



# themelios

*An International Journal for Students of  
Theological and Religious Studies*

**Volume 35 Issue 2 July 2010**

<b>MINORITY REPORT: Not in the Public Interest</b> <i>Carl Trueman</i>	195
<b>B. B. Warfield on Creation and Evolution</b> <i>Fred G. Zaspel</i>	198
<b>Why Evangelicals Should Ignore Brian McLaren: How the New Testament Requires Evangelicals to Render a Judgment on the Moral Status of Homosexuality</b> <i>Denny Burk</i>	212
<b>A Member of the Family or a Stranger? A Review Article of <i>Ancient Near Eastern Themes in Biblical Theology</i></b> <i>Stephen Dempster</i>	228
<b>Parallels, Real or Imagined? A Review Article of Jeffrey J. Niehaus, <i>Ancient Near Eastern Themes in Biblical Theology</i></b> <i>William Edgar</i>	238
<b>How to Write—and How Not to Write—a Review: An Appreciative Response to Reviews of <i>Ancient Near Eastern Themes in Biblical Theology</i> by Dempster and Edgar</b> <i>Jeffrey J. Niehaus</i>	245
<b>PASTORAL PENSÉES: Motivations to Appeal to in Our Hearers When We Preach for Conversion</b> <i>D. A. Carson</i>	258
<b>Book Reviews</b>	265

**THE GOSPEL COALITION**

# themelios

## 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.

*Themelios* is published three times a year exclusively online at [www.theGospelCoalition.org](http://www.theGospelCoalition.org). It is presented in two formats: PDF (for citing pagination) and HTML (for greater accessibility, usability, and infiltration in search engines). *Themelios* is copyrighted by The Gospel Coalition. Readers are free to use it and circulate it in digital form without further permission (any print use requires further written permission), but they must acknowledge the source and, of course, not change the content.

## EDITORS

**General Editor:** [D. A. Carson](#)

*Trinity Evangelical Divinity School  
2065 Half Day Road  
Deerfield, IL, 60015, USA*  
[Themelios@theGospelCoalition.org](mailto:Themelios@theGospelCoalition.org)

**Consulting Editor:** [Carl R. Trueman](#)

*Westminster Theological Seminary  
Chestnut Hill, P.O. Box 27009  
Philadelphia, PA 19118, USA*

**Managing Editor:** [Charles Anderson](#)

*Oak Hill Theological College  
Chase Side, Southgate  
London, N14 4PS, UK*  
[charlesa@oakhill.ac.uk](mailto:charlesa@oakhill.ac.uk)

**Administrator:** [Andrew David Naselli](#)

*Grace Bible Church  
107 West Road  
Moore, SC 29369, USA*  
[Themelios@theGospelCoalition.org](mailto:Themelios@theGospelCoalition.org)

## BOOK REVIEW EDITORS

**Old Testament**

Daniel Santos  
*Universidade Presbiteriana Mackenzie—  
CPAJ  
Rua Maria Borba, 15  
Sao Paulo, SP, Brazil 01221-040*  
[Daniel.Santos@theGospelCoalition.org](mailto:Daniel.Santos@theGospelCoalition.org)

**New Testament**

[Alan Thompson](#)  
*Sydney Missionary & Bible College  
PO Box 83  
Croydon, NSW 2132, Australia*  
[Alan.Thompson@theGospelCoalition.org](mailto:Alan.Thompson@theGospelCoalition.org)

**History and Historical Theology**

[Nathan A. Finn](#)  
*Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary  
P. O. Box 1889  
Wake Forest, NC 27588, USA*  
[Nathan.Finn@thegospelcoalition.org](mailto:Nathan.Finn@thegospelcoalition.org)

**Systematic Theology and Bioethics**

[Hans Madueme](#)  
*Trinity Evangelical Divinity School  
2065 Half Day Road; D-632  
Deerfield, IL 60015, USA*  
[Hans.Madueme@theGospelCoalition.org](mailto:Hans.Madueme@theGospelCoalition.org)

**Ethics (but not Bioethics) and Pastoralia**

Peter Comont  
*Magdalen Road Church  
41a Magdalen Road  
Oxford, OX4 1RB, UK*  
[Peter.Comont@theGospelCoalition.org](mailto:Peter.Comont@theGospelCoalition.org)

**Mission and Culture**

[Daniel Strange](#)  
*Oak Hill College  
Chase Side, Southgate  
London N14 4PS*  
[Daniel.Strange@theGospelCoalition.org](mailto:Daniel.Strange@theGospelCoalition.org)

## EDITORIAL BOARD

Gerald Bray, *Beeson Divinity School*; William Kynes, *Cornerstone Evangelical Free Church*; Ken Magnuson, *The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary*; Jonathan Pennington, *The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary*; James Robson, *Wycliffe Hall*; Michael Thate, *Durham University*; Mark D. Thompson, *Moore Theological College*; Garry Williams, *The John Owen Centre, London Theological Seminary*; Paul Williamson, *Moore Theological College*; Stephen Witmer, *Pepperell Christian Fellowship*.

## ARTICLES

Articles should generally be about 4,000 to 7,000 words (including footnotes) and should be submitted to the Managing Editor of *Themelios*, which is peer-reviewed. Articles should use clear, concise English, following *The SBL Handbook of Style* (esp. for abbreviations), supplemented by *The Chicago Manual of Style*. They should consistently use either UK or USA spelling and punctuation, and they should be submitted electronically as an email attachment using Microsoft Word (.doc or .docx extensions) or Rich Text Format (.rtf extension). Special characters should use a Unicode font.

## REVIEWS

The book review editors generally select individuals for book reviews, but potential reviewers may contact them about reviewing specific books. As part of arranging book reviews, the book review editors will supply book review guidelines to reviewers.

MINORITY REPORT

# Not in the Public Interest

— Carl Trueman —

---

*Carl Trueman is Academic Dean, Vice President of Academic Affairs, and Professor of Historical Theology and Church History at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.*

---

Suffering, marginalization, and the abuse of power are now the stock in trade not only of literary theorists but also of many theologians, of whom the Liberationists of the sixties and seventies are but the most obvious examples. Indeed, the influence of such academic emphases now finds its place frequently in the classrooms of Protestant theologians of more orthodox and traditional bent. One example that came my way recently was from one of my students who recently commented to me that he had heard a lecture by a certain African American scholar who claimed that the Puritans had little grasp of suffering or what it meant to be marginalized. The comment had intrigued the student, and he asked me what I thought.

My instinctive reaction was to be utterly dismissive of the claim; and while my instinctive reactions are not always correct, they are generally pretty good when it comes to boneheaded comments that others make about my chosen field of expertise. Indeed, as my boneheaded forays into the scholarly territory of others usually merit instant derision, so I am happy to return the favour when opportunity presents itself.

In this instance, I not only thought the comment by the lecturer was wrong; as I reflected upon it, I also realized it gave important insights into the different priorities or sensibilities of the world in which we now live and that of the seventeenth-century Puritans.

Contrary to what this lecturer claimed, the world of the Puritans was one peculiarly marked by suffering. Of course, their lives would have been subject to all of the typical physical difficulties of the time: medical conditions untreatable by anything approaching modern medicine; illnesses from poor hygiene; dentistry of a kind which would have made even the British Dental Association of my childhood an object of envy; no antibiotics, analgesics, anesthetics, or flushable toilets, with all of the resulting physical horrors. Thus, the typical life of a seventeenth-century figure would probably have been marked by far more natural physical suffering than would be the typical experience of even the poorest members of society in the developed world.

To this medical nightmare we can then add the matter of persecution. Certainly in the decades following the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660, Puritans had two basic options: get on board with the program of a vigorously enforced Anglican conformity, or face the consequences of losing status and property, and quite possibly jail. Many chose the latter option, with men like John Bunyan and Richard Baxter being only the most high-profile men to suffer imprisonment for their stands against the Establishment. Then there were the decades of social marginalization—decades that turned



into centuries—where English non-conformists were prevented from attending university, sitting in Parliament, or holding civil service positions. Indeed, if Catholics were legislated to the margins of society until the early nineteenth century, the same went for Baptists, Independents, Quakers, Presbyterians, and anyone who refused to conform.

On these grounds alone, I think we can generally assume that the typical post-1662 Puritan knew more about suffering and marginalization than the typical 2010 professor, with tenure and a full benefits package, in a bog-standard Lit. Crit. or Minority Studies Department at a common or garden University. What makes the difference, it seems to me, is not that these men did not know about suffering and about being on the wrong end of terrible abuse of power; it is rather that they did not see the need constantly to refer to their sufferings in their public ministries, whether from the pulpit or on the printed page.

One of the most notable examples of this silence is surely John Owen. Owen had eleven children. Ten of them died before adulthood. The daughter who did survive was then involved in an unhappy marriage, returning to the parental home and then dying before her father. In other words, Owen lived to see the funeral of every single one of his eleven children.

It beggars belief to think that such trauma did not have a huge impact on his life and thought: indeed, man-made persecution, horrible as it is, is arguably somewhat easier to accommodate than terminal illness within the context of faith since God is at least not the obvious, proximate cause; but death from illness has that random quality to it where God sometimes seems to be the only available culprit. Yet traumatic as these eleven deaths must have been, Owen makes no substantial reference to them in any of his major writings, and the reader can only speculate as to how exactly they may have caused him to rethink or revise his theology.

Why is this? Why the silence, or at least lack of emphasis, on the biographical details and impact of such personal suffering that not only marks the works of those like Bunyan, who suffered imprisonment, but also of Owen who, humanly speaking, saw more of the dirty work of the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune on his family than most if not all of those who read these words?

The pious answer, of course, would be some version of the following: these men had such a vision of the glory of God in Christ that their own sufferings were of little account. This may indeed be the correct answer; but I am just suspicious enough of human nature to believe that these men probably had their dark moments the same as any other human being; they probably asked the question ‘Why me and why mine?’ as often as we would ourselves in similar circumstances; and they were probably as tempted to despair as much as the next man. Indeed, if they did not do so, they would arguably be less than human, at least less than the humanity portrayed in, say, the Psalms.

My inclination is to read their silence in another way: they simply did not regard their personal and private struggles, hurts, and tragedies as fulfilling any useful role in their public ministries. The death of Owen’s children must have been devastating to him, but life went on, he had a job to do, and whatever tears he and his wife shared and whatever cries of anger and confusion he sent God’s way in prayer, these were private matters and of no significant use in the public domain. Sure, they shaped him as a person and thus did have an impact on his public ministry, but not in terms of their immediate, personal particularity. They probably made him more sensitive when preaching on death or counseling a bereaved couple, but he saw no need to use himself as an illustration at every opportunity. Private grief and suffering was just that—private—and constantly talking about it from the pulpit was not in the public interest.

In my experience, this seems quite a contrast with the church of today. Talking recently to a former student about the preaching at his church, he commented that the preacher always seemed to work some anecdote into every sermon that indicated how hurt he had been by the church or by church people in the past. Apparently, the occasional person had said the odd unkind word to him, he had not been stroked in the way he thought he deserved, and he was not as universally liked and admired as he assumed he should be. It is clear that such a preacher not only had a very high opinion of himself and of the didactic value of his life for others, but he also felt it quite appropriate to parade the trivial slights and inconveniences he had experienced before the wider world. Indeed, one might say that his suffering appears to be what authenticates him, an unsurprising phenomenon in what is arguably the Age of the Victim and an era where the public parading of private matters through blogs, Tweets, and online social networks means that the very distinction between public and private, and what fits appropriately into each sphere, is now up for grabs. The contrast of the content of this person's public ministry with that of the former prisoner, John Bunyan, and of the eleven-times-bereaved John Owen could not be greater.

The bottom line for me is this: private suffering is generally not for public consumption. It just is not that useful in the public sphere. There are exceptions—Joni Eareckson Tada springs to mind—but they are the exception, not the rule. The personal suffering of most of us does not serve to point people in general to Christ and, while it may have on occasion a function in one-to-one counseling or in the local church, its role in public ministry would seem to be dramatically limited compared to the place it now often fills. Paul, after all, usually alludes to his suffering only in passing or when he has been goaded into underlining that he too is a serious apostle; it is not an essential part of every gospel presentation or edifying address to the saints. This is not to say that personal suffering is insignificant, painless, or trivial; but it is to argue that talking about it should not be a major factor in our public lives as Christians. That can lead too quickly to self-pity or even, in an age where victimhood is close to being the greatest virtue, to self-importance. My suffering matters to me; but frankly, it is of no interest or significance to anyone else but my immediate loved ones. Suffering and grief are generally private matters; so let's keep them that way in order that we can use our public ministries for talking about God and the gospel.

# B. B. Warfield on Creation and Evolution

— Fred G. Zaspel —

---

*Fred G. Zaspel is a pastor of Reformed Baptist Church of Franconia, Pennsylvania, and author of *The Theology of B. B. Warfield: A Systematic Summary*, to be published by Crossway in September 2010.*

---

The advances of various creationist groups and of the intelligent design movement indicate that Christians are still considerably interested in the creation-versus-evolution controversy. Yet we would be mistaken to think that the advance is on the creationist side only. Renowned professor of OT Dr. Bruce Waltke recently made headlines with his remarks that evolution is entirely compatible with Christianity—indeed, with conservative evangelical, even inerrantist Christianity. Waltke warns further that if Christians do not concede the point they will be relegated to the academic ghetto and find that society at large will never take them seriously.<sup>1</sup> Clearly, there are no signs that interest in the topic will soon fade.

Within this debate appeal is sometimes made to our Christian forebears, and we are never far into this discussion before we hear of Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield (1851–1921) of Old Princeton. Warfield, we are often assured, the theologian of the doctrine of inspiration whose conservative credentials are unquestioned, is one who held both to the inerrancy of Scripture and theistic evolution. David N. Livingstone and Mark A. Noll have led the way in advancing this characterization.<sup>2</sup> Some of Warfield's writings on this question have been republished in *Selected Shorter Writings* and *The Works of Benjamin B. Warfield*.<sup>3</sup> But others of his related writings had remained difficult to find, languishing primarily in century-old periodicals. Livingstone and Noll have remedied this for us in *Evolution, Science, and Scripture*, which collects virtually all of the creation-evolution writings of this giant Princetonian.

Livingstone earlier claimed that Warfield “had been a key advocate of evolutionary theory at least since his student days at Princeton” and “remained enthusiastic” about the Darwinian theory throughout his theological career.”<sup>4</sup> More recently, Livingstone and Noll have argued that Warfield

---

<sup>1</sup> For the original webpage (but with Waltke's video now removed), see <http://biologos.org/blog/why-must-the-church-come-to-accept-evolution> and <http://biologos.org/blog/why-must-the-church-come-to-accept-evolution-an-update/>. On the controversy, see <http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2010/04/09/video> and <http://thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justintaylor/2010/04/12/updates-from-waltke-and-from-rts/> (accessed 6/25/10).

<sup>2</sup> B. B. Warfield, *Evolution, Science, and Scripture: Selected Writings* (ed. David N. Livingstone and Mark A. Noll; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), hereafter, *ESS*.

<sup>3</sup> *Selected Shorter Writings* (2 vols.; ed. John Meeter; Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1970–73); *The Works of Benjamin B. Warfield* (10 vols.; 1927–32; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), hereafter, *Works*.

<sup>4</sup> “B. B. Warfield, the Theory of Evolution, and Early Fundamentalism,” *EQ* 58 (1986): 78–79.

abandoned the theory of evolution temporarily but that over the course of his career came increasingly *again* to embrace it.<sup>5</sup> Their title of a more recent article asserts their conclusion with confidence: “B. B. Warfield (1851–1921): A Biblical Inerrantist as Evolutionist.”<sup>6</sup> The article begins with the same confident note: “One of the best-kept secrets in American intellectual history is that B. B. Warfield, the foremost modern defender of the theologically conservative doctrine of the inerrancy of the Bible, was also an evolutionist.”<sup>7</sup> In an earlier version of the article, they imply that reconciling evolution with biblical Calvinism was a “constant goal” of Warfield’s throughout his time at Princeton.<sup>8</sup>

This view of Warfield is widely accepted, perhaps the “canonical” understanding, and Livingstone and Noll are often cited, uncritically, in support.<sup>9</sup> I am persuaded, however, that this understanding is mistaken. Warfield did claim to have accepted the theory of evolution in his youth, but he then rejected it early in his career. Thereafter he remained open to the possibility of it and affirmed that Scripture could accommodate it, if it were to be proven true, but he himself continued to reject the theory. To demonstrate this, we will survey Warfield’s writings first for his foundational assumptions and basic distinctions about creation and evolution, second for his skepticism about evolution as a scientific theory, and third for how Christians specifically should evaluate and respond to evolution. We will then be in a position, finally, to reevaluate the argument and evidence that Livingstone and Noll propose.

## 1. Survey of Warfield on Evolution

### 1.1. Naturalism vs. Supernaturalism

The foundation for Warfield is the essential, necessary distinction between naturalism and supernaturalism. Thoroughly convinced of the supernatural character of Christianity, Warfield is always alert to expose theories with naturalistic tendencies. His own interest in the topic of evolution seems to have begun while breeding cattle with his father in Kentucky, but this—his concern for supernaturalism—was the driving concern behind his continuing interest in the subject. The Darwinian philosophy was sharply on the rise in Warfield’s day, and it increasingly demanded hearing. But its essential naturalism—“atheism,” as his mentor Charles Hodge had famously characterized it—was blatantly anti-Christian.<sup>10</sup> Warfield often stated that it may be possible to hold to biblical Christianity and some form of evolution, but he also complained that evolutionism had become more a philosophy

<sup>5</sup> See their comments in *ESS*, 26, 29, 34, 41, 66, 183, 237.

<sup>6</sup> David N. Livingstone and Mark A. Noll, “B. B. Warfield (1851–1921): A Biblical Inerrantist as Evolutionist,” *Journal of Presbyterian History* 80 (2002): 153–71.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 153. See also *ESS*, 14.

<sup>8</sup> David N. Livingstone and Mark A. Noll, “B. B. Warfield (1851–1921): A Biblical Inerrantist as Evolutionist,” *Isis* 91 (2000): 291.

<sup>9</sup> See for example, Nancy Pearcey, *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity from Its Cultural Captivity* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2004), 309.

<sup>10</sup> Interestingly, in Warfield’s personal copy of Charles Hodge’s *What Is Darwinism?*, pencil markings (presumably by Warfield) highlight Hodge’s remarks as to the naturalistic character of Darwinism, including Hodge’s famous conclusion that Darwinism is atheism. Of course, we cannot know whether Hodge was instrumental in formulating this conviction in Warfield, but it was an emphasis in Hodge that Warfield noted and an emphasis that he himself maintained throughout his career.

than a science, a philosophy based on the presupposition of anti-supernaturalism and that explained the whole of existence in specifically naturalistic terms.<sup>11</sup> This would never do. The physical universe, the animals, and humanity itself were all the result of the creative work of God.

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” That is the first sentence in the Christian revelation. That God alone is the first and the last, who changes not; that all that exists is the work of his hands and depends on his power for both its existence and its continuance in existence—this is the unvarying teaching of the whole Bible. It is part of the very essence of Christianity, therefore, that the explanation of the universe is found in God; and its fundamental word is, accordingly, “creation.”<sup>12</sup>

Whatever common ground might be discoverable between Scripture and the various scientific hypotheses of the day, this much Warfield insisted on throughout his career: “I believe in God almighty, maker of heaven and earth.” “The fundamental assertion of the biblical doctrine of the origin of man is that he owes his being to a creative act of God.”<sup>13</sup> By contrast, he remarks,

Over against the Christian conception there has arisen in our day, however, a movement which has undertaken to explain the world and all that it contains without God, without any reference to any unseen, supernatural, spiritual element. The watchword of this movement is “evolution.” And its confession of faith runs, “I believe in an eternal flux and the production of all things out of their precedent conditions through the natural inter-workings of the forces intrinsic to the changing material.”<sup>14</sup>

Warfield takes opportunity on several occasions to expose and even scorn this note of naturalism. One of his favorite themes is the folly of assigning to chance what can be accomplished only by cause and design. This sarcasm from 1903 is representative:

Aimless movement in time will produce an ordered world! You might as well suppose that if you stir up a mass of type with a stick long enough, the letters will be found to have arranged themselves in the order in which they stand on the printed pages of Dante’s *Inferno*. It will never happen—though you stir for an eternity. And the reason is that such effects do not happen, but are produced only by a cause adequate to them and directed to the end in view. . . . Assuredly, what chance cannot begin to produce in a moment, chance cannot complete the production of in an eternity. . . . What is needed is not time, but cause.<sup>15</sup>

At bottom the debate over origins was for Warfield the struggle of naturalism versus supernaturalism. That God is the maker of all that exists is the fundamental postulate of biblical Christianity. And what is meant by “God” is “a *supernatural* God” who is above and beyond nature and not entangled in it, one who is not just “another name for nature in its coordinated activities, or for that mystery which lies beneath and throbs through the All.” The Christian God is immanent indeed, but before all else he is

---

<sup>11</sup> *ESS*, 159–63; cf. *Works*, 9:27–29.

<sup>12</sup> *ESS*, 198.

<sup>13</sup> *Works*, 9:235.

<sup>14</sup> *ESS*, 198; *Works*, 9:235.

<sup>15</sup> *ESS*, 228–9.



the transcendent God who rules and directs as God above all. This God, “the *supernatural* God,” is our maker.<sup>16</sup>

### 1.2. How the World Came About: Creation, Mediate Creation, and Evolution

Linked to this foundational truth that God has supernaturally created, Warfield conceived of creation and evolution as mutually exclusive concepts. That is, creation connotes the bringing into existence of something new, something that is not already “in” previously existing forms. Evolution, by contrast, speaks of a development and improvement of previously existing matter. Evolution, by definition, originates nothing; it only modifies. To say “evolution” is to deny creation, and to say “creation” is necessarily to deny evolution. “Whatever comes by the one process by that very fact does not come by the other. Whatever comes by evolution is not created; whatever is created is not evolved.” To speak as some do of evolution as “creation by gradualism” or “creative evolution” is nonsense. Each excludes the other. “You cannot modify by originating; you cannot originate by modifying.” This is not to say that there cannot have been both creation *and* (subsequent) evolution, Warfield often concedes, but it is to say that evolution by the very nature of it cannot explain origins. Warfield at times expresses frustration that this basic distinction is not recognized. Evolution, if it occurred at all, is a secondary and later phenomenon. These two issues must not be confused. In his view, evolutionists often completely overlook this fundamental distinction and problem. Even the theistic evolutionist cannot explain ultimate origins in terms of evolution: evolution originates nothing. And so far as Christian theology is concerned, Warfield insists that humanity is not merely improved organic matter but a new being resulting from the creative power of God.<sup>17</sup> At these points there is no middle ground between evolution and the Christian faith.

Christianity demands and must demand also the direct supernatural interference and immediate production by which something new is introduced which the existing matter and forces are incompetent to produce. At this point there is absolute conflict which cannot be compromised. One or the other must be overcome, and in being overcome must be so far discredited.<sup>18</sup>

A third possible category is mediate creation. Immediate creation differs from evolution in that it speaks of origination *ex nihilo*. It is an altogether miraculous act of God in which he brings into existence from nothing. Mediate creation differs from both in that it speaks of God miraculously bringing about something *new* out of previously existing matter. In mediate creation God does not merely guide a process of development in such a way that new forms emerge out of the potential already inherent in older forms; that is evolution—modification pure and simple, or perhaps providential guidance. Mediate creation is

the truly creative acts of God occurring in the course of his providential government by virtue of which something absolutely new is inserted into the complex of nature—

<sup>16</sup> *Works*, 9:27–29, 31–33.

<sup>17</sup> *ESS*, 201–4; *Works*, 10:380; N. W. Harkness (unpublished class notes, 1900), 2. In his review of Darwin’s biography, Warfield highlighted Darwin’s own frustration that evolution cannot account for origins. See *ESS*, 103–6.

<sup>18</sup> *ESS*, 125, 200–204, 214–15.

something for the production of which all that was previously existent in nature is inadequate, however wisely and powerfully the course taken may be led and governed—something for the production of which there is requisite the immediate “flash of the will that can.”

These, then, according to Warfield, are the three means by which God may have brought about the world order: creation from nothing, mediate creation, and evolution.<sup>19</sup>

### 1.3. The Credibility of Evolution

If these, then, are the necessary distinctions and beliefs for considering evolution, what should a Christian—or anyone—make of the scientific theory? In his classroom lecture on evolution, “Evolution or Development,” prepared originally in 1888 but used repeatedly thereafter, Warfield describes three general positions that can be taken in reference to the question of evolution. First, we may take it as “an adequate philosophy of being” and “as supplying a complete account of the origin and present state of the universe.” That is, we may take the evolutionary theories at face value as an explanation of the facts. This position is tantamount to atheism with a new form of expression.

Second, “we may consider the evolutionary hypothesis as a discovery by science of the order and conditions under which the various living forms have as a matter of fact come into existence” and by which forms have been produced. In this way theism is presupposed, and evolution is viewed only in terms of second causes. This was the position of Warfield’s earlier mentor at Princeton College, James McCosh—evolution is thoroughly consistent with Christian theism and in fact constitutes the method through which God accomplished the creation. This was evidently the view Warfield himself held in the days of his undergraduate work. Looking back in 1916 to the 1868 arrival of McCosh at Princeton, Warfield claimed that he himself was already “a Darwinian of the purest water.”<sup>20</sup>

Third, we can view the evolutionary hypothesis “as a more or less probable, or a more or less improbable, conjecture of scientific workers as to the method of creation,” postponing final verdict on the question while scientists continue to test the theory against the facts. This is the position Warfield takes for himself and recommends to others, and he further advises that we not make any adjustments to our theology to accommodate “what is as yet a more or less doubtful conjecture.” Evolution is still on trial, and Warfield says that when McCosh claims that we have the same proof for evolution that we have for Newton’s theory of gravitation, “he has allowed his enthusiasm to run away with his judgment.” As of yet evolution cannot give account of the facts, and thus it is not yet a scientific theory but a hypothesis. Moreover, if evolution can finally give an account of the facts, it will still be left to determine if it gives a *true* accounting of the facts. “I do not assert that [evolution] cannot account for [the facts], but anyone who asserts that it can has certainly overstepped the boundary line of determined fact and made overdue use of his scientific imagination.” In short, Warfield argues that so much support is yet lacking in this theory that we simply cannot build any theology around it.<sup>21</sup>

Warfield refers to himself as a layman in scientific matters, but throughout his life he maintained a high level of interest in the subject. He had clearly read very widely and carefully, and he was able to

---

<sup>19</sup> *ESS*, 204–9.

<sup>20</sup> *ESS*, 115–16; B. B. Warfield, “Personal Recollections of Princeton Undergraduate Life IV—The Coming of Dr. McCosh,” *Princeton Alumni Weekly* 16:28 (April 19, 1916): 652.

<sup>21</sup> *ESS*, 67, 115–22, 164–69.

speak freely of the varying evolutionary theories, analyzing their differing claims and weighing their respective merits. It is not necessary to survey all his thinking in this regard, but we should note that he did criticize evolution on grounds of the geological record, which, “when taken in its whole scope and in its mass of details is confessed as yet irreconcilable with the theory of development by descent.” Likewise he finds the appeal to embryology unable to account for the fact that supposed later stages of development retain a transcript of previous stages. Similarly, Warfield makes much over the seemingly limitless and impossible demands the evolutionary theory makes on time. This, he notes, had become more a problem recognized within the evolutionary-scientific community itself. “The matter of time that was a menace to Darwinism at the beginning thus bids fair to become its Waterloo.” So also the evolutionist faces difficulty with the “limits to the amount of variation to which any organism is liable.” Warfield concludes, “On these and similar grounds I should therefore venture to say that any form of evolution which rests ultimately on the Darwinian idea is very improbable as an account of how God has wrought in producing species.”<sup>22</sup>

Warfield speaks often in this vein, insisting throughout his career that evolution remains an unproven hypothesis, and it may be helpful to demonstrate this at some length, precisely because the Livingstone-Noll thesis is that Warfield was an evolutionist himself. Warfield insists, for example, that evolutionary scientists have “not yet made the first step” toward providing sufficient evidence for the theory. “In an unprejudiced way, looking over the proofs evolution has offered, I am bound to say that none of them is at all, to my mind, stringent.” Laymen have the right to affirm with confidence that the evolutionary hypothesis remains “far from justified by the reasoning with which it has been supported.” If the facts are with the evolutionist they “have themselves to thank for the impression of unreality and fancifulness which they make on the earnest inquirer.”<sup>23</sup> In 1895 he wrote mockingly,

Students of logic might obtain some very entertaining examples of fallacy by following the processes of reasoning by which evolutionists sometimes commend their findings to a docile world. . . . Because a possible genealogy can be constructed for a number of forms, chiefly in the upper strata, for which evolution might possibly supply an account, it does not follow that evolution is shown to be the true account of the whole series of forms presented to us in the crust of the earth.<sup>24</sup>

In 1898, he said of evolutionists under review,

if their writers did not put evolution into their premises, they would hardly find so much of it in their conclusions. They all start out with the assumption of evolution as a thing “as universally acknowledged as is gravitation” (p. 2), and supplied long since with “demonstrative evidence” (p. 4); but they oddly enough appear to be still on the outlook for evidence for it, and cannot avoid speaking now and again of valuable material for its establishment (p. 4). This varied attitude toward their fundamental assumption seems to the lay reader not altogether unaccountable. He gets an impression that as greater

<sup>22</sup> *ESS*, 122–25; cf. 165–69; *Works*, 9:245–51.

<sup>23</sup> *ESS*, 121–22, 143, 152, 171.

<sup>24</sup> *ESS*, 168.

and greater masses of fact are accumulated, the load is becoming a little too heavy for the original assumption of evolution to carry.<sup>25</sup>

These assumptions, and their lack of attention to facts, Warfield elsewhere deems “highly speculative” and judges that the whole enterprise “looks amazingly like basing facts on theory rather than theory on facts.”<sup>26</sup>

Once more, in a 1916 review Warfield spoke optimistically of evolution as demonstrating teleology, design. “Imbedded in the very conception of evolution, therefore, is the conception of end.” Here he seems to be more open to evolution. But later in this same review he wrote more critically of the woeful lack of proof for it.

The discrediting of his doctrine of natural selection as the sufficient cause of evolution leaves the idea of evolution without proof, so far as he [J. N. Shearman, the author under review] is concerned—leaves it, in a word, just where it was before he took the matter up. And there, speaking broadly, it remains until the present day. . . . Evolution is, then, if a fact, not a triumph of the scientist but one of his toughest problems. He does not know how it has taken place; every guess he makes as to how it has taken place proves inadequate to account for it. His main theories have to be supported by subsidiary theories to make them work at all, and these subsidiary theories by yet more far-reaching subsidiary theories of the second rank—until the whole chart is, like the Ptolemaic chart of the heavens, written over with cycle and epicycle and appears ready to break down by its own weight.<sup>27</sup>

#### 1.4. A Christian Evaluation of Evolution

Despite Warfield’s sustained critique of evolution and its scant supporting evidence, he still affirms that holding to an evolutionary scheme is not necessarily inconsistent with theism. In the aforementioned lecture, “Evolution or Development,” Warfield argues that a theist may hold a higher view of the evolutionary process than the deist and see in it all the everywhere-present God accomplishing his will. “But to be a theist and a Christian are different things.” This is a distinction Warfield often makes. It is one thing to reason as a theist that God is at work through evolution. It is quite another matter to say that this is consonant with Scripture and with Christian doctrine.

Certainly, for Warfield, a thoroughgoing evolutionism is impossible to reconcile with Christianity and its frank supernaturalism. Evolution cannot account for the immaterial human soul, its substantiality, and its persistence in life after the dissolution of the body. So also evolution cannot account for the fact that humans are moral beings with a conscience—these are matters inevitably tied up with creation in God’s image. Evolution completely reverses the biblical teaching in regard to humanity’s fall into sin and posits a moral development. Similarly, evolution cannot address the question of ultimate origins, and it cannot account for the incarnation of Christ. On all these matters evolutionary theories undermine Christian doctrine.<sup>28</sup>

---

<sup>25</sup> *ESS*, 184–85.

<sup>26</sup> *ESS*, 246.

<sup>27</sup> *ESS*, 319–20.

<sup>28</sup> *ESS*, 125–29.

So Warfield cautions that it is not enough to ask whether evolution may be consistent with theism. “The test point,” he insists, is whether it is consistent with the Bible in its specific statements and in its related doctrines. He further insists on the priority of God’s written word over the “discoveries” of science.

All statements will find their test in facts, but it does not thence follow that revelation will find its test in science. Science is not fact, but human reading of fact; and any human reading of fact may well bow humbly before the reading given by God. In the conflict between the infallible Word and the “infallible science,” it is the part of reason to prefer the word-statement sufficiently authenticated as divine to the word-statement which is obviously very human indeed.<sup>29</sup>

It is God’s written word that provides the touchstone of truth, and all else must be judged by it.

What then should be the Christian attitude toward evolution? First the Christian must insist strenuously that evolution cannot explain origins. Evolution can speak only of subsequent modification. Second, the Christian must also with equal vigor deny that evolution can take the place of mediate creation. Evolution cannot account for the arrival of matter; within matter it cannot account for the arrival of living beings; it cannot account for the human soul, the human mind, self-consciousness, sin, or the afterlife; and it cannot account for the incarnation of Christ. All of these require a supernatural act of God producing something absolutely new. But with this said, Warfield allows that a Christian as such has “no quarrel with evolution when confined to its own sphere as a suggested account of the method of the divine providence.” It should be noted here that Warfield speaks of the Christian accepting evolution as a “suggested” account of the divine providence. This is the position he maintained throughout his career. Kept in its own place, evolution is not necessarily incompatible with Scripture, if at some point it might be demonstrated to be true. Then he continues his counsel: What the Christian must insist on “is that providence cannot do the work of creation and is not to be permitted to intrude itself into the sphere of creation, much less to crowd creation out of the recognition of man, merely because it puts itself forward under the new name of evolution.”<sup>30</sup>

The next question, therefore, is whether evolution, rightly understood, is compatible with Scripture. On this point Warfield says, “The sole passage which appears to bar the way is the very detailed account of the creation of Eve.” We should note here that Warfield’s words are a bit of an overstatement. Perhaps he was thinking of exegetical as opposed to theological barriers since the account of the creation of Eve was not, in fact, the only bar to evolution that Warfield could see for the Christian. In the previous paragraphs he had just noted problems such as the origin of the human soul and the afterlife. But this only qualifies a bit his next assertion, “that there is no *necessary* antagonism of Christianity to evolution, *provided that* we do not hold to too extreme a form of evolution.” He continues,

To adopt any form that does not permit God freely to work apart from law and that does not allow *miraculous* intervention (in the giving of the soul, in creating Eve, etc.) will entail a great reconstruction of Christian doctrine, and a very great lowering of the detailed authority of the Bible. But if we condition the theory by allowing the constant oversight of God in the whole process, and his occasional supernatural interference

---

<sup>29</sup> *ESS*, 130, 174.

<sup>30</sup> *ESS*, 209–10; *Works*, 10:380–85.



for the production of *new* beginnings by an actual output of creative force, producing something *new*, i.e., something not included even *in posse* in the preceding conditions, we may hold to the modified theory of evolution and be Christians in the ordinary orthodox sense.

But just as important to us in discerning Warfield's own view is his next statement: "I say we may do this. Whether we ought to accept evolution, even in this modified sense, is another matter, and I leave it purposely an open question."<sup>31</sup>

Warfield further rejected as "exegetically untenable" the understanding of the "days" of Genesis 1 as twenty-four hour days standing at the climax of successive ages of development. With this he also rejects the understanding that the Genesis account concerns the origin only of those things which man can see, leaving unaddressed the long ages of development previous to man.<sup>32</sup> And in an 1897 review of Methodist theologian Luther Tracy Townsend (1838–1922), Warfield enthusiastically commended the author for rejecting "not merely the naturalistic but also the timidly supernaturalistic answers" as to the origin of man and for insisting "that man came into the world just as the Bible says he did. Prof. Townsend has his feet planted here on the rock." Then Warfield explained his support further: "When it is a question of scriptural declaration versus human conjecture dignified by any name, whether that of philosophy or that of science, the Christian man will know where his belief is due. . . . [Prof. Townsend's] trust in the affirmations of the Word of God as the end of all strife will commend itself to every Christian heart."<sup>33</sup> Warfield's adherence to Scripture is obvious.

### 1.5. The Origin of Humanity

The previous discussion has raised by implication the pivotal question of the origin of humanity. Given the exegetical difficulties Warfield saw for evolution, how did he conceive more broadly humankind's beginnings? Among the options of immediate creation, mediate creation, or evolution, Warfield observes, simply, that the Scriptures teach and in seemingly more ways than we can count, that humanity owes its being to the creative act of God. More, this is "the constant presupposition of every portion of Scripture," as well as the express assertion of so many passages. He points for examples to Pss 8; 89:47; and 119:73. But of course it is in the opening chapters of Genesis this teaching is presented most plainly, in key verses like 1:27 and 2:7. That we owe our existence to God is one of the most basic presuppositions of Scripture and one of the most intimate convictions of our own consciousness. Warfield speaks often and at length of this "ineradicable sense of dependence" we have on God as a result of our creation in his image. Man is not self-created, as modern speculation would have us believe. He is created by God.<sup>34</sup>

But Warfield is willing still to find room for the evolutionist to acknowledge creation, and he reasons that the evolutionist should not need to press the theory so far as to exclude divine, creative activity in the production of something new. That is, even within an evolutionary framework there should be room for mediate creation. Indeed, the biblicist does not require that God's activity in the creation of humanity is such that excludes all process or interaction with natural factors. Psalm 89:47,

---

<sup>31</sup> *ESS*, 130–31.

<sup>32</sup> *ESS*, 145.

<sup>33</sup> *ESS*, 177–78.

<sup>34</sup> *ESS*, 212.

for example, declares that God “created all the children of men,” and Ps 119:73 that he fashioned the psalmist himself. “But surely no individual since Adam has been fashioned by the mere fiat of God to the complete exclusion of the interaction of natural forces of reproduction.” From this and Gen 2:7, Warfield concludes, “It does not appear that the emphasis of the biblical assertion that man owes his existence to the creative act of God need therefore exclude the recognition of the interaction of other forces in the process of his formation.”<sup>35</sup> We see again that Warfield is characteristically open to evolution in theory without actually affirming it.

Warfield is careful to say, however, that this option is allowable only so long as it is maintained that man originated as the result of God’s supernatural creative activity. The Genesis account insists on this. In the creation of man, God does not say, “Let the waters or the earth bring forth,” as he had said previously. There is no secondary production here. Rather, he says, “Let us make.” In the preceding days there is reproduction “after its kind,” but “man is set forth as created after the kind of God—‘God created man after his own image.’” Man did not arise from below. There was a double act and a double result: man was formed “from the dust of the ground, but he was not so left; rather, God also breathed into his nostrils a breath of life,” signaling that there is something about man that comes from above also. No purely evolutionary scheme will suffice here. And having reaffirmed this, Warfield once again allows that “if”—and he always stresses this “if”—the facts demonstrate the reality of an evolutionary process, then it may be understood only within this framework. No evolutionary scheme can find common ground with Scripture until it recognizes that in the arrival of humanity, God, supernaturally intruding, has created something new.<sup>36</sup>

## 2. *The Livingstone-Noll Thesis Reconsidered*

What, then, of the Livingstone-Noll thesis that Warfield was a theistic evolutionist? Clearly, Warfield was open to the possibility. But surely Livingstone misstates the matter when he says that Warfield remained “a key advocate” of evolution since his undergraduate days at Princeton college.<sup>37</sup> As noted above, Warfield does claim that in his first year at Princeton College when theistic evolutionist McCosh arrived there as president Warfield was already “a Darwinian of the purest water.” But to allege that Warfield remained a “key advocate” of evolutionism throughout his life is to ignore his own later claims on the subject. Livingstone further claims that Warfield “remained enthusiastic” about the Darwinian theory.<sup>38</sup> But it was particularly the Darwinian theory of evolution that received Warfield’s sharpest attacks, and Warfield repeatedly noted that scientists of his own day were abandoning much of the Darwinian theory. These claims by Livingstone in 1986 are certainly unwarranted.

The later claim of Livingstone-Noll that over the course of his career Warfield came increasingly *again* to embrace the doctrine of evolution likewise goes beyond the evidence. Livingstone and Noll rightly affirm that Warfield allowed the “possibility” of evolution within a Christian framework. They also state that other than in the narrative of Eve’s creation Warfield saw no necessary conflict between evolutionary development and Scripture. But if they acknowledge that Warfield allowed for

<sup>35</sup> *ESS*, 213–14.

<sup>36</sup> *ESS*, 215–16.

<sup>37</sup> Livingstone, “B. B. Warfield, the Theory of Evolution, and Early Fundamentalism,” 78.

<sup>38</sup> *ESS*, 79.

the *possibility* of evolution and if they admit that Warfield saw the narrative of the creation of Eve as standing in the way, then we might wonder how it is or on what ground they can assert with such confidence that Warfield did, in fact, accept the theory of evolution as true.

