23.50/\$35.00.

Prior to the seventeenth century, church and society widely assumed the historicity of Adam and Eve, a young earth, a global flood, etc. But as new data emerged from sources like the voyages of discovery and pagan historiographies, their chronologies conflicting starkly with the Bible, bold thinkers proposed a pre-adamite theory to make sense of the new world. The thesis: Adam was not the first human being; there was a whole race of pre-adamites who populated the earth before God created Adam. David Livingstone tells the fascinating story of this theory with its many twists and turns. The account is rich, brimming with a wealth of primary source material and forgotten protagonists in the history of science and religion. Livingstone's main thesis is that the pre-adamite theory was unusually flexible; depending on the scientific, theological, political, or ideological contexts, the pre-adamite strategy was used for different purposes and in different ways. In nine chapters, Livingstone discusses the origins of the doctrine in early history and how it received its most sustained defense by Isaac La Peyrère in the seventeenth century (on La Peyrère, see also Richard Popkin's work). At the time, it was judged a monumental heresy. From there, pre-adamism remained contested but, like a coat with many colors, others later used it to harmonize Scripture with the emerging sciences; it featured in the early science of ethnology; conservative Christians like B. B. Warfield and R. A. Torrey used it in their encounter with Darwin's theory of evolution; and others wielded the doctrine for racist, white supremacist purposes. Readers of this journal will not find compelling answers to the most important theological questions raised by this story, but nonetheless we are all in Livingstone's debt—he has taken a wide array of complex, often confusing, historical material and turned it into a very interesting and learned historical account.

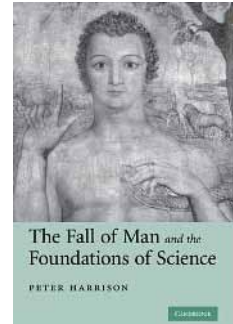
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Peter Harrison. *The Fall of Man and the Foundations of Science*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007. xi + 300 pp. £55.00/\$43.00.

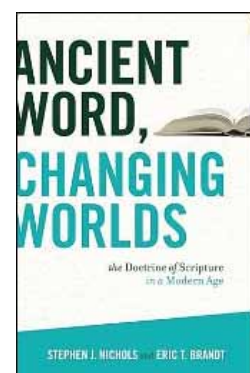
The present work serves as a helpful companion volume to David Livingstone's *Adam's Ancestors*. Peter Harrison is the Andreas Idreos Professor of Science and Religion at the University of Oxford and a well-known contributor to the history of science and religion (he is slated to deliver the Gifford Lectures in 2010–11). Readers of this journal are probably familiar with his important work, *The Bible, Protestantism, and the Rise of Natural Science*, where he argues for the importance of Protestantism in the emergence of modern science. This follow-up book has been widely reviewed in major journals and rightly so. His main thesis is that as a result of the Reformation, Protestants placed a heavy emphasis on the Fall of Adam and Eve and the consequent loss of knowledge and understanding. This belief significantly shaped methodological discussions during the sixteenth and seventeenth century, and it gave rise to experimental procedures (if we are fallen, then we need to develop careful, empirical approaches to investigate nature). In short, modern science arose largely because of the early modern commitment to the fall of man. Harrison delves deeply into the primary sources and develops his thesis in a number of directions, focusing primarily on English Christians, building a cumulative case. The argument is very controversial; if Harrison is correct, then modern science, far from being the result of Enlightenment rationalism, resulted rather from varying commitments to the Christian doctrine of the Fall. Scholars will debate the cogency of Harrison's rich and detailed arguments. For most readers of this journal, the Augustinian doctrine of the Fall is a central, historical dogma, and it explains our deep moral predicament. Although this important book has stimulated a fascinating debate about the relationship between the Fall and modern knowledge, the full jury is not in yet. We thus eagerly await the next installment.

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Stephen J. Nichols and Eric T. Brandt. *Ancient Word, Changing Worlds: The Doctrine of Scripture in a Modern Age*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2009. 176 pp. £10.61/\$15.99.

Many major controversies in modern theology are footnotes on the doctrine of Scripture. Orthodox Christianity embraced the Bible as a supernatural revelation from God, but this view has been challenged by the rise of science and naturalistic visions of life. This book tells the story of the Bible in the modern world through the lens of three important words: inspiration, inerrancy, and interpretation. The format of the book is perhaps its unique feature. Chapters 1, 3, and 5 are devoted respectively to inspiration, inerrancy, and interpretation. Chapters 2, 4, and 6 are complementary chapters, in which the authors select a number of representative primary source texts on the topic discussed in the preceding chapter. There is nothing new here, but Nichols and Brandt give a succinct, compelling history of



the trials and tribulations of Scripture in the modern age. Given the vast material, the authors had to make judgment calls on what to include in the narrative. Inevitably, readers might wonder about a few omissions (e.g., no mention of John Woodbridge, *Biblical Authority* [Zondervan, 1982] when discussing the Rogers/McKim proposal in chap. 3—perhaps an oversight?). Other times, the judgment is apt, as when they note that battles over the Bible were never as agonizing for African-Americans, who naturally tended to submit reverently to Scripture as God’s word (p. 72). For the most part, this book strikes just the right balance in terms of detail, emphasis, and scope of discussion. There are helpful timelines throughout the text, a glossary, and three short appendices. Many younger evangelicals who are unwisely shedding the church doctrine of inerrancy should at least read this book. The well-written and very accessible prose also makes it ideal for college students and Sunday school or church small group settings.

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— ETHICS AND PASTORALIA —

John Piper. *Finally Alive: What Happens When We Are Born Again*. Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2009. 203 pp. £8.99/\$14.99.

This relatively short book is John Piper’s response to the misuse of the language of regeneration in North America. Where “born again” is used as a label for professing evangelicals—or even those who simply report making some sort of commitment to Christ at some point in their lives—Piper believes, “[t]he term *born again* is desecrated” (p. 16). The matter is serious because this loose and unbiblical use of the language of rebirth leads those observing the church to “defile the new birth with the worldliness of unregenerate, professing Christians” (p. 15). If all who claim some sort of commitment to Christ are born again, it appears that being born again does not have the radical effect on life that the NT claims, for such professing Christians are regularly shown in surveys to be prone to the same sinful pursuits and habits as the world. Piper therefore sets out to provide a biblical definition of “born again” and its associated terminology.



Christians outside America may not have experienced quite the same misuse of language. They should be thankful, nevertheless, that circumstances in America have drawn forth this systematic treatment of a vital biblical theme. It certainly appears to this reviewer that confusion or simply ignorance on this topic is widespread in evangelical circles. It would be tempting to say that a serious study of the Bible’s teaching on new birth is timely, if it were not for the fact that it seems somewhat overdue!

Piper tackles the theme with his customarily thorough and systematic approach, starting with definition (“What is the new birth?”), moving through our need (“Why must we be born again?”), God’s action (“How does the new birth come about?”), the result (“What are the effects of the new birth?”), and the resulting imperative (“How can we help others be born again?”). Each question is tackled in a few short chapters, with each chapter based on a particular Bible passage. On the whole, the chapters

are thorough and clear, and thanks to their length quite readable. There is no technical vocabulary, beyond what is necessary to expound the passages cited, and the book is on the whole accessible to those who would not usually plunge into works of theology.

Piper's emphases seem highly relevant to the contemporary church. He insists that to be born again is more than to offer assent to the truths of the gospel: "Jesus says, what happens in the new birth is not merely affirming the supernatural in me, but experiencing the supernatural in yourself" (p. 31). Our churches are seriously infected by the prevailing naturalism of our society, and this is seen in the downplaying of the miraculous nature of Christian conversion. It is essential to say clearly that regeneration is a miracle. God is active in our world today and must be active if we are to see people entering eternal life.

I was particularly delighted to see the link between regeneration and union with Christ brought out clearly: "the Holy Spirit supernaturally gives us new spiritual life by connecting us with Jesus Christ through faith" (p. 42). It is the life of Jesus into which we are reborn. If I had not been on a quiet train while reading this particular chapter, I probably would have cheered. As it was, I contented myself with a broad grin.

This being John Piper, the emphasis on the sovereignty of God in the new birth is present throughout the book. Again, I was delighted, particularly as it was made clear throughout that this does not in any way detract from the need for real human faith and real human evangelism.

Alongside huge appreciation of these important points, I do have some reservations. The structure of the book, which feels more like a series of expository sermons than a purpose-written manuscript, sometimes feels a little laborious. More seriously, while the structure has led to detailed engagement with the relevant biblical texts, it has not allowed for the treatment of broader theological and pastoral issues arising from the topic. As an example, Piper seems aware that discussing new birth as a divine action worked on us may well be unsettling, raising the question of whether we are really born again; he expresses his hope that this will not be the result for tender consciences. For this reviewer, an explicit treatment of the question of assurance would have been invaluable. I would also have appreciated a fuller treatment of the issue of sin in the regenerate in this regard (the ten pages on the subject are excellent, but feel all too brief and under-applied) and some thoughts on the *experience* of new birth (for example, tackling the questions raised by people who cannot recall a particular conversion experience). Many of the answers to these questions are present in the text of this book, but the format has not permitted them to be drawn together and explored, at least not to my satisfaction, and I cannot help being a little afraid for readers of little faith.

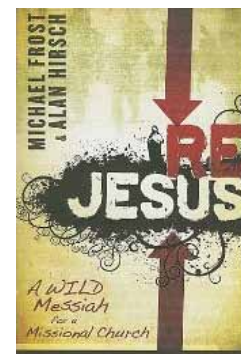
The previous paragraph notwithstanding, this book should be read and recommended for its insight into a crucial theological concept and as a wake-up call to a Christianity which has lost sight of the need for God's decisive and gracious intervention in each and every heart if there is to be real *life* in the church and real *witness* in the world.

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Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch. *ReJesus: A Wild Messiah for a Missional Church*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2009. 204 pp. £12.99/\$19.95.

The central thesis of *ReJesus* is that an institutionalized church needs to rediscover the radical example of its Messiah—we need to ‘reJesus’ the church or return to what the authors call ‘radical traditionalism.’ ‘Our point is that to reJesus the church, we need to go back to the daring, radical, strange, wonderful, inexplicable, unstoppable, marvellous, unsettling, disturbing, caring, powerful God-Man’ (p. 111).

Michael Frost is Professor of Evangelism and Missions at Morling College, Sydney, and Alan Hirsch is founder of Forge Missional Training Network. Their previous collaboration, *The Shaping of Things to Come* (Hendrickson, 2003), has been a significant text in the missional church movement.



The material in *ReJesus* is not especially original. Frost and Hirsch have themselves covered some of this ground in their previous books. They present Jesus as subverting both imperial politics and institutionalized religion, and they highlight similarities between the Pharisees of Jesus’ day and conservative Christians in our own. They critique consumer Christianity and the sacred-secular divide. Frost and Hirsch are well aware of the danger of people creating Jesus in their own image, citing many examples along the way. But they offer no rationale of why we should treat their version of ‘a wild messiah’ as any more reliable.

Nevertheless, the book has many strengths. The authors present the material with verve. They are aware of academic work, but this is a popular book with a strong polemic tone. There is plenty of insight and plenty of challenge. It is full of passion and sometimes over-stated, but I appreciate the need to be poked a bit.

But where are the cross and resurrection (mentioned so infrequently they merit no inclusion in the index) and the ascension and parousia of Jesus (not mentioned at all)? And for all their emphasis on the Jewishness of Jesus, there is little on Jesus as the fulfilment of the OT. It may well be that evangelicals have too often neglected the life of Jesus, and I suspect Frost and Hirsch are reacting against this. But the answer cannot be to neglect his cross, resurrection, ascension, and parousia.

There is a telling anecdote at the beginning of the book that encapsulates the problem (p. 18). A speaker asks an audience of six hundred people with whom in the story of the healing of Jairus’ daughter in Luke 8 they most identify. We are invited to be shocked that only six people identify with Jesus. But is it a mistake for people to look to Jesus as their Saviour before they look to him as their model? Do we really want lots of people with a messiah-complex?

What is missing is soteriology. Perhaps the authors assume this, but it is a dangerous assumption. Christology, we are told, determines missiology, which in turn determines ecclesiology. Perhaps, but only if christology includes an account of the saving work of Christ. The danger is that a lifestyle shaped by the pattern of Jesus that does not arise out of gospel-grace shaped by the redemption of Jesus will create a new kind of legalism—a new, edgy legalism to replace the traditional legalism Frost and Hirsch decry, but legalism nevertheless.

‘We believe that Christian faith must look to Jesus and must be well founded on him if it is to be authentic. If NASA was even .05 degrees off in launching a rocket to the moon, they would miss the

moon by thousands of miles' (p. 167). An attempt to reJesus the church with a cross-less, resurrection-less, ascension-less christology is surely more than a .05-degree-misalignment.

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Martin Bucer. *Concerning the True Care of Souls*. Translated by Peter Beale. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2009. 218 pp. \$24.00.

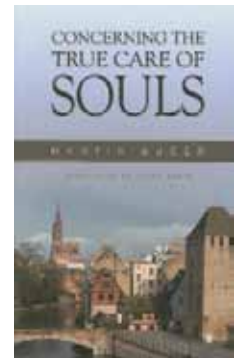
The year 2009 marked the five hundredth anniversary of John Calvin's birth, but one of the significant Reformation publications of last year was the first English translation of Calvin's mentor's work on pastoral theology. Written in 1538 when Martin Bucer was at the height of his leadership in the reformation of Strasbourg, *Concerning the True Care of Souls* offers biblical insight into the pastoral work of leadership, shepherding, and discipline in the church.

Bucer follows a basic pattern for each chapter. First, he offers a brief introduction followed by a list of key Scriptural texts dealing with the topic he wishes to cover. Next, he explains the doctrines taught in the text. He then teases out other points related to those doctrines and applies them to the pastor, the Christian, and/or the church in general. The book's thirteen chapters fall into three divisions: chapters 1–6 discuss the nature and government of the church; chapters 7–12 cover the basics of pastoral care; and chapter 13 offers a conclusion. Two appendices conclude the book with brief notes regarding married priests and church guardians. All of this is preceded by an historical introduction by the late David F. Wright that ably puts the work in its sixteenth-century context.

Bucer finds it necessary to spend several chapters outlining the biblical nature and governmental structure of the church. This is important because these topics provide the necessary foundation for pastoral care. The essence of Bucer's ecclesiology is that Christ rules his church through the Word of God and the instrumentality of elders. Deacons also hold an important office in the church, but they have a distinct role (pp. 29–32). The plurality of elders within a local congregation is essential to healthy pastoral care (pp. 33–39).

In the second half of the book, which covers the basics of pastoral care, Bucer works out his theology of the elder as shepherd. If the elders shepherd the flock of God, then they must seek lost sheep (chap. 7), reclaim the straying (chap. 8), bind up the wounded (chap. 9), strengthen the weak (chap. 9), and guard the healthy (chap. 10). In this section, Bucer movingly encourages pastors "that in Christ all loss is true and eternal gain, joy and honour, even though one may have to live in the world's sight as blessed with troubles and labours, poor and needy, weak and despised" (p. 169.) Pastors are to love their people (pp. 189–91), but also be prepared for the fact that "there is no ministry more subject to ingratitude and rebellion than that of the care of souls" (p. 191).

Without doubt the most surprising element of this work is Bucer's endorsement of penance for "gross errors and sins" (pp. 119–23). He covers his view of an evangelical version of this practice at length in chapter nine entitled, "How the Hurt and Wounded Sheep Are to Be Bound Up and Healed." For Bucer, the crux of the matter is that those who sin should not be allowed just to say, "I'm sorry; I



won't do it again" (p. 160). There must be a public demonstration of repentance (p. 137) as a means of curtailing present and future sins (p. 129). On the positive side, Bucer does not tie the forgiveness of sin to the depth and extent of one's penance. He still believes in justification by faith alone (pp. 103–4, 129). On the negative side, it appears that Bucer is guilty of eisegesis at several points (pp. 108–9, 112, 135). He is correct to insist that elders not deal carelessly with the gross errors and sins of the flock. Biblical discipline is essential to maintaining a gospel-centered church. Is it possible, though, that biblical counseling could provide the soul-care needed for those who have repented of grosser sins rather than some form of penance?