### 2.1. Warfield on James Orr

The confidence with which Livingstone and Noll speak stems primarily from two considerations. First, in a 1906 review of James Orr's *God's Image in Man*, Warfield notes Orr's argument that disparate development of mind and body is impossible, that it would be absurd to suggest an evolutionary development of the human body from a brutish source and a sudden creation of the soul by divine fiat. Warfield commends Orr's grasp of man as body and soul in unity and refers to this as "the hinge of the biblical anthropology." But always aware that a weak argument never helps a case, Warfield also comments that Orr's argument would lose its force against a theory of evolution *per saltum*—evolution by leaps (macroevolution) under the directing hand of God propagating a human body from brutish parents while at the same time creating a soul for that body. In this instance, Warfield argues, God would be understood not as directing organic material to produce something the seeds of which are already in the earlier forms, but as directing an evolution *and* creating something new. Orr's argument did not take into account this possibility, and so it is not as persuasive as Orr seemed to think. But what is important here is that Warfield does not commit himself to this understanding. He allows it as a possibility in order to demonstrate that Orr's argument falls short, but he does not embrace it himself. Neither does he disagree with Orr's position. This is how Warfield argued consistently over the course of his career: he allowed the possibility of evolution, but he remained non-committal. It overstates the case when Livingstone and Noll allege that Warfield here "proposed again his combination of evolution and some form of creation to account for the origin of humanity" and that he "had clearly accepted the theological legitimacy of an evolutionary account of the human body." Warfield pointed out a weakness in Orr's argument, and he allowed the possibility of the alternative, but he did not reveal his own commitments. Earlier in the same review, Warfield praised Orr for his "courage to recognize and assert the irreconcilableness of the two views and the impossibility of a compromise between them; he also undertakes the task of showing that the Christian view is the only tenable one in the forum of science itself." Warfield then followed with this evaluation: "That he accomplishes this task with distinguished success is the significance of the volume." Certainly this line of comment, by itself, at least, would have led Livingstone and Noll to a very different conclusion. They do not seem to have taken this into consideration. The fact is Warfield did not commit himself here to any evolutionary scheme.<sup>39</sup>

Indeed, at the conclusion of the same review, Warfield raised yet another problem with evolution. Orr had remarked that "there is not a word in Scripture to suggest that animals . . . came under the law of death for man's sin." Warfield finds this statement surprising, and he advises that Orr has not thought through the implications of the issue well enough. "The problem of the reign of death in that creation which was cursed for man's sake and which is to be with man delivered from the bondage of corruption,

---

<sup>39</sup> *ESS*, 29, 37, 231–33; *Works*, 10:136–41. Interestingly, Peter S. Heslam argues from this quote that Warfield was increasingly *unwilling* to accept the evolutionary theory because of the influence of his esteemed friend, the Dutch theologian Abraham Kuyper ("Architects of Evangelical Intellectual Thought: Abraham Kuyper and Benjamin Warfield," *Them* 24:2 [1999]: 13–15); *ibid.*, *Creating a Christian Worldview: Abraham Kuyper's Lectures on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 255–56.

presses on some with a somewhat greater weight than seems here to be recognized.”<sup>40</sup> Warfield does not comment further, but he evidently sees the biblical account of death as an obstacle to evolution. Evolutionary theories depend on death in many seemingly endless successions prior to human beings, yet the biblical account is that death has entered the creation only by means of human sin. Interestingly, Orr may have been more decidedly opposed to evolution than Warfield, but here Warfield provides Orr with more ammunition!<sup>41</sup>

Finally, Warfield closed his review with a broad endorsement of Orr’s work. “The book is a distinct contribution to the settlement of the questions with which it deals, and to their settlement in a sane and stable manner. It will come as a boon to many who are oppressed by the persistent pressure upon them of the modern point of view [evolution]. It cannot help producing in the mind of its readers a notable clearing of the air.”<sup>42</sup> It would seem that this 1906 review demonstrates no acceptance of evolution on Warfield’s part.

## 2.2. Warfield on John Calvin

The confidence of Livingstone and Noll in naming Warfield an evolutionist stems, secondly, from Warfield’s 1915 essay on Calvin’s doctrine of creation. Warfield surveys Calvin’s emphasis that God created by means of second causes. In the beginning he created *ex nihilo*, but in the following days the already existing matter is commanded to “bring forth.” Calvin did not teach a doctrine of mediate creation, Warfield argues. He taught, rather, that after the initial creation God brought subsequent things into existence from the previously created matter. This reflects Calvin’s high doctrine of providence, the doctrine of *concursum* that in this context means simply that God created by means of second causes. Warfield concludes, “Calvin’s doctrine of creation is . . . for all except the souls of men, an evolutionary one.” He goes on to acknowledge that “Calvin doubtless had no theory whatever of evolution; but he teaches a doctrine of evolution. . . . All that is not immediately produced out of nothing is therefore not created—but evolved.” Calvin’s doctrine was not simply evolutionism but “pure evolutionism.”<sup>43</sup>

Warfield’s work in all aspects of Calvin studies was exhaustive, and he has been hailed as Calvin’s “incomparable American interpreter.”<sup>44</sup> But that he represents Calvin accurately at this point is open to question. Indeed, John Murray fairly discredits Warfield on this point.<sup>45</sup> What is significant here, however, is not Warfield’s accuracy or inaccuracy in interpreting Calvin. What is significant for our purposes is to ask—regardless of whether Warfield accurately represents Calvin as teaching a doctrine of evolution—does this reflect Warfield’s own leanings? Perhaps. To be sure, he never states agreement with Calvin that evolution was the means God used. In fact he asserts plainly that Calvin’s position is inadequate within a framework of six natural days. Calvin’s view would require these days to be ages, something Calvin does not allow. So Warfield sees inconsistency in Calvin’s teaching at this point, as

<sup>40</sup> *ESS*, 235–36.

<sup>41</sup> Warfield nowhere takes up this argument to explain further how he could see this (and other objections noted above) as an obstacle and yet remain open to the possibility of evolution for the Christian. The most we can surmise is that these objections seem to have prevented him from accepting the theory himself.

<sup>42</sup> *ESS*, 236.

<sup>43</sup> *Works*, 5:303–5.

<sup>44</sup> Archer E. Anderson, review of Emil Brunner, *The Mediator*, *BSac* 92 (1935): 358.

<sup>45</sup> John Murray, “Calvin’s Doctrine of Creation,” *WTJ* 17 (1954): 28–42.

he understands it. Still, however, it is tempting to see in this at least a possible reflection of Warfield's own evolutionary leanings, even if he does not quite say so. Gundlach suggests that Warfield may have wanted to establish evolution as within the bounds of Calvinist orthodoxy, anticipating the possibility that evolution might one day be proven.<sup>46</sup> But Livingstone and Noll are on better ground here. Noll is right to describe this as "Warfield's strongest assertion of evolution."<sup>47</sup> But even so, this is not much, and its flimsiness, especially as weighed over against all the other evidence, ironically strengthens the argument against Warfield himself being an evolutionist.

### 2.3. Further Considerations for Warfield as Evolutionist

In another place, not noted by Livingstone and Noll, Warfield might appear to tip his hand in favor of evolution, but the remarks are so brief it is impossible to make much of it. In a review of Scottish theologian James Iverach's *Christianity and Evolution*, Warfield demurs that Iverach has made too much of evolution and too little of God. "Christ is no doubt the great exception" to evolution, Warfield says in agreement, "but," he says further by way of clarification, "he is not the sole exception." Then he continues, "'Evolution' can in no case be accepted as the formula of all that is; we must in any case rise above it to the higher formula of 'God'—who is more than evolution, who indeed works in evolution, but also out of it." This much sounds as if Warfield is granting evolution as a point of agreement. But these remarks are in 1895, much too early to fit Livingstone's and Noll's thesis. Moreover, in the same review Warfield seems to indicate that he had merely granted this for the sake of argument: "We say this is true 'in any case'; we intend to leave the impression that we are by no means as sure as is Dr. Iverach of the reality of evolution in the wide range which he gives it. We would not willingly drag behind the evidence, indeed—nor would we willingly run ahead of it."<sup>48</sup>

Something should be noted of the significance of Warfield's lecture, "Evolution or Development." This lecture, which Warfield prepared in 1888 for classroom use, is published for the first time in Livingstone and Noll's *Evolution, Science, and Scripture*. Livingstone and Noll have referred to this lecture several times as representing Warfield's most skeptical period concerning evolution, for as cited above, here he perceives it as a "very improbable" theory. Their thesis is that this was his most critical point, but through the years he came increasingly to embrace evolution. But this 1888 lecture cannot be so easily dismissed. Livingstone and Noll themselves acknowledge that Warfield used this lecture repeatedly over the years, making minor adjustments along the way. Some of these later adjustments were additional remarks critical of evolution,<sup>49</sup> as for example a lengthy four paragraphs entitled "Evolution Not Yet Proven."<sup>50</sup> We do not know at what point this addition was made, but it was presumably later than 1888, and it indicates not a waning but a strengthening conviction against evolution. Moreover, although we cannot know how long this lecture was in use, it is the only Warfield lecture on the subject we have. It was evidently never replaced by another with differing views. Its substance is repeated in

---

<sup>46</sup> Bradley John Gundlach, "The Evolution Question at Princeton: 1845–1929" (PhD diss., University of Rochester, 1995), 296.

<sup>47</sup> Mark A. Noll, "Charles Hodge and B. B. Warfield on Science, the Bible, Evolution, and Darwinism," *Modern Reformation* 7:3 (May/June 1998): 18–22.

<sup>48</sup> *ESS*, 152.

<sup>49</sup> E.g., *ESS*, 125.

<sup>50</sup> *ESS*, 117–18.



subsequent articles, and there is no evidence that leads us to think that Warfield ever abandoned the position outlined in this lecture, as Livingstone and Noll's thesis would lead us to think.

Finally, in 1916, Warfield reports a private conversation about evolution with McCosh, from some years earlier, in which McCosh insisted that all biologists under the age of thirty were evolutionists. Warfield comments, "I was never quite sure that he understood what I was driving at when I replied that I was the last man in the world to wonder at that, since I was about that old myself before I outgrew it."<sup>51</sup> Here Warfield's own claim in 1916 is that he had rejected evolutionism by the early 1880s, and significantly, his remark seems to reflect his thinking still in 1916. That is, we are left to think that having outgrown his earlier evolutionism, Warfield claimed as late as 1916 still to reject it.

### 3. Conclusion

That Warfield actually committed himself to a doctrine of evolution seems impossible to affirm simply because although there are some indications that he entertained the idea, he never admits to accepting it. More to the point, what he expressly claims is a critical agnosticism on the subject, and it would seem this is where the matter must rest.

In summary, Warfield plainly stated his agnosticism on the subject in his lecture that he prepared in 1888 and gave repeatedly over the years, and the same agnosticism is reflected in his student's class notes at the turn of the century. Indeed, these class notes preserve one of Warfield's regular descriptions of evolution—"speculation." This expressed agnosticism is what we find repeated in various reviews over the years and in his more in-depth 1895 article, adapted from his 1888 lecture. In his 1901 and 1903 articles he expressed doubts and is expressly non-committal. Continuously he spoke of the acceptability of evolution only "if" it were to be demonstrated as true—and that with the emphasis that it has not, in fact, been so demonstrated. He mocked the evolutionist's need for seemingly infinite time as though time were a magic wand to perform the impossible, and he spoke increasingly over the years of various evolutionary theories as losing support even within the scientific community. And in 1906 he endorsed Orr's opposition to evolution. Granted, it is easy to read his 1915 article on Calvin as reflecting his own leanings toward evolution, and there are other times also when he seems more open than others. But in the 1916 review cited above, he specifically and almost mockingly stressed evolution's lack of support. And again in 1916 he indicated, via his reported conversation with McCosh, that he never returned to his youthful acceptance of it. Ironically, Livingstone boldly asserts, "Warfield left the matter an 'open question' in 1888, but there is no mistaking his increasing acceptance of evolutionary theory over the years."<sup>52</sup> It would not appear that the evidence supports his enthusiasm.

This much is clear: although at times speaking with allowance of the possibility of evolution (carefully defined), Warfield never expressly affirmed it. Rather, he affirmed that he had rejected it sometime about age thirty and that he remained unconvinced. The Livingstone-Noll thesis does not reflect the evidence, and the prevailing understanding of Warfield as an evolutionist must be rejected.

---

<sup>51</sup> "Personal Recollections," 652.

<sup>52</sup> *Darwin's Forgotten Defenders* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 119.

## Why Evangelicals Should Ignore Brian McLaren: How the New Testament Requires Evangelicals to Render a Judgment on the Moral Status of Homosexuality

— Denny Burk —

---

*Denny Burk is Associate Professor of New Testament and Dean of Boyce College, the undergraduate arm of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, in Louisville, Kentucky. He also serves as an elder at Kenwood Baptist Church in Louisville.*

---

In 2006 on *Christianity Today's* leadership blog, Pastor Brian McLaren urged evangelical leaders to find a "Pastoral Response" to their parishioners on the issue of homosexuality. In short, he argued that the Bible is not clear on the moral status of homosexuality and that the ancient ethic of the Christian church offends moderns too much to be useful. He calls, therefore, upon evangelicals to stop talking about the issue. Here he is in his own words:

Frankly, many of us don't know what we should think about homosexuality. We've heard all sides but no position has yet won our confidence so that we can say "it seems good to the Holy Spirit and us." . . . If we think that there may actually be a legitimate context for some homosexual relationships, we know that the biblical arguments are nuanced and multilayered, and the pastoral ramifications are staggeringly complex. We aren't sure if or where lines are to be drawn, nor do we know how to enforce with fairness whatever lines are drawn.

Perhaps we need a five-year moratorium on making pronouncements. In the meantime, we'll practice prayerful Christian dialogue, listening respectfully, disagreeing agreeably. When decisions need to be made, they'll be admittedly provisional. We'll keep our ears attuned to scholars in biblical studies, theology, ethics, psychology, genetics, sociology, and related fields. Then in five years, if we have clarity, we'll speak; if not, we'll set another five years for ongoing reflection.<sup>1</sup>

That Brian McLaren's opinion on this matter carries weight in the evangelical movement is hardly disputable. There was a reason that *Time* magazine selected him in 2005 as one of the twenty-five most influential evangelicals.<sup>2</sup> He stands at the vanguard of the Emergent movement, and a whole sector of professing evangelicals gives considerable weight to his opinions.

---

<sup>1</sup> Brian McLaren, "Brian McLaren on the Homosexual Question: Finding a Pastoral Response," [http://blog.christianitytoday.com/outofur/archives/2006/01/brian\\_mclaren\\_o.html](http://blog.christianitytoday.com/outofur/archives/2006/01/brian_mclaren_o.html), accessed April 3, 2009.

<sup>2</sup> "The 25 Most Influential Evangelicals in America," *Time* (February 7, 2005): 45. The article in *Time* reports that when McLaren was asked to comment on gay "marriage," he replied, "You know what, the thing that breaks my heart is that there's no way I can answer it without hurting someone on either side."

Nevertheless, with still a year remaining on his moratorium, Brian McLaren has made a moral pronouncement on the moral status of homosexuality. In his 2010 book *A New Kind of Christianity*, McLaren seeks to redefine the Christian faith for a new day, and in one chapter in particular he argues that traditional evangelicals need to abandon their 2,000-year old ethic on homosexuality. He pillories their beliefs as “fundasexuality,” which he defines as a “reactive, combative brand of religious *fundamentalism* that preoccupies itself with *sexuality*. . . . It is a kind of *heterophobia*: the fear of people who are different.”<sup>3</sup> Traditional evangelicals, he argues, need an enemy against which they can coalesce in common cause: “Groups can exist without a god, but no group can exist without a devil. Some individual or group needs to be identified as the enemy. . . . Gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered people are an ideal choice for this kind of scapegoating.”<sup>4</sup> For McLaren, evangelicals who treat homosexuals as sinners are really just looking for an enemy—a scapegoat. In other words, traditionalist faith is less about theology than it is about psychology. Evangelicals need someone to loathe, and homosexuals are the unfortunate target. What is clear in all of this is that McLaren has come to definitive conclusions on the matter in spite of what he said in 2006. That McLaren has broken his own moratorium shows how untenable a suggestion it was in the first place.

Nevertheless, it is worth considering McLaren’s 2006 prescription on its own merits. What if evangelicals would have taken his advice four years ago? What if none of us had been talking about this issue from 2006 to 2010? Would we have missed out on anything? Would there have been lost opportunities for discipling God’s people or for being salt and light in the culture? I think the answer to these questions is an unqualified *yes*.

Since 2006, the larger debate in American culture over the moral status of homosexuality has only increased, not diminished. Some would point to the United States as an exemplar of the controversy unfolding around the world.<sup>5</sup> In 2006, only one state in America (Massachusetts) sanctioned same-sex unions. Today, there are five states and the District of Columbia.<sup>6</sup> Since 2006, activists have effectively applied the logic of the civil rights movement to the issue of same-sex “marriage.” In Iowa, for instance, the state supreme court has declared homosexuals to be a protected class. Thus, “marriage” must be treated as a civil right protected in law. The upshot of this logic in the wider culture is that advocates

---

<sup>3</sup> Brian McLaren, *A New Kind of Christianity: Ten Questions That Are Transforming the Faith* (New York: HarperOne, 2010), 174–75.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 175.

<sup>5</sup> The focus here is on the debate in America because that is McLaren’s context. It is worth mentioning, of course, that this issue is fiercely contested around the world. In 2007, for example, a Christian magistrate in Great Britain lost a landmark legal action against the British government claiming he was discriminated against by being forced to place children with gay couples. See Steve Doughty, “Christian JP can’t opt out of gay adoptions,” *Daily Mail* (March 2, 2007), 1st edition, p. 45. Another example is a recent controversy in Uganda surrounding a bill that would criminalize homosexuality. The furor caused a rift between Ugandan and American Christians. See Sarah Pulliam Bailey, “Anti-Homosexuality Bill Divides Ugandan and American Christians,” *Christianity Today* (December 17, 2009 [web-only]), <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2009/decemberweb-only/151-41.0.html>, accessed July 7, 2010.

<sup>6</sup> Same-sex “marriage” is legal in Massachusetts, Vermont, Connecticut, New Hampshire, Iowa, and the District of Columbia ([www.freedomtomarry.org/states](http://www.freedomtomarry.org/states), accessed May 25, 2010). In each of the states, gay “marriage” became legal by court decision or legislation. Gay “marriage” has failed in every state that has put the matter to a popular vote. In both California and Maine, gay “marriage” was first legalized and then overturned by popular vote.

of heterosexual monogamy are not regarded merely as foot-dragging traditionalists, but as morally retrograde bigots.<sup>7</sup> Evangelicals are right to ask how Christians can be salt and light in this kind of a culture while having no clear, biblical word on homosexuality.

The missed opportunities, however, are not merely within the domain of the current culture war. Christian churches and denominations have also been wrestling with this issue since McLaren's pronouncement in 2006. Mainline Christian denominations in the United States are increasingly divided on the issue. The crisis in the worldwide Anglican Communion is likely beyond the point of repair. The Episcopal Church in the USA has defied the expressed wishes of the wider Anglican Communion by continuing its ordination of bishops who are practicing homosexuals. Just this year, a majority of bishops and dioceses of the Episcopal Church approved the election of the church's second openly gay bishop, the Rev. Mary D. Glasspool.<sup>8</sup> Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams proposes not to discipline the schismatic American church, but to create a two-party system for the Anglican Communion—one that supports the normalization of homosexuality and one that does not. Through the past decade, many conservatives within the Episcopal Church have departed, by one means or another, and have now organized themselves into an alternative Anglican province, the Anglican Church of North America.<sup>9</sup> Meanwhile, the religious case for so-called gay "marriage" remains a powerful one in other mainlines. The argument has spread into more popular venues as well. Lisa Miller made the religious case for gay "marriage" in a major article for *Newsweek* magazine, and she did so on the basis of revisionist scholars who are not observing any moratorium on talking about these issues.<sup>10</sup>

In the midst of these massive cultural and ecclesiological shifts, Pastor McLaren has urged evangelicals to be silent. The bad news is that Christians who heeded McLaren's advice have missed four years' worth of opportunities to be salt and light in the midst of a morally confused culture. The good news is that there is only one year left! Nevertheless, McLaren is not the only one to have jumped the gun. In the Fall of 2008, Tony Jones the former national coordinator of Emergent Village (of which McLaren is a part) affirmed

that gay persons are fully human persons and should be afforded all of the cultural and ecclesial benefits that I am. . . . I now believe that GLBTQ can live lives in accord with biblical Christianity (at least as much as any of us can!) and that their monogamy can and should be sanctioned and blessed by church and state.<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> E.g., on May 1, 2010, *The Washington Post's* David Weigel wrote, "I can empathize with everyone I cover except for the anti-gay marriage bigots. In 20 years no one will admit they were part of that" ("Covering same-sex marriage," [http://voices.washingtonpost.com/right-now/2010/05/covering\\_gay\\_marriage.html](http://voices.washingtonpost.com/right-now/2010/05/covering_gay_marriage.html), accessed May 25, 2010). See also Frank Rich, "The Bigots' Last Hurrah," *The New York Times*, April 18, 2009: <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/19/opinion/19Rich.html>, accessed May 25, 2010.

<sup>8</sup> Laurie Goodstein, "Episcopalians Confirm a Second Gay Bishop," *The New York Times*, March 17, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/03/18/us/18bishop.html>, accessed May 25, 2010.

<sup>9</sup> See "Our Genesis," Anglican Church of North America, [http://anglicanchurch.net/media/acna\\_our\\_genesis\\_june\\_2009WITHLINKS.pdf](http://anglicanchurch.net/media/acna_our_genesis_june_2009WITHLINKS.pdf), accessed May 25, 2010.

<sup>10</sup> Miller cites Alan Segal, Neill Elliot, and *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* as authorities and concludes, "Religious objections to gay marriage are rooted not in the Bible at all, then, but in custom and tradition." She also quotes Walter Brueggemann in favor of gay "marriage."

<sup>11</sup> Tony Jones, "How I Went from There to Here: Same Sex Marriage Blogalogue" (November 19, 2008), <http://blog.beliefnet.com/tonyjones/2008/11/same-sex-marriage-blogalogue-h.html>.

Jones' pronouncement and many others like it show how untenable McLaren's advice was from the outset. From a New Testament ethics perspective, it simply will not do to postpone judgment on this question. We dare not be content to shrug our shoulders at the issue saying, "The Christian church's 2,000 year-old ethic is too offensive in the modern world, and we are not sure what the Bible says about it anyway." McLaren's remarks raise questions about the Bible's meaning and authority. These issues lie at the heart of the discipline of New Testament ethics, and McLaren's words deserve a response from a New Testament ethics perspective.

My aim in this essay is not to comprehensively survey Brian McLaren's views on homosexuality. Nor is it my aim to refute more broadly either the emerging church or postmodernism. I refer to McLaren simply as a representative of the many voices within the emergent and progressive wings of the evangelical movement. Many in that wing agree with McLaren's claim that the Bible is not clear about the moral status of homosexuality and that Christians need not press this divisive issue since it drives away potential converts. So my aim in this paper is to interrogate these two claims concerning homosexuality from a New Testament ethics perspective. (1) Is it right for evangelicals to be silent on the issue so that Christianity might appeal more widely to the culture? (2) Is it true that the Bible is unclear about the moral status of homosexuality? We will begin with the first question.

### ***1. Should Evangelicals Be Silent?***

Is it right for evangelicals to be silent on the homosexual question so that Christianity might appeal more widely to the culture? It is true that many in the culture and in the academy regard the 2,000-year-old ethic of the Christian church as oppressive and bigoted. In fall 2008, for instance, I attended a portion of the Lesbian-Gay-Bisexual-Transgender/Queer Hermeneutics Section at the 2008 Annual SBL meeting in Boston.<sup>12</sup> The LGBT/Queer Hermeneutics Section is a regular part of the program at the SBL annual meeting.<sup>13</sup> Among other things, this section aims to explore "the intersections between queer readers and biblical interpretations."<sup>14</sup> In general, participants in this section support normalizing homosexual orientation and practice. They seek to read the Bible as those who would "interrogate" traditions (biblical and otherwise) that they deem to be oppressive.<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> The following anecdote first appeared in Denny Burk, "Editorial: Collision of Worldviews and the Complementarian Response," *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 14:1 (2009): 2–3. It will also appear in my contribution to a forthcoming volume of essays, *Don't Call It a Comeback: The Old Faith for a New Day* (ed. Kevin DeYoung; Wheaton: Crossway, 2011).

<sup>13</sup> "The Society of Biblical Literature is the oldest and largest international scholarly membership organization in the field of biblical studies. Founded in 1880, the Society has grown to over 8,500 international members including teachers, students, religious leaders and individuals from all walks of life who share a mutual interest in the critical investigation of the Bible" ("About SBL," <http://www.sbl-site.org/aboutus.aspx>, accessed March 23, 2009).

<sup>14</sup> "Meeting Program Units," [http://www.sbl-site.org/meetings/Congresses\\_CallForPaperDetails.aspx?MeetingId=15&VolunteerUnitId=350](http://www.sbl-site.org/meetings/Congresses_CallForPaperDetails.aspx?MeetingId=15&VolunteerUnitId=350), accessed March 23, 2009.

<sup>15</sup> Peter Jones explains that that the "queer hermeneutics" project works "in cooperation with feminist biblical interpretation." He describes it this way: "Queer readings merely seek to take one more step in the hermeneutics of suspicion and expose the 'heterosexist bias' of the Bible and Bible interpreters. Identifying exegesis as an exercise in social power, queer theorists reject the oppressive narrowness of the Bible's male/female binary vision and boldly generate textual meaning on the basis of the 'inner erotic power' of the gay interpreter" (Peter Jones,



What I heard during my visit was both startling and sobering. The presentation that I attended featured a female theologian from a seminary in Atlanta, Georgia.<sup>16</sup> She delivered a paper on Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians—a presentation that included a variety of vulgar double-entendres involving the text of Scripture and that would hardly be useful to repeat here. What was noteworthy, however, was her decidedly antagonistic stance toward the apostle Paul. She complained that Paul's letters reveal an attempt not to undermine empire but to substitute one empire for another: the Christian empire in place of the Roman empire.<sup>17</sup> Thus, Paul's politics were as flawed as Rome's. The apostle's flawed political views were no doubt informed by his flawed views of gender and his embrace of patriarchy.

One contemporary application that she drew from Scripture was that the current American political system is also flawed because it is organized on the basis of a patriarchal definition of the family. The traditional definition of the family—one man and one woman in covenanted union at the center—is a structure that oppressively limits who can have sex with whom. Thus the traditional definition of the family has become an obstacle to liberty, and the American political system is flawed because it is organized around a notion of “family” that restricts individual liberty. In effect, she was arguing that a just society would not recognize any definition of the family that limits who can have sex with whom.

Notice what she argues. It is an issue of liberty and is therefore an issue of justice. To deny one's sexual freedom is to deny them justice. It is through this kind of argument that some in our culture compare traditional Christians to slaveholders of a former generation. Both slaveholders and Christians deny freedom and justice to their fellow man. The cotton lords of the South were the bigots then. Traditional marriage supporters are the bigots now.

In the face of a culture that is growing increasingly hostile to the church's 2,000-year-old sexual ethic, it is no wonder that some “evangelicals” would elect not to offend that culture. After all, we have to live in this culture, and things are a lot easier if we do not buck societal mores. Yet at the heart of this question is the issue of authority. Who or what determines when Christians should and should not speak? If the New Testament provides a normative, universally binding ethic, then one can hardly make the case that Christians can be silent about what God's revelation says about human sexuality. If the

---

“Androgyny: The Pagan Sexual Ideal,” *JETS* 43 [2000]: 444).

<sup>16</sup> The paper was delivered by Margaret Oget in a joint session of the LGBT/Queer Hermeneutics Consultation and the Bible and Cultural Studies Section at the 2008 annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in Boston, Massachusetts. Oget's paper was untitled in the program, but the theme for the joint session was “Intersections of Sexuality, Gender, and Empire in Biblical Interpretation.” Much of the material here is taken from her remarks during the panel discussion immediately following her paper.

<sup>17</sup> Oget addresses some of these themes in an earlier article published under what is presumably her maiden name: Margaret P. Aymer, “Empire, Alter-Empire, and the Twenty-first Century [New Testament and Roman Empire: Shifting Paradigms for Interpretation],” *USQR* 59 (2005): 140–46. She writes, “A quick perusal of Revelation makes it clear: it encodes a clear, alter-imperial rhetoric. It is alter-imperial, rather than anti-imperial, for all the rhetorics of empire pertain. The alter-empire in John's Apocalypse knows no space; stretches from the end of time until eternity; extends its rule over both body and psyche—seeking to control not only the bodies but also the hearts of those on earth (who nevertheless do not repent); and, even in the face of blood stadia high outside of the gates of the city, purports to bring about peace by means of a supernatural *bellum justum*. Clearly, John is writing in opposition to these phenomena in Rome. But in their place he proposes not what Cornel West calls the ‘Christian message of humility, and of equality among’ all people, but the much more threatening stance of alter-empire: of an empire stronger than Rome, more enduring than Rome, more all-encompassing than Rome, more bio-politically persuasive than Rome, and ultimately more capable of bringing to bear peace at any price than Rome. Similar tendencies can easily be identified in the writings of the gospels and of Paul” (145).

New Testament does not provide a normative, universally binding revelation, then it is hard to make the case for pressing its claims on contemporary people at all on any issue. This question—how the New Testament functions as a normative basis for ethics—is one of the central concerns of New Testament ethics, and those participating in the discussion do not all agree with one another.

Consider, for instance, the methodological framework for New Testament ethics that Richard Hays put forth in his watershed book *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*.<sup>18</sup> Hays argues that New Testament ethics has a fourfold task: the descriptive, synthetic, hermeneutical, and pragmatic.<sup>19</sup> The descriptive task of New Testament ethics is primarily historical and exegetical—determining what the New Testament authors meant by what they wrote. The synthetic task is concerned with the canonical context of Scripture and the “possibility of coherence among the various witnesses.”<sup>20</sup> The hermeneutical task aims to relate the New Testament’s ethical content to our current situation, and the pragmatic task involves “embodying Scripture’s imperatives in the life of the Christian community.”<sup>21</sup> For Hays, the hermeneutical and pragmatic tasks must proceed from the assumption that the Bible functions as the authority over Christian faith and practice. He writes,

The canonical Scriptures constitute the *norma normans* for the church’s life, whereas every other source of moral guidance (whether church tradition, philosophical reasoning, scientific investigation, or claims about contemporary religious experience) must be understood as *norma normata*. Thus, normative Christian ethics is fundamentally a *hermeneutical* enterprise: it must begin and end in the interpretation and application of Scripture for the life of the community of faith.<sup>22</sup>

All of those writing in the area of New Testament ethics, however, do not share Hays’s insistence on the authority of Scripture. In fact, many begin their program with either an explicit or implicit setting aside of Scripture’s authority. In his 2007 work *Imitating Jesus: An Inclusive Approach to New Testament Ethics*, Richard Burridge aims to base his ethics on scriptural teaching. Nevertheless, he outlines a methodology that undermines biblical authority. Burridge takes a biographical approach to New Testament ethics that insists “on the priority of the person of Jesus of Nazareth.”<sup>23</sup> He says that

---

<sup>18</sup> Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: Community, Cross, New Creation; A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics* (New York: HarperOne, 1996).

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 3–7.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 10. I find, however, that Hays inconsistently applies this principle. Later on in *Moral Vision*, Hays warns against forced harmonizations of the Scripture that suppress the “tensions” that exist among the various writers of the New Testament: “For example, Romans 13 and Revelation 13 are not two complementary expressions of a single principle or a single New Testament understanding of the state; rather, they represent radically different assessments of the relation of the Christian community to the Roman Empire. . . . If these texts are allowed to have their say, they will force us either to choose between them or to reject the normative claims of both” (190). This exegesis shows a fundamental inconsistency in Hays’s approach. How can the New Testament be the *norma normans* of the church’s life when the church inevitably has to “reject” one or more of the Bible’s teachings? This stance is totally incomprehensible to me. If the New Testament contradicts itself in some places (as Hays suggests is the case with Romans 13 and Revelation 13), then that undermines any claim to its authority.

<sup>23</sup> Richard A. Burridge, *Imitating Jesus: An Inclusive Approach to New Testament Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 4.

the key to understanding the New Testament has to be the person of Jesus, and that therefore he is the correct person and place with which to begin as well as to end. . . The biographical genre of the canonical gospels redirects our gaze back to begin with the historical Jesus, and in particular to a stress upon both his deeds and his words.<sup>24</sup>

For BurrIDGE, the Scriptures reveal a tension between Jesus' rigorous moral demands and his inclusive approach to sinners. This tension colors his reading of Paul in some unhelpful ways.<sup>25</sup> That Jesus never explicitly addresses the topic of homosexuality leads us to take Paul's prohibitions less seriously than we otherwise might. He writes,

It is puzzling why being against homosexuality, about which Jesus and the gospels have nothing to say and Paul has only these passing references alongside many other sins equally common to heterosexuals, should have become the acid test of what it means to be truly "biblical" in a number of quarters over the years. . . . [Paul's] few references to homosexuality, which occur only in his repetition of a couple of his vice-lists, should also be read in this context, rather than singled out as a primary test for the Christian fellowship.<sup>26</sup>

When BurrIDGE says that "Jesus and the gospels have nothing to say" about these issues, he echoes the objections that homosexual activists have raised for years. They protest that Jesus' silence on the issue shows that homosexuality was of little or no concern to the historical Jesus. BurrIDGE marginalizes the relevant Pauline texts by saying, "Paul's ethical comments . . . are more like 'work in progress' than being the considered, final moral word."<sup>27</sup> The upshot of BurrIDGE's approach, therefore, is that all the ethical content of the Pauline witness is subjugated to the "inclusive" framework of Jesus' ethics. When Paul disagrees with Jesus, guess who wins? BurrIDGE writes, "Paul's ethical teaching must always be balanced by his appeal to the imitation of Christ—and this entails accepting others as we have been accepted."<sup>28</sup> So BurrIDGE wants to use the Scripture, even as he adopts a methodology that undermines its authority to guide our ethical thinking.

Others more explicitly repudiate the Bible's ethical norms. They would be at the opposite end of the authority-spectrum from Hays. For them, Scripture is not the *norma normans* of the church's life because the Scripture can be normed by our own experiences and opinions. With reference to the morality of same-sex "marriage," Luke Timothy Johnson, for instance, conceives of the hermeneutical and pragmatic tasks of New Testament ethics in this way:

I have little patience with efforts to make Scripture say something other than what it says, through appeals to linguistic or cultural subtleties. The exegetical situation is

---

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 30: "We need to start with Jesus and to keep the focus on both his words and deeds, his teachings and his example; when we move on to the study of both Paul and the canonical gospels, again we will always start with Jesus."

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 129, 131. The two Pauline vice-lists that include homosexuality are in 1 Cor 6 and 1 Tim 1. BurrIDGE's remarks suggest, therefore, that he does not include Romans 1 among Paul's references to homosexuality. If so, BurrIDGE has adopted an interpretation that overlooks Paul's single most important text on this subject.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 130.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 154.

straightforward: we know what the text says. But what are we to do with what the text says? . . .

I think it important to state clearly that we do, in fact, reject the straightforward commands of Scripture, and appeal instead to another authority when we declare that same-sex unions can be holy and good. And what exactly is that authority? We appeal explicitly to the weight of our own experience and the experience thousands of others have witnessed to, which tells us that to claim our own sexual orientation is in fact to accept the way in which God has created us. By so doing, we explicitly reject as well the premises of the scriptural statements condemning homosexuality—namely, that it is a vice freely chosen, a symptom of human corruption, and disobedience to God’s created order.<sup>29</sup>

I have at least one thing in common with Johnson. I too have little patience with those who do hermeneutical gymnastics with Scripture in order to obscure or eliminate the Bible’s clear condemnations of homosexual behavior. But where we disagree profoundly is what we should do with the Scripture’s teaching on this matter.

How does all of this relate to our initial question? Who or what determines when Christians should and should not speak to a given moral issue? Is it okay for Christians to stop discussing their opposition to homosexuality as McLaren originally suggested? If your approach to Scripture matches that of Johnson, then clearly the answer is yes. Scriptural teaching can be trumped by other considerations external to it. If your hermeneutical framework matches Hays, then the answer is no. If Scripture is the norm that is not normed by any other norm, then we cannot set homosexuality aside as an issue of moral indifference. In other words, it is impossible to hold to biblical authority *and* follow McLaren’s view. They are mutually exclusive. We cannot be silent on this. The revisionist scholars are not silent, and we dare not be either. The stakes are too high because Paul says that *homosexuals* and *effeminate* persons will not inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor 6:9).<sup>30</sup> Would not evangelical silence on this issue be a death-sentence for sinners who must repent?

---

<sup>29</sup> Luke Timothy Johnson and Eve Tushnet, “Homosexuality and the Church: Two Views,” *Commonweal* (June 15, 2007): 15. On whether or not homosexuality is “freely chosen,” Richard Hays argues, “Paul’s condemnation of homosexual activity does not rest upon an assumption that it is freely chosen; indeed, it is precisely characteristic of Paul to regard ‘sin’ as a condition of human existence, a condition which robs us of free volition and drives us to disobedient actions which, though involuntary, are nonetheless culpable. . . . The gulf is wide between Paul’s viewpoint and the modern habit of assigning culpability only for actions assumed to be under free control of the agent” (“Relations Natural and Unnatural: A Response to John Boswell’s Exegesis of Romans 1,” *Journal of Religious Ethics* 14 [1986]: 209).

<sup>30</sup> The key terms in 1 Cor 6:9 are *μαλακοί*, and *ἀρσενικοῖται*, and the most widely held interpretation is the one found in BDAG: *ἀρσενικοῖται* denotes the active partner in a male homosexual encounter, and *μαλακοί*, denotes the passive partner (BDAG, s.v. *ἀρσενικοῖται*, 135; s.v. *μαλακός*, 613). Thus, this text is taken to denounce male homosexual activity in general—a view that Paul held in common with Judaism and its Scriptures (e.g., Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* [AYB; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008], 255–58; Richard Hays, *First Corinthians* [Interpretation; Louisville: John Knox, 1997], 97). This meaning is disputed in the literature. Dale Martin argues that *ἀρσενικοῖται* refers to exploitative sexual behavior and not homosexual acts per se (“*Arsenokoitês* and *Malakos*: Meaning and Consequences,” in *Biblical Ethics and Homosexuality: Listening to Scripture* [ed. Robert L. Brawley; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996], 119–23). Robin Scroggs argues that *ἀρσενικοῖται* and *μαλακοί*, refer not to homosexuality in general

Hays's hermeneutical framework has special relevance for evangelicals who wish to be faithful to Scripture but who face a culture that is increasingly hostile to scriptural mores. None of us works in a vacuum, and we are all conditioned by our own experiences and context. Yet our own experiences and context should never be turned into a pretext for distorting the interpretation of Scripture. As the song writer Rich Mullins said about orthodoxy in general, we might well say of the Bible in particular: "I did not make it. It is making me."

## ***2. Is the Bible Unclear about Homosexuality?***

What about McLaren's claim that we cannot be sure what the Bible teaches about homosexuality? It is one thing to assert the Bible's authority. It is another thing to know what the authoritative Bible teaches. Some writers have gone beyond the agnosticism of McLaren. Tex Sample, for instance, declares that "the preponderance of scholarly opinion no longer supports" the church's traditional teaching on the moral status of homosexuality.<sup>31</sup> Is it true that the traditional reading has little basis in New Testament scholarship? In the last several decades, there have been a number of scholars who have tried to revise or undermine traditional interpretations of the key biblical texts in the debate. We should note, however, that the revisionists often propose interpretations that are at odds with every interpretation of these texts prior to the middle of the twentieth century.<sup>32</sup> If one takes the long view, one would be hard-pressed to show that the "preponderance of scholarly opinion" now falls on the side of the revisionists. It would be helpful, therefore, to explore what New Testament scholars and commentators are now saying about New Testament texts on homosexuality. Is the issue as contested in the literature as McLaren implies? Is the New Testament really as unclear as McLaren says?

The answer to the first question is a fairly simple *yes*. New Testament scholars contest the moral status of homosexuality. The exegetical discussion has been voluminous and wide-ranging for several

---

nor even to pederasty in general, but to a specific form of pederasty that involved sex-slave dealers who peddle children for brothel houses (Robin Scroggs, *The New Testament and Homosexuality: Contextual Background for Contemporary Debate* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983], 106–9, 118–21, 126). Such narrowing of the scope of *μαλακοί*, and *ἀρσενικοῖται* has been compellingly refuted by Robert Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2001), 303–39. See also James B. DeYoung, *Homosexuality: Contemporary Claims Examined in Light of the Bible and Other Ancient Literature and Law* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2000), 178–203; Thomas R. Schreiner, "A New Testament Perspective on Homosexuality" *Them* 31:3 (2006): 70–71.

<sup>31</sup> Tex Sample, "Introduction: The Loyal Opposition," in *The Loyal Opposition: Struggling with the Church on Homosexuality* (ed. Tex Sample and Amy E. De Long; Nashville: Abingdon, 2000), 20.

<sup>32</sup> This is Andreas J. Köstenberger's judgment on revisionist interpretations of Genesis 19 in *God, Marriage, and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundation* (2nd ed.; Wheaton: Crossway, 2010), 205.



decades with arguments for both the revisionist view<sup>33</sup> and traditional view.<sup>34</sup> But the fact that it is contested does not necessarily mean that the New Testament itself is unclear (as we shall see in a moment). The three primary New Testament texts are Rom 1:26–27; 1 Cor 6:9–10; and 1 Tim 1:9–10.<sup>35</sup> The 1 Corinthians and 1 Timothy texts comprise vice lists that include homosexuality among a host of other acts condemned by God. The most important of these three texts is Rom 1:26–27,<sup>36</sup> and that is the one on which we will focus.