One of the great strengths of this work is its explicit reliance upon Scripture. Bucer is not adverse to appeal to natural theology to support an argument (see, e.g., pp. 41, 54, 116, 131), but his adherence to the Bible for guidance is conspicuous and to be applauded. *Concerning the True Care of Souls* offers much practical advice to pastors and elders. Bucer had a heart for his people, and it is evident that he wants other pastors to develop this love and care for their flocks as well. Twenty-first century readers will find it odd that he allows civic authority so much power in the church (pp. 65, 155ff.), but one must remember that this was the view of many during the Reformation period.

On the editorial and production side of things, this volume could benefit from several alterations. First, the italic type face used for section headings is too small. Its size proves distracting. Second, Bucer numbers his texts at the beginning of each chapter and then simply refers to passage number 1, 2, etc. Had the translator or editor inserted the Bible reference rather than keeping Bucer's method, he would save the reader much page turning and frustration. Third, Scripture and topic indices would greatly enhance the practical usefulness of the book.

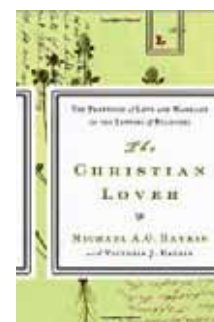
Peter Beale is to be commended for making this work available in English. Though not the most up-to-date volume on pastoral theology, it still deserves a place in every pastor's library. The works of the Reformers have stood the test of time. Read Bucer and you will discover why.

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Michael Haykin with Victoria J. Haykin. *The Christian Lover: The Sweetness of Love and Marriage in the Letters of Believers*. Orlando: Reformation Trust, 2009. xxv + 101 pp. \$15.00.

When asked to review a book with the enticing title *The Christian Lover*, it is hard to say no, and reading this short book by Michael Haykin (with assistance from his daughter Victoria) was a rewarding experience. Haykin, a professor of church history and biblical spirituality at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, has assembled personal letters from noted Christian leaders through history with the purpose of illustrating, celebrating, and encouraging the delightful and passionate love that a husband and wife can (and ought to) have toward one another.

The book itself consists of twelve chapters with each focusing on a Christian leader and his wife (or in one case, "romantic interest"). These include two Reformers, one seventeenth-century Puritan, seven eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Evangelicals and two from the twentieth



century. A brief biographical sketch of each gives some context for the letters, though more information about their specific setting might have been helpful. Four chapters cite only one letter, two chapters cite as many as six, and in all, thirty-two letters are presented.

These letters intentionally address a wide range of experiences related to marital love — courtship, a hopeful proposal, passionate delight in one's beloved, the anguish of separation, dealing with disappointment, and the intense pain of grief when death separates spouses. This is the real stuff of life, and these characters from history become very human in the "intimate windows" into their hearts that these letters afford.

We see Martin Luther's affectionate playfulness in writing to his wife Katharina, whom he addresses as "Most holy Mrs. Doctor" (p. 4). John Calvin writes after his wife's death, "I have been bereaved of the best companion of my life. . . . I do what I can to keep myself from being overwhelmed with grief" (p. 10). At age forty after twelve years of marriage, Martyn Lloyd-Jones seems almost adolescent in expressing his love to his wife Bethan: "I am quite certain that there is no lover, anywhere, writing to his girl who is quite as mad about her as I am" (p. 88). These spiritual giants experienced the "blazing fire" of romantic love exalted in the Song of Songs (8:6), and they would no doubt agree with the writer that "If one were to give all the wealth of his house for love, it would be utterly scorned" (Song of Songs 8:7).

But because love "burns like a blazing fire," it can be dangerous, and several writers acknowledge that passions must be guarded. Particularly, the passion of marital love must not be allowed to overwhelm a love for God. Lucy Hutchinson wrote a memoir of her husband John after his death in 1664, exalting his love for her, but she was conscious of putting that love in its proper place: "yet even this, which was the highest love he or any man could have, was yet bounded by a superior; he loved [his wife] in the Lord as his fellow-creature, not his idol He loved God above her" (p. 18). And after expressing the "extreme tenderness" of her heart for her husband, Philip, Mercy Doddridge confessed that this "sometimes makes me dread lest I should sin you away, by giving you that place in my heart which ought to be sacred to God alone, next to whom I believe I am permitted to love you" (p. 24).

Herein lies a central underlying theme of these letters. Though romantic love is common to human experience, that love is not diminished but deepened when wedded to a love for God. The sharing of our spiritual lives in Christ adds a new and more profound dimension to human love. Henry Venn warns his wife Eling of "an idolatrous love," adding, "I would always pray that God may be so much dearer to us than we are to each other. . . . By this means shall we love one another in God and for God" (p. 40).

That the marital union is grounded in our union with Christ finds its finest expression in the final letters from the only non-English speaking couple in the book. Helmut von Moltke, though a Christian opposed to violence, was linked to a plot to overthrow Hitler, and in January 1944, he was arrested by the Nazis. In a letter to his wife Freya, written within days of his hanging, he wrote,

You are not one of God's agents to make me what I am, rather you are myself. . . . I would not think of saying that I love you, that would be quite false. Rather you are the one part of me, which would be lacking if I was alone. . . . It is only in our union—you and I—that we form a complete human being. . . [a union symbolized through] our common participation in the Holy Communion. (p. 96)

In our age of telephone and now email, letter-writing seems a lost art, but it is a medium especially conducive to communicating deep emotional reflection. These letters evidence that, and they set before us a model worth following.

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Dennis P. Hollinger. *The Meaning of Sex: Christian Ethics and the Moral Life*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009. 272 pp. \$19.99.

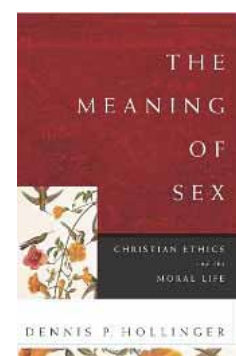
One mark of contemporary western perspectives on sexual morality, diverse as they may be, is that sex is understood to have no essential or objective meaning. Rather, those involved define its meaning and design their sexual lives according to whether they derive pleasure from it, or whether they experience it as an expression of affection or love. Thus it is difficult to establish criteria by which to judge the morality of the act or the relationship, and contemporary sexual ethics is reduced to a defense of whatever behaviors and attitudes are currently embraced.

By contrast, in *The Meaning of Sex*, Dennis Hollinger argues that “there is inherent meaning to sex. And it is in this meaning that we find designs for our sexual lives” (p. 12). While he examines the contribution of various disciplines to our understanding of sex, he grounds his perspective in what the Bible reveals about sex in relation to creation, theological anthropology, and marriage. He insists that “sex is a good gift of God with very specific purposes, and those purposes best find their fulfillment in a very specific context—the marriage of a man and a woman” (p. 13).

The first part of this book discusses frameworks for sexual ethics. Chapter One considers major theories of ethics, including consequentialist, principle, and virtue approaches, and the diverse implications they have for sexual morality. The second chapter discusses worldview-perspectives on sex, including asceticism, naturalism, humanism, monism, and pluralism. The third chapter contrasts such perspectives with a biblical worldview, focusing on the significance of its metanarrative of creation, fall, redemption, and consummation for sexual ethics. Chapter four examines what Hollinger finds to be the primary purposes of sex presented in Scripture, which are “consummation of marriage, procreation, love, and pleasure” (p. 95).

In the second part of the book, Hollinger applies a biblical worldview to select topics, including premarital sex, sex in marriage, homosexuality, reproductive technologies, and Christian living in a world obsessed with sex. In these chapters, he discusses a wide range of issues, such as pornography, lust, cohabitation, contraception, the media, and more. He considers historical and contemporary debates, but the final arbiter is Scripture. But instead of simply appealing to commands, he argues that the standard by which to judge the morality of sex is whether it is set within the context of the purposes that are given by God and revealed in the Bible.