John Boswell famously contested the traditional interpretation of Rom 1:26–27 in his 1980 book *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality*. He argues, “The New Testament takes no demonstrable position on homosexuality” as we know it.<sup>37</sup> He argues that Paul does not condemn all forms of homosexuality, but only those acts that are committed by people who are “naturally” heterosexual. Boswell writes, “Paul did not discuss gay *persons* but only homosexual *acts* committed by heterosexual persons.”<sup>38</sup> Thus, when Paul condemns what is *against nature*, he refers only to one’s own private sexual orientation.

---

<sup>33</sup> A couple of early revisionist works that continue to exert significant influence in this discussion are Robin Scroggs, *The New Testament and Homosexuality: Contextual Background for Contemporary Debate* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983) and John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980). Both of these works suggest new readings that still define the revisionist field today. Victor Paul Furnish (*The Moral Teaching of Paul: Selected Issues* [2nd ed.; Nashville: Abingdon, 1985]) is also an important early work claiming that Paul’s views on homosexuality can no longer be considered normative. More recent works of note include David L. Balch, ed., *Homosexuality, Science, and the “Plain Sense” of Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000). This volume includes essays from both sides of the issue and considers work from both scientific and exegetical scholarship. While these early revisionist approaches are still prominent in recent work, so are hermeneutical discussions that relativize the normative importance of biblical texts condemning homosexuality. See, for instance, David J. Lull, “Jesus, Paul, and Homosexuals,” *Currents in Theology and Mission* 34:3 (June 2007): 199–207. See also Dan O. Via’s contribution to *Homosexuality and the Bible: Two Views* (ed. Dan O. Via and Robert A. J. Gagnon; Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2003). On the hermeneutical question, Via argues that the Bible’s strictures against homosexuality should not be taken at face-value and that the Bible is not the ultimate norm for ethics (1–2). Another interesting revisionist work is Jack Rogers, *Jesus, the Bible, and Homosexuality: Explode the Myths, Heal the Church* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006), which narrates his change of heart from a traditionalist to a revisionist perspective.

<sup>34</sup> The most important recent defenses of the traditional view are Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice* and James B. DeYoung, *Homosexuality: Contemporary Claims Examined in Light of the Bible and Other Ancient Literature and Law* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2000). These two books work through all of the relevant biblical texts with great exegetical precision and care. A very helpful overview of the state of discussion among New Testament scholars through 1996 is Schreiner, “A New Testament Perspective on Homosexuality,” 62–75. Richard Hays’s chapter on homosexuality should not be overlooked (*The Moral Vision of the New Testament: Community, Cross, New Creation: A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics* [New York: HarperOne, 1996], 379–406), nor should Stanley J. Grenz’s *Welcoming but Not Affirming: An Evangelical Response to Homosexuality* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998).

<sup>35</sup> We might also add Jude 7 to this list as it appears to indicate that homosexual sin was at least part of the basis for God’s judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 19.

<sup>36</sup> Schreiner, “A New Testament Perspective on Homosexuality,” 65.

<sup>37</sup> Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality*, 117.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 109.

Robin Scroggs also renders Rom 1:27 irrelevant to the homosexual question by arguing that Paul meant to condemn only exploitive homosexual acts between men and boys—also known as *pederasty*.<sup>39</sup> Thus, since Paul condemns pederasty and not homosexual relations in general, this text (and 1 Cor 6:9 and 1 Tim 1:10) cannot be used to make an ethical judgment against what modern people mean by homosexuality. Gerald Sheppard relativizes what he calls the “homophobic”<sup>40</sup> interpretation of Rom 1:26–27 by arguing that “the Bible’s own normative expression of intimate sexual love . . . *does* begin to suggest . . . some norms and rules in support of loving same-sex relationships.”<sup>41</sup> In other words, the secondary matters of Scripture (like Paul’s view of homosexuality) must give way to the primary emphases of biblical theology (like justification by faith).<sup>42</sup> In effect, therefore, Paul’s manifest concern for justice trumps his hang-ups about homosexuality. Scholars like Victor Paul Furnish and Margaret Davies make no pretense to honor the authority of Scripture as Sheppard does. Rather, their perspective resembles Luke Timothy Johnson’s mentioned above. They think that what we now know about homosexuality simply trumps Paul’s condemnation of it.<sup>43</sup>

All of these proposals fail to convince.<sup>44</sup> Boswell fails because he misunderstands what Paul means by *nature*. For Paul, nature (φύσις word group) is not a reference to one’s own private sexual orientation. Nature refers to the creational purposes of God in the primeval event of making male and female.<sup>45</sup>

---

<sup>39</sup> Scroggs, *The New Testament and Homosexuality*, 126.

<sup>40</sup> Gerald T. Sheppard, “The Use of Scripture with the Christian Ethical Debate Concerning Same-Sex Oriented Persons,” *USQR* 40 (1985): 18, 31.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>43</sup> Furnish, *The Moral Teaching of Paul*, 79–80; Margaret Davies, “New Testament Ethics and Ours: Homosexuality and Sexuality in Romans 1:26–27,” *BibInt* 3 (1995): 318. Davies writes, “Pauline condemnation of homosexual practice is therefore to be understood as an anomalous emotional blindspot in an otherwise radical transformation of tradition” (318).

<sup>44</sup> In this summary and critique, I am following Schreiner, “A New Testament Perspective on Homosexuality,” 65–71.

<sup>45</sup> The meaning of the φύσις word group in Rom 1:26–27 has been fiercely contested—one side arguing that φύσις denotes *God’s created order*, the other that it refers to the *personal qualities of an individual* (i.e., “orientation”). Boswell’s watershed book famously argued that φύσις refers not to God’s creational order, but to an individual’s own orientation: “Nature’ in Romans 1:26, then, should be understood as the personal nature of the pagans in question” (*Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality*, 111). Thus, according to Boswell, Paul was condemning individuals who had a heterosexual orientation but who went against “nature” to engage in homosexual acts. In Boswell’s reading of Paul, not all homosexual acts are against “nature,” thus defined. Boswell writes, “It cannot be inferred from this that Paul considered mere homoerotic attraction or practice morally reprehensible, since the passage strongly implies that he was not discussing persons who were by inclination gay and since he carefully observed, in regard to both the women and the men, that they changed or abandoned the ‘natural’ use to engage in homosexual activities” (112–13). Boswell’s argument was roundly refuted by Richard Hays, “Relations Natural and Unnatural: A Response to John Boswell’s Exegesis of Romans 1,” *JRE* 14 (1986): 184–215. Hays shows that Boswell’s exegesis is “seriously flawed” (184), anachronistic (200), and eisegetical (201). Hays writes, “His proposal falls apart completely *as exegesis of Paul* when we recognize that the whole conception of ‘sexual orientation’ is an anachronism when applied to this text. The idea that some individuals have an inherent disposition towards same-sex erotic attraction and are therefore constitutionally ‘gay’ is a modern idea of which there is no trace either in the NT or in any other Jewish or Christian writings in the ancient world” (200). “Paul identifies ‘nature’ with the created order” (194). Hays says that this meaning is so clear that “One is left wondering what an ancient writer could possibly have said to avoid being coopted in the service of Boswell’s hypothesis” (202). See also Hays,

To depart from nature is to depart from the heterosexual norm established in Gen 1–2.<sup>46</sup> Scroggs’s pederasty proposal fails because there is not one scintilla of evidence in the text that Paul is talking about relationships between men and boys. Paul speaks of ἄρσενες ἐν ἄρσενιν (lit., males in males) in Rom 1:27 without saying anything about young boys. Paul condemns same-sex relations between females in verse 26, but there is no evidence from antiquity that women and young girls are in view. Thus, in both verses 26 and 27, Paul is prohibiting same-sex relations in general. Sheppard, Furnish, and Davies fail because they manifestly undermine the authority of Scripture in their hermeneutical approach. Tom Schreiner correctly evaluates their approach: “This view at least has the virtue of honesty, but at the same time it removes itself from the realm of biblical and Christian ethics by surrendering to the tides of culture.”<sup>47</sup> So yes it is true that the Bible’s teaching on homosexuality is contested, but the recent revisions of the traditional view are seriously flawed. That an interpretation of a text might be contested is by no means grounds for concluding that we cannot know what that text means. N. T. Wright’s comment to this effect is apt: “What we cannot do is to sideline this passage as irrelevant to Christian ethical discourse . . . or to pretend that it means something other than what it says.”<sup>48</sup>

We should also note that revisionist interpretations have yet to win a consensus among commentators on Rom 1:26–27. The traditional understanding still holds in many if not most of the major critical commentaries.<sup>49</sup> For instance, Robert Jewett’s 2007 Romans commentary for the Hermeneia series is a massive work of scholarship. After all the decades of homosexual-friendly interpretations, Jewett nevertheless holds the line on the traditional interpretation. In fact, he has gone further than anyone I have seen to show that Paul condemns homosexual behavior generally and not narrowly only with reference to certain kinds of homosexual behavior. He does this in a rather idiosyncratic translation of verses 26–27:

For this reason, God delivered them to the desires of their hearts for passions of dishonor, for their females exchanged the natural use for the unnatural, and likewise also the males, after they abandoned the natural use with females, were inflamed with their lust for one another, *males who work up their shameful member in other males*, and receive back for their deception the recompense that is *tightness in themselves*.<sup>50</sup>

---

*The Moral Vision of the New Testament*, 383–89. So also Markus Bockmuehl, *Jewish Law in Gentile Churches: Halakhah and the Beginning of Christian Public Ethics* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 130: “The context makes it plain that the appeal to ‘nature’ here (παρὰ φύσιν, v. 26) is in fact an appeal to the same created order which calls for the distinction between creature and creator.”

<sup>46</sup> The New Testament elsewhere reaffirms this creational order: Matt 19:5; Mark 10:7–8; 1 Cor 6:16; Eph 5:31.

<sup>47</sup> Schreiner, “A New Testament Perspective on Homosexuality,” 68–69.

<sup>48</sup> N. T. Wright, “The Letter to the Romans,” in *NIB*, 10:435.

<sup>49</sup> E.g., C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Epistle to the Romans* (2 vols.; ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975–79), 1:127; James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 1988), 64–66; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB; New York: Doubleday, 1993), 275–76, 285–88; Robert Jewett, *Romans* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 172–81; Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 113–17; Robert H. Mounce, *Romans* (NAC; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995), 82–84; Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 94–98; Ben Witherington III and Darlene Hyatt, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 69; Wright, “The Letter to the Romans,” 10:433–35.

<sup>50</sup> Jewett, *Romans*, 163 (italics mine).

Jewett's translation reveals an explicit depiction of homosexual acts, and Jewett argues that Paul sees them *all* as sinful. Jewett writes, "Paul simply follows . . . his Jewish cultural tradition by construing the entire realm of homosexual relations as evidence that divine wrath was active therein."<sup>51</sup> I am not citing Jewett as if his work is an unassailable authority on the interpretation of Romans. I am merely highlighting the fact that decades of revisionist interpretations have failed to gain a new consensus to replace the old one. Even this very recent major critical commentary emphatically enunciates the traditional view. Furthermore, Jewett comes to his conclusion without even one reference to the most important monograph defending the traditional view: Robert Gagnon's 2001 book *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics*.

Once again, it is true that the Bible's teaching on homosexuality is contested, but the recent revisions of the traditional view are seriously flawed. Probably the most serious error of the revisionists is their failure to see that Paul simply reflects the heterosexual ideal that he inherited from Judaism. This fundamental flaw explains in large part why there is not yet a scholarly consensus reflected in major critical commentaries. The evidence still shows that Paul understood that the OT prohibits homosexuality (Lev 18:22; 20:13). He simply carries forward into the New Covenant the sexual norm of his Jewish tradition.

### 3. Conclusion

When Jesus and Paul set out new covenant norms for marriage and sexuality, they do not appeal to polygamist kings like David or Solomon or to polygamist patriarchs like Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob. For all the importance these Old Testament figures have in the history of redemption, Jesus and Paul do not look to any of them as the paradigm for understanding marriage and sex. Instead, Jesus and Paul look back without exception to the pre-fall monogamous union of Adam and Eve in Gen 2 as the norm of human sexuality and marriage. "For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother and shall cling to his wife; and they shall become one flesh" (Gen 2:24, author's translation; cf. Matt 19:5; Mark 10:7–8; 1 Cor 6:16; Eph 5:31).

The apostle Paul says that the great *mystery* of the Gen 2 norm of marriage (one man and one woman in covenanted union) is that God intended it all along to be a shadow of a greater reality. From the Garden of Eden forward, God intended marriage and the marriage act to enact a parable of another marriage: Christ's marriage to his church (Eph 5:31–32). Thus, marriage and sex are not defined by the culture, but by the gospel itself. Jesus loves his bride exclusively and self-sacrificially; and Jesus' bride must respect and submit to her husband. In this way, God designed marriage to portray a gospel-archetype rooted in his eternal purposes. The gospel that shapes this archetype is also the hope for humanity and the context in which human happiness reaches its fullest potential. Here is the innermost meaning of marriage and human sexuality, and faithful Christians will engage the culture with proclamation and living that bears out this truth.

Brian McLaren seriously erred in both his 2006 and 2010 remarks about homosexuality. The Bible's verdict on this question is sufficiently clear for Christians to render a verdict on the moral status of homosexuality. For this reason, Christians must never shrink back from declaring the truth of God revealed in the Bible, even if that truth runs counter to the culture. Serious Christians cannot defer judgment on the moral status of homosexuality (as McLaren suggested) for at least three reasons: (1) the

---

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 179.

Bible's meaning is sufficiently clear in all the relevant passages; (2) faithful Christian discipleship needs clear norms for human sexuality; and (3) Christian witness to the lost world requires an accounting for human sexuality.

Revisionists and progressives often present us with a false choice concerning the church's ministry to homosexuals. Christians can either walk the path of homophobia and hatred, or they can surrender their ancient beliefs to accommodate the normalization of homosexual practice.<sup>52</sup> But this is an unnecessary dilemma. There is another way. Christians and churches can love and minister to homosexuals while still holding fast to biblical norms for human sexuality. If McLaren's "pastoral response" is as unworkable as I have argued here, then Bible-believing Christians must construct a framework for ministry to people struggling with homosexual sin.

In 1992, John Piper drafted a statement for Bethlehem Baptist Church that provides such a framework. The statement outlines six points of "Beliefs about Homosexual Behavior and Ministering to Homosexual Persons."<sup>53</sup> I commend this statement as a model starting-point for any church wishing to reach homosexuals with the gospel:

1. We believe that heterosexuality is God's revealed will for humankind and that, since God is loving, a chaste and faithful expression of this orientation (whether in singleness or in marriage) is the ideal to which God calls all people.

2. We believe that a homosexual orientation is a result of the fall of humanity into a sinful condition that pervades every person. Whatever biological or familial roots of homosexuality may be discovered, we do not believe that these would sanction or excuse homosexual behavior, though they would deepen our compassion and patience for those who are struggling to be free from sexual temptations.

3. We believe there is hope for the person with a homosexual orientation and that Jesus Christ offers a healing alternative in which the power of sin is broken and the person is freed to know and experience his or her true identity in Christ and in the fellowship of his Church.

4. We believe that this freedom is attained through a process which includes recognizing homosexual behavior as sin, renouncing the practice of homosexual behavior, rediscovering healthy, non-erotic friendships with people of the same sex, embracing a moral sexual lifestyle, and in the age to come, rising from the dead with a new body free from every sinful impulse. This process parallels the similar process of sanctification needed in dealing with heterosexual temptations as well. We believe that this freedom comes through faith in Jesus Christ, by the power of his Spirit.

---

<sup>52</sup> Baptist historian Bill Leonard offers a similar false choice in his reflections on the decline of the Southern Baptist Convention. Leonard says that the SBC is at a fork in the road. In one direction are Mennonites, who separate themselves from the larger culture to ensure their own doctrinal purity, and in the other direction is greater popularity but a dilution of the doctrine (Jeffrey Weiss, "The Southern Baptist Convention is Yesterday's News," *PoliticsDaily.com*, June 29, 2010, <http://www.politicsdaily.com/2010/06/29/the-southern-baptist-convention-is-yesterdays-news/>).

<sup>53</sup> John Piper, "Bethlehem's Position on Homosexuality," August 6, 2003, [http://www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/TopicIndex/80\\_Homosexuality/1237\\_Bethlehems\\_Position\\_on\\_Homosexuality/](http://www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/TopicIndex/80_Homosexuality/1237_Bethlehems_Position_on_Homosexuality/).

5. We believe that all persons have been created in the image of God and should be accorded human dignity. We believe therefore that hateful, fearful, unconcerned harassment of persons with a homosexual orientation should be repudiated. We believe that respect for persons with a homosexual orientation involves honest, reasoned, nonviolent sharing of facts concerning the immorality and liability of homosexual behavior. On the other hand, endorsing behavior which the Bible disapproves endangers persons and dishonors God.

6. We believe that Christian churches should reach out in love and truth to minister to people touched by homosexuality, and that those who contend Biblically against their own sexual temptation should be patiently assisted in their battle, not ostracized or disdained. However, the more prominent a leadership role or modeling role a person holds in a church or institution of the Conference, the higher will be the expectations for God's ideal of sexual obedience and wholeness. We affirm that both heterosexual and homosexual persons should find help in the church to engage in the Biblical battle against all improper sexual thoughts and behaviors.

Piper's statement combines the Bible's countercultural teaching with a compassionate call for gospel ministry to homosexual sinners. It is this kind of vision that the churches need to adopt if they are to bring the gospel to bear upon every sinner in need of God's grace in Christ. McLaren's distortion of the Bible's ethic renders this kind of ministry impossible, but here is a concrete example of a better way.<sup>54</sup>

Where these kinds of principles define the church's ministry and mission, there is hope for even the most wayward of sinners. The hope of the gospel is for any sinner who will have it, and that includes homosexual sinners. That is why the apostle Paul was able to say to the homosexual sinners in Corinth, "But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor 6:11). In 1 Tim 1:9–10, Paul gives a list of the various kinds of sinners that one finds in the world: murderers, immoral men, homosexuals, kidnappers, liars and perjurers. Among these, Paul names himself as the worst of the lot because he was a blasphemer, persecutor, and a violent aggressor when God saved him (v. 13). In verse 14, Paul says that he found love when by the mercy of God he came to Christ. If God's love applies to Paul, the chief of sinners, it certainly applies to other sinners as well—including the homosexual sinners of verse 10. This is the message that God has given the church to proclaim, and it is the message that the world desperately needs to hear.

---

<sup>54</sup> Piper says that the statement was drafted "with the help of Joe Hallet, who came out of the homosexual life by the power of Christ and lived faithfully with AIDS, and eventually with his wife, until his death in 1997" ("Bethlehem's Position on Homosexuality").

## Biblical Theology and the Ancient Near East: A Symposium on Jeffrey J. Niehaus, *Ancient Near Eastern Themes in Biblical Theology*

**H**ow to interpret the OT correctly in light of its Ancient Near Eastern context remains a live and pressing question in both the academy and church. A spate of publications and controversies in the last five years has demonstrated the potency of this issue, playing out on numerous fronts, including the doctrines of Scripture (on which, see the relevant articles in [Themelios 34](#)) and creation. Jeffrey Niehaus's recent publication *Ancient Near Eastern Themes in Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel 2008) generates fresh angles on this topic, not least because of the way it combines study of the ANE context, broader biblical theology, and a theology of culture, all from a robustly evangelical confession. Because of the importance of the wider debate and the stimulating arguments set forth by Niehaus, we present this symposium of review articles on his publication. They include a review by an OT scholar, Stephen Dempster, by a systematician, William Edgar, and a response by Niehaus. On a topic that has at times generated more heat than light, we hope that this exchange may model a probing, respectful, confessional seeking of greater insight into and submission to Scripture.



# A Member of the Family or a Stranger? A Review Article of Jeffrey J. Niehaus, *Ancient Near Eastern Themes in Biblical Theology*<sup>1</sup>

Stephen Dempster

---

*Stephen Dempster is Professor of Religious Studies at Crandall University in  
Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada.*

---

## 1. Introduction

We cannot overstate how important knowing the context is for understanding the significance of any communication, whether that is a simple word, sentence, paragraph, larger text, sign, photograph, or cultural cue. This is axiomatic for interpreting an ancient document like the Bible. Yet it is not so easy since context can mean many things. What context? The social context? The psychological context? The cultural context? The economic and political context? The historical context? The literary context? The full range of possible answers is staggering, which indicates how difficult it is to answer the question. The state of the problem in biblical studies is well known, as the increased knowledge in many areas has created many specialists in various fields in the ancient world as well as the Bible. Frequently, a perceptual iron curtain hangs between the world of evangelical biblical scholars and scholars of the ancient near east. The former world sees Israel as a stranger to the family of the ancient world; the latter sees Israel as simply one member of that family, and to view it any differently would be to violate a core principle of the scientific historical method.<sup>2</sup> Thus there can be in one world parallelophobia and in the other parallelomania.<sup>3</sup> Part of the Christian's commitment to Scripture is to maintain simultaneously both views in tension: Israel is a member of the same family; Israel has become a stranger. God has spoken into a specific world and communicates to that world. Therefore, the study

---

<sup>1</sup> Jeffrey Jay Niehaus, *Ancient Near Eastern Themes in Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2008). This essay updates a paper presented at the Biblical Theology section of the Evangelical Theological Society, New Orleans, 2009. Page references that occur parenthetically in the body of this essay are to Niehaus's book. I would like to thank Charles Halton, Ted Newell, and Peter Gentry for their helpful criticisms.

<sup>2</sup> Both points of view can be seen in Frank Cross's remark about the project of Yehezkel Kaufmann in his magisterial work on the religion of Israel (Yehezkel Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel: From Its Beginnings to the Babylonian Exile* [trans. Moshe Greenberg; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960], 2): "More serious the religion of Israel has been conceived as a unique and isolated phenomenon, radically or wholly discontinuous with its environment. . . . Kaufmann's insistence that Israelite religion was 'absolutely different from anything the pagan world ever knew violates fundamental postulates of scientific historical method'" (Frank Moore Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997], viii).

<sup>3</sup> John H. Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament: Introducing the Conceptual World of the Hebrew Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 18.

of context is indispensable for understanding the resulting message.<sup>4</sup>

The recent spate of books by evangelical scholars that address this tension shows not only the importance of context for understanding the Bible but also illustrates some of the dangers fraught in the hermeneutical enterprise.<sup>5</sup> When the tension is resolved in favor of either the ancient near east or the biblical text, a critical dimension of meaning is lost. This can be compared to either overemphasizing the humanity or the deity of Christ, which led respectively to either the Ebionite or Docetic heresies. To take just one example of interpretation, sometimes scholars can overemphasize the ancient near eastern background of a biblical text and obscure its foreground. In the story of the theophany to Elijah in 1 Kgs 19, Frank Cross and Leah Bronner observe a polemic against Baal and the language of storm theophany,<sup>6</sup> while Brevard Childs sees a polemic against Elijah,<sup>7</sup> who is decidedly not like Moses and has no business being up on the sacred mountain. The background of Canaanite mythology colors the former analysis while the more comprehensive biblical literary context informs Childs's understanding. Childs makes an important point that the burgeoning information about the historical context needs to be carefully evaluated before it is automatically appropriated since uncritical acceptance can lead to hermeneutical distortion.<sup>8</sup> This frequently happens in the renditions of biblical stories in popular culture. For example in the musical *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, the message of the biblical story becomes lost in all the special effects. It is transformed from a message of covenant faithfulness into a can-do philosophy of positive thinking expressed in one of its theme songs, "Any Dream will Do."<sup>9</sup>

Knowledge of these concerns—the importance of context and also its dangers, the tension between context and text—makes a recent book by Jeffrey Niehaus a work that will capture the interest of many in the evangelical world. This book claims essentially that a thorough awareness of the context of the ancient world can virtually revolutionize our understanding of the Bible by shedding light on not only rare biblical words and strange cultural cues but also the basic theological framework of the biblical message. This book is appropriately titled *Ancient Near Eastern Themes in Biblical Theology*.

That the ancient near east abounds with parallels that help clarify the meaning of the biblical text is one of the main arguments of Niehaus's thesis. His book is a rich treasure trove of these parallels that he has mined from ancient near eastern sources. This is old news, of course, since many scholars have found and explained such parallels. But Niehaus seeks to probe beneath the surface of these parallels

<sup>4</sup> This, of course, does not eliminate the need for the role of the Holy Spirit, the history of interpretation, and other crucial factors necessary for understanding the ancient text.

<sup>5</sup> See, e.g., these significant books: Peter Enns, *Inspiration and Incarnation: Evangelicals and the Problem of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005); Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the OT*; Kenton L. Sparks, *God's Word in Human Words: An Evangelical Appropriation of Critical Biblical Scholarship* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008); Niehaus, *Ancient Near Eastern Themes in Biblical Theology*; John N. Oswalt, *The Bible among the Myths* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009).

<sup>6</sup> Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 194; Leila Leah Bronner, *The Stories of Elijah and Elisha as Polemics against Baal Worship* (Leiden: Brill, 1968).

<sup>7</sup> Brevard S. Childs, "On Reading the Elijah Narratives," *Int* 34 (1980): 135.

<sup>8</sup> John Sailhamer (*The Meaning of the Pentateuch* [Downers Grove: IVP, 2009], 19–20) makes a similar point in his recent monograph on the Pentateuch. He states that the meaning of the Pentateuch can be compared to a Rembrandt painting. We understand the painting by studying the painting itself, *not other matter*.

<sup>9</sup> I owe this example to systematic theologian Stan Fowler. Childs makes the same point about the movie version of the Ten Commandments ("On Reading," 129–30).

and find their deep structure. To switch the metaphor, Niehaus intends to discover the grammar of ancient near eastern thought. What he discovers is that it is fundamentally the same as that found in the Bible. This ancient theological grammar provides an independent corroboration for the biblical-theological structure of the Bible. This theological grammar demands a theological explanation.

Niehaus begins by stressing his Christian bias. Thus his interest is truth as found in biblical revelation, but also in other forms such as mythology and science (14–33). As for scientific method, he focuses on the comparative method in contrast to the experimental. This method compares the facts discovered with other known facts in order to better understand them. He proceeds to describe two ways the comparative method functions in biblical studies: (1) to classify biblical material into categories of myth and legend and (2) to understand pagan myths and legends according to biblical truth. He rejects the first option since it rejects the Bible's claims about its own authority. But having accepted the biblical claims, he believes that there is much that can be found useful if one travels down the second road.

Before starting his journey, however, Niehaus briefly describes the method of those who venture down the first road. They fall into two categories: Universalists and Cultural Derivationists. The first group proposes some universal aspect of human nature to account for the similarities with myths and legends and the biblical material. Scholars in this camp include the eminent folklorist Sir James Frazer among others. They assume universal processes in the human mind that therefore produce similar results in widely different cultures. The second group believes that the Bible derives its similar material from its proximate surrounding cultures. Scholars from this perspective include Hermann Gunkel and others who have sought to demonstrate the influence of distinctive ancient near eastern mythologies and legends on the biblical record.

Niehaus then forges ahead on his own road (28–33). He sets up three categories of similarities: (1) ancient near eastern and biblical parallels derived from major events affecting everyone such as creation and the flood (accurately preserved in the Bible but distorted in the ancient world); (2) common literary and linguistic conventions such as poetic word pairs and international treaty forms; and (3) specifically religious acts and events that are virtually mirror images of each other in the Bible and the ancient world. It is particularly the third group of parallels that capture the attention of the author. It is here where the theological grammar is discovered. These parallels are not a

random selection . . . found in Sumer, Egypt, Hatti, Babylon and Assyria. Rather we propose that a shared theological structure of ideas existed in the ancient near East, a structure that finds its most complete and true form in the Old and New Testaments. (30)

This structure was not only prevalent in the ANE. It applies in one sense or another to the whole concept of biblical revelation, from the first Adam to the second. It is the theological backbone of the whole Bible—truth in the Bible but darkened forms in paganism—somewhat blurred as we move from the ancient near east whereas modern western cultures have abandoned it altogether in favor of alternate, secular worldviews. (32–33)

Niehaus concludes,

God allowed concepts that are true of him and his ways to appear in the realm of common grace . . . the purpose was to make such ideas somewhat familiar to God's

people so that, when he actually broke into the historical plane and acted, his acts would be recognizable against their cultural background (30).<sup>10</sup>

Thus common grace laid the theological foundation preventively among the cultures of the ancient world, preparing them for when God's truth arrives. If this view is true, it corroborates the structure that Niehaus determines to be the basic biblical-theological substructure of the Bible, an extremely valuable insight. He makes another case at the same time, more strongly at the end of the book, that the dim recollection of this structure in the ancient world is due to demonic deception. Personally I think this stands in somewhat of a tension with his view of common grace, but before evaluating the thesis of this book, the evidence should be summarized.

## ***2. Tracing the Argument***

The theological structure of ancient religion can be reduced to the following scheme: God chooses a king or a prophet to represent him and to bring about his kingdom in the world through warfare. A covenant is made with the king's people, and a city is built in which a temple is erected so that God or the gods can dwell with the people. In its most complete form, the conceptual sequence contains another idea: "the royal kingdom work is understood to be an act of divine creation or re-creation" (33, 172–76).

Niehaus proceeds to present the evidence, usually considering the ancient near east evidence first. There are chapters on each of the main elements in the theological grammar along with some additional ones. An initial chapter is devoted to the motif of the divine and royal shepherd throughout the ancient world, followed by respective chapters on covenant and conquest, city, temple, and image, and two chapters expanding on the covenantal consequences of disobedience and obedience. Subsequent chapters deal with recreation and restoration of creation and also summarize the conceptual substructure and its implications.

The first chapter traces throughout the ancient near east the theme of the god as shepherd and his king as representative. Literary and iconic evidence abounds to make this point, and its prominence in the Bible needs no repeating. Common grace accounts for the similarity in the ancient world. God the great ruler appointed human beings to rule the earth and this is refracted through the ubiquity of human kingship representing the divine (34–55).

A second chapter dealing with covenant and conquest describes the relationship that existed between the god/gods and the king in a particular land, which was expressed in laws given for the people to obey: "a god makes a covenant with a monarch and for a people . . . the covenant includes two major features: the god commands or imparts laws that the monarch must implement for his people and the god commands wars of conquest that will bring foreign peoples under the god's dominion" (56).

---

<sup>10</sup> See also Niehaus's comments toward the end of the book: "God in his providential care for humanity has allowed such theological parallels to become manifest over centuries so that truth would appear even in darkened and polytheistic forms. Truth in such forms could have no saving power. But it did prepare a matrix of thought, a background of theological understanding, so that even when God truly appeared and did such things as the pagans had claimed for their gods—instituting covenant, giving laws, commanding conquest, and extending his kingdom, even by signs and wonders—his revelation would come to a people who had some theological preparation for it. In this way God was glorified by even the distortions of pagan religions, for even in the darkness the pagans retained or obtained common grace reflections of his truth" (181).

The laws function as Torah indicating that the “people of the gods should live as the gods would have them do” (82).

A third chapter on city, temple, and image describes the significance of this important triad in the ancient near east: “The city . . . because it imaged a heavenly city. The temple . . . because it reflected a heavenly temple. The image . . . because it embodied the gods in the earthly temple and city” (83). Niehaus marshals evidence from throughout the ancient world to show the import of these concepts. The reverse side of this situation is that major defeats of ancient near eastern armies require a theological explanation. The gods of the defeated nations had abandoned their temples and cities (116–37).

A final chapter describes the destruction and salvation of covenantal households and shows parallels between the biblical and ancient near eastern ideas (138–65). It is not immediately apparent why this chapter is here, but I assume it is to show that the divine abandonment leads to the breakdown of human solidarity at the macro-level (war) and at the micro-level (the family). This is because of a strong belief in covenantal justice in the ancient world. Thus, nation rises up against nation, and family members fight among each other. Consequently, in Egypt rebellion at the political and domestic family level leads to internecine strife. Niehaus concludes,

These ideas articulated in a fallen and darkened form in annals and other accounts, appear in a revealed and purer form in the OT. The same truths appear more fully revealed in the NT. There the antipathy between Satan’s house and the household of God is most evident. Those who belong to Christ are the household of faith. They are children of a second Adam, whose blood speaks better things than the blood of Abel. They are vassals of a new and better covenant. And their Great King and Father is God. (165)

The next chapter briefly summarizes the previous evidence indicating that “all of these themes were essential parts of covenantal relationships between gods and humans in the ancient world and find their true counterparts in biblical revelation.”<sup>11</sup> A concluding chapter recaps the three possible sources of parallels between the ancient world and the Bible—the mutual recollection of major events, the mutual use of linguistic and literary forms current in the ancient world, and “finally the activity of deceiving, demonic spirits (producing parallels between supposed acts of pagan gods and the acts as they appear in the Bible)” (177).

He then anticipates another possible way of considering the data, namely, the biblical authors are simply borrowing common cultural forms and idioms that would be familiar to their audiences. Niehaus rejects this accommodation since it implies that the parallels are not real but are simply adapted to make relevant points. Niehaus prefers his view “because it is consistent with the claims” made by the biblical writers and the speakers themselves and it is rooted in the revealed truth of Scripture and the “distorted

---

<sup>11</sup> Niehaus then explores one final theme that appears most clearly only in Egypt: restoration, both of the individual and the cosmos. He presents evidence of the resurrection of the Pharaoh, which is not true for individual Egyptians. Similarly, it is the Pharaoh’s job on earth to restore all things so that the rule of Maat would be completely established. The Pharaoh is the incarnate son of Ra and thus has been entrusted with this task of restoration. Then Niehaus proceeds to sketch out complete paradigms in Egypt and the New Testament to show their correlation. “As Ra worked through Pharaoh, so God works through his incarnate son to advance his kingdom by warfare, establish a covenant with his former enemies and establish a temple, which is both the church and the individual believers in it, for divine service. So what the Egyptians claimed for Pharaoh and what the Bible says of the Son now also can be true for all believers” (174–75).

truth in the ancient Near East” (178). As a final “parade” example he juxtaposes the divine inspiration for the Davidic temple for Yahweh and the temple of Thutmose III for Amon. The execution of the plans is detailed and contains remarkable parallels. Any accommodative understanding that denies the essential reality of both parallels does not do justice to the data. David either got guidance from God by the hand of the Lord upon him or he did not. But what about Thutmose III? It would be most bizarre if by coincidence an Egyptian who predated David by centuries made essentially the same claim for divine guidance to build and furnish a temple. The claim of Thutmose III is the result of demonic influence. Here Niehaus relies on passages from the NT that indicate demonic influence in false religion. Thus, demonic inspiration should be considered as the cause for the sort of parallels considered, including the major paradigm in its pagan articulations (178–81).

### 3. Evaluation

#### 3.1. Strengths

I deeply appreciate many of the parallels, which show clearly that the Bible is part of the world in which it was born. Niehaus has gone through many sources throughout the ancient near east in many different settings to show the similarities that exist between the biblical texts and their ancient near eastern setting. Israel was definitely a member of the ancient near eastern family. I think this is very helpful. I remember the time when I first realized that Gen 1 spoke into a context that presumed an ancient near eastern cosmology, and it helped me understand for the first time why the waters were separated from the waters (Gen 1:6–8), why the sun and moon were called respectively the “the great light” and “the lesser light” (Gen 1:16). Perhaps such knowledge would have prevented Galileo’s inquisition.<sup>12</sup> Knowledge of ancient culture can solve many interpretive problems.

I also appreciate the spiritual dimension in the book, a willingness to go where some of the evidence led. How else does one explain some of this data? It insists on a spiritual interpretation. Sometimes I have pointed out to my students that if the biblical view of reality is true there is necessarily a dark spiritual dimension to life that works under the radar of postmodern western culture but nevertheless has practical relevance for biblical interpretation. For example, the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel were not fools (1 Kgs 18:19–46). They had engaged in their rituals of self-mutilation before, and they had seen a supernatural power act in response. Neither was Elijah a fool, and neither did he avail himself of gasoline and flint to make his point. One supernatural power acted that day because it was in control. But the text seems to assume that there were other supernatural forces.

The vast majority of historical-critical scholars are reductionist in discounting the world of the demonic. Some of Rudolf Bultmann’s famous “electric light bulb speech” at the Society for Protestant Theology (June 1, 1941) is worth citing again: “It is impossible to use electric light and the wireless and to avail ourselves of modern medical and surgical discoveries, and at the same time to believe in the New Testament world of spirits and miracles.”<sup>13</sup> It was during one of those most ironic moments in

<sup>12</sup> See, e.g., Gerhard F. Hasel, “The Polemical Nature of the Genesis Cosmology,” *EQ* 46 (1974): 81–102.

<sup>13</sup> A fuller quotation is as follows (Rudolf Bultmann, “The New Testament and Mythology,” in *Kerygma and Myth* [ed. H. W. Bartsch; trans. R. H. Fuller; New York: Harper, 1961], 5): “Now that the forces and the laws of nature have been discovered, we can no longer believe in *spirits, whether good or evil*. We know that the stars are physical bodies whose motions are controlled by the laws of the universe, and not demonic beings which enslave

history when one month later (July 1941) the order was delivered to Reinhard Heydrich to implement a final—and dare I say, demonic—solution for the Jewish “problem.” A country that produced some of the most demonic acts in history also produced a theology that discounted the world of the demonic.<sup>14</sup>

Another commendable quality of the book is its willingness to see the Bible as a coherent unity. It is an assumption, of course, but Niehaus’s structure accounts for a remarkably vast section of scripture, providing it with a coherent and logical outline, a logic that clearly has extra-biblical relevance.

### 3.2. Weaknesses

But a few lingering concerns make me cautious about this book. First, this may be my own intellectual difficulty, but I was left wondering how common grace and demonic inspiration work together. A number of times the author describes the ancient world parallels as being due to God’s common grace and yet also due to the influence of evil spirits. As the book proceeds, the reader finds much more of the latter and less of the former. Is it the case that the parallels are part of the common grace of natural revelation that comes through to everyone and yet is distorted because of demonic spirits operating within the culture so that only darkened parallels remain? The basic ideas then of divine representative, conquest, covenant, city, temple, and image would then be distorted in the various cultures by specific demonic beings. I would just like to see this clarified. And if this natural revelation is common grace, then why is it limited to the ancient near east because it is not really found anywhere else?

Second, I wonder if it is so easy to demarcate the parallels into three categories: common events, literary and linguistic parallels, and spiritual activity of the gods. I think that spiritual activity governed all these parallels to some degrees. Thus, the account of the flood in the ancient world would have to be concluded as the work of demonic spirits since it gives a different divine interpretation of what happened, and the legal and treaty forms resonate with the guidance of the gods as well. Similarly there

---

mankind to their service. Any influence they may have over human life must be explicable in terms of the ordinary laws of nature; it cannot in any way be attributed to their malevolence. Sickness and the cure of disease are likewise attributable to natural causation; they are not the result of demonic activity or of evil spells. (It may of course be argued that there are people alive today whose confidence in the traditional scientific view of the world has been shaken, and others who are primitive enough to qualify for an age of mythical thought. And there are also many varieties of superstition. But when belief in spirits and miracles has degenerated into superstition, it has become something entirely different from what it was when it was genuine faith. The various impressions and speculations which influence credulous people here and there are of little importance, nor does it matter to what extent cheap slogans have spread an atmosphere inimical to science. What matters is the world view which men imbibe from their environment, and it is science which determines that view of the world through the school, the press, the wireless, the cinema, and all the other fruits of technical progress.) The *miracles of the New Testament* have ceased to be miraculous, and to defend their historicity by recourse to nervous disorders or hypnotic effects only serves to underline the fact. And if we are still left with certain physiological and psychological phenomena which we can only assign to mysterious and enigmatic causes, we are still assigning them to causes, and thus far are trying to make them scientifically intelligible. Even occultism pretends to be a science. . . . It is impossible to use electric light and the wireless and to avail ourselves of modern medical and surgical discoveries, and at the same time to believe in the New Testament world of spirits and miracles.”

<sup>14</sup> Note Justice Robert H. Jackson’s comments at the beginning of the Nuremberg War Trials: “What makes this inquest significant is that these prisoners represent sinister influences that will lurk in the world long after their bodies have returned to dust” (“International Military Tribunal: Opening Address for the United States of America,” *Department of State Bulletin* 13:335 [1945]: 850–51). See also Robert E. Conot, *Justice at Nuremberg* (New York: Basic Books, 1993), xii.

is mention that the biblical writers would not have just “couched things in terms familiar to them from their contemporary thought world” (177). I can think of a number of examples that involve spiritual activity where precisely these things happened. The psalms sometimes use clear mythological imagery to attribute to Yahweh the conquest of creation (Pss 29:10; 65:6–7; 74:13–14; 89:9–11; 93:1–5; cf. Hab 3). This imagery assumes a shared understanding, and it polemically makes the point that it is Yahweh—not the gods of order—who conquers the forces of chaos. It is no less rooted in truth even if it is couched in “contemporary” terms.

Third, there are problems with some of the parallels. The author could have been more methodologically rigorous in his comparisons. The idea of a covenant between the kings and their gods is a case in point. It is presupposed in his discussion, but there is precious little explicit evidence of “extant covenant documents between a god and his people” as the author admits (57). But it is a stretch to move from explicit divine commands to covenants, which are quite different. Many times commands can exist without assuming a prior covenantal context. Similarly his discussion of the king as shepherd could be much more nuanced. There are different periods in Egyptian history where this metaphor is more relevant than others. The ruler in the Old Kingdom is more of a distant, elusive figure than the more human shepherd kings from other periods.<sup>15</sup> A more systematic account of the religious beliefs of antiquity would be necessary to prove some points. A lot of generalizations are made based on evidence gathered from various periods. It would be also worth interacting with recent scholarship on ancient near eastern religion.<sup>16</sup>

Similarly in his discussion of the biblical evidence there is sometimes an indiscriminate movement back and forth from the NT to the OT and vice-versa depending on the parallel. Thus, a leap of the imagination is required to move from 2000 BC to the time of Christ and from wars of conquest to the spread of the gospel:

Ra commands the monarch to build his “great house,” Pharaoh does build the god’s temple but Atum also builds it and its magnitude shows the extent of the kingdom the god has caused Pharaoh to conquer. The latest and final form of this theology sees God working through Jesus, and building his temple, the church. God has caused Jesus to conquer broadly by the spread of the gospel so that his kingdom (also the church) is broad—indeed global—in scope. (90)

There are connections here, but frequently in his haste to make comparisons the author skips immense temporal gaps.