Unlike many books on sexual morality from a Christian perspective that focus primarily on actions and attitudes that are right or wrong, Hollinger describes both the “what” and the “why” of a biblical ethics of sex. The discussion of the design and purposes of sex in the first part of the book is helpful for laying a foundation for what follows. When he turns to the issues, he focuses on the joy of following



the Creator's plan for good sex, and he does so with pastoral wisdom and sensitivity. As such, it is a significant work of evangelical sexual ethics. His closing chapter, "Living in a Sex-Crazed World," is especially helpful for Christians to reflect on faithful living in a fallen world, pointing the way to wholeness and satisfaction in our sexual lives before a confused world, for God's glory and our good.

This book is worth reading. It is written primarily for Christians and will be beneficial for scholars and pastors yet very accessible for lay persons. Hollinger also seeks to connect with those who are not Christian by appealing to natural revelation, especially in his chapter on the purposes of sex. In my judgment these appeals could be bolstered by engaging significantly with Natural Law thinkers. Where relevant, he notes sociological studies and statistics that demonstrate negative consequences of sexual behavior that strays from God's design. He rightly claims that a Christian perspective cannot be built primarily on arguments from consequences, for doing so "capitulates to a [utilitarian] framework that undermines a biblical ethic" (p. 127). Nevertheless, it should be said more clearly than Hollinger does that an appeal to consequences is not the same as Consequentialism. God so orders the world that our behavior has consequences for good or evil, and one reason that the Bible appeals to the consequences of disobedience is that we might avoid self-destruction and enjoy his blessings.

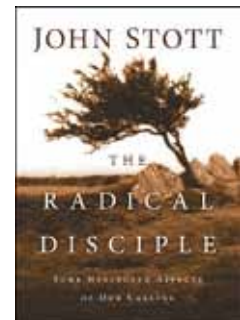
Hollinger nicely engages not only the most relevant biblical texts, but also a wide range of authors, Christian and secular, traditionalists and revisionists. He affirms biblical teaching without being heavy-handed. At times it seems that Hollinger is too gentle, as when he says that "mental adultery is not the same as physical adultery, but it does impact the character of a person and increases the possibility of adultery with the mental partner" (p. 160). While we ought to reflect Jesus' love and compassion, we also ought to reflect his boldness in exposing the heart of sin, as in his teaching on lust in Matt 5:28. Lust is problematic, not first because it impacts our character or opens the possibility of physical adultery, but because it is sin and thus offends God and others, exposes our sinfulness, and corrupts the beauty, goodness, and meaning of sex. The above example, however, is not indicative of Hollinger's treatment of the issues, and I commend this book as one that is faithful to biblical teaching and an important contribution to Christian sexual ethics.

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John Stott. *The Radical Disciple*. Nottingham: IVP, 2010. 144 pp. £8.99/\$15.00.

It is entirely fitting that John Stott should have chosen the theme of discipleship for this, his final book. He will no doubt be honoured for many years to come as one of the chief human agents in the resurgence and spread of evangelicalism in the second half of the twentieth century. His gifts as a preacher, writer, pastor, evangelist, theologian, and statesman have been greatly used around the world, but there is no doubt that he himself would want to be remembered above all as simply a follower of Christ. His many years of consistent, humble, and wholehearted Christian service since his conversion as a teenager in the 1930s are the backdrop to this moving book and add greatly to its power.

John Stott focuses on eight characteristics of radical discipleship: non-conformity, Christlikeness, maturity, creation-care, simplicity, balance, dependence, and death. It is a personal and, by his own



admission, arbitrary selection of subjects which he regrets are too often neglected in contemporary Christian reflection. Readers of his other books will soon recognise familiar themes and features. Once again we encounter a master bridge-builder “relating God’s never changing word to our ever-changing world” (to quote John Stott’s own words in *I Believe in Preaching*). Every statement is rooted in Scripture and then applied to the realities of twenty-first-century life, such as pluralism, materialism, narcissism, and the ecological crisis. The fact that so much ground is covered in only 140 widely spaced pages is testimony to the author’s remarkable lucidity and economy of style. The book abounds with pithy aphorisms that take us right to the heart of the matter in hand. A typical example in the second chapter on “Christlikeness” summarises a conviction which undergirds the whole book: “if we claim to be Christian, we must be like Christ.”

For me the last two chapters are most striking, largely because of a greater degree of personal vulnerability than appears in any of John Stott’s other books. His reflection on “dependence” in chapter seven begins with a description of his own weakness after a recent fall which left him “spreadeagled on the floor, completely dependent on others.” This was followed by a period of emotional weakness which expressed itself in tears before friends which we can imagine caused great distress to a product of “one of the so-called ‘public’ schools where one is supposed to be taught the philosophy of the stiff upper lip.” He was reminded, however, of a lesson taught him by the man who led him to Christ, that humiliation is the road to humility: “having plumbed the depths of utter helplessness, it would be impossible to climb the hill of self-confidence.” We gain a glimpse of an elderly saint struggling with the frustrating incapacities and indignities of old-age and yet striving for godly contentment within them. He is fortified by the example of Christ who was born a baby, completely dependent on his mother, “and if dependence was appropriate for the God of the Universe, it is certainly appropriate for us.”

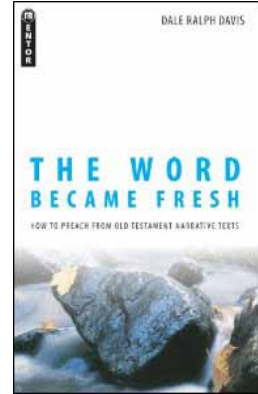
In the final chapter on death, John Stott reflects on “one of the profoundest paradoxes in the Christian faith: life through death.” It is only through the substitutionary death of Christ that we can enjoy spiritual life and friendship with God. The principle of life through death must then be the pattern of our discipleship as we take up our crosses until the day we die. Physical death holds no horror for the Christian because Christ has risen and will return and then clothe us with resurrection bodies in the new creation. The author has often expounded these truths before, but they are communicated with extra power now that he writes as an eighty-eight-year old man for whom “the end is in sight” and who has therefore been “reflecting much about these things.” When he writes “the best is yet to come,” he is not reciting a glib phrase but proclaiming a deep conviction.

In a postscript John Stott says goodbye to his readers now that he is laying down his pen for the last time. He expresses a confident hope that books will continue to have a future and urges us to keep reading them. Books are unique, he says, and with our favourite ones we can even develop “an almost living and affectionate relationship.” We could say the same about their authors. I have met John Stott on only a few occasions, and yet through his many works he has been a hugely important mentor and guide to me since a friend gave me his Bible Speaks Today commentary on the Sermon on the Mount a few weeks after my conversion with the words, “read it: there is gold on every page.” As Stott signs off by bidding us farewell, his many readers will want to respond with a heartfelt thank you. We thank the Lord for all he has given us through his servant, and we are full of gratitude to John Stott himself for teaching us through his many books how to know, love, and serve Christ with such faithfulness, clarity, and integrity.

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Dale Ralph Davis. *The Word Became Fresh: How to Preach from Old Testament Narrative Texts*. Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2006. ii + 154 pp. £ 9.99/\$15.99.

Davis is a pastor who previously taught Old Testament at Reformed Theological Seminary in Jackson, Mississippi. He is the author of very helpful commentaries on Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel and 1 and 2 Kings. His winsome combination of “rigorous study and devotional warmth” (p. ii) in those volumes marks this volume that focuses on “proper interpretation of Old Testament narratives in preparation for preaching” (p. i). Davis’s organization of the book, his helpful endnotes, combined with his down-home language and sermon-illustration-like anecdotes serve that aim well.



Davis begins with a plea for prayer as foundational and lays out his own questions with which he gets at intention, context, structure, content, and appropriation of the preaching portion. From there he lists nine peculiarities of narrative, all of which he illustrates from biblical passages he intentionally selects from parts of the OT other than those on which he has written commentaries.

The next chapter, titled “Theology,” reveals Davis’s hermeneutic. He tells us that he is using the term “to refer to the theology of the biblical text, that is, what the text means to say about God, his ways, and his works. Or to put it a bit differently, I use the term to refer to the *intended message* of the biblical text” (p. 31). Davis believes that biblical narrative texts foundationally teach us about God. The balance of the chapter demonstrates how preachers can detect that theological intention and how a seminal text such as Gen 12:1–9 helps us interpret later texts.