Some of Niehaus’s examples are also due to “covenantal overkill”: the trembling Philippian jailer asking for salvation is compared to a rebellious vassal in the ancient near east (140); the comparison of the Hittite ritual in which the blood of a slain goat is smeared on an altar to the covenant of Moses (61); Samson’s destruction of the lion like a goat as possible evidence of his status as a royal shepherd (52); the

<sup>15</sup> W. Stiebing, Jr., *Ancient Near Eastern History and Culture* (New York: Longman, 2003), 149.

<sup>16</sup> Jan Assmann, *The Search for God in Ancient Egypt* (trans. David Lorton; Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001); Jean Bottero, *Mesopotamia: Writing, Reasoning, and the Gods* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); *Religion in Ancient Mesopotamia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004); Daniel C. Snell, ed., *A Companion to the Ancient Near East* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2007). It would also be worth interacting with an important older article that addresses many of the same religious concerns of the ancient world but with more of a reductionist approach: Morton Smith, “The Common Theology of the Ancient Near East,” *JBL* 71 (1952): 135–47.



linguistic parallel of *nîr* in the biblical and Assyrian texts and the conclusion that the Hebrew meaning probably means “yoke” like its Assyrian cognate because it occurs in a political context (79–80).<sup>17</sup>

Finally, as concerns the main point of the similar theological substructure—the grammar—it is striking that it never produced in the ancient near east a narrative similar to that of the Bible. To be sure there are parts and fragments but no sense of the whole. There are pieces of the puzzle, but no attempt has been made to put it all together. Perhaps this is a significant point. Israel was a member of the ancient near eastern family but also a stranger. Gerhard von Rad thought that this observation was striking:

This ability to deal with extensive complexes of connected history and not just episodes must be regarded as one of the most momentous advances in man’s understanding of himself, since its effects upon the development of the whole of the west are incalculable.<sup>18</sup>

But caution at the same time must be exercised. Perhaps the only reason that at least some of the pieces of the ancient near eastern puzzle match up in the sequence that Niehaus desires is that he has the picture on the “box cover” of the Bible.

Why did no ancient near eastern worldview develop the resources to produce such a sequence? That is an interesting question, and it might be something that Niehaus wants to consider in his forthcoming biblical theology. If this substructure truly existed, it may be that the worldviews of the ancient near east were so plagued by what John Oswalt calls “continuity” that they could not transcend the cycle of nature and develop an interest in history. Moreover, since there was not one divine will but a plethora, the intellectual and spiritual resources for producing an overarching coherent sequence just did not exist. It is interesting that N. T. Wright had to modify his standard worldview paradigm to be able to capture accurately the Jewish worldview in his study of NT origins. He had to add an eschatological and historical component.<sup>19</sup>

In this book Niehaus has done some important programmatic work, which requires more systematic and rigorous analysis of the evidence. I look forward to reading his forthcoming biblical theology where he will address these concerns. Despite my criticisms, it is clear that Niehaus is on to something. At the least, he has shown the choice is not between Israel as a member of the ancient near eastern family versus Israel as total stranger. Both are true. When Abram embarked down that dusty Mesopotamian

---

<sup>17</sup> In the Assyrian texts the word *nîr* means “yoke,” and in the biblical text it is usually translated “lamp” or “light.” A number of texts state that despite divine judgment the Lord leaves David with a “lamp” in Jerusalem, stressing the continuity of the Davidic dynasty (1 Kgs 11:36; 15:4; 2 Kgs 8:19; 2 Chr 21:7). I find it problematic to translate “yoke” here, which is symbolic of royal rule, simply based on the Assyrian. Although it is plausible in some texts to read *nîr* this way in the biblical text, when all the contexts are considered in which the word occurs in the Bible, it is perfectly natural to read the word as “light.” For example, in the Messianic context in 2 Sam 21:17, David is called “the lamp of Israel which should not be extinguished” (cf. 1 Sam 3:3). In the other passages dealing with the Davidic dynasty, *nîr* should be read from this perspective and not another “foreign” context.

<sup>18</sup> G. von Rad, *Old Testament Theology* (trans. D. Stalker; New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 1:50; cited in Oswalt, *The Bible among the Myths*, 143.

<sup>19</sup> N. T. Wright adds a fifth worldview question to account for the distinctive ideas of Judaism: What time is it? (*Jesus and the Victory of God* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996], 138n41, 443–74).

road toward that destination whose location only God knew, he was leaving the family.<sup>20</sup> But by leaving the family he was going to show the rest of the family how to go truly home.<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>20</sup> See, e.g., Thomas Cahill, *The Gifts of the Jews: How a Tribe of Desert Nomads Changed the Way Everyone Thinks and Feels* (New York: Anchor Books/Nan A Talese, 1999), 63. In my judgment, Martin Noth correctly assessed one of the main goals of an OT history: “Making this clear [the difference between Israel and its neighbors] must be one of the main tasks of a presentation of the history of Israel” [*A History of Israel* (New York: Harper & Row, 1960), 2], cited in Hans Walter Wolff, “The Hermeneutics of the Old Testament,” in *Essays in Old Testament Hermeneutics* (ed. C. Westermann; trans. James Luther Mays; Atlanta: John Knox, 1963), 167n19.

<sup>21</sup> Note the comment by Hans Walter Wolff: “As a community from among the Jews and the Gentiles, the church is a stranger among the peoples just as the old Israel was in its environment, and only as the stranger who is called does it become a blessing to the world” (“The Hermeneutics of the Old Testament,” 173).

## Parallels, Real or Imagined? A Review Article of Jeffrey J. Niehaus, *Ancient Near Eastern Themes in Biblical Theology*

— William Edgar —

---

*William Edgar is Department Coordinator and Professor of Apologetics at  
Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.*

---

When I came to Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia as a young student in the 1960s, two things struck me. First, under the portrait of one of the founding fathers, the biblical scholar Robert Dick Wilson, was a simple epithet: “I have not shirked the difficult questions.” Wilson was one of the most accomplished biblical scholars of his day. He made lasting contributions to the linguistic questions surrounding the OT. He was a sharp opponent of what was then called the higher criticism of the Bible, which used rationalist and naturalist assumptions to investigate the Scripture, often finding it to be inaccurate in its historical claims, and thus substituting more plausible, rational schemes than simply divine inspiration, to explain the text we hold in our hand. Wilson was not afraid to look into the many questions raised by higher criticism. Usually they were legitimate ones, and often they were indeed difficult. But he always was able to answer, “I have come to the conviction that no man knows enough to attack the veracity of the Old Testament. Every time when anyone has been able to get together enough documentary ‘proofs’ to undertake an investigation, the biblical facts in the original text have victoriously met the test.”

The second item that came to my attention as I sat in classes was the way my professors were not limited by their specialties or the department they officially taught under. Edmund P. Clowney, professor of Practical Theology, was one of the best biblical theologians on the planet. John Murray, in Systematics, taught us more about exegesis than some of the biblical researchers. We probably learned more about practical theology from church historian D. Clair Davis than from the practical theology professors. Professor of Old Testament E. J. Young was as good a systematician as any. Meredith Kline, the OT scholar, taught us about biblical ethics. The point is that specialization in one field did not preclude expertise in another. Especially striking was the ease with which theologians handled biblical studies, and, of course, the reverse: the way Bible scholars were at home with theology. This was in part because Westminster was (and is) a confessional institution, wherein each instructor is required to subscribe *ex animo* to the Westminster Standards. But it was also because in that world of yesteryear there was far less isolation into little boxes where outsiders are not welcomed because of their presumed lack of expertise in a particular area.

Surely today one of the “difficult questions” not to be shirked is that of the humanity of Scripture. And surely an evangelical view where historians, systematicians, and exegetes converge to give us a consensus about divine inspiration in relation to the humanity of Scripture is something we long for. Yet in the larger world of biblical studies, evangelical views are considered obscurantist at best. The reason for that is not simply scholars honestly facing hard questions, nor their respect for specialization. The

deeper reason is philosophical. For well over two hundred years mainstream biblical scholarship has dichotomized two kinds of history: salvation history (theology) and observable history (facts). This dichotomy stems ultimately from an exalted view of human reason.

We can conveniently date the beginning of this split with Johann Philipp Gabler's 1787 inaugural lecture at Altdorf, in which he proclaimed there was a fundamental difference between biblical theology and dogmatic theology. Gabler in effect launched the discipline of biblical theology, which he saw as a historical discipline, which is different from dogma.<sup>1</sup> His intention was, typical of the Enlightenment, for biblical theology to prepare for dogmatics, which was based on ideas arrived at through human reason.

Subsequent developments played this out in different ways, but always two principles contrasted: the historical and the systematic. Space prohibits properly rehearsing even the highlights of this juxtaposition down through the decades.<sup>2</sup> In the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, critical scholarship highlighted the differences between the world of Israel or of the primitive church, and ours. It was deemed impossible to take the text we have in our hands at face value. There had to be background checks that inevitably revealed that the Bible was the product of a culture and history foreign to our usual understanding of the way the text was generated.

Since those early days, many players have contributed to this way of understanding the Bible. And they have done so with different kinds of emphases. Hermann Gunkel (1862–1932), for example, became the outstanding proponent of the “history of religions school,” in which traditions behind the biblical text and an identifiable *Sitz im Leben* were posited, proving that the faith and piety of the biblical writers was markedly different from our own. For Gunkel, doctrine was not the heart and soul of religion, but piety.<sup>3</sup> Although ostensibly in reaction to this sort of more liberal approach, Karl Barth (1886–1968) in his own way displayed affinities for this dichotomy between biblical data and theology. In his famous commentary on Romans, right in the preface, he explains that the historical-critical method is a necessary preamble to the “venerable doctrine of inspiration.” Although he is anxious to arrive at an inspired Word, history is not to be discarded, he says, even though it might reveal errors or contradictions in the Bible. These errors are not so significant because the historical Scripture is only a lens through which to see the “spirit of the Bible, which is the Eternal Spirit.”<sup>4</sup> Today, with highly detailed investigations into the Ancient Near East as well as Second Temple Judaism, it has become more and more challenging to accept the evangelical position, which insists that history and theology must converge if we can trust the message of the Scripture.

---

<sup>1</sup> *Oratio de justo discrimine theologiae biblicae et dogmaticae regundisque recte utriusque finibus*, repr. in *Opuscula Academica II* (Ulmae: n.p., 1831), 179–94. Those of us in conservative evangelical circles would claim that “biblical theology” in the tradition of Geerhardus Vos had very different origins and very different philosophical commitments.

<sup>2</sup> Such histories abound. One that is still valuable, though twenty years old, is Henning Graf Reventlow, “Early History and the New Beginnings,” in *Problems of Old Testament Theology in the Twentieth Century* (London: SCM, 1985), 1–43.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Hermann Gunkel, “Ziele und methoden der Erklärung des Alten Testaments,” *Monatschrift für kirchliche Praxis* 4 (1904): 46. In this he is heavily influenced by Ernst Troeltsch, although without the latter's radical secularism.

<sup>4</sup> Karl Barth, *Epistle to the Romans* (6th ed.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933), 1.

Added to the investigation of the historical background of the Bible are developments in the physical sciences. They suggest a very different cosmology from that of the biblical writers. As a result of assumptions about an ancient earth and the veracity of macro-evolution, biblical scholars, including some evangelicals, have decided that the worldview of the ancient writers is simply “premodern,” obviating the need to reconcile it with modern cosmology. For many, then, the gap between biblical history and dogmatic verities has become nearly unbridgeable. Is it possible to find a way to accept the historiographies, or even the cosmologies of the biblical authors in order to harvest a true and reliable theology?

Be it said that counterpoints to the critical school from more conservatively committed scholars, though minoritarian, have not been entirely lacking. Even in the nineteenth century, researchers such as E. W. Hengstenberg (1802–69) offered a vigorous defense of the historic Christian position. In strong opposition to the critical views of Gesenius and Wellhausen, he proposed exegetical methods strongly committed to the unity of the biblical text and the analogy of Scripture, while at the same time fully cognizant of the challenges involved.<sup>5</sup>

On the side of Reformed theology, the towering figures of Herman Bavinck and B. B. Warfield weighed in as defenders of orthodoxy but with full attention to exegetical and historical considerations. Bavinck wrote eloquent pages in the first volume of his *Reformed Dogmatics* defending the inspiration of Scripture and its compatibility with the data derived from textual and historical study. Noting the attacks made on the traditional doctrine of inspiration, he does warn against “closing one’s eyes to the serious objections that careful Bible research derives from the facts it discovers and can advance against the self-testimony of Scripture.”<sup>6</sup> But an honest scientific procedure should lead to a corroboration of the highest view of the integrity of the Bible.

Warfield’s strong defense of the inspiration of Scripture, including its inerrancy, did not preclude his acknowledging the role of the human agents of Scripture. He often stressed their importance and discussed the way that the different modes of revelation interacted with human agency, and he could not be compressed into one unilateral gesture, or a Docetic approach.<sup>7</sup> And he even accepted, at least to some extent, the analogy of inscripturation with Christ’s incarnation.<sup>8</sup> Still, because Scripture is divinely inspired, this means, among other things, that in interpreting it we should seek for unifying elements that betray this divine authorship. When we read a passage but cannot successfully harmonize it with the rest (the analogy of Scripture), this should never call into question the inspiration of Scripture, but only our inability to see how particular passages fit into the whole.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> His masterpiece is undoubtedly *Christologie des Alten Testaments* (1829–35; 2nd ed., 1854–57; trans. R Keith; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1835–39), also in Clark’s *Foreign Theological Library*, by T. Meyer and J. Martin (1854–58).

<sup>6</sup> Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 1: *Prolegomena* (1896; trans. John Vriend; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 420.

<sup>7</sup> See his “The Biblical idea of Revelation,” in *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible* (Nutley: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1948), 71–102.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 162. Warfield notes that the incarnational analogy is helpful as a general reminder that divine and human factors can work together, but pressed too far the analogy leads to unreasonable conclusions, such as believing there is a hypostatic union between the divine and the human in Scripture, clearly not the case. See Paul Wells, “The Doctrine of Scripture: Only a Human Problem,” in *Reforming or Conforming? Post-Conservative Evangelicals and the Emerging Church* (ed. G. L. W. Johnson and R. N. Gleason; Wheaton: Crossway, 2008), 38–40.

<sup>9</sup> “The Real Problem of Inspiration,” in *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible* (Nutley: Presbyterian &

To be sure, not all of the counterpoints to the excesses of the critical approach are from an evangelical viewpoint. Some came out of Neo-Orthodox theology. Consider, for example, John Bright, who accepted the possibility of errors in the Bible, but still regretted the denigration of Scripture implied in the critical view.<sup>10</sup> Many Jewish scholars likewise have objected to the anti-Semitic implications of critical scholarship.<sup>11</sup>

In the present generation these minority voices are still being aired. More than ever, evangelicals are wrestling to decide how to relate the historical and cultural backgrounds of Scripture to the final text and then to a solid theology. Unless they simply hide away from the issue of background and context, biblical scholars, however committed to the infallibility and inerrancy of Scripture, cannot shirk the difficult questions.<sup>12</sup> Important studies have come out helping guide us into the field of text and context. Yet the field is fraught with dangers.<sup>13</sup>

Among scholars concerned to lead us, few are more competent than Jeffrey J. Niehaus, whose recent book is under consideration here. He has managed fully to acknowledge the significant parallels between the world of the Ancient Near East (ANE) and the Bible, while at the same time defending the truth of God's revelation. He has not shirked the difficult questions, nor has he sunk down into overspecialization. Instead, he has demonstrated that inspiration is not incompatible with being situated in the local context in which the Bible was produced.

The bulk of the book is devoted to showing the parallels between themes in the ANE and biblical revelation. As such it is a fascinating account of some of the major topics in common between the two worlds. One learns a great deal about such themes as God and the royal shepherd; covenant and conquest; city, temple, image; city and temple (abandoned and restored); the covenantal household (destruction and salvation); and the restoration of all things. Many of the strongest parallels to the OT are from Egypt, but also from Babylon, Sumer, and Assyria. All of the themes that emerge for his comparative work are important. Let me mention just two of them more specifically.

First, he explains the idea of conquest with a view to establishing justice on the earth. In Egypt, for example we have the rule of *Ma'at*, the just order the gods wished to establish on earth through the

---

Reformed, 1948), 219–20. Much later, at Westminster Seminary, the pursuit of harmonization as the only way to observe the unity of Scripture was somewhat modified by Raymond Dillard, who suggested that apparently discrepant historical narratives could be due to authorial choice of historiography to fit the purposes in view, rather than simply a different set of emphases. See his “Harmonization: A Help and a Hindrance,” in *Inerrancy and Hermeneutic: A Tradition, a Challenge, a Debate* (ed. Harvie M. Conn; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 163.

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, his *A History of Israel* (1959; repr., Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2000).

<sup>11</sup> For example, Cyrus Gordon, *The Bible and the Ancient Near East* (1953; repr., New York: Norton, 1998).

<sup>12</sup> I realize there are those who would make a sharp distinction between infallibility and inerrancy in an effort to avoid holding Scripture to a standard that is not appropriate. See, for example, Andrew T. B. McGowan, *The Divine Authenticity of Scripture: Retrieving an Evangelical Heritage* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2007). Among other claims, McGowan says that “inerrancy” is more of an American issue, rather than a European one, a debatable assertion at best. For our purposes this argument is not important.

<sup>13</sup> A recent controversy at Westminster Seminary over Peter Enns' book, *Inspiration and Incarnation: Evangelicals and the Problem of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), has served to highlight the problem. An attempt to clarify exegetical techniques of the biblical writers in the light of the surrounding cultural and historical context, supporters found the book within the bounds of the subscription vows required of Westminster Seminary professors, whereas critics did not. For obvious reasons I do not wish to make comments here on the virtues or deficiencies in this book.

Pharaoh. And we have the Babylonian *Code of Hammurabi*, whereby Shamash deposits his code of justice and covenant in the Esagila temple. The parallels with God's purposes at Sinai cannot be missed.

Second, we learn of the significant parallels between temple-building in Egypt and Old Babylonia with their view that the earthly replicated the heavenly, and the Bible's view of the temple as God's dwelling place. Niehaus eventually notes the extraordinary fact, not paralleled anywhere, that God will reside in the believers' hearts through his Holy Spirit (114). In both cases our author concludes with the uniqueness of biblical revelation as it culminates in Jesus Christ. The study is rich and suggestive, page after page.

So, then, what is to be done with these parallels? Negatively, how do we avoid the sort of historicizing we encounter in Gabler and Gunkel? Positively, how may we account for these parallels? Niehaus's basic premise for the study is simple, deceptively simple. Because there is truth, we can begin with a divine perspective. God has an objective way of looking at the phenomena, which in turn allows us to discover what they are through careful science. A comparative method thus emerges by which the unknown is enlightened by the known. When we proceed in such a manner, we will find numerous parallels between the two worlds. These should neither surprise nor embarrass us, but be expected. And they should instruct us, even inspire us. Put in my own words, all truth is God's truth.

Niehaus defends his view by comparing the two possible ways to apply such a comparative method (15ff.). One is to fit biblical material into the larger categories of myth and legend. The second is to fit pagan myths and legends into biblical truth. He opts unashamedly for the latter, bowing to "the Bible's claims about its own historicity." Those who opt for the former view, he explains, fall into two categories, the universal and the derivative. According to the universal method, espoused by people such as J. G. Frazier of *The Golden Bough* (1890), Sigmund Freud and Carl Gustav Jung, it is possible to classify every human myth into an overall scheme. All of them reflect human need, and in human history we observe a progress from magic to religion to science.<sup>14</sup>

The derivative method, espoused by luminaries such as Hermann Gunkel and Friedrich Delitzsch, states that there is an actual historical dependence of one group of traditions or writing upon another. Both Gunkel and Delitzsch decided that the OT accounts derived from extra-biblical sources. Delitzsch, not to be confused with his father, Franz Delitzsch, believed that the OT contained very poor adaptations of Sumerian culture.<sup>15</sup> But how did the ancient cultures influence one another? Take, for example, the creation account (Gen 1:1–2:3) or the flood account (Gen 7–9), which have parallels in Babylonian narratives, such as *Enuma Elish* and *Gilgamesh*. It could be that the Babylonian stories were dependent on the Hebrew ones. Or the Hebrew stories derived from the Babylonian. Or perhaps both Babylonian and Hebrew derived from a common source (21).

Much of biblical scholarship has attempted to wrestle with these possibilities. The older critical schools used a kind of evolutionary (or diffusionist) scheme according to which one local culture, say, Egyptian or Babylonian, developed strong cultural traits that then made their way into others, including the Hebrew people. Because the OT was largely edited in the period of exile and the people of Israel were weary, the resulting product was considered to lack some of the vitality of their sources. The

---

<sup>14</sup> This approach is common to many views. One can think of Claude Lévi-Strauss in his numerous works, including *Tristes Tropiques* (New York: Penguin, 1992). See also the venerable Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Jovanovich, 1987).

<sup>15</sup> His view is in fact anti-Semitic. See his *Babel and Bible* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1903).

other approach, somewhat less evolutionist, posits an independent invention scheme, which states that human beings, made of the same psychology, respond similarly to their circumstances.

Niehaus agrees strongly that there are real parallels, but ultimately rejects both the universal and the derivative approaches because they assume the Bible is entirely dependent on factors other than inspiration. He opts instead for the second overall method that seeks to fit the pagan stories and those from the ANE into the biblical framework. Although he does not give any deeper philosophical or theological reasons for his own approach, he states three working assumptions for it: (1) the OT preserves “true and accurate” accounts of major events, including the creation and flood; (2) because of general revelation, the OT uses literary and legal forms current in the ANE serving as vehicles of God’s special revelation; and (3) parallels exist between the ANE and the OT because of God’s common grace.

Along the way, Niehaus states, perhaps surprisingly, that one of the sources for OT parallels to the ANE is the “activity of deceiving, demonic spirits” (177, 179). He does not develop this idea in much detail because, as he notes, the Bible does not either. But he states it nevertheless. However, in fact, there is a much more positive reason for the presence of the parallels under consideration. God’s overall rationale for these parallels, some coming before, some after the biblical themes, is to help prepare his people for the extraordinary intrusion of divine revelation into history. As he puts it, “the purpose was to make such ideas somewhat familiar to God’s people so that, when he actually broke into the historical plane and acted, his acts would be recognizable against their cultural background.” He adds, “God’s revelation was so dynamic and (in his holiness) so challenging (cf. Exod. 20:18–19; Deut 18:16) that a background preparation for at least some aspects of that revelation was necessary for his people” (30).

In my judgment this approach is an excellent first step. It is enormously helpful to face these numerous parallels between the ANE and the Bible, and, rather than being embarrassed by them, to show how they relate to God’s purposes, culminating in Jesus Christ. The book presents a real feast of themes and events that tie the ANE to biblical revelation. Yet I wish a second step had been taken. It is true enough that by his general revelation and common grace God makes ready a people for his special revelation. But is this because he would then “break into the historical plane”? I worry about the Kantian implications of this view, which sharply contrasts a “noumenal” realm from the “phenomenal.” Of course, this is the last thing Niehaus intends. But would it not be better to state that both general and special revelation work together, not against the backdrop of history, but within the very fabric of history? Otherwise, do we not fall into the “derivative” approach unwittingly?

Furthermore, I think certain questions need to be raised about the parallels themselves. Niehaus does not interact much with skeptics of parallelism. For example, he makes no mention of Noel K. Weeks, who has written eloquently about how to understand the affinities between some of the ancient cultures.<sup>16</sup> He asks, just to take one example, how legitimate are the discoveries of parallels between Egyptian parity treaties and OT covenant treaties of conquest. Weeks does not deny any connection at all, but questions whether the Egyptian model is significantly similar to that of Semitic people.<sup>17</sup> To begin with, the evidence for such documents is itself tenuous. But even in the documents we may have, from the Hittites and from the Amarna letters, there is no reference to treaties at all. Nor do they speak of a “father” and “son” relationship between the Pharaoh and his vassal, except in a problematic letter

<sup>16</sup> See, for example, Noel Weeks, *Admonition and Curse: The Ancient Near Eastern Treaty/Covenant Form as a Problem in Inter-Cultural Relationships* (JSTOTSup 407; London: T&T Clark, 2004).

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 99ff.



(#44). Yet some biblical scholars have rather easily assumed that Semites and Egyptians were living in the same universe.

The deeper question raised by this kind of challenge, one that Weeks raises, is that of philosophical or theological assumptions. On the diffusionist supposition, many scholars, including a few evangelicals, see strong ties between the Mesopotamian outlook and various biblical accounts. This is claimed, for example, of myths of origins, but also of many other approaches to God's dwelling with humankind. But the diffusionist model makes us blind to the variety of ways these cultures viewed life and the cosmos. Upon closer examination, it turns out that there were many culturally and regionally specific outlooks, including myths of origins, in the different civilizations of the ANE, making it very difficult to show any kind of straight-line influence of one or another on the Bible. Not to deny the parallels of course. They are there. But what exactly are the influences and affinities between these different cultures?

More importantly, this challenge against a too simple kinship between ancient cultures, including the Hebrews, reminds us of something not as well stressed by Niehaus as it could have been. God's revelation was as often as not critical, indeed, sharply judgmental against the local cultures surrounding Israel. The wrath of God is revealed against all ungodliness, according to Rom 1:18, and one sees that exhibited on nearly every page of the OT. To give just one example of where more could have been said: When Jeremiah "implies divine abandonment," as is suggested (125), it does appear to parallel other forms of abandonment in the ANE. And Niehaus does affirm that the Lord's words of judgment through Jeremiah respond to the false confidence that Israel exhibited that assumed God could never abandon his people. Yet why not raise the larger issue of God's purposes in judging the very sinful cultures of the ANE, especially when Israel sinfully accommodates them? That way, in addition to the "symphony of parallels" and "shared theological thought" we could underscore the remarkable uniqueness of biblical revelation.

It seems to me we have here a great opportunity in biblical studies as elsewhere to speak to the "Christ and culture" issue. Too often we have been satisfied to look at ways in which God's revelation is accommodated to human culture. This is not wrong of course. John Calvin spoke of God's "lispering" to accommodate us.<sup>18</sup> And Niehaus does not fall into the snare of acknowledging only a one-way cultural influence. But the other side of it is that God is busy transforming culture. He stands over culture as its creator and redeemer as well as judge. This is not so much a reproach, as one book cannot accomplish too many purposes, as it is an encouragement to take the next step and commend the uniqueness of revelation, stemming from the unique and self-authenticating God of the universe. True enough, all truth is God's truth, but that does not say quite enough about the authoritative, clear, necessary, and sufficient manner in which he has revealed himself.

---

<sup>18</sup> *Institutes* 1.13.1.

# How to Write—and How Not to Write—a Review: An Appreciative Response to Reviews of *Ancient Near Eastern Themes in Biblical Theology* by Dempster and Edgar

— Jeffrey J. Niehaus —

---

*Jeffrey J. Niehaus is Professor of Old Testament at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in South Hamilton, Massachusetts. He is the author of Ancient Near Eastern Themes in Biblical Theology (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2008).*

---

I want to thank *Themelios* for the unusual opportunity to interact with two reviewers of my book *Ancient Near Eastern Themes in Biblical Theology*. An author does not often have the opportunity, not only to join discussion with two reviewers, but also to express and document further some concepts that he may not have expressed as fully as possible in the original work.

I also want to thank Stephen Dempster and William Edgar for their reviews, which illustrate what a review ought to be. Both of them have understood the work under review and have helped the reader to see some of the virtues of that work. Both of them have also raised reasonable questions regarding points that might have been made more clear or explored further. The goal of such reviews is to understand better and establish more clearly what we may know to be true of the data under discussion, in this case, the Bible and ancient near eastern materials that may relate theologically to the Bible.

If the reviews they have written are exemplary in the ways mentioned above, there is another sort of review that is not. Since two examples of this latter form of review have recently appeared, I would like to take this occasion to comment on them briefly before entering the lists with Dempster and Edgar. In a sense, the two specimens discussed briefly below may be taken as foils to the better reviews by Dempster and Edgar, which most of my discussion will engage.

## ***1. How Not to Write a Review***

Recently two other reviews of my book have appeared: one by Krzysztof Baranowski and the other by Elke B. Speliopoulis.<sup>1</sup> Because Speliopoulis follows Baranowski uncritically, it will be convenient to deal with both of their critiques *in tandem*.

Perhaps their most important critique is that—in Baranowski’s words and which Speliopoulis quotes—many of the texts studied show “a reliance on antiquated scholarly literature,” which, to use

---

<sup>1</sup> Krzysztof J. Baranowski, review of Jeffrey J. Niehaus, *Ancient Near Eastern Themes in Biblical Theology*, *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures* 9 (2009): 1–2; Elke B. Speliopoulis, “*Ancient Near Eastern Themes in Biblical Theology* by Jeffrey J. Niehaus—*A Critical Interaction*,” unpublished review submitted to Gary E. Yates in partial fulfillment of requirements for THEO 695 at Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary (Downingtown, PA: March 1, 2010). <http://www.scribd.com/doc/27692261/Book-critique-of-Ancient-Near-Eastern-Themes-in-Biblical-Theology-by-Jeffrey-J-Niehaus>. Baranowski, also a student, is pursuing a PhD at the University of Toronto (<http://utoronto.academia.edu/Baranowski/CurriculumVitae>).

Speliopoulos's words, "would show up in a markdown of a grade in any graduate student's work."<sup>2</sup> I think, however, that any fair-minded reader of my book—or, perhaps better, any reader who actually checks its bibliography and the proportional use of the works cited—will come to a different conclusion. The textual sources that I have quoted for the great majority of non-Egyptian materials are not at all "antiquated" but continue to be standard reference works for such data.<sup>3</sup> Some scholarly works that comment on ancient texts, as well as reproducing select material in translation, are in the same category.<sup>4</sup> I have used Weidner's edition of the Hittite treaties in Akkadian, and that is an older work.<sup>5</sup> In doing so, I ought perhaps to have mentioned the more recent translations by Gary Beckman, which, however, do not offer the reader the original language texts.<sup>6</sup> For a different reason, I drew extensively on Breasted's translation of the Egyptian annals because it remains the only set that accomplishes anything like completeness.<sup>7</sup> Any reader who considers the actual space devoted to particular ancient near eastern textual materials will see that the great majority of those materials are not from sources that are "antiquated." Further, the older source material cited for reasons noted above continues to be accurate for the purposes employed (e.g., the Akkadian of Weidner's edition).

---

<sup>2</sup> Speliopoulos, 7.

<sup>3</sup> E.g., Jerrold S. Cooper, *Sumerian and Akkadian Royal Inscriptions, I, Presargonic* (New Haven: The American Oriental Society, 1986); R. O. Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1969); Loren Fischer, *Ras Shamra Parallels* (Rome: Pontificum Institutum Biblicum, 1972); Douglas R. Frayne, *The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia: Old Babylonian Period* (Early Periods 4; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990); Albrecht Götze, *Die Annalen des Mursilis* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1967); A. K. Grayson, *The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia Assyrian Periods* (2 vols. [*Assyrian Rulers of the Third and Second Millennia B.C.* and *Assyrian Rulers of the Early First Millennium B.C.*]; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987–91); W. M. Green, "The Eridu Lament," *JCS* 30 (1978): 127–61; W. M. Green, "The Uruk Lament," *JAOS* 104 (1984): 253–79; S. N. Kramer, "Lamentation over the Destruction of Nippur: A Preliminary Report," *Eretz-Israel* 9 (1969): 89–93; Raphael Kutscher, *Oh Angry Sea* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975); Tremper Longman III, *Fictional Akkadian Biography* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1991); Piotr Michalowski, *The Lamentation over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1989).

<sup>4</sup> E.g., Riekle Borger, *Einleitung in die assyrischen Königsinschriften, erster Theil* (Leiden: Brill, 1961); Richard J. Clifford, *Creation Accounts in the Ancient Near East and in the Bible* (CBQMS 26; Catholic Biblical Association of America: Washington, 1994); Morton Cogan, *Imperialism and Religion: Assyria, Judah and Israel in the Eighth and Seventh Centuries B.C.E.* (Missoula: Scholars, 1974); J. van Dijk, "Le motif cosmique dans la pensée sumérienne," *AcOr* 28:1–2 (1964): 1–59; Ivan Engnell, *Studies in Divine Kingship in the Ancient Near East* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1967). I do sometimes cite older articles, either in German or in English, because they deal with some inscriptional evidence that is either pertinent to a particular point or is not available in a more recent edition. E.g., W. G. Lambert, "Three Unpublished Fragments of the Tukulti-Ninurta Epic," *AfO* 18 (Graz: Weidner, 1957–58): 38–51; William L. Moran, "A Note on the Treaty Terminology of the Sefire Stelas," *JNES* 22:3 (1963): 174; Knut Tallqvist, *Akkadische Götterepitheta* (Leipzig: Harrassowitz, 1938); Ernst F. Weidner, "Die Kämpfe Adadniraris I. gegen Hanigalbat," *AfO* 5 (1928–9): 89–100; D. J. Wiseman, "A New Stela of Assur-nasir-pal II," *Iraq* 14:1 (1952): 24–44, which is important for its mistranslation of *mamītu* as "spell," as I note in *Ancient Near Eastern Themes* (61n15).

<sup>5</sup> Ernst F. Weidner, *Politische Dokumente aus Kleinasien, die Staatsverträge in akkadischer Sprache aus dem Archiv von Boghazköi* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche, 1923).

<sup>6</sup> Gary Beckman, *Hittite Diplomatic Texts* (2d ed.; Atlanta: Scholars, 1999).

<sup>7</sup> James H. Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt: Historical Documents from the Earliest Times to the Persian Conquest* (5 vols.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1906).

Baranowski and Speliopolis also take issue with my finding parallels in some cases, but that is to be expected. One area that certainly requires further documentation is that of supposed divine-royal or divine-human covenants in the ancient Near East, and I will address that below. In addition to disagreeing with an author whom they review, reviewers can also show their own theological biases or misconceptions in their reviews, as both Baranowski and Speliopoulis do. Baranowski for instance finds it “naive” that “on Jesus’ authority, the author seems to consider as fact Jonah’s sojourn in the belly of a great fish (p. 15).”<sup>8</sup> Speliopoulis, for her part, comments in her summary of the book’s chapter topics, “The following chapters evaluate specific text elements, both from ANE texts and from the Bible—surprisingly from both Old and New Testaments.”<sup>9</sup> However, this should come as no surprise. A thematic comparison that involves both Testaments is the whole point of the book, whose title, after all, is *Ancient Near Eastern Themes in Biblical Theology*.

## 2. The Reviews of Dempster and Edgar

A book that not only surveys ancient near eastern data and compares them with biblical data but also uses spiritual criteria to do so is likely to meet with some unsympathetic response. I am grateful that such has not been the case with the reviews of Stephen Dempster and William Edgar. It would be a good thing, in my opinion, if evangelical scholarship were more open to the spiritual side of things and did not avoid such considerations because two hundred years of liberal scholarship has considered them unscientific. Being open to such matters includes, of course, accepting the historicity and truth of what Jesus and the NT writers affirm as well as the historicity and truth of the OT witness. Every scholarly work has assumptions, and my work assumes without apology the historicity and truth of the biblical data.<sup>10</sup>

Another of the governing assumptions of *Ancient Near Eastern Themes* is the possibility of correspondences between the ancient near eastern and biblical data on spiritual grounds. If such connections are possible—that is, if parallels can justly be attributed to one or more non-human spiritual source—then synchronic and/or diachronic considerations obviously become less significant.<sup>11</sup> This is, of course, a theological matter, and one in which considerations of common grace and/or of demonic

---

<sup>8</sup> Baranowski, 1. Different readers, of course, will reach different conclusions as to whether they accept Jesus’ statement as made by him and whether they accept the historicity of Jonah.

<sup>9</sup> Speliopoulis, 4.

<sup>10</sup> Although it has not been my purpose to argue at length for such historicity and truth, I am certainly grateful for the work of others who have done so. Perhaps the most important volume of that sort recently produced is by K. A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003).

<sup>11</sup> I note in addition here what was never in doubt in the book: I have not attempted to reconstruct the ancient cultural milieus that produced the texts under study. That was not the purpose of the book, and one can find a host of respected scholarly works that use ancient near eastern texts in studies of biblical parallels without discussing the ancient near eastern cultures that produced the parallel texts. E.g., Frank M. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1973); and Peter Machinist, “Literature as Politics: The Tukulti-Ninurta Epic and the Bible,” *CBQ* 38 (1976): 455–82. The reason for this is probably that a good deal of commonality obtains among the ancient cultures, despite undeniable differences. It was such commonality that makes possible such a book as Cyrus Gordon’s *Common Background of Greek and Hebrew Civilizations* (New York: Norton, 1965). I submit further that even parallels that some readers may find questionable will be borne out by future study and discovery, perhaps the most important one being the divine-royal/human covenant category.

influence come under discussion. Dempster has called for greater clarity regarding this distinction, and I turn now to interact with his review.

### 2.1. Dempster

In §3 of his review, Dempster comments, “I also appreciated the spiritual dimension of the book, a willingness to go where some of the evidence led.” I think it is appropriate that he highlights the irony of cultural development in pre-World War II Germany, where, as he notes, “A country that produced some of the most demonic acts in history also produced a theology that discounted the world of the demonic.”<sup>12</sup> Higher critical scholarship in Germany, with its antisupernatural bias, arguably led to a cultural climate in which Nazis could characterize the Bible as “the Jews’ book of lies.” Ironically, on the other hand, Hitler could be aware of power coming upon him as he began to speak, and naturally believed that power was none other than “der Gott der uns geschaffen hat.”<sup>13</sup> I am consequently not only happy to agree with Dempster that the theological outline proposed in my book “accounts for a remarkably vast section of scripture, providing it with a coherent and logical outline,” I also agree that it has “extra-biblical relevance.”

The question that remains to be explored, however, is how both common grace and demonic influence can play roles in extra-biblical theologies. I agree that I do not explore that issue with anything like the care that it deserves, and I am not sure that I could have explored it with such care at the time of the book’s composition. I do hope to explore it further in the forthcoming biblical theology. I would say now, however, that I find Dempster’s statement of a possibility—that demonic spirits can distort common grace natural revelation and thus produce darkened parallels—is close to my own further thought. Another possibility is that evil spirits, knowing what God has done, and perhaps even, by God’s permission, knowing what he intends to do (cf. 1 Kgs 22:19–22), can and sometimes do produce a false version of divine activity to which people respond because people are shaped in God’s image to receive the truth and if the closest thing to the truth is a distorted version of it, that is what people will embrace.

It is also possible that the Holy Spirit provides some inspirations or guidance in the realm of common grace, even in the cultural context of demonic religion. So, for instance, the Lord can call Cyrus his “shepherd,” and even his “messiah” (i.e., “anointed one,” Isa 45:1), and yet say of the polytheistic pagan emperor, “You never knew me” (Isa 45:4). “Messiah” is highly significant in this context because it implies that the Holy Spirit comes upon the emperor and gives him the authority and guidance to accomplish what God intends. Similarly, God tells Elijah to “anoint” Hazael king of Damascus (1 Kgs 19:15). Summarily, Paul affirms that all earthly governmental authority is from God (Rom 13:1–2), and such authority can come only from the *active* presence of the divine *Person* of the Holy Spirit, who also, for example, gives “authority” to believers to become children of God (John 1:12). The Bible indicates clearly enough by its terminology that God’s Spirit acts in an empowering and revelatory way in the very context of pagan, polytheistic, and thus demonic religious contexts (cf. Deut 32:16ff., 1 Cor 10:20).

---

<sup>12</sup> Bultmann’s “electric light bulb speech” may seem rather quaint today when we can view it from the perspective provided by a century or more of dynamic experience both of the Holy Spirit and of demonic resistance in the global growth of the church.

<sup>13</sup> “The God who has formed/created us,” a quote from one of Hitler’s speeches at the 1934 *Reichsparteitag*, as documented in Leni Riefenstahl, *Triumph of the Will* (trans. of *Triumph des Willens*; Bloomington: Synapse Films, 2001).

It may be within our grasp to understand each particular biblical example. To understand whether or where the Holy Spirit operates in one case or another of pagan theology is not so easy.

As evil spirits can produce false teaching (cf. 1 Tim 4:1), so they can adopt and use forms or ideas or acts that originated with God to inform such teaching or theology. This is where, as Dempster suggests, we may see the influence of such spirits on, for example, the pagan flood and creation accounts, and also the pagan development of the international treaty forms—pagan forms of a covenant relational concept that, as I have argued elsewhere, originated as an idea in the mind of God, or in the very nature of God as Suzerain in relationship with his vassals.<sup>14</sup> In these matters I agree entirely with Dempster, and I ought to have made my views more clear.