The fourth chapter unpacks how placement of the text in its context and its lay-out (i.e., the internal structure of the text) shed light on its meaning. In preaching, Davis uses only literary structures that are simple enough to explain to his listeners (pp. 52–53). Once again, the examples lend credence to his approach.

Chapter five tackles a few “repulsive” passages, those considered too dull, racy, gory, or severe. By demonstrating how Scripture itself views these stories, he rehabilitates them for preaching. Chapter six effectively takes a macroscopic view that, like his other techniques, brings to light things that are actually in the text but would not be seen at closer range.

After cautioning readers not to glibly assume that we know how the text wants to be applied, the seventh chapter suggests some “application handles” to look for. Then Davis ends the chapter with another caution in application: “don’t claim too much from narrative” (p. 115). The seventh chapter brings us back to the theocentric focus and wonders aloud “if a good chunk of our hermeneutical problem may simply be a heart problem. Maybe we get off the track in our interpretation because our eyes are fastened on the wrong object.” (p. 133). The final chapter is a synthesis pointing to ways to turn observations into expositions.

The great strength of this volume is its accessibility. Any preacher who ministers in English should be able to grasp Davis’s ideas and enjoy doing so. He teaches by example or “sample” (p. 71) as he calls those texts he explores to display his hermeneutical method. Copious illustrations, weighted somewhat toward World War II themes (cf. pp. 54, 66, 102, 152), foster reader-engagement and give the text an almost oral style. “Down-home” language (e.g., scuzzball, grunt work, riffraff, spitting distance) reinforces the informality. Endnotes provide helpful pointers toward further study and bibliographic

backing for positions taken in the text. Beyond the immediate appeal to the preachers and students for whom he is writing (p. 3), Davis models how to preach Christ from the OT without disrespecting the preaching portion itself (cf. “implicit messianism,” p. 90).

Are there weaknesses? A Scripture index would make it easier for students to review how Davis handles various passages. Are there cautions for the reader? In the preface, Davis confesses that his experience teaching a course on expository preaching over a decade ago clarified his resolve not to do so again but to stick to interpretation. That may be because getting from text to sermon is neither easy nor easy to teach. Davis makes it *look* easy, but that appearance can be deceptive. His skill in interpreting preaching portions rests on a broad and deep knowledge of the whole OT that many of us who preach do not have. He may see connections that others miss. We may, if we are not careful, imagine connections that aren't really there. Suffice it to say that we should be cautious in trying to replicate his methods, not because they are inherently faulty, but because they necessitate a thorough knowledge of the book, corpus and Testament. If, on the other hand, this book drives preachers to aspire to a deeper understanding of the OT so that they can preach its texts better, Pastor Davis's efforts will have been richly repaid.

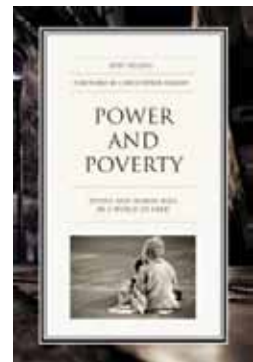
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Dewi Hughes. *Power and Poverty: Divine and Human Rule in a World of Need*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2008. 253 pp. \$25.00.

Power and Poverty by Dewi Hughes is an excellent study. In his introduction, Hughes states his task: the “underlying theme of this book is that poverty has to do with the way in which human beings use the power God gave us when he created us. The core meaning of ‘power’ is the ability to do something” (p. 12). Endowed with this “power,” humanity has satisfied its own desire for security at the expense of others. Hughes’ aim is not to write a thesis on overcoming poverty, but to begin a discussion of the twin themes of power and poverty throughout the Bible as a whole and engage with some fundamental theological themes. This he does successfully and eloquently.

Power and Poverty traces poverty along the Bible’s storyline, starting with its beginnings in the account of the fall (sin) through to its eradication in the New Creation under King Jesus. However, Hughes gives ample attention to particular key points in the Bible’s narrative to explain both the nature and effects of poverty and power. This study is thoroughly biblical. It is littered with scriptural references that are always explained in light of the whole narrative. Because Hughes surveys the whole Bible, and not simply the teaching of Jesus (which he does powerfully), he successfully avoids many of the problems of other literature on this topic, such as a preoccupation with social analysis other than that begg’d by the text.

The book is neatly divided into three parts. Part One shows how the OT moves from its roots in Gen 1–11 (the covenant made with Abraham that explores how “God laid down the tracks on which the progressive revelation of his redemptive purpose would run” [p. 43]) to the divinely instituted



government and law in the OT and how these were to function for welfare for all to finally seeing the inadequacy of the Mosaic covenant because of human sin. He also has pockets of both intriguing and helpful insights. For example, his insightful excursus on Babel and the establishment of empire does not move beyond the bounds of the text.

Part Two focuses on Jesus and his final revelation of divine government. This section demonstrates how Jesus fulfills OT expectation of the Messiah, how he is the supreme ruler who is going to come in judgment to bring true and lasting justice. This section also details Jesus' teachings in reference to the poor, emphasizing heart-transformation by the Spirit that will ultimately lead to reform in a Christian's individual and corporate life to look after the poor and powerless. Hughes here engages with theological themes such as the person and work of Christ (advocating the necessity and centrality of penal substitutionary atonement), the ethical interpretation of the beatitudes and the sermon on the mount (describing the teaching like a Christian home "where real people seek to live in a countercultural way among others who do not share their beliefs or ethics" [p. 127]), and eschatological continuity/discontinuity, always explaining his views in relation to the poor in conversation with other interpretations, avoiding caricature and dismissal.

Finally, Part Three looks at the Church as God's governed society. Hughes draws upon Oliver O'Donovan's *The Desire of the Nations: Rediscovering the Roots of Political Theology* and his appropriation that the shape of the church is a recapitulation of the Christ-event. He uses O'Donovan's distinctions of the church as a gathering, suffering, rejoicing and speaking community to move through the books of the NT to the New Creation. He concludes, "In thinking about the church and the poor, the crucial question is not what the church does for the poor but what the church is as the governed community of Jesus" (p. 238). It is as individuals in community live governed *now*, as all *will be*, by Jesus that the poor will be looked after. That they are not is evidence that this empire rather than Jesus' influences us and is to be repented of. In this part he effectively shows the seamlessness of proclamation of the good news and good works, never creating a dichotomy between the two by focusing on the rule of Jesus.

Dewi Hughes has written an excellent volume that should be addressed in any treatment of social justice, poverty, and the Christian response. He successfully fulfills his aims with biblical and theological integrity. His theological nuances will not satisfy all, but he defends each one within the Bible's narrative and in sympathetic conversation with other views.

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Shannon Craigo-Snell and Shawnthea Monroe. *Living Christianity: A Pastoral Theology for Today*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009. xix + 194 pp. £15.00/\$22.00.

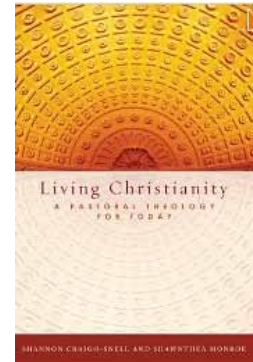
Living Christianity endeavors to demonstrate how a theologian (Craigo-Snell) and a pastor (Monroe) can collaborate in co-creating pastorally sensitive theology. In doing so, each author contributes unique perspectives on five crucial theological themes: creation, Christ, sin, church, and heaven.

To begin, Craigo-Snell views the Genesis creation account as “neither science nor history” (p. 4), but a narrative conveying theological meaning such as the goodness and intentionality of creation (p. 17). She calls us to replace misguided, modernist quests for certainty and scientific objectivity with a robust theological foundation for “the relationship between humanity, cosmos, and Creator” (p. 18). Monroe writes more overtly regarding the possible harmonization of evolution and creation. She advocates an agnosticism regarding *how* God created, preferring to focus on *why*: God desired to partner with responsible co-creators (pp. 22–25). Both authors make a compelling case that scientifically oriented creationists miss the whole point of the creation narrative.

In chapter 2, Craigo-Snell describes two christological approaches, hoping to demonstrate the communal and practical nature of systematic theology. The first takes one aspect of Jesus’ life as the theological center, such as the incarnation; the second develops atonement theories based on prominent biblical metaphors. Furthermore, she recommends the contemporary work of Delores Williams, who resists the substitutionary atonement metaphor given its association with surrogacy and the suffering of black Americans (pp. 42–47). Building on the first approach articulated by Craigo-Snell, Monroe distinguishes between resurrection-Christians, who emphasize Easter, interior piety, and the life to come, and life-and-ministry-Christians, who stress Pentecost, social action, and Christian community (pp. 51–53). Though Monroe aligns with the latter, she commends the coherence of either system rather than seeking to discover the most accurate biblical framework (p. 68).

With regard to sin, Craigo-Snell emphasizes the reality of fallenness overcome by the power of God’s grace as expressed in classic Augustinianism (pp. 72–76). She explores several contemporary approaches, including Roman Catholics, who emphasize sin as an act (pp. 79–83), Reformed Protestants, who highlight the state of sin (pp. 83–87), and Liberation theologians, who underscore sin’s institutional nature (pp. 87–93). All of these traditions show the power of a doctrine of sin to explain, convict, and relieve (pp. 93–94). Next, both Craigo-Snell and Monroe take a pastoral angle, condemning the exclusion of others based on our prideful definition of sin. Instead, they advocate humbly welcoming others—even homosexuals—with open arms (pp. 96–100). Unfortunately, they fail to address when it may be loving and humble to exclude for the sake of purity, truth, or discipline. According to the life of Jesus, is tolerance always the greatest indicator of humility?

In chapter 4, Monroe unpacks Karl Barth’s interpretation of the church’s four marks: one, holy, catholic, and apostolic. Based on these marks, the church should strive to be united, in some way separate from the world (not just “the Rotary Club with sacraments”!), spanning all times and place, and faithful to apostolic teaching (pp. 111–19). Despite supporting Barth’s view of the church as a verb (p. 111), Monroe continues to refer to the church as a place where people should “show up,” causing moderate confusion (p. 121). Particularly fascinating, however, is Craigo-Snell’s constructive description of the church as performance in conversation with Peter Brook’s *The Empty Space*. She envisions a church



both holy (the invisible-made-visible) and rough (connected to the messiness of life) by means of being immediate (personal, active participation). This creative analogy assists us to imagine the church as an empty space occupied by Spirit-filled performances (pp. 125–41).

The last chapter is a conversation about heaven, displaying the strength of the authors' dialogical, pastoral method while also bringing several weaknesses to the foreground. On the one hand, both Craigo-Snell and Monroe address difficult theological questions and are willing to claim finite ignorance. On the other hand, Monroe in particular purposefully and disconcertingly dispels theological accuracy for the sake of pastoral sensitivity, such as praying to her grandmother (p. 171) or telling people they might turn into angels when they die (p. 153). In addition, it is difficult to reconcile their emphasis on salvation through Jesus with their overt universalism, either in its pastoral (Monroe, p. 159) or Rahnerian (Craigo-Snell, p. 157) variety.

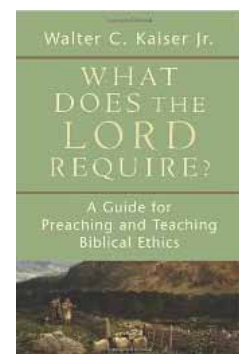
Overall, evangelical readers will be distressed by the theological positions supported by Craigo-Snell and Monroe, whether liberation theology, universalism, theological pluralism, or the affirmation of homosexuality. In addition, the authors rarely voice an adequate defense of stated positions. For example, on what basis does Craigo-Snell claim that God's salvation through surrogate suffering inevitably undergirds human surrogacy (p. 46)? Obviously, key elements of their thought process remain hidden. Regarding method, Craigo-Snell and Monroe demonstrate a laudable paradigm for "the way pastors do ministry and the way professors do theology" (p. 175). *Living Christianity* shows how theology can be practical and pastoral and how pastoral ministry can be theologically informed. The authors would have enriched their method, however, by including a biblical exegete in their conversation and interacting more thoroughly with the text of Scripture. Despite the importance of theological tradition, pastoral sensitivity, and cultural contextualization to the theological and pastoral task, living Christianity is possible only when Christian theologians, pastors, and communities are listening and responding to the Spirit speaking through Scripture.

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Walter C. Kaiser Jr. *What Does the Lord Require? A Guide for Preaching and Teaching Biblical Ethics*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009. 256 pp. \$19.99.

With this book, respected and prolific OT scholar Walter Kaiser offers a gift to the church by providing clear, accessible, and biblically-based discussions of a wide range of contemporary ethical issues. Kaiser has taught and written on biblical ethics for many years, so it is valuable to have an up-to-date and compact volume from him that seeks to facilitate discussion of ethics in the local church context. I hope that preachers and teachers in many seminaries and local churches will welcome and use the book.

The main distinctive of Kaiser's book is his strategy of focusing on one or two main "teaching passages" from the Bible in dealing with each of the ethical issues he addresses. The eighteen chapters of the book each consist of an introduction to the ethical issue under discussion (e.g., gambling, divorce, abortion, genetic engineering, civil disobedience).



In the introduction to each chapter, Kaiser offers statistics and social commentary in order to highlight and clarify the ethical issue. In some chapters, he also weaves into this discussion a range of Scripture passages. He then moves into a focused exposition of one or two main teaching passages that bear on the ethical issue treated in the chapter. The exposition includes an outline of the biblical passage followed by verse-by-verse discussion. For example, in the chapter on abortion and stem cell research, Kaiser exposit Ps 139:13–18 and Exod 21:22–25. In the chapter on suicide, infanticide, and euthanasia, he focuses on Job 14:1–6. Each chapter ends with a summary of the argument, suggested bibliography for further reading, and discussion questions.

The greatest strength of this book is its clear focus on the Bible as the source of Christian ethics. Kaiser demonstrates his skill as an interpreter of Scripture, drawing upon his many years of close study of the text and managing to write with clarity and simplicity. His strategy of focusing on one or two main teaching passages in each chapter usually works quite well and sets this book apart from other evangelical books on ethics. It allows Kaiser to engage more closely with some of the most important Scriptural resources for various ethical issues and to treat these passages in a contextual fashion, not simply “cherry-picking” isolated verses here and there. In this respect, the book offers not only solid content but also an important *methodological model* for preachers and teachers.

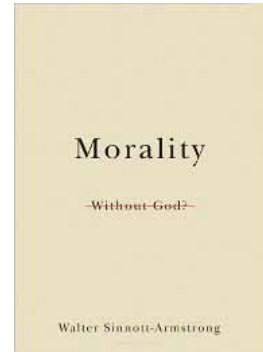
The book is not without some weaknesses. At times the research for the opening sections discussing the various ethical issues feels a bit derivative. Kaiser draws a great deal of his facts and analysis from other evangelical books on ethics (particularly Kerby Anderson’s *Christian Ethics in Plain Language*). In addition, the decision to focus on one or two main teaching passages, which is the main distinctive and contribution of the book, can at times be somewhat limiting. Because there are eighteen chapters and the book is quite short, the extensive focus on one or two main Scripture passages limits Kaiser’s ability to discuss ethical issues in depth. For this reason, the book will perhaps be better used in seminary classrooms as a supplement to, rather than a replacement of, other standard evangelical works on ethics. In several chapters, the chosen teaching passages do not shed as much light on the ethical issue being discussed as one might hope. For example, Kaiser chooses to exposit Matt 6:19–34 in the chapter on gambling and greed. While this passage does address the matter of greed, it does not offer direct insight on gambling, which is the focus of Kaiser’s discussion in the first part of the chapter. Similarly, while Gen 1:26–30 and 2:15–25 are surely important background for the discussion of genetic engineering and artificial reproduction, it would have been helpful for Kaiser to be more specific in demonstrating how these Genesis texts translate into a thoughtful, informed, critical opinion on the ethics of genetic engineering and artificial reproduction.