Another area of parallelism, and one that perhaps I should have specially noted, lies in the area of the polemical. Dempster mentions the use of mythological imagery in the Psalms, and I would add, for example, Isa 27:1, a virtual lifting of lines from an old Ugaritic poem about Baal and Mot done for polemical, allusive, and illustrative purposes, which I have discussed in that light in another book.<sup>15</sup> I have also treated some of the Psalms in this regard, in particular Ps 18 with its allusions to Canaanite mythology.<sup>16</sup> I would point out, though, that when Dempster quotes me as saying that the biblical writers would not have just “couched things in terms familiar to them from their contemporary thought world,” I was not ruling out such parallels produced for polemical or other purposes by the biblical writers, but rather making the point that the biblical writers did not simply borrow uncritically the concepts from the world around them and then make up a literature out of such material. That would consider them “to be part of an ancient near eastern worldview,” as I said in the sentence preceding the one Dempster quoted.<sup>17</sup>

Dempster also raises the question that if some of the parallels we find in the ancient Near East are part of natural grace revelation, “then why is it limited to the ancient near east because it is not really found anywhere else?” First, I am not sure that such theological parallels as I have indicated are not found anywhere else. I suggested at the end of the first chapter,

*As humankind spread across the globe and cultures arose that were more remote in time from the beginning, the theological outline we find in the ancient Near East became somewhat blurred. Modern western cultures, of course, have abandoned it altogether in favor of alternate, secular worldviews, except that it is kept alive in the church, God’s people, who continue to be his temple and to advance his kingdom, until he returns to establish it once and for all: for all time, and for all who believe in him.*<sup>18</sup>

I have no doubt that further study on a global scale would produce more of the sort of theological and thematic parallels that form the subject matter of the book. To take one example, poetry about the exploits of Ghengis Khan shows the emperor enacting the same sort of household judgments that I discuss in the sixth chapter (“The Covenantal Household: Destruction and Salvation”).<sup>19</sup> To take another,

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Jeffrey J. Niehaus, “Covenant: An Idea in the Mind of God,” *JETS* 52 (2009): 225–46.

<sup>15</sup> Jeffrey J. Niehaus, *God at Sinai* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 111–15.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 301–4.

<sup>17</sup> Niehaus, *Ancient Near Eastern Themes*, 177.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 54–55 (emphasis added).

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Paul Kahn, *The Secret History of the Mongols: The Origin of Chingis Khan* (San Francisco: North Point, 1984), 42, 48–49, 68.

Charles Halton has noted the parallel shown by my diagram (Amon Ra > Pharaoh, son of Ra, “Ra in his limbs” > warfare > covenant with conquered > temple service, and Jesus, Son of God, God incarnate > warfare > new covenant > temple service), and he has drawn a further parallel with Krishna.<sup>20</sup> Halton seems to think that in doing so he has presented a counterexample to my thesis, but in fact he may have presented further evidence in favor of it. The occurrence of such a parallel in India suggests the very sort of theological production by evil spirits that I have proposed.<sup>21</sup> In any case, to revert to the question Dempster raises, it touches on an issue that, in their own ways, Frazer and Jung also handled, although not in ways that I could endorse.<sup>22</sup> But the question of global parallels is, after all, a subject for another book. My book sought to explore *ancient near eastern themes* (not global themes) in biblical theology. The attempt to do so, and to account for some parallels spiritually, naturally raises questions about theological parallels beyond the ancient Near East, but to engage that question, beyond the sort of general and suggestive comment that I made at the end of the first chapter, lies beyond the proper scope of the book.

Dempster devotes attention to the same parallel between Pharaoh and Christ that Halton notes, but raises a different question about it, namely, the question of temporal distance: “There are connections here, but frequently in his haste to make comparisons the author skips immense temporal gaps.” The spanning of such temporal gaps, however, comes not from a haste to make connections, but from a belief that such apparent parallels have a spiritual substrate. I believe I have drawn an accurate set of parallels between the essential elements of the theology of pharaonic kingdom-advance on the one hand and that of Christ’s kingdom-advance on the other. Such a portrayal of essential elements may be viewed unsympathetically as simplistic by some (although not by Dempster), or it may be viewed as part of the “grammar,” to use Dempster’s term, of ancient near eastern theological thought. I have proposed, in effect, that it is the latter. As such (as noted above) diachronic and synchronic issues become less important and certainly fall short of being determinative any more than diachronic issues impede our recognizing past (and possible future) manifestations of antichrist types, of which each Pharaoh was one.<sup>23</sup> If we are willing to accept John’s statement that there are, have been, and will be many “antichrists” (from ancient near eastern monarchs with divine pretensions through Roman emperor worship, and on to such figures as Napoleon, Hitler, and so on), we already participate in the point of view whose application in comparative biblical theology I have advocated. Similarly it may be true that “a leap of imagination is required to move from 2000 B.C. to the time of Christ and from wars of conquest to the spread of the gospel,” but I would argue for precisely such leaps of imagination, if the elements that

---

<sup>20</sup> Charles Halton, review of Jeffrey J. Niehaus, *Ancient Near Eastern Themes in Biblical Theology*, *JETS* 52 (2009): 133.

<sup>21</sup> Halton elaborates, “This chart and associated discussion are simplistic. It is akin to saying one could substitute Jesus for Nirvana and change Buddhism into Christianity” (review of Niehaus, 133). I think any thoughtful reader will not agree with the kinship that Halton proposes, and my book clearly advocates no such substitutions; such a reader may also question whether my chart or Halton’s comment is the more “simplistic.”

<sup>22</sup> For Frazer, cf. in brief Dempster’s summary of my treatment above. Carl Jung accounted for parallels of religious thought by positing “the universality of the collective unconscious,” which he attributed to the “similarity of the structure of the brain in all races of men, and this similarity in turn is due to a common evolution.” Cf. Niehaus, *Ancient Near Eastern Themes*, 19 (and 16–21 for the more general discussion that includes Frazer, Freud, and Jung).

<sup>23</sup> This observation applies to such apparent problems as the use of, e.g., the shepherd metaphor or the lack of such usage in different periods in Egyptian history, as Dempster notes.

constitute the comparative structures of thought are sufficiently, and so obviously, parallel. Imagination has a role to play in scholarship, just as all scholarship is in one way or another an act of *poiesis*.

A related parallel that appears questionable is that of divine-human covenants. As Dempster rightly observes, “Many times commands can exist without assuming a prior covenantal context.” However, I would note here a work to which Dempster refers, and I am indebted to him for it. Morton Smith, at the end of “The Common Thought of the Ancient Near East,” concludes, “The *relation* between people and god was therefore a contractual one, and the question as to when it was first given dramatic expression *in a formal contract* is one for the history rather of rhetoric than of theology.”<sup>24</sup> Although I disagree with Smith’s classically liberal perspective on the OT and its constituent documents, I entirely agree with him on this. I have recently argued, on theological grounds, that covenant is an idea in the mind of God, or to put it another way, an expression of God’s nature in *relation* to his creatures.<sup>25</sup> Since humans are made in the *imago Dei*, one could reasonably expect that not only the capacity for relationship, but also some of the constituent elements of relationship, being grounded in God’s very nature, would show up in human relationships (e.g., in family relationships, as discussed in my article). It also follows that covenantal elements may be expected to appear in any relationship between one in authority and one who is under that authority. Such elements can be expected to include affirming the authority of the “suzerain,” noticing his prior relationship with and benefits to the “vassal,” and then making requirements of the “vassal” (i.e., stipulations), blessings for obeying the “suzerain” and curses for disobeying. Not all of these elements may be articulated in every conceivable or recorded contractual or power relationship, but we should expect in such power relationships some statement of the most essential elements, namely, those that define the roles of “suzerain” and “vassal” or “boss” and “subordinate” and that stipulate the subordinate party’s obligations to his superior. So, for example, K. A. Kitchen notes that the term *brt* appears as a Canaanite loan word in the Nauri Decree of Year 4 of Sethos I (ca. 1302/1291 B.C.), where it is used for a contract involving hired labor paid at an agreed rate.<sup>26</sup> It also characterizes the contractual situation of a group of hired women during the reign of Merenptah (ca. 1200/1210 B.C.).<sup>27</sup>

Dempster is understandably concerned that one avoid what he calls “covenantal overkill.” However, I respectfully disagree with his understanding of the four examples he cites from my book. One of them (the Philippian jailer episode as it illustrates the concept of household redemption) is properly appreciated if we see it as drawing upon a paradigm foundational in creation, that is, the paradigm of household headship and its potential consequences when dealing with a Suzerain who can bless or curse (as I have argued). The concept of household judgment (or, its alternate, redemption) as a primordial value, is, in effect, built into humanity and human thinking and will appear in a variety of contexts (as,

<sup>24</sup> Morton Smith, “The Common Thought of the Ancient Near East,” *JBL* 71:3 (1952): 145 (emphasis added). I would note here a separate point: the desirability of my interaction with, e.g., Assmann, Bottero, and Snell, as Dempster indicates. I interacted with Bottero, in effect, when I disagreed with Walton’s acceptance of his thesis about the Codex Hammurapi (*Ancient Near Eastern Themes*, 56–57n1). As for the others, and as for Bottero also, although their contributions are clearly very worthwhile and although I do not agree with their understanding of the ancient near eastern data at every point (this applies especially to Bottero), it was not my purpose to interact with their work, since the goal of my book is quite different from theirs. Cf. further comments below.

<sup>25</sup> Niehaus, “Covenant,” 228–30, 245–46.

<sup>26</sup> K. A. Kitchen, “Egypt, Ugarit, Qatna and Covenant,” *UF* 11 (1979): 454–56.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 457, where Kitchen summarizes the Egyptian data under discussion: “By c. 1300 B.C., the term *brt* could be used for contract/compact/agreement, in the economic sphere, for hired labour.”



e.g., in the case of Ghengis Khan, noted above). A second example is that of royal typology in Samson, suggested because he is able to fight with and kill a lion with his bare hands. I would still maintain that an ancient near eastern reader would have, or could have, caught the implication of fitness to be a judge, because monarchs (who could also be called “judges”—cf. the king of Moab as a “judge” in Amos 2:3) claimed to do the very thing that Samson did.<sup>28</sup>

Dempster’s other two examples regard observations by other scholars with whom I agree. The first of these is the commonality of blood shed and smeared on an altar as a covenant sealing ritual in a Hittite example and, in the case of the Mosaic altar, a parallel drawn by Gurney before me.<sup>29</sup> The second is the translation of Hebrew *nir* not as, traditionally, “lamp,” but rather in light of an Assyrian cognate meaning “yoke.” Paul Hanson first proposed this alternative translation.<sup>30</sup> Other scholars have made the same identification, and I believe it has merit.<sup>31</sup> As has been shown to be the case with Hebrew *yom* (“day”), and *yom* (“wind, storm”), both of which also have Assyrian cognates (*ūmū* and *ūmū*), two Hebrew words that look alike may both appear in the OT and cause confusion or lead to mistranslations when the second, though less common, translation value is not appreciated.<sup>32</sup>

Another very valuable question Dempster raises is why the theological substructure I have outlined—what he calls a “grammar” of ancient near eastern thought—“never produced in the ancient near east a narrative similar to that of the Bible.” The possible causes that he indicates, those of continuity and the plethora of divine wills in ancient near eastern perspective, probably played a role in producing a cultural soil (or cultural soils) that were not favorable to the development of historiography as we find it in the OT. Ultimately, however, I believe that this question of historical narrative and its origins can be answered only from the realm of treaty (or covenant), because it is in connection with this genre that most ancient near eastern history appears.

Some years ago I argued that ancient near eastern historiography was rooted in covenant.<sup>33</sup> History writing as we find it in the ancient world suggests that this is so. The ancient Near East provides for the most part two genres of historical narrative: the historical prologues of second millennium B.C. international treaties on the one hand, and royal annals on the other. The first genre is obviously rooted

---

<sup>28</sup> We might also note, e.g., the association of the lion with rule in the blessing of Judah as thematically related (Gen 49:9–10). Cf. Elena Cassin, “Le roi et le lion,” *RHR* 298 (1981): 355–401.

<sup>29</sup> O. R. Gurney, *Some Aspects of Hittite Religion* (The Schweich Lectures, 1976; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 29–30.

<sup>30</sup> Paul Hanson, “The Song of Heshbon and David’s *NIR*,” *HTR* 61:5 (1968): 297–320.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. further, and in agreement with Hanson’s proposal, M. Görg, “Ein ‘Machtzeichen’ Davids 1 Könige xi 36,” *VT* 35 (1985): 363–68; Iain W. Provan, *Hezekiah and the Books of Kings* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1988), 91, who translates 1 Kgs 15:4–5, “Nevertheless, for David’s sake Yahweh his God gave him *dominion* in Jerusalem, setting up his son after him and establishing Jerusalem; because David did what was right in his sight.”

<sup>32</sup> For the two values of *yom*, cf. L. Koehler and W. Baumgartner, *Hebräisches und Aramäisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974), 384. They are followed by William L. Holladay, *Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 131. Cf. also my article on the translation of *yom* in Gen 3:8, “In the Wind of the Storm: Another look at Genesis III 8,” *VT* 44 (1994): 263–67, and subsequently in *God at Sinai*, 155–59.

<sup>33</sup> I put forth this thesis in a rudimentary fashion in “The Warrior and His God: The Covenant Foundation of History and Historiography,” in *Faith, Tradition, and History: Old Testament Historiography in Its Near Eastern Context* (ed. A. R. Millard, James K. Hoffmeier, and David W. Baker; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 299–312.

in covenant, since historical prologues are part of the structure of Hittite international treaties.<sup>34</sup> The second genre, the royal annals, records various royal activities (conquest, sometimes the royal hunt, domestic building projects, temple building or refurbishing, and dedicating booty to the gods), but mostly they record royal conquest. Such conquest involved making new suzerain-vassal treaty relationships (routinely reported, e.g., in Assyrian annalistic tradition by the concluding phrase, “I made them swear the oath of the great gods,” i.e., enter into a suzerain-vassal treaty with the Assyrian emperor). They also involve the reconquest of rebellious vassals (of which the Hittite royal annals also give us some good examples). A study of these two genres makes it obvious that they are history written on the basis of covenant: either the formation of new suzerain-vassal treaties, or the punishment of rebellious vassals and the return of the same, if possible, to their previous vassal condition.<sup>35</sup>

If ancient near eastern historiography is rooted in treaty/covenant, we may expect to find that the same is true of OT historiography. I would submit, and have argued elsewhere, that the same covenantal foundation for historiography is to be found in the OT. Indeed, that is why the historical books, with their covenant-lawsuit undertones, were traditionally referred to as the “former prophets” (and recognition of the same covenant-lawsuit or prophetic perspective has made possible that famous but misguided reconstruction, the “Deuteronomistic History”). However, in addition to a shared foundation in the concept of covenant, there is also a profound difference between the historiography of the ancient Near East and that of the OT. The fact that God truly acted in the history of a people and instituted covenant relations with them answers why the pagan cultures of the ancient Near East never produced such *continuous* historical narrative as we find in the OT. On the one hand, people in the ancient Near East arguably thought they were the people of their gods. This implied both a familial relationship (they could call themselves, e.g., the “sons of Ashur”) and, correspondingly, a covenant relationship. Cross has argued that these nations were sacral leagues, like Israel, in covenant with their god (e.g., “the *am Kemos*, ‘sacral league’ or ‘kindred’ of Chemosh, and Ammon, the *am Milkom*”).<sup>36</sup> On the other hand, however, and this is of the utmost importance, no god ever actually manifested himself among any of them as God did at Sinai, and no god ever actually made a covenant with them as God did there. To have

---

<sup>34</sup> Klaus Baltzer, *The Covenant Formulary* (trans. David E. Green; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971), 11, made a very brief but similar observation about the historical prologue (which he calls the “antecedent history”) of a Hittite treaty: “The description must be considered as a form of historiography.” By “description” he means the account of prior events and relations between the two parties to the treaty, in other words, the “antecedent history” or historical prologue. We should note here the long tradition, amply documented in Mesopotamia, of dedicatory inscriptions that contain historical episodes. Jerrold S. Cooper, *Sumerian and Akkadian Royal Inscriptions, I* (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1986), 13, notes, “The historical narrative is attested as early as Urnanshe, full-blown, as it were, and sources before his reign are too few to pinpoint a specific moment when reports of political successes were introduced into building and dedicatory inscriptions, or commemorated on monuments specially designed for that purpose.” Urnanshe’s reign has been dated ca. 2520 B.C. Such inscriptions portray a range of concepts, including the god’s choice of and commissioning of the king to do various works, from conquests to public works to the impartation of law both for the nation of the god and for subjugated foreign kings and their lands. Such elements obviously have to do with relationships, whether elective or enforced, that entail obligations and thus have a covenantal tone to them, even when covenants are not explicitly mentioned. For the basic concept, cf. Niehaus, “Covenant,” *passim*.

<sup>35</sup> I have just completed an article that touches on the topic, “Covenant and Narrative, God and Time,” which will appear sometime next year in *JETS*.

<sup>36</sup> Frank Cross, *From Epic to Canon, History and Literature in Ancient Israel* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1998), 12.

the concept that you are the “sons” or “people” of your national god and are thus implicitly in covenantal relationship with him is one thing. To have experienced the reality of his redemption and forging of such a relationship, and his intervening again and again to maintain it through history, is quite another.<sup>37</sup> I believe that historiography took the form it did in Israel because, like other ancient near eastern historiography, it reported on relations between suzerain and vassal, but, unlike other ancient near eastern historiography, it could report the successive real encounters with, and actions of, that living Suzerain God among and on behalf of (or even in judgment of) his people. Finally, the clarity of mind, honesty of evaluation, and continuity of purpose shown by Israelite historiography ought justly to be attributed to the action of the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of truth, since the historical books of the OT, like the rest of Scripture, are “God-breathed” (2 Tim 3:16). Not every scholar will be comfortable with such a claim, but evangelical scholars ought to be.

## 2.2. Edgar

I turn now to the review of William Edgar, for which likewise I express appreciation. I am especially grateful for his emphasis on the compatibility of Scripture with the data derived from textual and historical study, an emphasis I share. I also share his concern to understand the relation between the divine inspiration of Scripture, on the one hand, and its humanity, on the other. I have long agreed with Bishop Lowth, for example, in his hierarchical ranking of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel in poetical quality. Ezekiel is far from being the poet that Isaiah is, and yet, the work of both prophets is “God-breathed.” The Spirit works in mysterious cooperation with the particular gifts and background of each biblical writer to produce just what God wanted to say through that writer. Finally, I appreciate Edgar’s affirmation of my book as “an excellent first step” toward understanding the significance of the many parallels between the ancient near eastern data and the biblical data.

As I have proposed, above, the importance of treating the biblical data—and the ancient near eastern data, too—from a spiritual point of view, I also agree with Edgar about the objectivity of God: “God has an objective way of looking at phenomena, which in turn allows us to discover what they are through careful science. A comparative method thus emerges by which the unknown is enlightened by the known.” There is only one objective point of view in the universe, and God has it. Only he knows all things exactly as they are. We can approximate his objectivity to the degree that we come to be in step with the Spirit in the way that we evaluate and understand phenomena, in everything from our personal relationships to the phenomena of the Bible and the ancient Near East.

Like Edgar also, I am far from being a Kantian, and in this regard it may be that referring to God’s breaking “into the historical plane” was unfortunate because it is potentially misleading. God sustains all things by his powerful word (Heb 1:1), which means, I suspect, that his Spirit, working through his Word, is in touch with and sustains all things (as Jesus could say, “The words I speak to you are Spirit, and they are life,” John 6:63). So it certainly follows that God’s general and special revelation “work together, not against the backdrop of history, but within the very fabric of history,” as Edgar says.

---

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Deut 4:32–34 (NIV): “Ask now about the former days, long before your time, from the day God created man on the earth; ask from one end of the heavens to the other. Has anything so great as this ever happened, or has anything like it ever been heard of? Has any other people heard the voice of God speaking out of fire, as you have, and lived? Has any god ever tried to take for himself one nation out of another nation, by testings, by miraculous signs and wonders, by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, or by great and awesome deeds, like all the things the Lord your God did for you in Egypt before your very eyes?”

Edgar poses a couple of questions with regard to my book, and to these I now turn. He asks, “How legitimate are the discoveries of parallels between Egyptian parity treaties and OT covenant treaties of conquest?” This question perplexes me a little. I cannot see what Egyptian parity treaties (of which we have only one exemplar, that between Rameses II and Hattusilis III) should have to do with “OT covenant treaties of conquest” (of which we have few instances, e.g., in Josh 9, since God commanded Israel to exterminate those they conquered and explicitly forbade Israel to make treaties with them). Edgar may have intended to question parallels between Egyptian suzerain-vassal treaties and the OT Suzerain-vassal covenants (e.g., the Adamic, Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic). Since Edgar mentions Weeks’ work on the topic, I assume that this is his concern, and it is an appropriate topic to raise.

Weeks notes the paucity of documentary evidence for Egyptian suzerain-vassal treaties, and provides some possible explanations for it.<sup>38</sup> I suspect that the reason for such apparent lack is akin to the reason we find no pharaonic legal corpus (e.g., no “Codex Thutmoses III” comparable to the “Codex Hammurapi”): since Pharaoh was considered to be a god, his word was law.<sup>39</sup> This would apply to foreign vassals, as well as to Egyptians. Indeed, what I wrote in *Ancient Near Eastern Themes* would be consistent with this understanding: Pharaoh’s job was to extend the borders of Egypt and to make the conquered people both people and *servants* of Amon Ra and the gods of Egypt.<sup>40</sup> Whether or not the future presents us with newly uncovered Egyptian suzerain-vassal *treaties*, a *de facto* suzerain-vassal *relationship* obtained between any pharaoh and any king or kingdom that he conquered.<sup>41</sup> As I have written above, it is the relationship that is essential, and that is what we find in the Egyptian conquest of foreign peoples, who are then made part of the land of Egypt (in theory at least) and people of Amon-Ra, pay tribute to Pharaoh, and even become servants in the temples of Egypt’s gods.<sup>42</sup> They are effectively vassals, subject to Pharaoh and the gods of Egypt.<sup>43</sup> It follows that the parallelism that I propose between Pharaoh, the supposed incarnate god, and Christ, the true incarnate God, contains an element of effective covenantal relationship in each case.

Edgar raises two other matters that I would like to address. One is the broad socio-historical question of “the influences and affinities between these different cultures.” With regard to this question, I affirm what Edgar says: “one book cannot accomplish too many purposes.” My purpose is to demonstrate by quoting relevant data that the elements of a shared theological structure of thought can be found

<sup>38</sup> Weeks, *Admonition and Curse*, 111; cf. 99–112 for the Egyptian treaty question more broadly.

<sup>39</sup> Weeks makes essentially the same point, 111. The same consideration—the supremacy of a pharaoh above merely human considerations—may be the cause why circumlocutions such as “brotherhood” and “friendship,” which as Weeks notes are standard in references to treaty relationships, occur in the Amarna correspondence, whereas the normal terms for treaty or oath (Akk. *riksu*, *mamitu*) do not. Cf. Weeks, 100–101.

<sup>40</sup> Niehaus, *Ancient Near Eastern Themes*, 68–69.

<sup>41</sup> Weeks points out that the administrative details of such a relationship would be carried out by subordinate Egyptian officials (103–11).

<sup>42</sup> All of which I discuss in “Covenant and Conquest,” ch. 3 in *Ancient Near Eastern Themes*.

<sup>43</sup> I note briefly here the same concept of territorial addition and its legal/treaty implications in Assyrian royal tradition, where the conquering emperor (in ancient near eastern parlance, the “great king”) added “land to his land and people to his people” with each conquest—and such additions were legally sealed by causing the conquered to “swear the oath of the great gods,” i.e., enter into treaty with the Assyrian suzerain. For the continuity of such phrases in Assyrian royal tradition, cf. Riecke Borger, *Einleitung in die assyrischen Königsinschriften, erster Theil* (Leiden: Brill, 1961), and Wolfgang Schramm, *Einleitung in die assyrischen Königsinschriften, zweiter Theil* (Leiden: Brill, 1973).

throughout the ancient Near East. I suggest that such a structure might also be found beyond the ancient Near East, although probably in increasingly attenuated forms, and in modern western cultures, not at all. I take this approach with the understanding that the Bible got it right: that the demonstrated structure of thought does indeed represent the way that God had operated with his people through history as part of his program of salvation in which the making of successive covenants played a key role. This understanding enables us to recognize parallel structural elements in ancient near eastern data (as Edgar says, “A comparative method thus emerges by which the unknown is enlightened by the known”). It is not part of my purpose, then, to produce a comparative study of ancient near eastern cultures or to suggest how one culture might have influenced another.<sup>44</sup> As we have seen, if Pharaoh, Krishna, and Christ can all be part of a parallel structure of thought, then that structure of thought is more likely to be spiritual in its origin than cross-cultural.

The second question has to do with “the larger issue of God’s purposes in judging the very sinful cultures of the ANE, especially when Israel sinfully accommodates them.” Here again, although I affirm such a point and will readily discuss it in the forthcoming biblical theology, I do not see it as germane to the purpose of my book. Similar matters (i.e., those worthy of discussion but not germane to my purpose) might be the transcendence of God (as opposed to the immanence of the deities of the ancient Near East), the presence of eschatology in the OT and NT, or even, to pick a manifestly NT datum, the triune nature of the true God. My purpose is not to review the qualities of God or of his activity that set him apart from the deities of the ancient Near East, but rather, to explore and demonstrate a shared structure of thought.

As I review these last two questions raised by Edgar, I also affirm them as, to use his words, “an encouragement to take the next step and commend the uniqueness of revelation, stemming from the unique and self-authenticating God of the universe.” To do so will be a fundamental purpose of the future biblical theology.

### ***3. Conclusion***

I revert here to Smith’s article on the common thought of the ancient Near East. That thought, as he understood it, was as follows: a contractual relationship existed between a people and their gods, and that relationship included obligations of worship and sacrifice (i.e., cultic law) as well as prescribed and proscribed behavior in the land (i.e., social law):

But as father and king, the god of worship is just as well as merciful, an object—not to say an objectification—of fear as well as love. His justice has accordingly expressed itself in the law, both the law of his cult and the law of the land, which he has given or caused to be given . . . it should be noticed that everywhere the civil law, like the cult law, is the god’s law, and an offender against either is an offender against the god.<sup>45</sup>

I have argued elsewhere for the intimate connection between family and covenant, an argument Gruenler made before me, and one that Cross and Hafemann have also, each in his own way, affirmed.<sup>46</sup>

---

<sup>44</sup> As noted above in n11.

<sup>45</sup> Smith, “The Common Theology of the Ancient Near East,” 142–44.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Royce Gordon Gruenler, *The Trinity in the Gospel of John: A Thematic Commentary on the Fourth Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986), 12–13, 19–20; F. M. Cross, *From Epic to Canon, History and Literature in Ancient Israel* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1998), 17; Scott Hafemann, “The Covenant Relationship,” in *Central*

I have argued that such a connection exists as part of the *imago Dei* because God is from the beginning in covenant with his human family, who are made in his image.<sup>47</sup> It is no surprise that such creational ideas later appeared in the fallen cultures of the ancient Near East.

Although Smith's study of ancient near eastern theology builds upon presuppositions that I do not share regarding the nature of Scripture, he succeeds in outlining some of the basic elements (e.g., a god in contractual relationship with a people, the divine donation of law, and divine blessing or punishment according to a people's obedience or disobedience) of a larger paradigm that obtained not only in the Bible but also in the ancient Near East. Producing and demonstrating that paradigm is the goal of my book. As I indicated in my first chapter, and indeed in the book's title, my goal is to demonstrate that larger paradigm within the ancient near eastern and biblical domains. That self-limitation is purposeful.<sup>48</sup> Others may wish to pursue the occurrence of such a structure globally. I myself may make such a pursuit ancillary to a future biblical theology.

One cannot address all topics in one book, and there may be some topics that I should have pursued more completely in *Ancient Near Eastern Themes* (although I think there are some concepts I could not have pursued more completely at the time of the book's composition). I am grateful for the opportunity provided by *Themelios* and by the reviews of Dempster and Edgar to elaborate more fully on some concepts and to answer the valuable questions they raise. I am especially grateful for the opportunity to discuss further the issue of the spiritual causation of some theological parallels and what such causation implies for the significance of cultural influences (and of diachronicity and synchronicity). When I began the collection of essays for ETS conferences that eventually led to the book, I had no idea that the spiritual dimension would loom so large. But the longer I live the more convinced I am, not only of the spiritual nature of our universe, but also of the pervasive quality of spiritual influences globally, culturally, and even individually. Scholarship—including scholarship in institutions that discredit such spiritual realities—is not immune to spiritual influence.<sup>49</sup> I hope that biblically considering such matters will become more acceptable as part of the scholar's kit in days to come.

---

*Themes in Biblical Theology* (ed. Scott Hafemann and Paul House; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 26–27.

<sup>47</sup> Niehaus, "Covenant," 225–29.

<sup>48</sup> In this, too, I agree with Smith's earlier approach, and I also suspect he may be correct with regard to more global manifestations of the same ideas: "Such was the common theology of the ancient Near East—and not only of the ancient Near East, but of most periods and countries where polytheism has been the religion of civilized peoples. In describing it I have discussed only its appearance in the ancient Near East, because that alone is usually referred to in the study of the OT" (Smith, "The Common Theology of the Ancient Near East," 146).

<sup>49</sup> One might reflect here ironically on the perspective of Bultmann, illustrated by his above comment.

PASTORAL PENSÉES

# Motivations to Appeal to in Our Hearers When We Preach for Conversion<sup>1</sup>

— D. A. Carson —

---

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

---

**M**ost of us, I suspect, develop fairly standard ways, one might even say repetitive ways, to appeal to the motivations of our hearers when we preach the gospel. Recently, however, I have wondered if I have erred in this respect—not so much in what I say as in what I never or almost never say. What follows is in some ways a *mea culpa*, plus some indication of why I think the topic should be important for all of us.

Before I survey the motivations themselves, I should specify that because the gospel is to be preached to both unbelievers and believers, the motivations that here interest me may be found among both parties. Nevertheless, I shall tilt the discussion toward those motivations of *unbelievers* to which we should appeal when we preach the gospel to them, aiming, in God’s mercy, at their conversion.

## *1. A Survey of Possible Motivations*

The eight motivations I am about to list are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Several may, and often do, coexist at one time and in one person. In no particular order of importance:

### **1.1 Fear**

The Letter to the Hebrews insists that people are kept all their lives in fear of death but that the coming of the Son of God as a human being, a son of Abraham, set in train the destruction of him who has the power of death, namely, the devil himself (Heb 2:14–18). With respect to this particular fear, then, the preaching of the gospel promises a *reduction* in fear. On the other hand, in various ways Jesus tells his hearers to fear him who has power to destroy body and soul in hell (Matt 10:38). Not a few of the parables end in a simple polarity: gathered into barns or burned (Matt 13:30), entering the home of the wedding feast or being shut outside where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matt 22:10–13), and so forth. Some apocalyptic images depict people calling for the rocks and mountains to fall on them and hide them from the wrath of the Lamb (Luke 23:30; Rev 6:15–17). Belonging to the same theme are

---

<sup>1</sup> This article is a lightly edited manuscript from a paper presented on May 19, 2010 at The Gospel Coalition’s Pastors’ Colloquium in Deerfield, Illinois.

texts asking us, rhetorically, where the profit lies if we gain the whole world but lose our own souls (Matt 16:26), or the insistence that it is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Heb 10:31).

Obviously it is possible to preach the wrath of God in such an angry and self-righteous fashion that we bear a much closer resemblance to Elmer Gantry than to Jesus Christ. On the other hand, in addition to the example of Jesus and the apostles, we have occasional examples from church history where God has used the appeal to the fear of judgment in powerful ways. The best known witness is doubtless Jonathan Edwards's "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," which I reread some weeks ago to remind myself how biblical most of it is.

### 1.2. The Burden of Guilt

I specify "the burden of guilt" instead of "guilt" because I prefer to use the latter for one's moral and legal status before the holy God. In other words, one may *be* very guilty and not feel guilty, that is, not labor under any burden of guilt. If one is in fact guilty but feels nothing of the burden of guilt, the objective guilt is not a motivation for conversion. Until one cries, in these words or something similar, "Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight" (Ps 51:4),<sup>2</sup> one is not strongly motivated by the burden of guilt. On the other hand, that guilt, rightly perceived, can be a crushing burden and thus a powerful and desperate motivation for relief.

It is a truism of much Reformed theology, not least Puritan theology, that the law must do its work before grace can do its work. Without an adequate dose of the former, the latter is likely merely to heal the wounds of the people slightly (to use King James English). That Puritan heritage influenced many who were, strictly speaking, outside that heritage. For example, John Wesley's advice to a young minister on how to preach the gospel in any new situation is replete with this perspective.<sup>3</sup> The text to which many in this tradition appealed was Gal 3: the law is our παιδαγωγός to bring us to Christ, for the law was added to turn sin into transgression, to make us see our fault, to shut us up under condemnation (Gal 3:19–25). Careful exegesis of Gal 3 has often shown, of course, that this interpretation is substantially mistaken: Gal 3 is less interested in the psychological and moral profile of the person transitioning from guilt to grace, than in unpacking the place of the Mosaic law in redemptive history. Nevertheless, the Puritan vision of the place of the law is not as off-base as some think. For even if Paul's primary point in Gal 3 is to locate the law's rightful place in redemptive history, over against the place that many Palestinian first-century Jews thought it should have, the conclusion one must inevitably draw is that God took extraordinary pains to establish and nurture the law-covenant across a millennium and a half as *preparatio Christi*. Total ignorance of this OT background is one of the reasons that so many in contemporary culture feel almost no burden of guilt when they are first confronted with the Bible, with Jesus, with the gospel. In fact, nurtured on a spongy epistemology, many hear the law's demands and conclude, at least initially, that the God who thought this lot up is not worth respecting, for he must be a manipulative and power-hungry despot. Still, at some point the burden of guilt catches up with many people, and it can become a powerful motivation in their conversion.

---

<sup>2</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture citations are from *Today's New International Version* (TNIV), © 2005.

<sup>3</sup> John Wesley, "To an Evangelical Layman," in *The Works of John Wesley: Volume 26: Letters II: 1740–1755* (ed. Frank Baker; Oxford: Clarendon, 1982), 482–89.



### 1.3. Shame

A glance at the literature shows how difficult it is to distinguish absolutely between guilt and shame. Some cultural anthropologists speak of “shame cultures” as if such cultures know little of guilt, and of some traditional Western cultures as if they are guilt-ridden but know little of shame: the two kinds of cultures are sometimes treated as if they are categorically disjunctive. Some in the field of psychiatry assert that guilt arises from what we do, while shame arises from what we are, but that is certainly not a biblical distinction. In the Bible we may be guilty and feel guilty for what we are, and equally we may be ashamed of what we do.

In popular parlance, I suspect that shame has more to do with losing face, primarily (though not exclusively) in horizontal relationships. Nevertheless, if one loses face before one’s family or peers, it is usually because one has done something “wrong” as judged by those peers, so it is hard to see why guilt feelings do not also intrude. Similarly, one may be genuinely guilty of some sort of moral breach and be ashamed of what one has done. Initially Adam and Eve are naked and unashamed: they have nothing to hide. But when sin changes everything, does Adam hide from God because he feels guilty or because he feels ashamed? Must one choose? Nevertheless, there does appear to be a slight difference in focus between the two: shame has to do with losing face, often objectively, and hence feeling shamed. Such loss of face commonly springs from one’s own faults, but of course it may spring from something one has endured—like David’s envoys who are ashamed of losing half their beards at the hands of the Ammonites and whom David therefore consoles by instructing them to remain at Jericho until their beards grow back (2 Sam 10:1–5). They have lost face, but of course in this instance they are not guilty of anything.

Many have argued that in a culture like ours, which protests that it is unmoved by the law’s demands and that refuses to admit to guilt feelings because it refuses to admit to guilt, a better way to unpack the nature of sin is to unfold the nature of idolatry rather than the nature of law. Idolatry is bound up with corrosive relationships, with de-godding God, with shameful distortions and substitutions; and, it is argued, these evils are more easily admitted among yuppie postmoderns than are the evils of transgressing law. In other words, shame is more readily acknowledged than guilt.

### 1.4. The Need for “Future Grace”

When John Piper unpacks this category, he has primarily Christians in view. Historically, however, a great deal of evangelism has been carried out by urging people to prepare to meet God, to receive the grace now that alone prepares a sinner for resurrection-existence in the new heaven and the new earth. Where is the profit in gaining the world and losing one’s soul? Where there is widespread belief that one must finally give an account to a holy God who does not grade on the curve, this sort of appeal carries quite a lot of weight. The motivations to which one appeals are a mixture of fear (which I have already mentioned) and the desire to be found right, just, before this God, acceptable to him.

### 1.5. The Attractiveness of Truth

Frequently the apostles declare that they bear witness to the truth, that they declare the truth, that they do not peddle the truth, that they cannot do other than speak the truth, that they speak the truth plainly in the eyes of all, and so forth (e.g., John 19:35; Rom 9:1; 2 Cor 4:2; 11:10; 13:8). The assumption, of course, is that by the grace of God, the truth itself is attractive to some. Cornelius was such a man. He was a good deal more eager to hear the truth, at least initially, than Peter was to declare it. For those

with eyes to see and ears to hear, the truth can be self-attesting; for others, like some of Jesus' opponents in John 8, the truth is precisely what is detested: "Because I tell you the truth, you do not believe" (John 8:45; cf. also Isa 6, cited in Matt 13 and elsewhere). To draw an analogy: the one gospel can be a wonderful aroma to those who are being saved and a disgusting stench to those who are perishing (1 Cor 1:18). So also the truth can appear wonderful to those who by grace begin to see its beauty and compelling nature, while actually causing offense and unbelief in those who are perishing.

When I was a young man, many university missions spent a lot of time defending, say, the deity of Christ or his resurrection from the dead. The widespread assumption, both among the evangelists and among many of the student hearers, was that if one accepted the truth of these claims, one was already on the path toward becoming a Christian. This assumption sustained quite a lot of evidentialist apologetics. The approach is flawed in several ways, of course. James reminds us that the devil knows and believes such truths, but such "faith" does not save him (James 2:19). Granted, however, the need for grace to enable the "natural" person to perceive the truth, one cannot deny that one of the motivations in people as they begin to "close" with Christ (to use an old Puritan expression) is the attractiveness of the truth. While some in Athens sneered, others, in some ways already hooked by what the apostle Paul was saying, wanted to hear him again on these matters (Acts 17:32). They were drawn to the truth.

### **1.6. A General, Despairing Sense of Need**

It is pretty clear from the Gospel accounts that many who pursued Jesus did not do so out of a well thought-through theology (e.g., law precedes gospel, and they were under deep conviction of sin), but out of desperation fed by their most acutely perceived need. Witness the woman with the history of hemorrhaging (Matt 9:20–21), the two blind men by the side of the road calling for the Son of David to have mercy on them (Matt 9:27), the Syrophenician woman (Mark 7:25–28), and many others. In some cases, of course, Jesus responds to such needs yet also pushes on a little farther to deal with the sin in their lives (the Samaritan woman [John 4:10–18], the man by the pool of Bethesda [John 5:5–14]). Moreover, it does not follow that everyone who is healed by Jesus is "saved" in the fullest theological sense of that word. For instance, nine of the ten healed lepers do not have the courtesy of gratitude, let alone saving faith (Luke 17:11–19). Yet where there is a whole-hearted and desperate plea to Jesus, even absent much theological understanding, it is wonderful to see how embracing Jesus is.

Pastoral experience supports this assessment. Many of us have witnessed people turning to Christ with remarkably little exact theological knowledge. The knowledge comes later. Why these people come, at least initially, is that they need help, need it desperately, and turn to Jesus. This may prove to be part of a broader, whole-life turning to Jesus. Their initial motivations, however, are all bound up with desperation.

### **1.7. Responding to Grace and Love**

Both Testaments repeatedly emphasize the matchless love and grace of God. Some are drawn to Christ when they begin to glimpse the Father's love for this damned world in sending his Son to the cross, and the Son's love in accomplishing his Father's will. One suspects that the appellation Mary and Martha had for their brother Lazarus—"the one you love," they say to Jesus (John 11:3)—reflects a common experience: so many felt peculiarly loved by Jesus, even the Fourth Evangelist himself (John 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20). Paul cannot talk long about justification and the cross-work of Christ without breaking out with an adoring exclamation such as "who loved me and gave himself for me"

(Gal 2:20). Whether it is the love of the proverbial father for his prodigal sons (Luke 15:20–24) or the assertion that Christ loved the church and gave himself for her (Eph 5:25, 29), whether it is the gut-wrenching portrayal of the love of God in Hosea or Paul’s prayer that believers might have the power, together with all the saints, to grasp the limitless dimensions of that love (Eph 3:17–19), the response to the love of God is one of the most powerful motivations people experience, not only when they first close with Christ but also when they mature in Christ.

### **1.8. A Rather Vague Desire to Be on the Side of What Is Right, of What Is from God, of What Is Biblical, of What Is Clean, of What Endures**

I know that sounds terribly vague. If I had to attach one word to what I am talking about, it would probably be the motivation of hope. Consider the encounters with Jesus in John 1:19–51. The Baptist’s disciples begin to follow Jesus because their master had pointed to him. They clearly hope he is the one to come. The christological confession at Caesarea Philippi (“You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God” [Matt 16:16]) is part of this hope, of course—even though the context shows the apostles at this point have no category for a crucified Messiah. The same sort of longing, with even less theological understanding, is reflected in the desire of Zacchaeus to entertain Jesus in his home (Luke 19:6). I am not trying to specify exactly when the apostles or Zacchaeus were converted. I am pointing out merely that at least part of their motivations in pursuing Jesus, at least initially, lay in their desire to see if he really would fulfill Scripture-anticipation, if a good and powerful man would come to the home of a corrupt civil servant. They hoped so. Transparently, such hope can merge with other motivations already listed: people may hope for release from the burden of guilt, hope to be justified by God on the last day, hope that things will turn out well both short-term and in eternity.