Despite these weaknesses, the book is the kind of solid, informed, clearly written work we expect from Kaiser. It will be particularly helpful for pastors and students as they seek to engage with the Bible in addressing the significant ethical issues of our day.

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Walter Sinnott-Armstrong. *Morality without God?* Philosophy in Action 1. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009. xviii + 172 pp. \$24.95.

In this witty, learned, and engaging book, the first of a new series called “Philosophy in Action,” Walter Sinnott-Armstrong, editor of the series and professor of philosophy and legal studies at Dartmouth College, sets out to disprove the popular slogan that “if God is dead, everything is permitted.” In place of that view, Sinnott-Armstrong attempts to demonstrate that morality has “nothing essentially to do with religion” (p. xii).



For several reasons, the book is of particular interest to evangelicals. First, Sinnott-Armstrong, who was an evangelical Christian before becoming an atheist, takes evangelical Christianity as his chief sparring partner. Second, Sinnott-Armstrong is in some respects an atypical atheist. He critiques New Atheists Christopher Hitchens and Richard Dawkins. More significantly, he believes in objective morality and moral universals. He disavows subjectivism, relativism, egoism, nihilism, and postmodernism (pp. 75–76). Third, Sinnott-Armstrong frequently quotes Scripture, offering interpretive comments and conclusions. He suggests, “Bad moral advice is not just an occasional aberration in the Bible. There’s lots of it” (p. 143).

The structure of the book’s argument is simple. Sinnott-Armstrong divides into five distinct claims the view that morality depends on religion and God and then argues against each of those claims in successive chapters. Chapter 2 contests the view that “all atheists . . . are morally bad.” While admitting that some atheists do bad things, Sinnott-Armstrong argues against the claim that atheists perform immoral acts (or are on balance immoral) *because* they are atheists. Drawing on evidence from numerous studies and focusing on behaviors that both theists and atheists consider immoral (so-called “neutral tests of depravity” such as homicide and theft), chapter 3 disputes the claim that secular *societies* are bound to become corrupt and depraved.

Chapters 4–5 constitute the heart of the book’s argument and seek to disprove the notion that “objective morality makes no sense, has no firm foundation, or cannot exist without God.” Chapter 4 lays out Sinnott-Armstrong’s own positive, harm-based understanding of morality. On this view, an act is immoral if it causes harm (e.g., death, pain, or disability) to another person for no adequate reason. Sinnott-Armstrong argues that his harm-based morality establishes objective morality. Chapter 5 then goes on the offensive by critiquing a thorough-going divine command theory of morality, the view that “what makes immoral acts immoral is that God commanded us not to do them” (p. 94).

The rest of the book builds on the central argument of chapters 4–5. Chapter 6 contests the claim that “atheists . . . have no adequate reason to be moral” by asserting reasons for morality based on the harm-based morality proposed earlier in the book. Chapter 7 argues against the claim that “atheists . . . cannot know what is morally right and wrong without guidance from God or from religious scriptures or institutions.” While admitting there are difficult moral dilemmas, Sinnott-Armstrong suggests that through collaborative discussion, consensus can often be reached that leads to justified moral belief and even moral knowledge. Finally, chapter 8 concludes by reflecting upon the impact of the overall argument. Calling for more civility and fairness on the part of both theists and atheists and for a move beyond liberal-conservative dichotomies, Sinnott-Armstrong advocates a re-thinking of political policy on the basis of his harm-based morality.

Though well-written, entertaining, and provocative, this book has significant problems. Not least is a pervasive misunderstanding of both particular Scripture passages and basic hermeneutical principles. For example, in several places Sinnott-Armstrong advances a naïve and caricatured interpretation of Matt 12:31 and in other instances does not appear to be aware of even basic principles for how the Mosaic Law might be applied to NT believers. This naïveté suggests that Sinnott-Armstrong does not understand the position of his chief discussion partners.

The most significant problem of the book, however, is a failure to achieve its stated goal of demonstrating that morality does not depend upon the existence of God. The main trouble with Sinnott-Armstrong's harm-based morality is not so much that it is wrong as that it is superficial. For instance, Sinnott-Armstrong claims that rape is morally wrong because it harms the victim for no adequate reason. But why is it immoral to harm someone for no adequate reason? Sinnott-Armstrong offers no compelling answer to this question. His attempt at an answer runs in three steps. First, we recognize it as morally wrong if someone harms *us* for no adequate reason. Second, we have no reason to claim special moral status for ourselves. Therefore, it is morally wrong for us to harm someone else for no adequate reason. The problem with this argument is that it fails to explain the first premise, i.e., why it is morally wrong for someone else to harm us. Sinnott-Armstrong claims that if you *don't* believe it is immoral for someone to harm you, you must "admit that everyone in the world is allowed to [harm you] whenever he or she feels like it" (p. 63) and that this possibility is "abhorrent." But this argument is weak. You need not claim it is *immoral* for others to harm you in order to avoid admitting that anyone can harm you. You may simply claim that it is inconvenient or undesirable.

Sinnott-Armstrong also fails to offer adequate motivation for acting morally. He argues in chapter 6 that atheists can logically act on nonegoistic reasons. Suggesting that a reason is "a fact with rational force," Sinnott-Armstrong claims that atheists are not irrational in seeking to avoid harming others and in seeking to do good to others, and therefore they have adequate reasons for acting in a moral way toward others. These reasons offer motivation for individuals "as long as they care about other people" (p. 118), which most people do. But it is here Sinnott-Armstrong's case falters, again because it is superficial. He fails to address the more basic question: *why* should people care about others, particularly when it is not to their advantage? He offers no compelling reason.

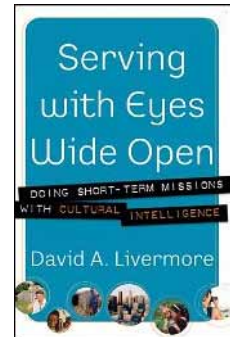
I am glad that Walter Sinnott-Armstrong wants to be moral by seeking to help others and avoiding harming them, but after reading this book I remain unconvinced that as an atheist he has any consistent, compelling reason for doing so.

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— MISSIONS AND CULTURE —

David A. Livermore. *Serving with Eye Wide Open: Doing Short-Term Missions with Cultural Intelligence*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006. 188 pp. \$12.99.

Religious tourism is on the rise. A Princeton University study found that in one year (2005) 1.6 million church members took mission trips—an average of eight days each at a cost of \$2.4 billion. If you have spent any time in an American church, you have probably seen many in your congregation leave on a short-term missions trip with curiosity, fear, and anxiety only to come back to share glowing stories about how God used them and that their lives have been changed forever. Enter David Livermore, who wants you to open your eyes to see the complexity of short-term missions and cross-cultural engagement in general.



Part One of the book looks at globalization and the church. Livermore provides brief snapshots of what he believes are important trends in the world and the church. So, for example, “Snapshot 2” of the world is “Poverty and Wealth,” where he provides statistics that show the seemingly wide gap in wealth around the world. The snapshots of the church rely mostly on Philip Jenkins’s works and introduce the reader to some issues such as to the explosive growth of Christianity in the global south, the persecution Christians are facing, and the need for leadership-training just about everywhere.

Some readers may be frustrated that major topics are glossed over in these snapshots, but they are not the main point of the book. For example, the issue of the poverty-and-wealth divide is not as simple as “we are rich and you are poor.” However, at least on this topic there is a more nuanced approach taken later in the book. One may wonder whether some of the sources Livermore uses are just another example of Christians behaving poorly with statistics. When there is a report that there are 480 million believers in Latin America, one wonders how the word believer is defined? Are there really 20,000 conversions in Africa a day?

Part Two details a few short-term missions trips and looks at the perspectives from American and National leaders on the topics of motivation, urgency, common ground, the Bible, money, and simplicity. Each chapter is a critique (though gracious) of the Americans providing the short-term trip. The reader begins (at least should) to cringe reading some of the comments that are often heard on the field or back home when the short-termers return, as if the Americans are sweeping in to rescue those poor Christians in x country.