So I turn now from this survey of possible motivations that people display when they turn to Jesus and offer:

## ***2. Four Theological and Pastoral Reflections on This Survey***

1. *We do not have the right to choose only one of these motivations in people and to appeal to it restrictively.*

Consider an analogy. It has become common to speak of half a dozen distinguishable models of the atonement. I do not much like the rubric, but I shall use it for the sake of convenience. Many is the recent book that argues that since all these “models” are grounded in Scripture, we are free to choose the one we prefer. But that is precisely what we are not free to do, unless we conceive of Scripture as little more than a case-book, an inspired volume of cases, warranting readers to glom onto those few cases, and only those cases, that seem to fit their own situations or preferences most closely. If we hold to a more traditional and faithful understanding of Scripture, then to the extent that the various models of the atonement are warranted by Scripture, we must hold to all of them—and then work out how each is related to the others, what holds them together, where there is a priority among them that is established by Scripture itself, and so forth. But we dare not choose merely one or two of them.

So also here. Insofar as these diverse motivations enjoy biblical precedent or even biblical warrant, preachers do not have the right to appeal to only one or two motivations as if they were the only legitimate ones. We ought to appeal, at various times, to all these motivations—and, again, work out how each is related to the others, what holds them together, and where there is a priority among them that is

established by Scripture itself. But we do not have the right to appeal constantly to, say, fear before God, without also on occasion appealing to other biblically illustrated and sanctioned motivations.

2. *On the other hand, we may have the right to emphasize one motivation more than others.*

In the same way that the structure and emphases of Paul's evangelistic addresses could change, depending on whether he was addressing biblically literate Jews and proselytes (Acts 13) or completely biblically illiterate pagans (Acts 17), so the particular motivations to which we appeal may vary according to our knowledge of our audience. In a somewhat similar vein, if we are addressing biblically literate but unregenerate people, some of our appeal will presuppose that they know the Scriptures at some level, that many of them, say, will be convinced that there is a judgment to be faced, a heaven to be gained, a hell to be shunned and feared. By contrast, if we are addressing biblically illiterate people, then although all those themes will at some point have to be introduced, our initial appeals may sound quite different. Some motivations are of course unworthy, and we should never appeal to them. For example, "Come to Jesus, and you will receive a lot of cargo,"<sup>4</sup> or "Turn to Jesus, and you will always be free of trouble." Where motivations are not unworthy, however, and especially where they are biblically sanctioned, we may find it particularly appropriate to appeal to certain motivations rather more than others.

It would be easy to go through the list I laid out and conjure up situations where it is the part of prudential wisdom to appeal to one or two motivations rather more often than to all the rest. Had we time, it would be an excellent exercise to envisage the kind of audience that ought to find us appealing to primarily this or that motivation in our hearers.

3. *Nevertheless, the comprehensiveness of our appeal to diverse motivations will reflect the comprehensiveness of our grasp of the gospel.*

Once again, let me draw an analogy first before establishing my point. For the last fifteen or twenty years, many of us have wrestled long and hard with the doctrine of justification, judging that something essential to the gospel is at stake in the current discussions. The result, however, is that we have sometimes so tied the gospel and conversion to the question of our right standing before God that we have downplayed the new birth. We have emphasized Christ's bearing our guilt and the nature of imputation without correspondingly emphasizing the regenerating work of the Spirit and the gospel as the power of God, the same power that raised Jesus from the dead, in transforming our lives, in our becoming part of the new creation. Suppose, then, that we managed to emphasize both of these elements of conversion appropriately (let us call them the forensic and the transformative). We might, of course, then tumble into neglect of the running biblical tension between our joy in the kingdom of God now already operating in the reign of King Jesus and the joy that awaits the consummation of that kingdom in the resurrection-existence of the new heaven and the new earth. Understanding this tension will engender hope, thereby reinforcing all the motivations that spring from a godly anticipation of what God has promised that still lies ahead. In other words, while the exigencies of our pastoral location during these past twenty years have demanded that we focus on forensic elements of the gospel and conversion, a robust biblical theology demands that part of our ministry be taken up by the biblical exigencies, the shape of the gospel itself, the rich and complex nature of its outworking in conversion and in the spiritual maturation of the believer and of the church.

So also this matter of choosing the motivations to which we appeal—choices that largely shape our sermons. For pastoral reasons, we may decide, for instance, that our particular audience, with its endless frustrated and idolatrous relationships and its suspicion of law-categories, needs a heavy emphasis on

---

<sup>4</sup> Cf. neo-Melanesian "cargo cults," or our own health, wealth, and prosperity gospels.

the generosity and freedom of God's grace: our God, as Tim Keller likes to put it, is an overwhelmingly prodigal God.<sup>5</sup> Well and good. But the Bible itself depicts Jesus inciting fear in the hearts of people with his insistence that the God with whom they have to deal "can destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matt 10:28). Again, Jesus openly appeals to motivations that seek eternal rather than temporary and material rewards. He does not hesitate to elicit awareness of guilt and to invoke shame: Who goes home justified, the Pharisee or the publican (Luke 18:9–14)? Who gives more, the wealthy givers or the widow with her two mites (Mark 12:41–44)?

So while we may, for pastoral reasons, initially choose to appeal to certain motivations and not others, it is surely the path of biblical faithfulness so to teach and preach the Word of God that we awaken new motivations in the hearts and minds of our people as we unpack the complex richness of the glorious gospel of our blessed God. If instead we find ourselves constantly appealing to the same two or three motivations while ignoring others, it is probably because our choices are too much shaped by our perceptions of local cultural needs and too little shaped by the richness of the biblical gospel. Sooner or later, our people may read their Bibles with limiting and even dangerous blinkers that we ourselves have given them.

*4. To put this another way, all of the biblically sanctioned motivations for pursuing God, for pursuing Christ, say complementary things about God himself, such that failure to cover the sweep of motivations ultimately results in diminishing God.*

Thus, the motivations characterized by fear are bound up with the truth that God is holy, that he is rightfully our Judge, that he gathers some into his presence and casts others into outer darkness, that his knowledge of us is perfect, extending not only to a grasp of our motives but even to a full-bore knowledge of what we would have done under different circumstances (a form of so-called "middle knowledge"). The burden of guilt reminds us that God does not grade on the curve, and unless we are justified by the one who is himself just while justifying the ungodly, there is no hope for us.

And so we could work through the list. The point to be made is simple: any failure to appeal to the full range of biblically exemplified and biblically sanctioned motivations not only means that there are some people we are not taking into account, but, more seriously, that there are elements in the character and attributes of God himself that we are almost certainly ignoring.

---

<sup>5</sup> Timothy Keller, *The Prodigal God: Recovering the Heart of the Christian Faith* (New York: Dutton, 2008).

# Book Reviews

## — OLD TESTAMENT —

- Ellen F. Davis. *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture: An Agrarian Reading of the Bible.* 269  
Reviewed by Tim Barker
- Ellen van Wolde. *Reframing Biblical Studies: When Language and Text Meet Culture, Cognition, and Context.* Reviewed by Tarcizio F. Carvalho 271
- David L. Baker. *Tight Fists or Open Hands? Wealth and Poverty in the Old Testament.* 272  
Reviewed by Daniel Santos Jr.

## — NEW TESTAMENT —

- Gordon D. Fee. *The First and Second Letters to the Thessalonians.* 274  
Reviewed by Anthony C. Brammall
- Stefan Nordgaard Svendsen. *Allegory Transformed: The Appropriation of Philonic Hermeneutics in the Letter to the Hebrews.* Reviewed by Jared M. Compton 276
- Peter T. O'Brien. *The Letter to the Hebrews. Pillar New Testament Commentary.* 278  
Reviewed by Jared M. Compton
- Andreas J. Köstenberger and Terry L. Wilder, eds. *Entrusted with the Gospel: Paul's Theology in the Pastoral Epistles.* Reviewed by Malcolm J. Gill 279
- Craig A. Evans. *Holman QuickSource Guide to the Dead Sea Scrolls.* 281  
Reviewed by Daniel M. Gurtner
- Seyoon Kim. *Christ and Caesar: The Gospel and the Roman Empire in the Writings of Paul and Luke.* Reviewed by Justin K. Hardin 282
- Te-Li Lau. *The Politics of Peace: Ephesians, Dio Chrysostom, and the Confucian Four Books.* 284  
Reviewed by Joshua W. Jipp
- Matthew Sleeman. *Geography and the Ascension Narrative in Acts.* 286  
Reviewed by Joshua W. Jipp
- James W. Thompson. *Hebrews.* Reviewed by Barry C. Joslin 288
- Andreas J. Köstenberger. *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters: The Word, the Christ, the Son of God.* Reviewed by Colin G. Kruse 290
- Oswaldo Padilla. *The Speeches of Outsiders in Acts: Poetics, Theology and Historiography.* 291  
Reviewed by Kenneth D. Litwak
- Christopher A. Beetham. *Echoes of Scripture in the Letter of Paul to the Colossians.* 293  
Reviewed by Jason C. Meyer

## Book Reviews

---

- Mark D. Given, ed. *Paul Unbound: Other Perspectives on the Apostle*. 295  
Reviewed by Jason C. Meyer
- Anthony C. Thiselton. *The Living Paul: An Introduction to the Apostle's Life and Thought*. 297  
Reviewed by Jason C. Meyer
- Jonathan T. Pennington. *Heaven and Earth in the Gospel of Matthew*. 298  
Reviewed by Scott Newman
- Joel B. Green, ed. *Hearing the New Testament: Strategies for Interpretation*. 2nd ed. 300  
Reviewed by Dane Ortlund
- R. C. Sproul. *John*. Reviewed by Eric C. Redmond 302
- David L. Baker. *Two Testaments, One Bible: The Theological Relationship between the Old and New Testaments*. 3rd ed. Reviewed by Peter Sanlon 305
- Matthew C. Hoskinson. *Assurance of Salvation: Implications of a New Testament Theology of Hope*. Reviewed by Thomas R. Schreiner 306
- Douglas Atchison Campbell. *The Deliverance of God: An Apocalyptic Rereading of Justification in Paul*. Reviewed by Mark A. Seifrid 307
- Michael F. Bird and Preston M. Sprinkle, eds. *The Faith of Jesus Christ: Exegetical, Biblical, and Theological Studies: The Pistis Christou Debate*. Reviewed by Moisés Silva 309
- Eckhard J. Schnabel. *Paul the Missionary: Realities, Strategies and Methods*. 312  
Reviewed by Brian J. Tabb
- Michael J. Gorman. *Elements of Biblical Exegesis: A Basic Guide for Students and Ministers*. Rev. and expanded ed. Reviewed by Alistair I. Wilson 314
- Lynn H. Cohick. *Women in the World of the Earliest Christians: Illuminating Ancient Ways of Life*. Reviewed by Robert W. Yarbrough 315

### — HISTORY AND HISTORICAL THEOLOGY —

- Gerald R. McDermott. *The Great Theologians: A Brief Guide*. Reviewed by Peter Beck 317
- Owen Strachan and Douglas A. Sweeney. *The Essential Edwards Collection*. 5 vols. 320  
Reviewed by Peter Beck
- Randall Balmer. *The Making of Evangelicalism: From Revivalism to Politics and Beyond*. 322  
Reviewed by Nathan A. Finn
- Eugene TeSelle. *Augustine*. Reviewed by Lee Gatiss 324
- Douglas A. Sweeney. *Jonathan Edwards and the Ministry of the Word*. 325  
Reviewed by Matthew S. Harmon
- Soong-Chan Rah. *The Next Evangelicalism: Releasing the Church from Western Cultural Captivity*. Reviewed by J. Ryan West 327

## — SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY AND BIOETHICS —

- Michael Sudduth. *The Reformed Objection to Natural Theology*. 329  
Reviewed by James N. Anderson
- Ligon Duncan, ed. *The Westminster Confession into the 21st Century: Essays in Remembrance of the 350th Anniversary of the Westminster Assembly*. 3 vols. 331  
Reviewed by Matthew Barrett
- Timothy Ward. *Words of Life: Scripture as the Living and Active Word of God*. 334  
Reviewed by Andrew Curry
- Peter J. Thuesen. *Predestination: The American Career of a Contentious Doctrine*. 336  
Reviewed by Paul Kjoss Helseth
- Michael Northcott and R. J. Berry, eds. *Theology after Darwin*. Reviewed by Douglas F. Kelly 337
- Robert Wuthnow. *After the Baby Boomers: How Twenty- and Thirty-Somethings Are Shaping the Future of American Religion*. Reviewed by Henry H. Kim 339
- Maarten Wise, Marcel Sarot, and Willemien Otten. *Scholasticism Reformed: Essays in Honor of Willem J. van Asselt*. Reviewed by Martin I. Klauber 341
- Miroslav Volf, Ghazi bin Muhammad, and Melissa Yarrington, eds. *A Common Word: Muslims and Christians on Loving God and Neighbor*. Reviewed by Chawkat Moucarray 343
- William M. Struthers. *Wired for Intimacy. How Pornography Hijacks the Male Brain*. 345  
Reviewed by Franklin E. Payne
- Thomas J. Marinello and H. H. Drake Williams III, eds. *My Brother's Keeper: Essays in Honor of Ellis R. Brotzman*. Reviewed by Nicholas G. Piotrowski 347
- Oliver O'Donovan. *The Word in Small Boats: Sermons from Oxford*. 349  
Reviewed by Greg R. Scharf
- Stephen Fowl. *Theological Interpretation of Scripture*. 350  
Reviewed by Ched Spellman
- Michael Ruse. *Science and Spirituality: Making Room for Faith in the Age of Science*. 353  
Reviewed by Charles Taliaferro
- Mark E. Powell. *Papal Infallibility: A Protestant Evaluation of an Ecumenical Issue*. 356  
Reviewed by Jeffrey C. Waddington
- Ron Highfield. *Great Is the Lord: Theology for the Praise of God*. 358  
Reviewed by David H. Wenkel

## — ETHICS AND PASTORALIA —

- Chris Castaldo. *Holy Ground: Walking with Jesus as a Former Catholic*. 359  
Reviewed by Tim Augustyn



## Book Reviews

---

- Edward T. Welch. *Running Scared: Fear, Worry and the God of Rest and When I Am Afraid: A Step-By-Step Guide Away from Fear and Anxiety*. Reviewed by Tim Chester 361
- John Howard Yoder. *Christian Attitudes to War, Peace, and Revolution*. Reviewed by Guido de Graaff 362
- Tim Chester. *Captured by a Better Vision: Living Porn-Free* [American title: *Closing the Window: Steps to Living Porn Free*]. Reviewed by Mark Meynell 364
- Zondervan Bible Reference Bundle*. 87 vols. Reviewed by Andrew David Naselli 365
- Jonathan Leeman. *The Church and the Surprising Offense of God's Love: Reintroducing the Doctrines of Church Membership and Discipline*. Reviewed by Thomas R. Schreiner 367
- Don Kistler, ed. *Feed My Sheep: A Passionate Plea for Preaching*. Reviewed by K. Erik Thoennes 369
- Dave Kraft. *Leaders Who Last*. Reviewed by Stephen Witmer 371

### — MISSION AND CULTURE —

- Timothy C. Tennent. *Invitation to World Missions: A Trinitarian Missiology for the Twenty-First Century*. Reviewed by J. Scott Horrell 372
- Paul G. Hiebert. *The Gospel in Human Contexts: Anthropological Explorations for Contemporary Missions*. Reviewed by Kevin Paul Oberlin 374
- David K. Naugle. *Reordered Love, Reordered Lives: Learning the Deep Meaning of Happiness*. Reviewed by Ted Newell 376

## — OLD TESTAMENT —

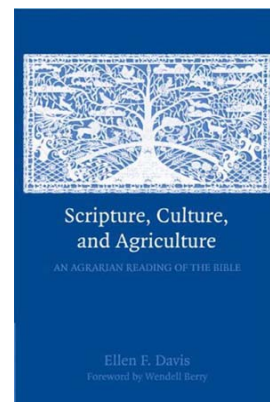
Ellen F. Davis. *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture: An Agrarian Reading of the Bible*. New York: Cambridge, 2009. xvii + 234 pp. £14.99/\$24.99.

Ellen Davis, an identified urbanite, writes about the agricultural viewpoint of the Hebrew Bible. She cultivates a conversation between the ancient Hebrew text and modern agrarian writers. “Agrarianism is a way of thinking and ordering life in community that is based on the health of the land and of living creatures” (p. 1). With the subtitle of “an agrarian reading of the Bible,” one might think that Davis is indicating a new method. Her approach is really about a perspective emphasizing the historical, social, and geographical features. The book is a collection of nine essays pertaining to the conversation between the Hebrew Bible and agrarianism.

The first chapter plants the seed for seeing agrarianism in the OT. Davis binds the land-centeredness of its message with the ecological issues of the current world (theological rather than technological). Part of the adjustments needed to correct the ecological crisis involves hoping for better. Davis locates this mentality in the prophets, who join environmental harmony with the flourishing of humanity. Thus, Jer 4:23–26 indicates that hurting the environment (modern parallels are mountaintop removals and agribusiness) is also destructive to human society. Prophetic voices call people from apathy toward covenant commitments to the land. Isaiah 24 speaks of the everlasting covenant of humans and the environment, giving specific instruction on their relationship.

Chapter 2 explains that most modern readers’ distance from agriculture actually erodes their understanding of the Scripture’s meaning. Davis articulates the two moral systems regarding food resources as the productionist ethic and the theological land ethic. The productionist ethic seeks to make as much food as possible, so that it is as cheap as possible with no regard for the cost to the land. The theological land ethic understands the land and humanity as both created by God. The Promised Land was a place of fragile agriculture because of its geography. It required dependence on God and following his principles to produce food for the people.

The next three chapters survey the acreage of the Pentateuch. Chapter 3 addresses Gen 1, acknowledging ecological concerns over the common use of the idea of “exercising dominion over the earth.” Following Walter Brueggemann’s reading of Gen 1 as a liturgical poem, she sees a harmony of P’s and J’s understandings of the relationship of humanity and the land. Humanity’s responsibility in the cultural mandate is “to secure the food system that God gives to sustain all creatures” (p. 58). Chapter 4 contrasts the wilderness tradition with Egyptian and Canaanite cultures of the time. It presents a thorough agrarian society focused on a distinct form of eating. Eating that is not based on exploitive production or inequitable distribution. Manna displays a view of eating that acknowledges God’s sovereignty and his generous provision for all people requiring restraint instead of lavishness. Chapter 5 argues from Leviticus for an interdependence and complexity of humanity and the rest of the created order. It is due to the church’s neglect of the book of Leviticus that a wholesome materiality is so foreign. In the seemingly secularity of farming and diet, Israel could declare its sacred faithfulness. Davis argues



that as blessings and curses are connected to covenant faithfulness, so modern society must consider curses that will come from the lack of concern for the earth.

Chapter 6 casts the OT agrarian economy as countering the surrounding Canaanite economies that emphasized royal centrality. The possession and use of local land was to support the needs of a local population. Chapter 7 looks to the Hebrew prophets for direction on how modern agrarian poets can use metaphors and stanzas to draw people back to the needs of the land. The prophets drew attention to a change in economic interests to produce more grain for cities, expensive products, and to heighten the appetite for opulence. Chapter 8 addresses the contrast of sloth and the wisdom of good work. Taking up Karl Barth's view of sloth as the undoing of creation, Davis exposes as false the assumption that abundance does not require thrift. The good work of thrift is in fact an evidence of wisdom just as in Prov 31.

Finally, chapter 9 addresses what feels like an anti-urban sentiment throughout the whole book. Biblical urbanism sees connectedness of the city and the surrounding rural communities. The urban environment must appreciate its dependence on the fields of the rural regions that support it. Two views of urbanism are contrasted: Babel's self-interest versus Zion's shalom-interest. This moral sentiment of well-being extends even to an urban view of land as illustrated by Detroit's efforts to be a "postindustrial green city."

What is perhaps most engaging about Davis' reading is the intent for the Hebrew Bible to speak to current issues, as if relevant to the discussion. The conversation between modern agrarian writers and the biblical text is filled with similarities as pointed out. I do wonder if the differences are significant to point out as well. Agribusiness and productionist mentalities are not on par with biblical teaching, but neither should the agrarian poet perspective be adopted wholesale. Davis does speak of voices from other sectors informing the conversation. Indeed, the response of politicians and business executives should also be solicited for explanation. As a fresh table conversation is raised by Davis, the guests are responsible to ensure all perspectives are heard on the topic.

Tim Barker  
Exodus Church  
Somerville, Massachusetts, USA

---

Ellen van Wolde. *Reframing Biblical Studies: When Language and Text Meet Culture, Cognition, and Context*. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2009. 402 pp. \$44.50.

---

Ellen van Wolde is a professor at Radboud University in the Netherlands. Her book is being hailed as a novel framework in biblical studies. Popular press announced a long awaited new translation of the verb *bara'* ("to create") of the biblical Hebrew, even though the book is much more than a debate with regard to one word. According to the press at that time (October 2009), her conclusion is that God did not "create" the universe, but rather "separated" preexisting material. This dramatic quotation triggered curiosity of how that could be after thousands of years: "The traditional view of God the Creator is untenable now!"

Wolde's explosion was heard not only in biblical studies circles. In the beginning of October, websites that work under a more sensationalist approach in Brazil echoed her thoughts about the verb *bara'* as making separation instead of creating.

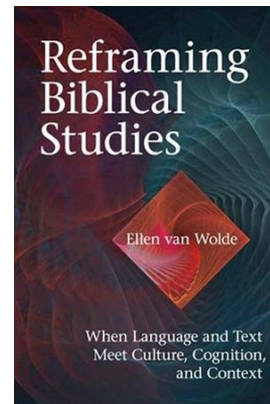
Ellen van Wolde has engaged herself in this field of cognitive linguistics applied to biblical studies. She has decided to publish this book while everything is still boiling on the linguistic ground. Her motivation began after she perceived that biblical studies lacked more connections to neighborhood areas of study. As a result, she proposes a more integrated approach, suggesting cognition as a kernel. The cognitive aspect becomes incarnate by language, she contends, which connects different areas of study: "Brain activities, individual sensations, experiences, social and cultural routines are intimately intertwined" (p. 2). For all that matters, it is a hard task, and she deserves honor and support for such authentic work.

Since the seventies, linguistics has strongly influenced biblical studies. Wolde fits better with those who treat specific problem areas in biblical Hebrew in terms of one particular modern linguistic theory.

The book starts with wide-ranging concepts from cognitive grammar (chs. 1–6). She draws on Ronald Langacker's cognitive grammar and builds up her cognitive relational approach on five brief pages (ch. 7). Chapter 8 is the supposed outlined methodology applied to a lexical analysis of the word *timme'*. Chapter 9 takes up the cognitive analysis of *timme'* provided in the previous chapter to understand its use in an extended example from Gen 34. The book ends with a short retrospective (ch. 10).

I suspect that the majority of Wolde's book will not make sense to a reader who is not coming from a linguistic background. A further obstacle arises because the terminology of cognitive linguistics is not entirely standardized (prototype, profile, trajectory, base, landmark), both because it is a new field and because it interfaces with disciplines different from the biblical exegete's milieu. After understanding the terminology, one would muse on the value that cognitive grammar methodology has effectively added to the discussion that a close reading would not.

The introduction is particularly valuable because it sets the importance of Wolde's analysis of what is lacking in the general context of biblical studies. Anyone will benefit from her investigation. Additionally valuable is chapter 10. Not only does she overview the book and the content of each chapter, but also she outlines the underpinning insights of her approach. I would rather make chapter 10 part of the introduction.



As for Wolde's controversial thesis regarding the meaning of the verb *bara'* as "to separate," I'd better skip this debate and save time pointing out an article from Bob Becking and Marjo C. A. Korpel, "To Create, to Separate or to Construct: An Alternative [to] a Recent Proposal as to the Interpretation of אָרָב in Gen 1:1–2:4," *JHS* 10:3 (2010). Their treatment of the meaning of *bara'* is comprehensive and accurate.

I am disappointed in this book because I was tracking her proposal of a more integrated approach, but it is not there. Of course, integrated areas is something to celebrate. However, trying to put many loose ends together neither clarified cognitive grammar nor the ways those neighbor areas could be of any help to exegetes or preaching pastors. The task is so challenging that even Wolde is not able to manage such interaction with different areas of study as the analysis of the verb *tm'* covered by two chapters proves. It is basically another method of reading the Hebrew text.

Readers informed by any linguistic approach should read this book. I would call readers' attention particularly to what she sets out to do in terms of a new way of thinking about lexicography.

Tarcizio F. Carvalho

Andrew Jumper Graduate Center, Mackenzie University

São Paulo, Brazil

---

David L. Baker. *Tight Fists or Open Hands? Wealth and Poverty in the Old Testament*. Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 2009. xxiv + 411 pp. \$36.00.

---

It is not very often that I run into a book that I wish I had the privilege and capacity of writing. Yet, no regrets. Reading it was a rewarding experience, one that challenged me to move on to something else because the subject has been addressed accordingly. The bibliography is fifty-three pages long, and that does not include the extra forty pages with separate indexes of subjects, foreign words, Scripture, ancient Near East laws, and authors. According to the author, "the heart of the book is a new translation and exegetical study of all the biblical laws concerned with wealth and poverty" (p. xiv), and he does so without using vocalized Hebrew or transliterating Semitic languages.

The book investigates three aspects of life in the ancient near east context: (1) property and land, (2) marginal people, and (3) justice and generosity. As the subtitle suggests, his quest hinges upon the expected distinction in the way biblical and ANE laws deal with wealth and poverty. Is it with tight fists or open hands? For the OT laws he follows a canonical approach, seeking to understand them in their biblical (Decalogue, Book of the Covenant, Holiness Code, and Deuteronomistic Laws) rather than historical context. For the ANE laws a rather chronological order is adopted for organization's sake only, inasmuch as "all ANE laws in question are virtually earlier than those in the Old Testament" (p. 2).

Chapters 2–4 address property and land: property rights (ch. 2), property responsibilities (ch. 3), and ancestral land (ch. 4). Baker's analysis is a priceless resource for pastors and leaders who need to preach on a weekly basis; it will certainly enhance their interest in biblical laws as a source of preaching. For example, when dealing with property responsibilities, Baker concludes,



the most significant difference is that the ancient near eastern laws make detailed provisions for renting, whereas the parallel clauses in the Book of the Covenant are concerned with borrowing. There is no mention of borrowing in the ancient near eastern laws, while the only biblical mention of renting is a brief supplement to the law of borrowing (Exod 22:15b). It seems that here we have an Israelite distinctive, whereby a member of the covenant community is expected to help another member in need by lending an animal without making a profit, just as he or she is expected to lend money without interest to a needy person. (pp. 73–74)

Chapter 4 superbly analyzes the holy jubilee within its proper semantic domain, namely, the question of ancestral land. When one looks at certain issues over against their original context, which in this case includes a comparative study with other law codes, it is possible to see the entire set of conclusions that are dependent upon the holy jubilee. For instance, we can see that “land in ancient Israel was not really sold at all, but simply leased until the year of jubilee” (p. 84). Why? Because

God himself asserts his claim as ultimate owner of the land occupied by Israel. His gift of the land is not an unconditional grant, but more like a long-term lease or loan. This means that the people of Israel are like tenants or stewards, who are free to live and work in the land but do not have absolute rights of disposal over it. (p. 85)

Chapters 5–7 elaborate on marginal people: slaves (ch. 5), semi-slaves (ch. 6), and other vulnerable people (ch. 7). As one plunges into these chapters, it becomes clear that unless a definition for these three social class is achieved it is impossible to formulate a satisfactory answer to the question “tight fists or open hands?”

The final section of the book (chs. 8–11) deals with justice and generosity: just lawsuits (ch. 8), shared harvests (ch. 9), generous loans (ch. 10), and fair trade (ch. 11). As I say above, the way Baker arranges the content of his study leads me to emphasize the importance of having a proper definition of “marginal people” before we get into matters of justice and generosity. Take, for instance, the case of witnesses, discussed under just lawsuits (ch. 8):

Great harm can be caused by false witnesses, as shown in the death of Naboth and the death of Jesus, to mention just two of the most notorious examples. At the same time, it is irresponsible to avoid giving false testimony by substituting silence for speech. Witnesses may be reluctant to speak out if they know that what they say will be unwelcome (cf. Amos 5:10), so Leviticus makes it clear that members of the community have a duty to testify if they have seen a crime take place. (p. 208)

The concluding chapter (ch. 12) draws out the key similarities between OT and other ANE law codes—“the differences far outnumber the similarities” (p. 305)—and the theological and ethical implications. For instance, Baker rightly concludes,

Compared to today’s world, where slavery is illegal yet there are more slaves than at any other time in history, it is arguable that Old Testament law is simply being realistic. Rather than outlawing the institution of slavery completely, it establishes various principles to ameliorate the condition of the poor and needy. If all these principles had been practiced consistently, slavery would probably have disappeared many centuries before Wilberforce. (p. 312)

I strongly recommend the book to pastors and leaders who want to reconsider much of what has been said on wealth and poverty in the OT in light of this comparative study. Baker has scored a priceless contribution by putting together exegesis and comparative studies in a way that lay people benefit.

Daniel Santos Jr.

Andrew Jumper Graduate Center, Mackenzie University

Sao Paulo, Brazil

---

— NEW TESTAMENT —

---

Gordon D. Fee. *The First and Second Letters to the Thessalonians*. New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009. xxviii + 366 pp. \$44.00.

---

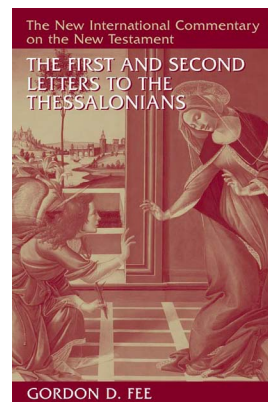
Gordon Fee has given us a new commentary on 1 and 2 Thessalonians in the NICNT series, of which he is currently the series editor. It replaces Leon Morris's thorough but in some ways outdated volume written forty years ago. The NICNT commentaries now use the TNIV text, but commentators are at liberty to provide alternative translations.

The last two decades have produced quite an array of solid commentaries on these two letters, including Wanamaker, Gaventa, Malherbe, Gene Green, Beale, and Witherington. What has Fee given us that was not already available in these others?

Fee here demonstrates his established reputation for careful exposition, and he does not disappoint us. This is an exegetical commentary, and as such it wisely avoids surmising the answers to questions that the lack of textual evidence forces us to leave unresolved. Concerning the day of the Lord and *katechon* ("hold back") in 2 Thess 2:1–7, for example, he writes, "There is much they [the Thessalonian church] already know, which will help them to 'connect the dots' as it were, but which is simply not available to us" (p. 278). Another example of Fee's commendable reluctance to speculate is in 1 Thess 2:18. What does "Satan hindered us" mean? Fee makes no comment at all. Wise reluctance, to be sure; but *something* by way of explanation would be helpful, as, say, Morris gives (though, like Fee, without going beyond what the text reveals).

Careful though the exegesis is, it is also refreshing that Fee does not feel constrained simply to exegete. He is very willing to insert a few paragraphs of well-considered application at the ends of sections. These are helpfully relevant to the contemporary church. At times, quite appealingly, he writes these sections as he might preach: the exhortations to preparedness in 1 Thess 5:1–11 are "to do not with living 'uptightly' . . . but uprightly" (p. 200).

Similarly, Fee offers readers sound, applied theological comments on various subjects in the text such as perseverance and prophecy. He rightly exhorts all, but especially those in church ministry, to perseverance (see comments on 1 Thess 2:11–12), which must be seen in the context of God's sovereign faithfulness in 5:23–24. And he is clear about Paul's normative approach to prophecy, especially in 1 Thess 5:19–22. Fee's viewpoint is, as in other commentaries (e.g., 1 Corinthians), mildly and cautiously Pentecostal. He argues against any hermeneutical support for a modern prohibition of prophecy, from





this passage along with 1 Corinthians 14. However, he is very measured at this point, urging all to pay regard to the criteria of purpose, content, and “helpfulness to the believing community” when testing prophecy (p. 222). The key to the appropriateness of prophecy within the body of Christ, he argues, is not to dismiss it or assume its cessation, but to use it rightly, as Paul prescribes.

On the whole, Fee’s treatment of eschatological passages in these letters is measured and helpful. He is right to point out Paul’s purpose in these passages: to encourage Thessalonian Christians in the midst of uncertainty and persecution, not to provide the kind of specific information about end times events and characters we might be tempted to seek. In passages like 1 Thess 4:13–18, Paul provides “reassurance and hope for beleaguered believers” (p. 190), so is offering *hope*, not *threat*. This is, likewise, the way such passages should be treated in today’s church. We are used to Fee being provocative at times, and here he stridently refutes the theology underlying the “Left Behind” series. He shows why such interpretations are unbiblical and is prepared to label them “false teaching” (p. 182). His comments about the debate between “going to heaven” and “living on a new earth” interpretations are excellent: Paul’s whole point is surely relational (“being with the Lord,” 4:17), not locational.

Having said that, though, there are places where Fee is so keen to eschew eschatological speculation that his thin comments are dissatisfying. Granted, in 2 Thess 2:3–10, the precise identification of *anthrōpos tēs anomias* (the “man of lawlessness” or “Rebel” as Fee identifies him) and the *katechon* (‘what/who holds it back’) are too difficult and speculative to make pronouncements about. But Fee so strongly avoids any discussion of the options that in the end we are left (to use a rather Thessalonian phrase!) truly up in the air. Other commentators—Green, Morris and Beale, for example—at least present us with some background and possibilities, before warning us against past and present dangers of speculation.

Fee’s focus on the Trinitarian theology and the high Christology of these letters (particularly his application of *Lord* to Jesus in 1 Thess 3:11–13) builds on his previous thorough exegesis of 1 Cor 8:6 and its Shema foundation. In other places, too, he presents convincing alternatives to standard interpretations: he argues (with Wanamaker) for “vessel” (meaning the male sexual organ) in 1 Thess 4:4, urging the need for holiness in Christians’ sexual conduct; and in 1 Thess 2:7 for *nēpioi* (“infant”) rather than *ēpioi* (“gentle”), explaining why Metzger’s preference makes better sense in this context.

The commentary’s sparse introductions (six pages for each letter) will disappoint some, but all the significant background matters are covered, and readers seeking more detail can look elsewhere. The commentary is exegetically careful, theologically reliable, and practically applied in a refreshingly helpful style. Not everybody will be satisfied with its lack of eschatological detail, but in a sense that is one of its strengths: to keep Paul’s main thing (comfort, reassurance and hope in Christ, not precision in detail) the main thing.

Anthony C. Brammall  
Sydney Missionary and Bible College  
Croydon, New South Wales, Australia



Stefan Nordgaard Svendsen. *Allegory Transformed: The Appropriation of Philonic Hermeneutics in the Letter to the Hebrews*. Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2.269. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009. xv + 273 pp. \$117.50.

---

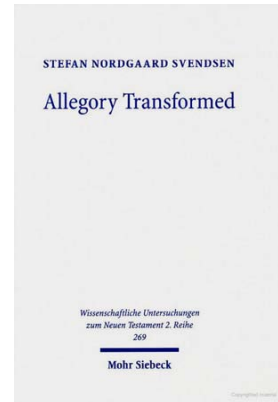
In this revised version of his 2007 PhD thesis (University of Copenhagen), Svendsen challenges the *communis opinio* that the author of Hebrews (AH) and Philo differ, at the least, in the respective hermeneutic each employs. Svendsen insists instead that the difference lies in the ontological theory each used to fund his allegorical exegesis. It was this similarity of approach and different metaphysic that allowed the AH both to *identify* the allegorical meaning contained in the OT and to *contrast* this meaning with the text's literal meaning. Svendsen's argument for this transformation of Philo's method proceeds in three steps that correspond to the three major divisions of the monograph.

Part 1 (Allegory, pp. 9–52) situates Philo's interpretive approach in its historical context. It is the Jewish allegorists of Alexandria (pseudo-Aristeas and Aristobulus), not the Stoics, with whom Philo shares the most in common (pp. 9–28). For these, *both* the literal and allegorical meaning are true (p. 14), and a text's author intends both (pp. 9, 24). Where Philo differs from this tradition, however, is that his approach is grounded in a "comprehensive ontological theory" (pp. 29–52). This theory is shaped, on the one hand, by Platonic metaphysical dualism (i.e., the distinction between a transcendent realm and its "sense-perceptible copy," the immanent realm) and, on the other, by a Stoic-like insistence that this dualism is not absolute. For Philo, in fact, the *logos* bonds both realms together. What this means for his hermeneutic is that a text's literal meaning corresponds with the immanent realm, while its allegorical meaning corresponds with the transcendent realm. Moreover, the allegorical meaning is "laid up" in the literal meaning, just as the transcendent realm is a "template" for (and is, not least, bonded to) the immanent realm.

Part 2 (Preliminaries, pp. 55–80) describes the relationship between Philo's metaphysic and Jewish apocalypticism and suggests the relationship of the AH to each. Like Philo, the AH and Jewish apocalypticism distinguish between transcendent and immanent realms. Unlike Philo, however, the AH and Jewish apocalypticism also suggest that the transcendent realm *materially* exists and that its transcendence is both vertical *and* temporal. (One may wonder whether Philo's *Rewards* 165f. softly points against this contrast.) Moreover, for each, the metaphysical dualism serves a hermeneutical function. However, unlike Philo, the AH and Jewish apocalypticism use the dualism to *contrast* the two realms (though see pp. 40–41, 186). It is this final point that explains Svendsen's title ("*Allegory Transformed*") and the purpose of the letter (pp. 69–80). By negatively portraying the literal meaning of the Mosaic Law, the AH hopes to dissuade his audience from seeking asylum from Roman harassment in the status given to Torah-observers (cf. p. 247).

Part 3 (Exegesis, pp. 83–248) supports both Svendsen's claim about the AH's hermeneutic and its purpose. He supports the first by comparing the way the AH and Philo talk about three of Judaism's central identity markers: the Promised Land, the tabernacle, and the priesthood (pp. 83–195). He supports the second by looking at the exhortatory material in Heb 10:19–13:25 (pp. 196–245).

The Promised Land is the first identity marker discussed (pp. 107–20). Svendsen says that when the AH distinguishes between God's rest and the Land in 3:7–4:11 he acknowledges that the Land was a symbol for rest (i.e., salvation). Something similar can be found in Philo. However, unlike Philo, the AH



views the Land as *only* a symbol; that is, unlike Philo, “the essence of the allegorical correlate is absent” (p. 118).

The priesthood is the second identity marker discussed (pp. 130–58; 168–71; 176–80; 182–95). In this case, the AH links Jesus’ priesthood with Melchizedek’s (ostensibly) transcendent priesthood (7:1–10; cf. 5:6, 10). Svendsen argues that this allows the AH to suggest not only the inferiority of the Levitical *qua* earthly (high) priesthood (7:8, 11–28; 8:5–6; 9:11–14, 25–28; 10:1–18), but, more fundamentally, the inadequacy of the law (or, covenant) it served (7:11–19, 28; 8:6–13; 9:8–10, 15–24; cf. 10:16–18). Philo conceives of the priesthood rather differently. For Philo, the Jewish high priest, while part of the immanent realm, nevertheless manifests the *logos par excellence*, the transcendent high priest.

The tabernacle is the final identity marker discussed (pp. 158–68; 171–76; 180–82). For the AH, the tabernacle is, according to Exod 25:40, an earthly copy of its transcendent counterpart (8:1–6). Svendsen notes that much the same could be said for Philo. However, unlike Philo, the AH insists that the tabernacle was *only* a copy, whereas Philo maintains it is a *perfect* copy. The AH’s contrast allows him to underscore, once again, the inferiority of the old covenant and its tent and, simultaneously, to highlight the superiority of the new covenant Jesus mediates from his *heavenly* tent.

Svendsen concludes his study by exegeting 10:19–13:25 to support his hypothesis about the letter’s purpose. As such, the sin that 10:26–31 warns against is adhering to the now-abrogated law. Such adherence might avert persecution (considering the disparate legal statuses of Judaism and Christianity in the first-century), but it would have disastrous results. Only perseverance in their Christian confession would provide ultimate safety (i.e., salvation; vv. 32–39; cf. vv. 19–25). To spur them on, the AH adduces several examples of heroic perseverance (11:1–12:3) and reflects on the divine purpose behind Christian suffering (12:4–11). The rhetorical climax, however, comes in 13:7–16, with 13:9 revealing the AH’s “central concern” (p. 239). Only those who forsake Torah-observance will gain access to the world to come.

Here there is space for only a handful of critical remarks. For starters, it is not sufficiently clear that the AH and Jewish apocalypticism share a similar metaphysic. While both may contrast the transcendent and immanent realms, it is only the AH whose criticism turns primarily on a temporal axis. He views the immanent negatively most often because it is *now old*. What else are we to make of his *a fortiori* arguments throughout (see esp. 2:1–4; 10:28–29) or his frequent use of *better*, not simply *good* (1:4; 7:7, 19, 22; 8:6 [2x]; 9:23; 10:34; 11:16, 25, 40; 12:24; also 6:9; cf. esp. pp. 178–79), to say nothing of the fact that the speaker of both the old and new words is *God* (e.g., 1:1)? One also wonders whether the AH’s association of the new age with *heavenly* realities adequately proves Svendsen’s claim that he “assumed Philo’s hermeneutical method” (p. 60), not least considering all the qualifications Svendsen makes (e.g., temporal dualism, non-noetic *Abbilder*, non-Middle Platonic metaphysic). Perhaps Svendsen has too quickly made typology a species of allegory, when, in fact, the two really are separate genera.

This observation leads to one further criticism. Svendsen never gets around to discussing *how* Philo moves from one level of meaning to the other. In other words, *that* Philo reads, e.g., Gen 12:6 as depicting a soul’s pursuit of wisdom is plain (p. 116; cf. *Migration* 216); *why*, however, is not. Though Svendsen nowhere says as much, this seems to be one more difference between Philo and the AH. While Svendsen insists that Philo’s allegorical sense was bound up with the literal sense and that both pointed to universal truth, it is not at all clear how Philo knew *which* truth to find in *which* text. Therefore, while Philo may have rescued the literal sense from charges of capriciousness (see p. 50), it is doubtful that the same could be said for the allegorical sense he inferred. On the contrary, something

slightly different takes place in Hebrews. There the AH treats the “secondary” meaning as nothing more than *direct* implications drawn from the literal sense of the OT (see esp. 2:8; 4:7–8; 7:11; 8:13; 9:8), something G. B. Caird called the “self-confessed inadequacy” of the old order. Moreover, for the AH, these implications are themselves *corroborated* by new revelation in the form of historical acts (i.e., Jesus’ death and resurrection/exaltation). Once again, the transformation appears more extensive than Svendsen realizes, his scattered comments about the AH’s strained exegesis notwithstanding (see, e.g., pp. 95, 111–12, 123, 144, 151–52, 195 [!]; though cf. pp. 187–88).

Jared M. Compton  
Trinity Evangelical Divinity School  
Deerfield, Illinois, USA

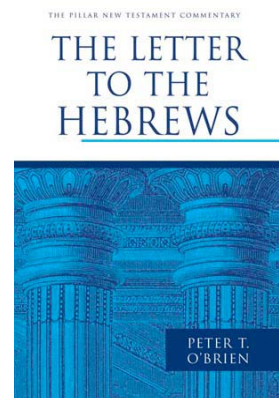
---

Peter T. O’Brien. *The Letter to the Hebrews*. Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Cambridge: Apollos, 2010. xxxiii + 596 pp. \$50.00.

---

Crossing specialties in biblical studies is risky business, not least when the crossover is on the scale of a semi-technical commentary. I suppose it might be equivalent to an NBA star trying his hand at the MLB. As Michael Jordan (or, at least his stats) will admit, that sort of move can have unexceptional results. What then is Peter O’Brien, veteran Pauline scholar and commentator, doing writing a commentary on Hebrews, a letter some have called “perhaps the most enigmatic . . . text of first-century Christianity” (Attridge)? Has he managed a feat of unusual academic versatility, or does his commentary approximate Mendoza-Line mediocrity? One reviewer, at least, enthusiastically suggests the former, noting that “[i]t would be difficult to find a more helpful guide [to Hebrews] than Dr. O’Brien” (p. xi). I would concur, though the proof is, of course, in the reading. In the following observations, therefore, I can only hope to whet the reader’s appetite to “taste and see.”

For starters, O’Brien’s text is admirably uncluttered with technical detail or scholarly debate. Some of this, no doubt, owes to the series’ aims (cf. p. xi), though O’Brien probably deserves credit here as well. He seems to have an uncanny sense for just what to put above and below the footnote separator line—a lamentably-rare gift indeed. In the text, O’Brien nicely integrates the best insights of discourse analysis, particularly via George Guthrie’s seminal work. The upshot of this is a very useful outline (pp. viii–x), which is incorporated into the text’s headers, and a number of situating-summaries prefacing new sections. (For a reader unfamiliar with Hebrews, these would be ideal places to begin: see esp. pp. 44–47, 63, 125–26, 179–80, 187–88, 286–87, 360–61, 371–72, 502–3.) In addition, O’Brien is sensitive to both intratextual (i.e., within Hebrews) and intertextual connections, frequently drawing illuminating parallels. In my copy I have a good two dozen or so places where I scribbled “good connection” in the margin. On this score, O’Brien (probably rightly) gives more precedent to OT and NT parallels than he does to non-canonical Jewish (esp. Qumran) and Greco-Roman ones. The interested reader, therefore, may wish to supplement O’Brien’s text with, say, Attridge to round the picture out a bit. This suggestion notwithstanding, O’Brien has clearly done his homework. He has identified and put to use the best of the secondary literature (incl. European). He is in constant dialogue with many of the first-rate



commentaries (esp. Attridge, Bruce, Ellingworth, Koester, Lane, Spicq, and Weiss), key monographs, and (fairly) recent periodical literature. Moreover, as one might expect from his previous work, O'Brien demonstrates considerable mastery of the other relevant domains, including Greek syntax, linguistics (esp. verbal aspect—of the Campbell variety), textual criticism, and lexicography (see esp. his interaction with John Lee's work). And, finally, his remarks on matters of special introduction and interpretive cruxes are generally reasonable, lucid, and convincing, though one will probably want to supplement these as well, perhaps with one of the beefier commentaries by either Lane or Ellingworth.

In short, O'Brien has shown remarkable versatility and, along the way, left us once again in his debt. Time will only tell, but I suspect he has produced a volume that will replace that of his esteemed mentor, F. F. Bruce. Like Bruce's volume, this is a commentary college professors and, especially, pastors will want to keep within reach while expositing this penetrating "word of exhortation."

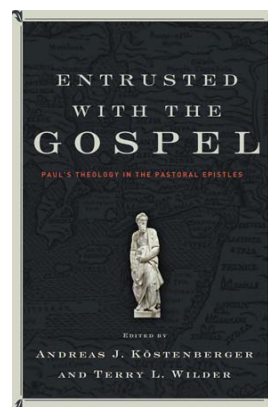
Jared M. Compton  
Trinity Evangelical Divinity School  
Deerfield, Illinois, USA

---

Andreas J. Köstenberger and Terry L. Wilder, eds. *Entrusted with the Gospel: Paul's Theology in the Pastoral Epistles*. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2010. xi + 340 pp. \$19.99.

---

Study of the Pastoral Epistles has, in recent times, undergone something of a renaissance. Questions, predominantly over authorship, that have historically stymied the study of 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus have quietly faded into the background with a burgeoning field of commentaries, monographs, and journal articles appearing. Though there is still little consensus as to the provenance, authenticity, and audience of these letters, biblical scholarship has taken a renewed interest in the content and theology of the Pastoral Epistles. In spite of the rise in research surrounding the Pastorals, however, Andreas Köstenberger and Terry Wilder feel that the evangelical voice has generally been ignored and that critical scholars "have largely neglected evangelical scholarship on these letters" (p. vii). In order to fill this perceived gap, these authors edited *Entrusted with the Gospel: Paul's Theology in the Pastoral Epistles*.



The book compiles studies ranging from the theological contribution of the Pastorals to issues of pseudonymity, structural coherence, and mission. The style and approach to each chapter varies, as does the quality of the research. As one would expect, the divergent topics covered by multiple authors gives the feeling that the book is somewhat disjointed. In spite of this, however, there is a consistency to the book as it is readily apparent that each author has a firm commitment to interact with the texts of 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus. This commitment to take seriously the text is a breath of fresh air in comparison with writings of the past that have often dismissed the works on the assumption that they are inauthentic and unreliable.

While there are several things that are helpful about this work, two are worth commenting on. First, there is generally a consistent and well-rounded pattern of exegetical and theological reflection in each of the chapters. The authors assume the authenticity of the letters and spend a great deal of time interacting with the passages themselves. After wrestling with select exegetical issues, the authors then

seek to persuade the reader as to the theological issue they are trying to advance. Though one won't always agree with the authors' theological conclusions, their approach is relatively straightforward. Most chapters argue concisely and explain the significance of their particular issues to biblical studies of the Pastorals.

Second, while there is nothing groundbreaking in the book, several articles freshly reflect on debated issues. Terry Wilder's chapter on "Pseudonymity, the New Testament, and the Pastoral Epistles" helpfully overviews the current debate regarding authorship and the NT. He not only surveys contemporary approaches; he also insightfully criticizes these views before putting forward his own view. Chiao Ek Ho's chapter on "Mission in the Pastoral Epistles" is also stimulating in that he examines a lesser-known motif found in these letters. Finally, I. Howard Marshall's article, "The Pastoral Epistles in Recent Study," is perhaps the most helpful in the book. Marshall provides an excellent snapshot of the current state of play regarding research in 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus. He helpfully outlines the significant works and perspectives of contemporary scholarship regarding the Pastorals, critically reflects on the value of such contemporary works, and provides a helpful bibliography related to recent research on the Pastorals.

A few things could strengthen this book. First, several of the chapters cover the issues of authorship, wrestling with the traditional problems of vocabulary, pseudonymity, and style. Köstenberger's opening chapter, "Hermeneutical and Exegetical Challenges in Interpreting the Pastoral Epistles," helpfully surveys these major issues, and one feels that this chapter would have been sufficient in addressing the issue of the books' authenticity. Reintroducing and defending the issue of Pauline authorship in multiple chapters feels redundant and unnecessary. Perhaps in the editing process some of this repetition could have been minimized.

Second, a few of the chapters seem to cover complicated issues with little room available for serious validation. Ray Van Neste's "Cohesion and Structure," for example, argues for the cohesion of the book by analyzing transitional devices looking at things like "hook words" and thematic commonality. In one case Van Neste argues for the thematic cohesion of a passage based on the placement of "two second-person verbs" (p. 103). His argumentation, while possible, does little to convince the reader of its probability because of its lack of well-qualified validation. Due to the conciseness of the chapters, arguments like Van Neste's cannot be fully developed, and as a result some arguments, which may be legitimate, are not persuasive, as they require the reader to make some significant exegetical and theological leaps. One wonders whether topics like Van Neste's could have been further narrowed to allow for better argumentation.

Finally, following the lead of scholars such as L. Oberlinner, P. Trebilco, and D. G. Horrell, interaction with the influence of hellenization and its relationship to the cultural milieu of the intended audience of the Pastoral Epistles would have strengthened the work. While not wanting to be derailed by the somewhat troublesome issue of audience, the book does not do enough to recognize the Hellenistic culture surrounding the assumed audience and its significance to interpreting the text.

Although the book perhaps tries to accomplish too much, the positive approach to the Pastorals found in this work make it a worthwhile venture. As stated earlier, the purpose of *Entrusted with the Gospel* is to contribute to the contemporary research of the Pastoral Epistles from an evangelical



perspective. This book achieves that goal and as such hopefully opens up doors for future evangelical contributions.

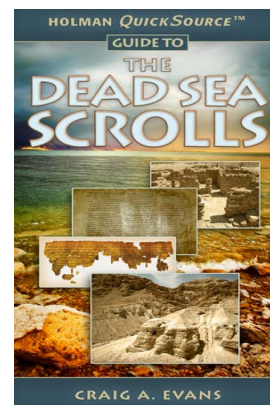
Malcolm J. Gill  
 Sydney Missionary and Bible College  
 Croydon, New South Wales, Australia

Craig A. Evans. *Holman QuickSource Guide to the Dead Sea Scrolls*. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2010. xvi + 398 pp. \$14.99.

The purpose of this book is to help readers understand what the Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS) really are and how they shed light on Jesus and the Jewish people 2,000 years ago (p. 19). Mission accomplished—and more! Divided into ten parts, the book begins with a riveting narrative account of a serene figure insightfully scanning the horizon to anticipate the arrival of the Romans to Jerusalem. In light of the impending destruction, Eleazar has the sacred Scrolls gathered and hidden in the Judean wilderness. This sets the context for an introduction to the discovery and importance of the Scrolls, outlining some basic facts such as their hiding, their discoveries, the importance of the Scrolls, and the region in which they were found (Part I).

Part II discusses issues such as the science of dating, restoring, and preserving the Scrolls. Part III outlines their historical context. Here Evans begins with a historical survey of events between the Testaments, the various historical groups in first century Palestine, and historical figures mentioned explicitly and implicitly in the text. Part IV moves readers from the discovery in the caves to the publication of the scrolls. Craig’s discussion of the Essenes (Part V) surveys Philo, Josephus, and other writers before looking at the archaeological evidence from Qumran. Part VI discusses the faith and practices of the Essenes as related in the DSS. It covers issues such as how the Essenes interpreted Scripture, worshiped God, related to the Jerusalem establishment, and viewed the end times. Part VII addresses the DSS and the OT, discussing the Bible’s preservation, canon, and the DSS depiction of popular biblical figures. John the Baptist and Messianism with respect to the Scrolls are the subjects of Part VIII, and Part IX discusses the Scrolls and the remainder of the NT, including Paul, Hebrews, and Revelation. Evans addresses “works of the Law” in Paul, Melchizedek and “sacrifice of praise” in Hebrews, and the “new Jerusalem” in Revelation. Part X is a series of questions and answers, largely summarizing main points of the book, followed by an appendix of major scroll publications and a second appendix with a brief bibliography of the major scholars in the study of the DSS.

Though rather lengthy for a “QuickSource Guide,” this book is about more than the DSS; it is a window into the first-century Jewish setting of the NT. Frequently Evans takes readers from biblical texts to particularly illuminating Scrolls to discuss if and how the Scrolls help one interpret the NT. Chapters often refer readers to further sources for study in endnotes, many of which cite chapters in the *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls*. Readers will find Evans’ profiles of biblical figures presented in the Scrolls a particular delight. The discussion in Messianism and the teachings of Jesus with respect to the Scrolls will open many doors of understanding to the inquisitive reader. The volume is replete with timelines, vivid photos, and charts. Who better to introduce the lay Christian reader to the Scrolls than



Evans? This work is enjoyable to read, clear, informed, and conversational. These qualities, along with its affordable price, make it the ideal entry point on the subject for the general reader. It will invite the reader into the world of the Scrolls, hold their attention, and leave them wanting more.

Daniel M. Gurtner  
Bethel Seminary  
St. Paul, Minnesota, USA

---

Seyoon Kim. *Christ and Caesar: The Gospel and the Roman Empire in the Writings of Paul and Luke*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008. xvi + 228 pp. \$24.00.

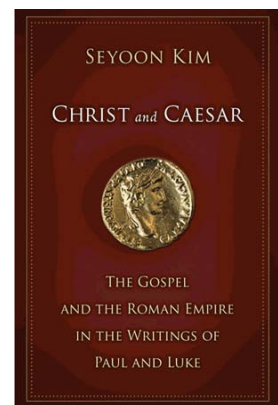
---

In this monograph, Seyoon Kim evaluates the thesis that the NT authors consciously (and polemically) criticized the public veneration of the Roman emperor. As the subtitle indicates, Kim focuses on the apostle Paul and on Luke–Acts. Kim’s book is thus divided into two parts, and his broad conclusion is that neither Paul nor Luke “formulate the gospel of the Kingdom of God and the Lord Jesus Christ in conscious antithesis to the imperial ideology of Rome” (p. xvi).

Part 1 (chs. 1–5) evaluates recent anti-imperial readings of Paul’s letters. Kim begins by evaluating the prominent counter-imperial interpretations of 1–2 Thessalonians from scholars such as E. A. Judge, K. Donfried, and J. R. Harrison (pp. 3–10). After eight pages, Kim rejects the view that Thessalonian correspondence contains counter imperial rhetoric. Chapter 2 (pp. 11–27) then widens the lens to summarize discussion of Philippians, Romans, and 1 Corinthians. Here Kim arrives at the same conclusion: “At most Paul points to the total inadequacy of the much-celebrated *pax Romana* (1 Thess 5:3) and of the Roman commonwealth and its *sōtēria* (Phil 3:20–21)” (p. 66).

His reasons for dismissing anti-imperial readings in Paul are set out systematically in the following two chapters: “The Problems of the Method” (pp. 28–33) and “Factors that Make an Anti-Imperial Interpretation Difficult” (pp. 34–64). Kim first highlights four methodological problems with anti-imperial readings of Paul, namely, that they suffer from (1) Sandmel’s “parallelomania” syndrome; (2) faulty assumptions about the “imperial cult” and Paul’s theology; (3) proof-texting certain Pauline terms such as gospel, Saviour, Son of God, and peace; and (4) a (self-contradictory) appeal to coding, i.e., why would Paul be simultaneously overt *and* covert in his critique of the Roman imperial order? Kim then provides a whole host of factors that in his view render an anti-imperial interpretation of Paul very unlikely. Indeed, in his “Summary and Conclusions” (pp. 65–71), Kim asserts that Paul “may well have judged that the Roman imperial system was, on the whole, more conducive than detrimental to his universal mission” (p. 70).

Part 2 (chs. 6–11) turns to Luke–Acts to evaluate whether these writings are deliberately counter-imperial. Here Kim largely agrees with scholars such as K. Rowe who posit that in Luke’s Gospel Jesus’ Messiahship is described in stark relief to Caesar’s lordship (pp. 77–93). Chapter 8 (“Jesus’ Redemption: It is Not a Deliverance from the Roman Empire,” pp. 94–113), to be sure, does not therefore conclude that Luke’s Gospel was written to announce any impending imperial overthrow. Instead, chapter 9 (pp. 114–50) argues that Luke aims to present Jesus’ deliverance from the dominion of Satan and to



point forward to the imminent consummation of God's Kingdom. Kim then argues in his subsequent chapter (pp. 151–60) that these twin themes are developed further in the book of Acts: “the exalted Lord empowers and directs his apostolic church through the Holy Spirit to carry on this saving work” (p. 151). In his final chapter of Part 2, Kim provides various reasons he believes Luke–Acts was not written to critique the imperial order. Indeed, “Luke seems to evaluate the Roman imperial order or *pax Romana* as relatively superior to other states, as it provides an environment in which Christian mission can progress” (p. 178). Following his conclusions (pp. 191–99), Kim theologically reflects in a brief epilogue (pp. 200–203).

Kim's monograph, of course, responds to a flurry of “anti-imperial” energy among a wide range of NT scholars (e.g., R. Horsley, J. R. Harrison, R. Jewett, N. T. Wright, B. W. Winter, and even the present reviewer!). Although many of Kim's individual arguments cannot be assessed within the limited confines of this review, it may be helpful at least to highlight two of the more significant shortcomings in this work.

First and perhaps most importantly, it remains unclear how precisely Kim defines the term “anti-imperial.” Several times in his discussion, I got the impression that he was defining this term in a very literal sense, i.e., the church is being encouraged to overthrow the emperor then and there. After admitting, for example, that in Philippians Paul clearly exhorts the church to live as an “alternative society” as citizens of another Kingdom, Kim then states, “However nowhere in his epistles does Paul suggest that doing the duties of the citizens (πολιτεύεσθε) of God's Kingdom involves fighting a human kingdom” (p. 51). Now if “anti-imperial” means “pick up a sword,” then Kim is certainly correct, but I am unaware of any NT scholar who is defining anti-imperial in this way. Indeed, the present reviewer would tentatively define anti-imperial as “providing an alternative (Davidic) King and Kingdom to the Roman emperor and empire and thus encouraging the church to live as a community in society according to the reality of God's Kingdom as they eagerly await the return of the true King.” Of course, a robust eschatology—Jesus' victory over all powers and his imminent return to redeem his people and to restore creation—is all part of this message, and so surely the NT authors need not “consider the church eventually replacing the Roman Empire in this world” (p. 66) for them to be anti-imperial.

Secondly, I am not convinced that Kim needs to discuss Paul and Luke–Acts together (see his rationale for this on pp. xiv–xvi). Given the swirl of debate around both Paul's letters and Luke–Acts, the book would have been much tighter had he focused his attention upon one of these writings. Indeed, Kim even admits that attempting to cover such a wide-ranging discussion results in a “deficiency in thoroughness” (p. xi) and that “a deeper and wider reflection would have made the book more complete” (p. xii). His discussion would be particularly stronger, for example, if he interacted with scholars such as P. Oakes on 1 Thessalonians or R. Jewett on Romans 13. It would also be helpful to assess Paul's letter to the Galatians, which interpreters (including the present reviewer) have placed in a Roman imperial context. Despite these deficiencies, Kim offers his initial installment in what will undoubtedly remain a very important debate among NT scholars.

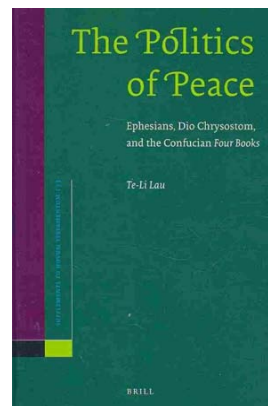
Justin K. Hardin  
Wycliffe Hall  
Oxford, England, UK



Te-Li Lau. *The Politics of Peace: Ephesians, Dio Chrysostom, and the Confucian Four Books*. Supplements to Novum Testamentum 133. Leiden: Brill, 2010. xvi + 360 pp. \$179.00.

---

In an age of intense over-specialization, one cannot but feel a sense of refreshment and appreciation for Te-Li Lau's skillful, sympathetic, and illuminating comparison of three distinct politico-religious conceptions of peace. Lau, now an assistant professor at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, offers this comparative study of peace as a lightly revised dissertation completed under Luke Timothy Johnson at Emory University. In *The Politics of Peace*, Lau argues that the political elements embedded within Paul's discussion of peace suggests "that Ephesians can be profitably read as a politico-religious letter on peace" (p. 5). This thesis can be best grasped by examining the political topics contained within Ephesians as well as comparing analogous texts—particularly orations of Dio Chrysostom and the Confucian *Four Books*.



In chapter 2, Lau demonstrates that while there is a striking correspondence between Ephesians and Colossians, the motifs of peace, unity, and reconciliation are stronger in Ephesians. Lau notes that both letters use the same words to speak to different issues. Whereas in Colossians Paul speaks of the alienation between humans and God (Col 1:21), in Ephesians he uses the same word to describe the alienation between Gentiles and Israel's constitution (Eph 2:12). In Colossians "the mystery" is "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col 1:27); in Ephesians "the mystery" is that Gentiles are fellow heirs of the gospel (Eph 1:9–10; 3:1–13). Comparing the construal of "the body of Christ," the in-Christ language, and the use of OT citations confirm that Ephesians is concerned with peace and the horizontal reconciliation between humans.

One of the gems of Lau's book is his third chapter ("The Political in Ephesians"), where he takes five sections of Ephesians and situates them within Greco-Roman political discourse. In the ancient Mediterranean, the political dealt with matters related to economics, household management, citizenship, war, wealth, and concord. Many of these topics occur throughout Ephesians. Two examples will suffice. First, Eph 2:11–21 describes the reconciliation of Jews and Gentiles into one unified new humanity. This concept of a harmoniously unified humanity is similar to the political vision of humankind's unity and the idea of a world-state that was propagated through the conquests of Alexander the Great and the *pax Romana*. Thus, Eph 2 resonates with these Greco-Roman concepts of the unity of humanity, the vision of peace and harmony, and the erasure of group boundaries. A second example of Ephesians' use of political motifs is the household code (Eph 5:21–6:9). As the Greek city was composed of households and as its success depended upon their well-ordering, so too the church is intimately bound to Christian households. In the ancient world, discussions regarding the management of households were for the purpose of advocating a conservative social mores for the promotion of the state's peace. Similarly, Paul's discussion of the relationships between master/slave, husband/wife, and father/child promote stability within the church—though they have been transformed in Christ (p. 140). These two examples demonstrate that Ephesians uses similar strategies for producing peace as other political texts. The major difference between Ephesians and these texts is that Ephesians indwells "the symbolic universe of the Christian community" and its "political frame of reference" is the church, not the Greek city (pp. 153–54).

In chapters 4 and 5, Lau sets forth the vision of peace and the strategies for its accomplishment as found in select orations by Dio Chrysostom and the Confucian *Four Books*. In the “Concord Orations Delivered in Bithynia,” Dio presents himself as an agent of Zeus who has been commissioned with the task of procuring peace for the Greek cities. Dio prays for, and through his speeches seeks, the welfare of these cities. Throughout his speeches, Dio praises concord as the greatest blessing. Concord is linked with peace, humanity, friendship, and reconciliation. It originates in Zeus who himself desires the unity of these dissenting cities. Dio appeals to the animal kingdom, the heavenly sphere, and the structure of the universe as examples of how harmony pervades the world. Humans must imitate this harmonious ordering of the world. In his “Kingship Orations,” Dio shows that the ideal king adopts virtues that will create peace and harmony throughout his empire. The king imitates the harmony and peace he sees built into the universe, and the civic leaders and citizens then imitate the example of the king.

Lau’s description of peace in Confucian thought focuses upon the two books of the *Sishu* that best embody the political, social, and ethical ideals of Confucian thought: the *Daxue* and the *Zhongyong*. The former text emphasizes peace between humans whereby peace between individuals produces balance that leads to peace in the broader world; the latter text focuses upon peace between humanity and Heaven. Within the *Zhongyong* the central element of peace is harmony. Peace and harmony originate in the Supreme Being. In order to be in harmony with this Ultimate Reality one must be aligned with the metaphysical principle of *li*, which one manifests through maintenance of the largely external “rites” that embody all that is right and just. Confucian thought gives precedence to the cultivation of peace within the individual and thereby emphasizes ethics as the root of political peace. There is a strong focus within these texts upon the moral cultivation of peace within the individual. Only those who have attained peace in their own selves are able to bring peace to households and kingdoms. There is, then, a movement from peace within the individual to the household to the kingdom to the world and finally to the cosmos. Finally, it should be emphasized that the household is the central social focus within the Confucian construction of peace. The state is the outgrowth of and depends upon the well-ordering of the household.

Lau’s final chapter compares these three visions of peace with the goal being an improved understanding of Ephesians as a political text. Whereas the moral cultivation required for the production of peace and participation in the divine is the result of difficult and strenuous moral effort in Dionian and Confucian thought, in Ephesians it is a result of God’s gracious gift. Paul’s vision of peace is more radical in the ethnic domain as it maintains that the two mutually antagonistic groups have been reconciled into one equal people group. The greatest agreement between the three texts is in their concern with concord in the household and call for conformity to social hierarchical structures. Perhaps the greatest difference, however, is the role that Paul gives to Christ in procuring cosmic peace. While Dio does refer to Zeus and the divine ordering of the universe as imitative examples of concord and while Confucian cosmic harmony is the result of cosmic processes following the Way of Heaven, nothing matches Paul’s claims that Christ has subjugated all authorities and powers (1:20–22), that he has made two groups into one (2:14–16), or that “he is our peace” (2:14). Whereas Confucian thought has a role for individual harmony, both Dio and Ephesians are concerned almost solely with interpersonal concord. This intentional community faces greater challenges as it seeks to educate members from different families, worldviews, and backgrounds into the ways of peace. This type of community also frequently experiences conflict from the majority culture, which may view it as deviant. Paul, therefore, seeks to promote a conservative social stance among the household and emphasizes that its battle is not against the majority culture but rather against evil spiritual entities (Eph 6:12). One of the greatest differences

of Paul's politics in Ephesians is that he argues that ethnic peace is already a present reality based on the work of Christ. It has been inaugurated decisively, and there is now a call to implement it in the Pauline communities. This perspective of the already/not yet is absent in both Dionic and Confucian thought.

The value of Lau's work is at least threefold. First, by comparing Ephesians and Colossians, he demonstrates that the former is oriented around the horizontal production of peace within the church. Second, Lau's situating of broad swaths of Ephesians within Greco-Roman political discourse confirms his thesis that Ephesians is a political letter with the rhetorical intent of persuading its readers to pursue peace. Finally, Lau's comparison of Ephesians with Dionic and Confucian thought is masterful. It is no easy task to compare distinct politico-religious documents, but Lau does so in a manner that is fair, sympathetic, and sheds light on Ephesians. My only regret is that more attention could have been devoted to the extent to the manner in which Paul's presentation of Christ, or the christological narrative he assumes, compares with Dio's (or Pliny's and Seneca's) construction of the ideal king.

Joshua W. Jipp  
Emory University  
Atlanta, Georgia, USA

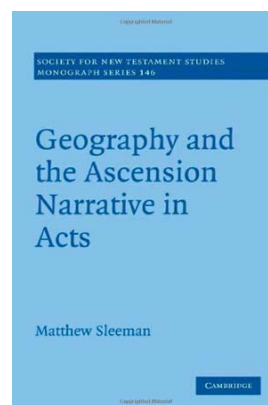
---

Matthew Sleeman. *Geography and the Ascension Narrative in Acts*. Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 146. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009. xi + 300 pp. £55.00/\$99.00.

---

In this study Sleeman respatializes discourse concerning Acts through a narrative study of the ascension narrative. Despite the flood of scholarship devoted to the Lukan ascension narratives, this scholarship is marked by three flaws. First, ascension scholarship has made no "sustained attempt . . . to trace the impact of the ascension through the course of the ensuing Acts narrative" (p. 4). Scholars have failed to discern how Jesus' ascension influences the rest of the narrative, structures the shape of the church, and creates new understandings of space. Second, the ascension narrative has been the subject of a debate whereby some emphasize the ascension as producing christological absence, while others see it as producing a new form of Christ's presence. The third flaw with ascension scholarship is that it has marginalized the geographical and spatial aspects of the text.

While Sleeman redresses all of these flaws, the heart of his work and the most creative contribution is his application of a geographical/spatial theory for reading Acts 1:1–11:18. Most important for Sleeman's reading of Acts is his application of Edward Soja's concept of "thirdspace." "Firstspace" refers to the empirical notion of space that is mappable. "Secondspace" refers to space as perceived or as a mental projection reflecting one's particular configuration of the world. "Thirdspace" is more difficult as it constructs spaces as "simultaneously read [firstspace], imagined [secondspace] and more (both and also . . .)" (Soja in Sleeman, pp. 44–45). Thirdspace is "Other," a place where "alternative territorialities and worldviews are explored," and is found in "visionary vistas that imagine new meanings or possibilities for shaping spatial practices" (p. 45). Furthermore, by its nature as "Other," thirdspace resists an oppositional binary relationship as it attempts to open up new ways of seeing. Thus, rather than creating an opposition between absence and presence, thirdspace allows for one to view Jesus'



ascension as both creating new space and critiquing other earthly spaces (p. 48). The heart of Sleeman's study, then, is his examination of "the earthly implications of an absent-but-active ascending Christ functioning thirdspatially within the narrative" (p. 49).

Chapter 3, which examines Acts 1, has a foundational role for Sleeman's reading of Acts as it is the ascension that is foundational in its ordering of space throughout Acts. The disciples' question to Jesus in Acts 1:6 contains three spatial assumptions: that the kingdom will be restored *to Israel*, that it is *Jesus* who is the agent of restoration, and that this restoration could happen *now*. Jesus' response (1:7–8) redefines their own space as well as that of the wider world as he undermines a focus upon human calculation concerning "times and seasons," emphasizes their own role as agents in this restoration, and expands their notion of restoration-space from Israel to the entire world. But most importantly, in 1:9–11 Jesus' ascension produces a new and distinctively thirdspatial "heavenward Christocentric orientation" (p. 73). Sleeman notes that the phrase "into heaven" occurs four times in 1:10–11 and emphasizes that while Christ is absent in firstspatial terms, the heavenly Christ now creates a new thirdspace for the disciples. Heaven—not Jerusalem—controls the rest of space through the narrative. The heart of Sleeman's reading of Acts can be summed up in one sentence: "The ascension is *the* moment of spatial realignment in Acts . . . and Acts as a narrative whole cannot be understood without ongoing reference to the heavenly Christ" (p. 80). Sleeman notes that in Acts 1:12–26 it is the heavenly Jesus who restructures apostolic space through the replacement of Judas (as a result of his "spatial apostasy") with Matthias.

Chapters 4–7 study how Christ's ascension creates and defends new spaces. While Jerusalem functions as the firstspatial location of the giving of the Spirit, Sleeman notes that it is Christ's new position in heaven upon which the outpouring of the Spirit depends. The hope of Israel's restoration has been taken up into heaven. According to Sleeman, the narrator's summary of the Christian community describes the heavenly Lord's creation of new believer space. Thus, the community's claim that Jesus occupies heavenly space as well as its attendant creation of new believer space (2:37–47; 4:32–5:11) provokes a "clash of geographies" between this group and those whose primary spatial allegiances are to the temple (p. 104). In Acts 3 "the Temple is being shorn of its thirdspace claims, these being transferred to the heavenly Christ" (p. 111).

This previous claim is confirmed in the Stephen-episode. Sleeman notes that Stephen's speech presents the God of Israel as appearing in non-Israelite spaces, but emphasizes that the heart of Stephen's speech is this question: Where does—and does not—God dwell? Stephen's spatial claims about the heavenly Christ (7:55–56) and his challenge to Temple-space motivates his martyrdom (7:58). Stephen's vision of the exalted Christ leads to restructuring believer-space in Acts as it produces a persecution of the early Christians that causes them to be scattered through Judea and Samaria (8:1). Acts 8–11 further narrates how ascension geography will "further the space of the expanding church" (p. 172). Luke's claim that "all of the church of Judea, Galilee and Samaria" was being edified (9:31) arises from "the heavenly Christ overseeing this pivotal section of Acts" (p. 215). The role of the heavenly Christ in Acts 9:32–11:18 confirms Sleeman's thesis as Christ still heals through Peter (9:32–43) and especially as Christ, from his heavenly location, produces new believer space through the conversion of Cornelius' household. Within this section of Acts, the elements of Christophany, the reference to Jesus as "Lord of all" (10:36), and the intervention from heaven (10:44–46) confirm that earthly space is being ordered from heaven by Christ.

Sleeman's monograph is a major contribution to Acts scholarship. Most significant is his sustained treatment of the manner in which Christ's ascension and heavenly location influences the narrative of Acts beyond the traditional ascension texts. That Christ's heavenly location exerts pressure on other portions of the narrative generates important insights. Of further significance are his claims concerning the heavenly Christ's production of new believer-spaces and the manner in which the conflict with the Jerusalem authorities is a clash of geography. His introduction of geographical and spatial theory, specifically the category of thirdspace, leads to genuinely new insights. While Sleeman is successful in redressing scholarship's failure to address the narrative function of the ascension narrative as well as its lack of spatial precision, I expected him to offer a synthetic discussion that sought to resolve the debate regarding christological presence versus absence. While there *are* numerous comments throughout the monograph addressing this, a fuller synthetic treatment of the issue in the conclusion would have been welcome. Additionally, there are instances when I wondered whether his spatial categories genuinely fit the text. For example, is Judas' apostasy really one of "spatial apostasy" (pp. 87–89), or is Gamaliel's speech best interpreted under the category of his own "spatial estimation" (p. 128)? Perhaps so, but the reader will have to judge whether the concept of space illuminates every passage that Sleeman examines. Nonetheless, Sleeman's monograph is a convincing work of scholarship, and I expect that it will justly become one of the standard works on the ascension narrative in Acts.

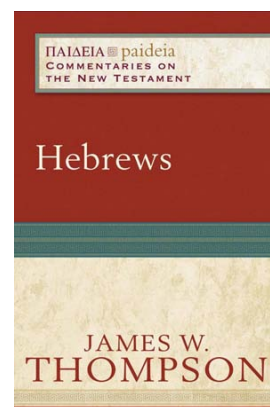
Joshua W. Jipp  
Emory University  
Atlanta, Georgia, USA

---

James W. Thompson. *Hebrews*. Paideia Commentaries on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008. vii + 328 pp. \$27.99.

---

James Thompson, Robert and Kay Onstead Distinguished Professor of Biblical Studies at Abilene Christian University, brings the insight and expertise of a veteran teacher to bear on the text of Hebrews. His is the second of eighteen volumes in the Paideia commentary series and is aimed at university and seminary students, though it aims to be useful and accessible for pastors and professors alike. The goal of the commentary is to approach each text in its canonical form, commenting on larger "sense units" rather than commenting verse-by-verse, with a sensitivity to the cultural, literary, and theological settings in which the text took form (p. xi). Each of the commentary's "sense units" is then explored in three sections. The first deals with introductory matters; the second traces the train of logic and thought; the third addresses hermeneutical and theological questions.



In a twenty-six page introduction, Thompson addresses the topics of author/audience, genre/structure, the book's purpose, the story world of Hebrews, and encountering Hebrews today. Concerning authorship, Thompson notes the speculative nature of such discussions and concludes that such are not worthwhile (p. 5). Thompson also dismisses attempts to identify the book's audience, unconvinced that the audience was largely Jewish Christian, though he shows a preference for the conclusions of DeSilva's sociological perspective regarding loss of honor and the presence of shame concerning the original

readers (pp. 8–10). He is equally disinterested in the date of composition, other than to question both pre and post A.D. 70 assertions. In reference to genre, Thompson frames Hebrews in terms of ancient rhetoric, averring that it contains “elements of both deliberative and epideictic rhetoric” (p. 12). The most space is devoted to the question of structure. He rejects the thematic approach of P. E. Hughes and others (*Christ Superior to Prophets*, etc.) as well as the literary analysis of Vanhoye. Instead, he prefers a rhetorically based structure that builds on the tripartite structure of Nauck, concluding that Hebrews falls into the pattern of classical rhetorical argumentation (pp. 16–20). Hebrews’ purpose is to “reorient a community that has been disoriented by the chasm between the Christian confession of triumph and the reality of suffering that it has experienced” (p. 20). Finally, the thought-world of Hebrews is influenced by the Platonic tradition (p. 23). Yet all is not Platonic, since the presentation of a crucified savior is “irreconcilable with Platonism” (p. 25). Hebrews affirms Christian convictions that cannot be reconciled with Platonism while at the same time making use of Platonic categories to explain Christian existence.

Each section of Hebrews is discussed in three parts. First, Thompson places the text in its ancient context. For example, in 1:5–2:4, Thompson first introduces the reader to the LXX and compares the OT Greek with the Hebrew texts. He notes that such a catena of quotations has similarities with some of the Dead Sea Scrolls as well as the hermeneutics of several ancient Jewish authors. Second, Thompson comments on the text by tracing the train of thought according to “sense units,” which are typically a few verses in length. A third section discusses theological issues of particular interest. Given that Hebrews is so steeped in theology, this reviewer would like to have seen this section lengthened throughout the commentary. Theological students and pastors will perhaps be left wanting if their interest in Hebrews is its theology (for example, almost nothing is said concerning typology, and there is little concerning the use of the OT). Thompson’s discussions, though brief, are still helpful.

Of particular interest to any reader of Hebrews are the warning passages, which Thompson addresses in a unique way. Instead of interacting with current discussions concerning the warnings, he asserts that the “path to progress in understanding this passage [6:4–8] entails not fitting it into a prearranged doctrinal system but placing it within the conventions of the author’s world” (p. 123). He sees little worth in entering into post-Reformation discussions concerning the security of the believer (p. 135). Those described in the warnings are Christians, yet Thompson insists that they have not yet fallen away. The biblical author does not describe something that has happened in the past. Rather, he desires to prevent an action in the future (pp. 133–35; cf. 210–11). This view is similar to Schreiner and Caneday’s *The Race Set Before Us*, namely, the warnings are prospective and not descriptive. Further, such warnings are likely the author’s usage of a rhetorical device known as *deinōsis*—the “attempt to shock the audience” (p. 124). In short, Thompson attempts to explain Hebrews’ warnings not by interaction with the text and scholarship, but by interaction with the text and ancient rhetoric.

This raises a particular concern surrounding the book’s format. There are no footnotes or endnotes, and as such there is no interaction with other scholars. This is an interesting omission given the audience to which the commentary is aimed. It is somewhat balanced by the many helpful charts and figures found throughout, but it seems that any commentary seeking to address “key hermeneutical and theological questions” (as stated on the series website at [www.bakerbooks.com](http://www.bakerbooks.com)) should demonstrate an awareness of and interaction with the various hermeneutical and theological discussions that orbit this NT epistle.

Thompson’s work excels in three primary areas. First, his writing is accessible, lucid, and marked by brevity; students and pastors will find it very readable. Second, the many sidebars and charts strengthen



the work, and complement the clear style of writing. Third, Thompson's expertise in the ancient culture is seen on almost every page. Few commentaries so carefully and ably place Hebrews in its ancient context, and in this regard Thompson's work is comparable to the work of Attridge. This is its greatest strength and as such deserves its place on the student's and pastor's shelf.

As noted, verse-by-verse exegesis is not the stated purpose of the Paideia series, and there are ample works available to the student of Hebrews such as that of Lane, Bruce, Attridge, Ellingworth, and O'Brien that work through matters of grammar and syntax. Pastors and lay leaders will be helped by Thompson's work, though the commentaries of O'Brien, Lane, G. Guthrie, and Phillips might better serve the busy pastor. In terms of Hebrews' theology, one should complement this work with that of O'Brien, Lane, or P. E. Hughes. Thompson should be commended for making a helpful contribution to NT studies, and specifically in an area that is becoming increasingly crowded with capable works.

Barry C. Joslin

Boyce College of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary  
Louisville, Kentucky, USA

---

Andreas J. Köstenberger. *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters: The Word, the Christ, the Son of God.* Biblical Theology of the New Testament. Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 2009. 652 pp. \$39.99.

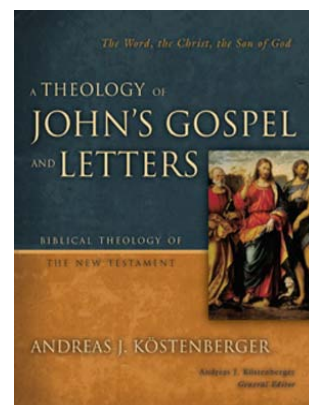
---

This is the first of eight projected volumes in a new series of studies of the writings or groups of writings of the NT under the general title Biblical Theology of the New Testament (BTNT). This first volume, *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters*, is contributed by Andreas Köstenberger, director of PhD studies and professor of New Testament and biblical theology at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. He is editor of *JETS* and also the series editor of this new BTNT series. He is the author of *Encountering John: The Gospel in Historical, Literary and Theological Perspective* (Baker, 1999) and *John* in the BECNT series (Baker, 2004).