The chapters on motivation and teaching the Bible are provoking. Are participants in short-term missions going to serve for an adventure? Why do short-term agencies sell their trips as adventures and worse, vacations? Have you ever heard your pastor say, “Culture doesn’t matter; we just taught them the Bible”? While not descending into relativism, Livermore points out that it is not that easy: “when we make our interpretation of the Bible the almighty trump card by proof-texting our models for ministry, we’re in danger of heresy” (p. 81). Of course, this is always true whether or not you are teaching in another culture, but it becomes more pronounced when trying to take our models that have been informed by our own cultural presuppositions into a culture that is much different from our own.

Part Three is meant to rebuild the reader’s cultural intelligence (CQ) after they have been broken down by the previous two sections. Livermore breaks cultural intelligence into four parts to help the reader interact with other cultures in an effective way.

Knowledge CQ is the ability to understand cultural differences. Of course, the danger of trying to understand cultural differences before traveling to another culture is that you can become more of an “expert” on the culture than the people who live there! Still, the author calls us to pay attention to our presuppositions. Interpretive CQ is the degree in which we are mindful that we are interacting in different cultures. Livermore offers basic advice on how to get your mind off of cruise control in order to observe what is going on around you. Perseverance CQ is just as it sounds—the motivation to adapt cross-culturally. Again suggestions abound. Behavioral CQ is the ability to adapt verbal and non-verbal actions as we interact with other cultures. Here he tells us that the “biggest problems for most short-term missions teams are not technical or administrative. The biggest challenge lies in communication, misunderstanding, personality conflicts, poor leadership and bad teamwork” (p. 155). One wonders why there is no interaction with 1 Cor 9:19–23. There is a curious omission to note: while there is a great deal of emphasis on what we should do to blend in, there is very little practical advice on how to critique another culture (or if it is even possible).

The goal of building cultural intelligence extends the mission of God (p. 163). The final chapter’s ten helpful tips to start thinking about how to engage cross-culturally are worth the price of the book. There is however something missing in his final chapter where he tells us that what matters most is to love God and to love others. Following (I think) Scot McKnight’s thoughts on the Shema, Livermore relates to us that the centrality of the Shema is Jesus’ life and Paul’s writings. While it is no doubt true that Shema is important, to mention it as *the* most important part of mission and completely leave out any mention of the cross is to miss what is most central.

As a matter of fact there is very little mention of the gospel and its impact on how we view short-term missions. Maybe the gospel is just assumed, but most of what has been suggested is not primarily about Shema, but about the cross. The implications of that event is what drives our mission and should shape how we view and interact with different cultures. Certainly, we can learn to serve our brothers and sisters in Christ around the world by thinking of the implications of Philippians 2.

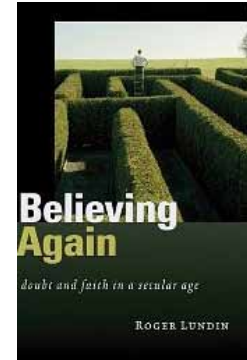
While there is a lot of good wisdom packed into this book, there is very little interaction with the Bible. While I understand that the point of the book is to gain a level of competency in cultural and theological hermeneutics, it would have been helpful to point us to Scripture.

That being said, if you have served long-term in another culture, you may feel this book has put into words what you have been feeling for years. So pastors, put this book in the hands of your people. If you are a youth pastor, read this with your leaders, and then use it in your preparations with your students. Before you head overseas, read this book.

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Roger Lundin. *Believing Again: Doubt and Faith in a Secular Age*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009. 302 pp. \$26.00.

With a title like *Believing Again*, one could be forgiven for thinking that Roger Lundin's recent volume is yet another response to the recent torrents of the New Atheists. But this is an altogether different project. The hint is in its title, *Believing Again*, which evokes the sentiments of W. H. Auden, "Every Christian has to make the transition from the child's 'We believe still' to the adult's 'I believe again'" (Auden, *Forewards and Afterwords* [ed. Edward Mendelson; New York: Vintage, 1989], 518).



This side of the nineteenth century, the roaring clamor of suspicion has emptied the heavens, silencing both storm and whisper of their divine voice. Many studies have appeared over the years proposing various secularization hypotheses—most notably the recent work of Charles Taylor—and this volume is a useful compendium to the genre. (Cf. James Turner, *Without God, Without Creed: The Origins of Unbelief in America* [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985]; George M. Marsden, *The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1994]; Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* [Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007].) More than a mere condemnation of the phenomenon of secularization or a nostalgic peering over the shoulder at a universe once animated by divinity, Lundin's volume is a candid study in detection, a pilgrimage after the epiphenomena that allowed for the possibility of secular sensibilities, where decided unbelief is a societal and intellectual option. But *Believing Again* is more than this. It is a societal and individual narrative on the possibilities of "believing again" in the adulthood of our current cultural moment "and the larger cultural context of that personal trek" (p. 2).

The volume is also colored with an emotive and personal hue. As a fifteen-year old, Lundin's brother died during a routine surgery. English classes offered whatever sustenance there was for his "famished spirit." While reading certain poets and novelists, he "heard voices that spoke into the heart of the void [his] life had become, and in heeding their call, [he] took [his] first steps on a long journey to belief" (p. 2). Many of those "poets and novelists" return and animate the pages throughout the historical setting of the book's concerns, the substance of its cultural analysis, and the subject of its theological response" (p. 2).

Lundin is interested in narrating nineteenth-century contexts and contemporary consequences. Though broken up into seven sections (history, science, belief, interpretation, reading, beauty, and story) and concluding with a meditation on Memory, the essays in this volume largely center on the posture of faith in a climate of unbelief with the aid of such theologians as Hans Urs von Balthasar, Karl Barth, and Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who offer responses to the challenges that Dostoevsky, Dickinson, Melville, and Milosz have set in their art.

Lundin sequesters the nineteenth century as the culprit that provided favorable conditions for unbelief to settle and indeed become familiar (p. 5). The advances of scientific exploration in the universe lead to what George Steiner has called "the silencing of the cosmos." With the explanatory powers of science reaching near exhaustive levels, society bowed in awe and terror before a regally silent universe, while faint echoes could be heard of a retreating god from public discourse. This is what Max Weber termed "the disenchantment of the universe," the belief that in nature "there are no

mysterious incalculable forces that come into play, but rather that one can, in principle, master all things by calculation” (quoted on p. 35). Existence now consists of “an isolated self housed within an indifferent universe” (p. 94).

The brilliance of *Believing Again* is in its refusal to stop short at the mere subtraction story or to offer trite answers. The way forward for the community of faith is not the route of tawdry apologetics (cf. the comments of Boenhoffer, p. 8), but in theological (re)narration. Lundin, following Auden, sees a chastening effect from these recent developments: “Science has liberated men from a misplaced humility before a false god.” For Auden, the singular advance of science in the modern world “has been to demythologize the Universe . . . [which] may be seen as a gift from a gracious God” (quoted on p. 92).

This is precisely where “nimble belief” is required—a phrase Lundin borrows from Emily Dickinson. The journey of faith is a constant process of believing and non-believing. Believing in the triune creator God amidst the luring charms of cultural deities. The erosion of belief in our so-called secular age may well be a sort of *felix culpa*. For in its wake lay the death of a thousand gods. And as Karl Barth has written, “we are not left alone in this frightful world. Into this alien land God has come to us” (quoted on p. 24). Amid the rubble and carnage of these fallen deities, the rising God stands forth. And it is in this rising that we are “graciously enabled to hear within the sound and beyond the fury of our lives a tale told by one who freely suffers in love and whose suffering love signifies everything” (p. 263).

Though some might take issue with the “neat” and paradigmatic historical narrative and others wonder over the absence of Scripture’s testimony in this account, *Believing Again* is criticism at its best. It is an elegant narration of doubt and faith in a secular age through the anguish of an assortment of witnesses and how their struggle imbued their art and how their struggle can help us in ours. Aristotle once wrote, in so many words, “Before arriving at the right answer, we must first ask the right question.” This is worth pondering this side of the New Atheists and the Pew Forum survey. Instead of rushing into the fray of the mounting unbelief in the West with answers, it is worth pausing and asking why the unbelief is mounting. It is also worth considering the stories of those who struggled with a waning belief. For a useful guide in both instances, I can’t think of a better resource than *Believing Again*.

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