The series preface defines the nature of biblical theology as follows: 'In essence, Biblical Theology engages in the study of the biblical texts while giving careful consideration to the historical setting in which a given piece of writing originated. It seeks to locate and relate the contribution of the respective biblical documents along the lines of the continuum of God's salvation-historical program centered in the coming and salvific work of Christ. It also endeavors to ground the theological exploration of a given document in a close reading of the respective text(s), whether narrative, discourse, or some other type of literature.'

The stated intention for each volume is that it include a survey of recent scholarship and the state of research; a treatment of the relevant introductory issues; a thematic commentary following the narrative flow of the document(s); a treatment of important individual themes; and discussions of the relationship between a particular writing and the rest of the NT and the Bible.

This first volume, *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters*, consists of four parts: (1) the historical framework for Johannine theology, which deals with the historical setting of John's Gospel and letters; (2) literary foundations for Johannine theology, which discusses the genre of John's Gospel and letters, their linguistic and literary dimensions, and a literary-theological reading of John's Gospel and letters;



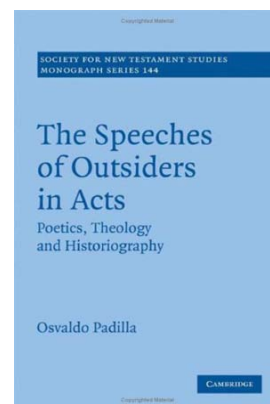
(3) major themes in Johannine theology, including John's worldview and use of Scripture, the Messiah and his signs, the world, God, salvation history, the cosmic trial motif, the new messianic community, the Johannine love ethic, John's theology of the cross, and John's trinitarian mission theology; and (4) Johannine theology and the canon of Scripture, which compares the theology of John to other NT writers.

This book fulfils admirably the intention of the series. It discusses recent scholarship and the state of research comprehensively and fair-mindedly, and it carefully assesses differing views while leaving the reader in little doubt about the author's own opinions. Chapters 4 and 5 provide about 100 pages of literary-theological commentary on the text of John's Gospel and letters with many valuable exegetical and theological observations. Many readers will find chapters 6–15, where Köstenberger discusses the major themes on Johannine theology, to be the most original contributions of the book. The final chapter briefly compares the theology of John with other NT writers. This reviewer would have appreciated a fuller treatment of these comparisons, but maybe this is asking too much. Perhaps, when the eight volumes of the series have been completed, a ninth volume could provide a detailed comparison of the theologies of the various NT writings or groups of writings.

Colin G. Kruse  
Bible College of Victoria  
Lilydale, Victoria, Australia

Oswaldo Padilla. *The Speeches of Outsiders in Acts: Poetics, Theology and Historiography*. Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 144. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008. xv + 266 pp. \$115.00.

Padilla begins this work by discussing the role the “Other” has in shaping community identity. He notes that while Peter gives nine speeches in Acts and Paul eight, “outsiders” as a group give seven, and this comparatively high number indicates a need to study these neglected speeches of outsiders to see how they functioned in helping the early Christian community define itself. Given that the speeches of opponents are also sources for understanding Luke's theology, “it is thus puzzling that NT scholarship has yet to explore the implications of Acts' presentation of the opponents of the Jesus movement” (p. 6). Padilla seeks to shed light on Luke's theology, the genre of Luke/Acts and the purpose(s) for writing Luke/Acts by exploring the speeches of outsiders. After describing the overall goal of the study, Padilla spends the rest of chapter 1 discussing issues of method. He treats Acts through the tools of narrative criticism and rhetorical criticism, in particular focusing on “dramatic irony.” Thus, he states that he treats Acts in its final form, is interested in the theological significance of the narrative, and assumes that the original audience expected the speeches to relate to events in the real world. Padilla considers the “what” and the “how” of the speeches of outsiders within Luke's narrative. The author notes that he uses the terms Luke, author, implied author, and narrator interchangeably, asserting that it is doubtful that the author of a work of a historical nature sought to be distinct from a persona of the narrator as the author of a “transparently fictional” work would (p. 11).





Chapter 2 reviews and assesses the history of research on the speeches in Acts from the Tübingen School to the present. Padilla concludes that there has been little attention to the speeches of outsiders by authors who have written on the speeches in Acts, such as Baur, Cadbury, Dibelius, Bruce, Soards, and Penner, because they do not have a significant place in the discussion of the historicity or historiography of Acts. Padilla asserts that the speeches of outsiders in Acts are much more like those in the Hebrew Bible or Second Temple literature than in Hellenistic historiography.

Chapter 3 looks at the use of speeches by outsiders in narratives in the Hebrew Bible and Second Temple literature as background for understanding the speeches of outsiders in Acts. Padilla argues that the speeches of outsiders in these texts, from Nehemiah to Daniel to 1 Maccabees to Addition E in Greek Esther, all have an outsider who had hubris towards the Jewish people (e.g., Nebuchadnezzar) and gives a speech that affirms the theology of the Jewish author of the work. The notable exception is Josephus, who does not have such speeches. These speeches affirm the sovereignty of the God of Israel over the whole world.

Chapters 4–7 examine specific speeches of outsiders, beginning with Gamaliel's in Acts 5. For each speech, Padilla examines the context, setting, characters, and plot, followed by looking at the speech itself. The results of each of these are used to determine the function of the speech in its context and in Acts as a whole. Padilla offers many detailed observations that bring to light many details of each speech, which is helpful in its own right. Gamaliel's speech in Acts 5 illustrates his analysis. Padilla states that Gamaliel's speech, according to many scholars, has an apologetic purpose for Luke in showing that Christianity cannot be destroyed. He agrees with this conclusion but asserts, "the means through which [this conclusion] is reached lacks literary nuance and thus its credibility may be jeopardized" (p. 127). Padilla rejects the view of Fitzmyer and others that Gamaliel's speech served to legitimate Christianity because the Christian movement, unlike others, had survived the death of its founder. Rather, Gamaliel asserts that Christianity may be true if it stands the test of time. Padilla demonstrates that Gamaliel's speech uses dramatic irony and that if it is "apologetic," it is not intended for outsiders, but for those who already embrace Luke's viewpoint and is closest to an apologetic of "legitimation/self-definition" (p. 132). Dramatic irony for Padilla is a technique that would have been most persuasive to insiders. Within Acts 5:17–42, Gamaliel's speech serves as the *action transformatrice* as it "moves the action into a specific horizon" (p. 134). Most of the speeches of outsiders in Acts serve a similar role as "transformative action." Some speeches serve ironically in their results by promoting the mission of the apostles. Padilla concludes that the speeches of outsiders in Acts have a legitimating function for its readers.

Overall, this is a helpful, well-researched study that contributes to Luke-Acts scholarship on a relatively neglected topic. There is an issue over Padilla's selection of speeches, however, in that he does not analyze all the speeches of outsiders. For example, he explicitly omits the speech of the owners of the slave girl in Acts 16:20–21 because it "appears that Luke has cast the words of these outsiders in direct speech primarily to provide variation in his narrative" (p. 5n13). It is difficult, however, to know the author's "intent" in the speech of one outsider as opposed to another in this regard, so this criterion is questionable. Moreover, the speech in Acts 16 is important because it does not seem to support Padilla's view that the speeches of outsiders are used to affirm the author's theological perspective or show that the gospel is advancing no matter what. Padilla ought to deal with speeches that appear to challenge his conclusion, not put them out of bounds on the ground that they represent Luke's effort at "variation" in his narrative. That would seem to be a reductionistic reading of this and possibly other

speeches. Nevertheless, this work will be of value to those researching Acts in general or the speeches of outsiders in particular. Padilla's assessment of various approaches to assessing the genre of Acts offer important areas for further study.

Kenneth D. Litwak  
Azusa Pacific University  
Azusa, California, USA

---

Christopher A. Beetham. *Echoes of Scripture in the Letter of Paul to the Colossians*. Biblical Interpretation Series 96. Leiden: Brill, 2008. 342 pp. \$189.00.

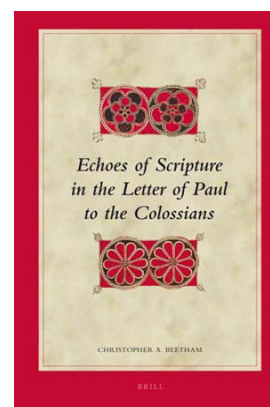
---

Christopher A. Beetham is Assistant Professor of Biblical Studies at the Evangelical Theological College and Assistant Professor of New Testament at the Ethiopian Graduate School of Theology, which are both in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. This volume revises and expands his doctoral dissertation at Wheaton College Graduate School under the supervision of Greg Beale. This review begins by summarizing the book and concludes by assessing Beetham's contributions to the ongoing study of the use of the OT in the NT.

This well-written book consists of fourteen chapters and three appendixes. Though the book is divided into chapters and not distinct sections, the present reviewer suggests that the book contains three sections of related material: (1) introductory matters (chs. 1–2), (2) specific echoes of the OT in Colossians (chs. 3–13), and (3) implications (ch. 14). What follows summarizes the contents of these three sections.

Section one has two valuable introductory chapters. The first chapter represents a history of research concerning the use of the OT in Colossians. Beetham shows the need for his work in that “no monograph or even journal article has probed the use of the Old Testament” in Colossians (p. 2). Scholars have noted that Colossians lacks any explicit quotations of the OT, which accounts for the dearth of studies on the use of the OT in Colossians. Beetham argues that many scholars concentrated on only explicit OT quotations before the 1990s, but in 1989 Richard B. Hays introduced biblical studies to the “literary-critical study of intertextuality” (p. 1). Hays's work led to a swell of interest in investigating allusions and echoes of the OT in the New. Therefore, the author concludes that the time is right for a detailed examination of allusions and echoes in Colossians. Beetham notes that after finishing his own work, he was able to consult two studies that were not yet published during his dissertation work. Greg Beale and Gordon Fee independently carried out studies of intertextuality in Colossians, and Beetham identifies the places where his work and theirs both overlaps and differs (pp. 6–8).

Chapter two lays out some very helpful and detailed criteria for determining allusions and echoes. Beetham argues for an “author-oriented” approach over against a “reader-oriented” approach (pp. 12–13), even though he incorporates the insights of literary criticism, which often assumes an “audience-oriented” approach (p. 14). He also carefully defines quotations, allusions, and echoes. A quotation is “an intentional, explicit, verbatim or near verbatim citation of a former text of six or more words in length” (p. 17). Formal quotations have an introductory marker, while informal quotations do not have any introductory formulas (p. 17). An allusion is a “literary device intentionally employed by an author to point a reader back to a single identifiable source, of which one or more components must be



remembered and brought forward into the new context in order for the alluding text to be understood fully” (p. 20). An echo is a “subtle, literary mode of reference that is not intended for public recognition yet derives from a specific predecessor. An author’s wording may echo the precursor consciously or unconsciously and/or contextually or non-contextually” (p. 24). Quotations, allusions, and echoes are alike in the sense that they have a specific precursor (p. 21).

Beetham also attempts to pinpoint the differences between these three terms. We could provide a synthesis of this section by saying that there are basically four main elements that make these three terms distinct: (1) the explicit nature of the reference, (2) the length of the reference, (3) the linear nature of the reference, and (4) the intentional nature of the reference.

First, concerning the explicit nature of the reference, the author follows John Hollander in establishing a “rhetorical hierarchy” for references depending upon how explicit the reference is. Therefore, the order of the hierarchy is quotation, allusion, and echo (p. 20).

Second, concerning length of reference, Beetham argues that a quotation consists of at least six words, but an allusion will have five or less words, even though they will still be verbatim from the original source (p. 17). If there are five words or less and there is a citation formula, then it is classified as a quotation, not an allusion (p. 17). Echoes do not have a length requirement.

Third, concerning the linear nature of the reference, a quotation will feature a linear phrase, but an allusion is more fragmentary in nature and sometimes exists as a “word cluster” of “several uncommon words, phrases, and/or images” from a source text that are “scattered in a paragraph or section of a new text” (p. 17). An echo is similar to an allusion, but may be even more fragmentary in nature.

Fourth, concerning the intentional nature of the reference, an echo may be a conscious or unconscious act on the part of the author and may not be recognized by the audience, but an allusion is an intentional act by the author and can and should be recognized by the audience. In fact, an effective allusion requires that parts of the original source must be brought forward into the new context or else the new text will not be “understood fully” (p. 20). An echo does not depend “upon the original sense of the precursor to be understood (p. 21),” but the original sense should still be studied because it “deeply enhances and colors the understanding of the new context” (p. 22) and sometimes reveals “unspoken hermeneutical presuppositions of the author concerning the original text” or clues concerning how the author understood the OT context (p. 24).

The second section (chs. 3–13) features eleven chapters that collectively identify eleven allusions and echoes. Each chapter follows the same format as the author proposes a specific echo, compares the textual versions, examines both the OT and NT contexts, studies the OT tradition in the rest of the NT and the early church, and then concludes with hermeneutical and theological reflections. Beetham argues for two allusions (Prov 8:22–31 in Col 1:15–20 and Gen 1:26–27 in Col 3:10) and nine echoes: (1) Gen 1:28 in Col 1:6, 10, (2) Isa 11:2, 9 in Col 1:9–10, (3) the Exodus motif in Col 1:12–14, (4) 2 Sam 7 tradition in Col 1:13, (5) Ps 68:16 in Col 1:19, (6) Deut 30:6 in Col 2:11, (7) Gen 17 in Col 2:13, (8) Isa 29:13 in Col 2:22, and (9) Ps 110:1 in Col 3:1.

The third section (chapter 14) unpacks the impact that Beetham’s work has for five distinct spheres of study: (1) an overall understanding of Colossians, (2) the relationship between the Testaments, (3) Paul’s use of the OT, (4) the authorship of Colossians, and (5) the relationship between Colossians and Ephesians.

It is very difficult to summarize Beetham’s book in a detailed way because of spatial constraints, but the summary section already highlighted what the present reviewer perceives as the work’s most

important, far-reaching contribution: the definitions and methodological criteria of chapter two. The second section (chs. 3–13) constitutes the bulk of the book and contains many exegetical insights, but Beetham’s conclusions would be difficult to evaluate apart from the detailed methodology that the author establishes in chapter two. Intertextual studies are plagued by a lack of standardized terminology and methodology. Far too many studies of intertextuality never get around to defining the difference between quotations, allusions, and echoes, and too few studies offer methodological controls by which to test the proposed conclusions.

I found the author’s explanation of the differences between an allusion and an echo to be the most formative for my own thinking concerning intertextuality. Specifically, I was most helped by Beetham’s insistence that the intentionality of an allusion can be confirmed objectively by the need to bring something forward from the original text in order to understand the new text fully (p. 20). In other words, the original context contains the key to unlock the meaning of the new text, or else its meaning will remain concealed from the reader.

The only part of Beetham’s methodological criteria that I found lacking was his insistence that a quotation must consist of six words or more and an allusion must consist of five words or less. Beetham himself acknowledges that this criteria has been “arbitrarily set” (pp. 16–17). In personal communication with the author, he expressed his agreement with this critique, and he pointed me to the same critique found in *RBL* (12/2009) by Maarten J. J. Menken. He also affirmed the promising potential of Menken’s suggestion that a “quotation has to be a clause made up of at least a subject and a predicate.” I plan to adopt Beetham’s methodological criteria along with Menken’s proposed revision in future attempts to detect allusions and echoes. I would suggest that these criteria would be a helpful starting point for others working in this field.

Jason C. Meyer  
Bethlehem College and Seminary  
Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA

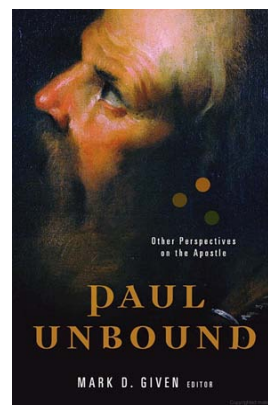
---

Mark D. Given, ed. *Paul Unbound: Other Perspectives on the Apostle*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010. 210 pp. \$24.95.

---

This book began as a panel presentation at the 2004 Central States Society of Biblical Literature meeting in St. Louis on the topic “Newer Perspectives on Paul.” The participants recognized that the wide range of approaches covered could enhance the standard textbooks on Paul for introductory courses as a supplemental textbook (p. 1). The title, *Paul Unbound*, suggests that tradition and theology have unjustly bound Paul, while the more recent approaches surveyed in the book have successfully liberated Paul from those past constraints. It is intended to remind the reader of the myth of Prometheus, whom Zeus bound for giving gifts like fire and knowledge to the human race (p. 1).

The book consists of eight chapters that together survey the relationship between Paul and eight topics: (1) the Roman Empire, (2) economics, (3) Paul’s opponents, (4) ethnicity, (5) the Law, (6) Judaism, (7) women, and (8) rhetoric. I will briefly summarize the focus of each chapter.



In chapter 1, Warren Carter interacts with the SBL Paul and Politics group. He shows that Paul's primary engagement was with the Roman Empire, and thus he highlights significant contributions, offers critiques, and suggests future work in the field. Steven J. Friesen addresses the topic of Paul and economics in chapter 2. He successfully shows the ongoing neglect towards this topic within Pauline studies. In chapter three, Jerry L. Sumney helpfully discusses the different factors involved in the search for Paul's opponents. His critique of Troy Martin's and Clinton Arnold's proposals concerning the Colossian philosophy effectively illustrates the pitfalls associated with this search (pp. 61–65).

Chapter four features a selective and intentionally diverse history of interpretation concerning Paul's assumptions and teaching with regard to ethnicity (pp. 71–95) by Charles H. Cosgrove. He concludes by sketching his own understanding of Paul and ethnicity in which he concludes that Paul did not place value on ethnicity in the same ways that moderns value ethnicity (pp. 95–97). In chapter five, A. Andrew Das admirably sketches seven current pressure points on Paul and the Law. In chapter six, Mark D. Nanos challenges the idea that Paul and Judaism are necessarily two distinct and opposing religious systems. Perhaps the best summary of Nanos's position is found on page 157: "Paul's criticism was not of Judaism. It was for the failure of some Jews and Jewish groups to be all that Judaism promised to be when the end of the ages had dawned."

In chapter seven, Deborah Krause addresses the issue of Paul and women. She announces that past studies on Paul and women are now defunct (p. 161). Current studies no longer treat Paul as a "decontextualized religious figure" that could speak for Christianity; they examine Paul's writings within the complexities of his historical, rhetorical, social, cultural, political, economic, and religious contexts (p. 161). Paul's position does not necessarily reflect the consensus of the church, and thus the goal is not to determine whether Paul was "pro" or "anti" woman (p. 161). His words simply serve as a witness to the "enduring struggle" for a "humane, inclusive, and just church" (p. 173). Paul's words do not give "comfort" for women as much as they give further "courage" to continue the struggle (p. 173).

Mark D. Given concludes the book by surveying the subject of Paul and rhetoric. He helpfully overviews classical rhetoric and how it has been applied to 1 Corinthians. He then calls for a postmodern rhetorical approach that recognizes that Paul used forms of power and performance in his writing, and he sometimes gets carried away by his own rhetoric, which leads him to say things that are not truthful. Given points out the falsehood and the deception behind Paul's statement that he resolved to know nothing except Jesus and him crucified (1 Cor 2:3). He seduced the Corinthians with his rhetoric (pp. 193–98).

In terms of positive elements, this book nicely fulfills its purpose to provide "an introduction to a wide range of fascinating approaches to Paul that are relevant to, yet go beyond, traditional theological and historical concerns" (p. 1). The authors often trace the historical trajectory of various lines of thought that have developed in response to the traditional understanding of Paul. This approach is not only immensely interesting, but it is also helpful in keeping the reader abreast of many multifaceted developments in Pauline studies.

I turn to the negative elements of the book only after strongly asserting that these comments do not call into question the valuable contribution that this book makes.

First, I suspect that the conversation would be more complete by including the interaction between the traditional and the "new perspectives" on Paul. Has the traditional view engaged these newer perspectives in noteworthy ways that merit a response or rapprochement? This additional feature would have produced a "fuller perspective" that includes the interplay between *both* traditional and

newer perspectives on Paul. This interaction needs to be documented in order to achieve an accurate assessment of where we are in the current quest to understand the apostle Paul.

Second, the book lacks any sustained reflection on the relationship between Paul and Paul's gospel, even though the two are thoroughly interrelated. For example, if Paul proves to be a seductive speaker who gets carried away by his own rhetoric (ch. 8), then should one trust his "rhetoric" concerning the gospel? If Paul is a hapless guide in terms of his views on women (ch. 7), then should we really put much stock in him as a reliable guide concerning matters touching upon eternal life? Those who are concerned about the gospel should show concern when the gospel is ignored in these discussions.

Jason C. Meyer  
Bethlehem College and Seminary  
Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA

---

Anthony C. Thiselton. *The Living Paul: An Introduction to the Apostle's Life and Thought*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2010. 192 pp. \$20.00.

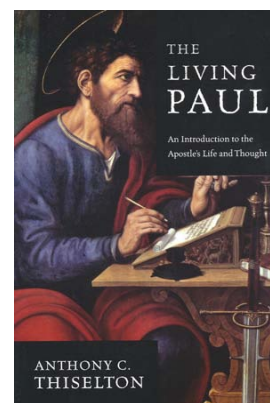
---

The author is professor of Christian Theology at the University of Nottingham and is a noted expert in the field of hermeneutics. He has also written a well-received commentary on 1 Corinthians (NIGTC) as well as a shorter exegetical and pastoral commentary on 1 Corinthians.

This book serves as a guided tour of Paul's life and thought consisting of seventeen chapters. Although the book does not divide the chapters further, these chapters could be usefully subdivided into two sections. The first section covers introductory matters (chs. 1–4). The first two chapters focus on obstacles that prevent readers from properly appreciating Paul: the relationship between Paul and Jesus (ch. 1) and the "immense cut" that separates Paul's experience before and after conversion, which Thiselton rightly chalks up to Paul's new creation theology, not psychology (ch. 2). The next two chapters concentrate on Paul's varied roles as the apostle to the Gentiles: traveler and missionary-pastor (ch. 3) and traveler, pastor, and letter writer (ch. 4). Chapters 3 and 4 also succinctly summarize Paul's letters.

The second section has thirteen chapters that cover different topics in Paul's thought (chs. 5–17). These chapter divisions follow the traditional sequence of categories from systematic theology, except for the final chapter. Thiselton begins this section with an exposition of Paul's thought on the Trinity: Jesus Christ (ch. 5), God the Father (ch. 6), and the Holy Spirit (ch. 7). Having covered theology proper, Thiselton now turns to the doctrines of humanity and soteriology as he examines humanity (ch. 8), sin (ch. 9), the work of Christ and being "in Christ" (ch. 10), and justification and the law (ch. 11). The author also has three chapters on ecclesiology: the church (ch. 12), the ministry of the word (ch. 13), and the ordinances of baptism and Lord's Supper (ch. 14). The next two chapters look at ethics (ch. 15) and eschatology (ch. 16), while the final chapter addresses Paul and the phenomenon of postmodernity (ch. 17).

This book has many positive elements. First, it is a smooth read. It has an orderly feel because it naturally arranges topics so that chapters smoothly transition to each other. Second, the chapters have a comprehensive feel because (1) they overview the apostle's life and thought, while many other books on





Paul focus exclusively on one or the other (biography or theology) and (2) they touch on nearly the full range of topics from systematic theology. Third, the book has a balanced feel because Thiselton nicely condenses each chapter into about eight to ten pages. Fourth, the excellent and fascinating chapter on Paul and postmodernity is easily worth the price of the book in its own right.

There are however some negative aspects of the book. First, occasionally the condensed nature of the book cuts both ways. Sometimes the chapters are clear and concise enough to be forceful, while at other times they are condensed to the point of being unclear and unhelpful. For example, chapter 11 covers a topic of increasing complexity and controversy: Paul's view of justification and the law. Thiselton admirably attempts to keep the discussion to nine pages (eight pages on justification and one on faith and the law), but one is left with the impression that justice has not been served and that the surface has not even begun to be scratched. Thiselton sides with N. T. Wright's view of justification, but I am still unsure where Thiselton lands concerning Paul's view of the law in this book. One page (pp. 99–100) is too short to be clear or helpful on this particular topic (the discussion on p. 132 concerning ethics and the law is much more helpful). Thiselton's discussion of justification is also somewhat unbalanced because he cites Wright frequently, but he does not really interact with those who oppose Wright and the New Perspective. He briefly mentions the now dated work of Ernst Käsemann (1971) and Seyoon Kim (2002), but does not refer to other more recent scholarly responses.

Second, occasionally Thiselton refers to a scholar's view without citing them. For example, Thiselton refers to the work of J. Louis Martyn, Alexandra Brown, and "others" that say Paul utilizes "performative" speech (pp. 18–19). However, the footnote cites Alexandra Brown, not J. Louis Martyn. In fact, Martyn's work does not even appear in the bibliography.

In conclusion, I have to confess that the book did not meet my initial heightened sense of expectation based on the standard of excellence established by the author's prior works. The book did not rise to any lofty heights of eloquence or erudition (perhaps the final chapter is an exception), but it is a valuable introductory guide on Paul's life and thought and it has much to commend it.

Jason C. Meyer  
Bethlehem College and Seminary  
Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA

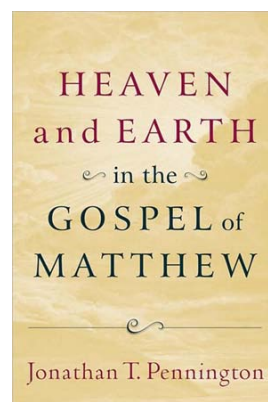
---

Jonathan T. Pennington. *Heaven and Earth in the Gospel of Matthew*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009. xv + 399 pp. \$42.99.

---

Pastors and scholars may rejoice at Baker's publication of *Heaven and Earth in the Gospel of Matthew*, as it makes Jonathan Pennington's doctoral dissertation (originally published by Brill in 2007) accessible at a price that won't break one's bank. In this meticulously researched and carefully argued work, Pennington investigates and overturns the dominant view regarding the phrase "kingdom of heaven" in the Gospel of Matthew demonstrating that the use of the phrase and its corresponding "heaven" and "earth" language is part of a literary/theological paradigm Matthew weaves into his gospel.

Pennington begins his study with a review of the scholarly discussion surrounding Matthew's use of "kingdom of heaven" rather than "kingdom of



God,” which appears in the other two Synoptic Gospels. The current consensus among scholars is that Matthew uses “kingdom of heaven” rather than “kingdom of God” as a kind of reverential circumlocution in order to avoid using the name of God much the same way that a devout Jewish author would write “G-d” in place of “God.” Pennington then traces this view back to the continental scholar Gustaf Dalman in the late nineteenth century. Though Dalman’s view has become the near universal explanation for the “kingdom of heaven” phenomenon in Matthew, there is a small but significant trail of dissenting opinions through the literature. Pennington suspects that Matthew is up to something deeper and more significant than any scholar has yet outlined and promptly sets about demonstrating this through an extensive excursion into the OT and Second Temple Jewish literature.

In this OT and other Jewish literature that stands behind and contemporary to Matthew, Pennington discovers that heaven language plays a significant role, especially in the apocalyptic/prophetic book of Daniel. When Matthew is set against this backdrop, it appears that Matthew emphasizes the theme of heaven because of the sheer number of its occurrences in comparison with the other two Synoptics. Furthermore, Matthew seems to use heaven language in four idiolectic ways compared to the Jewish background literature: (1) a preference for heaven language in plural form, (2) frequent pairing of heaven and earth together, (3) use of the phrases “Father in heaven” and “heavenly Father,” and (4) the phrase “kingdom of heaven.” Moving into the heart of his study, Pennington examines the significance of each of these idiolectic patterns to help discern Matthew’s overall understanding of the kingdom of heaven.

Moving through the OT and Second Temple literature, Pennington sees that each of the four unique ways that Matthew uses heaven language seems intentionally stylized in order to communicate Matthew’s literary and theological intentions. Matthew, he argues, has picked up on the great OT theme of the separation of heaven and earth as a result of the fall and perpetuated in the earthly empires that dot the landscape of OT history. Matthew intentionally patterns his usage of heaven/earth and kingdom of heaven language to demonstrate that Jesus’ announcement of the kingdom announces the eschatological inbreaking of God’s heavenly kingdom. This kingdom, in accordance with OT usage (particularly in the prophet Daniel), stands in radical discontinuity from all earthly kingdoms of the present age and signifies the reunification of heaven and earth, two realms driven apart in the garden as a result of sin.

By the last chapter, many readers will wonder whether Matthew, or Pennington for that matter, has fallen into the trap of Platonic dualism. Foreseeing this objection, Pennington demonstrates just where Matthew’s heaven/earth duality should be located on the scale of dualisms. Here he rightly points out that Matthew’s cosmology escapes the trap of Platonism since he sees that there is no inherent antithesis between heaven and earth in the biblical worldview. These were two realms that were originally one and are beginning to experience the eschatological reunification through the reconciling work of Jesus.

The coming years may show that Pennington has effected a paradigm shift in Matthean scholars’ understanding of the kingdom of heaven and heaven/earth language in the Gospel of Matthew. His work deserves this designation because he has not merely set about to overturn a long held maxim in the study of Matthew and the Synoptic Gospels; he carefully and methodically demonstrates the poverty of the prevailing view. Pennington’s alternative proves compelling because it evidences the careful work in the trenches that scholars operating at his level must exercise while maintaining the kind of wide-angle literary and theological perspective that is necessary to make sense of the Gospels in today’s academic climate.



While it will take a patient and careful reader to plow through Pennington's massive and wide-ranging study, pastors and church leaders should not make the mistake of thinking that this work is of interest only to NT scholars and biblical theologians. Any effort given to taking in this study will pay dividends that will richly benefit the church. For example, the emphasis on the reunification of heaven and earth will help pastors show people that their hope is in an embodied existence on the reunified heaven and earth in the presence of God rather than a disembodied existence in an ethereal heaven for eternity. Pennington also demonstrates how his thesis leads to a higher Christology as Jesus is the one who, in his own flesh on the cross, has begun the great reunification of heaven and earth and will return one day to complete it. For Christians living under various kinds of social oppression, this thesis is good news that the powers that currently dominate them will be done away with and replaced with God's good and gracious rule through Jesus Christ.

Scott Newman  
Soma Communities  
Tacoma, Washington, USA

---

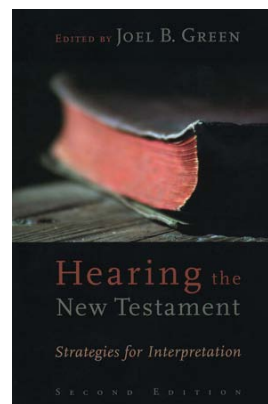
Joel B. Green, ed. *Hearing the New Testament: Strategies for Interpretation*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010. xii + 432 pp. \$28.00.

---

The proliferation of distinct strategies for interpreting the Bible over the past few generations has produced a multifarious configuration of subdisciplines within the world of NT hermeneutics. These have been effectively brought together and represented in *Hearing the New Testament*. As with the first edition (1995), Joel Green once again assembles a strong cadre of contributors, including Richard Bauckham, Richard Hays, and Kevin Vanhoozer. The volume's purpose is to introduce various hermeneutical approaches in current NT scholarship; its target audience is perhaps upper-level undergrad or beginning seminary students. The goal is not to break new ground but to present the current state of play in NT hermeneutics.

Joel Green kicks off the volume with an introductory overview of a few of the core issues in today's NT hermeneutics discussions. His essay gives a representative flavor of what is to come—one hears echoes throughout the volume of Green's conviction that "meaning is not so much repeated or reproduced in the experience of reading; instead, reading constitutes, at least in some sense, the production of meaning" (p. 13) and that "no one interpretive method can claim to provide the one authentic meaning of a NT text" today (p. 14). Bart Ehrman then deals with NT text criticism (the reader compelled by Ehrman's frequent referrals to his own works should equally note the recent response to these works by Köstenberger and Kruger, *The Heresy of Orthodoxy* [Crossway 2010]).

Then comes a series of essays handling distinct interpretive approaches to the NT. Stephen Barton handles historical criticism and social science sensitivities. Holly Carey, replacing Bruce Chilton's 1995 essay on the same topic, writes on traditio-historical criticism, citing but somewhat neglecting the important blow to form critical assumptions delivered by Bauckham's 2006 *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*. James Bailey treats genre analysis, usefully incorporating the work on genre theory by M. Bakhtin (who also shows up in Spencer's essay). Clifton Black handles rhetorical criticism, Green discourse analysis,



and Mark Powell narrative criticism. Interspersed within all these are some of the stronger essays of the volume: Bauckham on the relevance of Jewish texts to NT study (a short piece that could easily be required reading for first-year seminary students), Loveday Alexander on the importance to NT study of understanding the Greco-Roman milieu, and Hays and Green on the OT in the NT. Readers intrigued by the latter essay's five "basic assumptions" with which the NT incorporates and builds upon the Old (pp. 130–32) may wish to consult also G. Beale's more theologically and hermeneutically satisfying list of five "hermeneutical presuppositions" with which the NT uses the OT in the final chapter of the 1994 volume edited by Beale, *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts?* Max Turner, in a particularly instructive chapter, discusses linguistics and word study.

A transition takes place at this point in the volume, with a shift to the role of the reader in interpretation. Vanhoozer reviews recent reader-oriented approaches and ultimately concludes, "The reader has a responsibility to receive the text according to its nature and intention" (p. 283). A single chapter in the 1995 edition devoted to "Global Perspectives in New Testament Interpretation" has been expanded in this second edition to individual chapters on African American (Emerson Powery) and Latino/a (Efrain Agosto) readings of the NT. Scott Spencer (replacing Sandra Schneider's 1995 contribution) treats feminist criticism; for the reader who wishes finally to sit under rather than stand over the biblical text, it would not be unhealthy for the hermeneutic of suspicion Spencer encourages (e.g. pp. 304–5, 318–19) to be viewed with suspicion itself (on which more below).

Two concluding chapters address canonical reading of the NT (Robert Wall) and theological interpretation of the NT (Stephen Fowl). By "canonical" Wall means a focus (à la Brevard Childs) on the final literary form of the text as part of a larger canon and should not be confused with a biblical-theological reading of the NT with an eye toward divine orchestration of a history of salvation culminating in Christ and resulting in a final canon that can, in a similar way though on different assumptions, be read as a unity. Rather, Wall assumes "the inherent polyvalency of biblical teaching" (p. 381) and "diverse theologies" within the Bible (p. 385). Fowl's essay encourages reading the Bible in an ecclesial context and mindful of previous centuries' biblical interpretation—an appropriate closing injunction, though puzzling in light of the dropping in this second edition of Anthony Thiselton's historical review of NT interpretation (the second essay in the 1995 edition). Other changes from the first to the second edition not yet mentioned are the omissions of Edgar McKnight's essay on "Presuppositions in New Testament Study" and Green's closing essay "The Practice of Reading the New Testament."

*Hearing the New Testament* possesses several notable strengths. First, the contributors soberly diagnose weaknesses as well as strengths to the hermeneutical approaches they discuss (and for which many of them are uniquely known). Second, the sample use of each interpretive strategy with a specific NT text in closing most of the chapters allows the reader to see these various hermeneutical foci in action in a concrete way. Third, relatedly, Green's request that the contributors work with the same two or three NT passages for these samples was a good idea, allowing readers to perceive more clearly the differences between the various approaches. Fourth, the "further reading" suggestions that close each essay are far more substantive and useful than is usually the case, given in prose rather than list form, some of them stretching for several pages.

A few dissatisfying elements to the book could be noted. The volume needs an introductory preface, stating clearly the book's goals, explaining the need for a second edition, and identifying, perhaps with brief rationale, differences from the first edition. The last few pages of Green's opening essay helpfully outline what is to come, but more big-picture clarity is needed right up front. Another frustration

is admittedly more subjective but also more significant. As with much current writing on biblical hermeneutics, one feels a bit of tension in this volume between, on the one hand, the general semantic pessimism endorsed by biblical scholars about readers accessing the meaning of the Bible and, on the other, the semantic optimism assumed by biblical scholars about readers accessing the meaning of their own work. One wonders if a few of these contributors, each of whom has served us well, writing clearly and helpfully, would feel mildly disconcerted if they themselves were read with the reading strategies they endorse. If a hermeneutic of suspicion is commended to us in our reading of Scripture—allegedly due to an author’s socio-cultural locatedness, personal history, perceived androcentrism, latent misogyny, racial blinders, etc.—should one not immediately incorporate such a hermeneutic in evaluating this very advice?

Minor frustrations aside, however, this volume will prove a useful introduction to the various hermeneutical strategies currently being employed in technical study of the Bible.

Dane Ortlund  
Wheaton College  
Wheaton, Illinois, USA

---

R. C. Sproul. *John*. St. Andrew’s Expository Commentary. Lake Mary, FL: Reformation Trust, 2009. xiv + 414 pp. \$27.00.

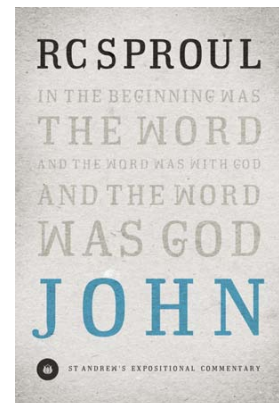
---

R. C. Sproul’s *John* is the second commentary in the St. Andrews Expository Commentary series. The commentaries in this series represent the preaching of Sproul as Minister of Preaching and Teaching at St. Andrew’s Chapel, Sanford, Florida. The series comes as a modern companion to the cache of Reformed expositions available to students of Scripture.

The second St. Andrew’s volume has many items to commend it. First, the work is warm and pastoral at many points. A shepherd’s heart is revealed throughout the expositions. Jokes and many personal stories of common interests invite the reader to consider his or her own relatedness to the text.

The use of Greek terms occurs more sparingly than one comes to expect in an evangelical exposition of NT materials. This is welcomed, as the reader is not given the impression that displaying one’s knowledge of exegesis, as a pastor, is as important as explaining the text in familiar and understandable terms. Sproul follows Calvin’s model of giving simple expositions rather than flaunting knowledge for knowledge’s (or pride’s) sake, and by doing so he sets a good example for fellow expositors to follow. Also, Sproul periodically confronts the reader for a response to the text with the heart of an evangelist: “I pray that you will hear the word of Christ to this woman, and that before you put your head on your pillow tonight that you will say to Him, ‘Give me a drink’” (p. 60). Often with great shepherd-like compassion toward those suffering, illustrations abound from the author’s personal experiences of his encounters with those in pain. His tone is very encouraging in the chapters reflecting the Upper Room Discourse.

Second, in the commentary large amounts of systematic and historical theology are included in the expositions. This is probably the greatest strength of this work. There are references to Luther’s trial at Worms (p. 9), predestination and the teachings of Arminianism and semi-Pelagianism (p. 116),



Unitarianism and the Heidelberg Catechism (p. 298), and the author uses many Latin theological terms. In one sermon alone (John 5:16–30), the author introduces deism, naturalism, New Age beliefs, rabbinical (first century) Sabbath laws, ontological and economic Trinity, and ontology—all of these while establishing both God’s direct involvement in the creation and the deity of Christ. These are typical things we come to expect of the author—a professor of historical theology and professed lover of Reformed theology.

The strong theology is supported especially by affirming the text’s inerrancy and criticizing the views of liberal higher-critical scholars. Again, this is not shocking, for guarding inerrancy has been a drumbeat of Sproul’s since a time prior to his role on the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy. What is amazing is how often he is able to affirm inerrancy and redress criticisms of the text as he preaches through the Gospel of John. He will establish the veracity of the cleansing of the Temple (p. 26), explain the science of textual criticism while discussing John 5:3–4, and give a lengthy retort to nineteenth-century scholarly criticism of the miracle of the feeding of the 5,000, explaining both textual transmission and variants in the same series of comments (pp. 103–5). Importantly, in one exposition he explains his love for the truth of inerrancy: “If you take away the Word, you take away my life. I have nothing left, because this is the Word of Christ” (p. 279).

Third, one can discern that biblical theology and observation of intertextuality is important to Sproul. Good examples are Sproul’s discussion of Jesus’ mother Mary and the term “Woman” (pp. 368, 386) and his discussion of “fires made of coal” in John 18 and 21 (p. 401). The biblical theology is supported by thorough historical and cultural background research related to each passage under examination. The story of Christ and the message of the gospel, which are drawn out in every chapter, are grounded in both theology and history for Sproul.

As no post-apostolic sermons are perfect, so no commentaries made from sermons are perfect. In brief criticism, four drawbacks of this commentary are noted, but one should not consider these drawbacks to be applicable to the entire St. Andrews series. First, the great majority of the expositions do not reflect the unity of thought intended by the Apostle John. In this way these pages are not truly expositions of the central idea of a passage. However, there are exceptions, such as the exposition of John 5:31–47, which is centered around the “four witnesses” to the deity of Christ (pp. 91–97), and the exposition of John 11:45–12:8, which is unified around the pragmatic skepticism of the Jewish leadership (pp. 213–20). In similar criticism, occasionally the author recognizes the unifying idea, but it is not reflected in the exposition, as is the case with “[fulfilling an] empty life” as an idea in John 6:16–34 without the passage being explained by this rubric.

Second, because of the rich systematic and historical theology emphases, the theology discussion can draw away from the expositions of the passages. This is not to suggest that expositions should not be rich in doctrine. Instead, it recognizes that expositions of Scripture should explain terms and unifying concepts of a passage more than they should take detours on the history of doctrine or a systematic topic. Two examples of several detours in this commentary include the discussion on worship that draws away from the exposition of John 4:16–42 and the discussion on deistic and naturalistic beliefs in the discourse on 5:17–30.

Occasionally, the pattern of detour leads to an imbalance of emphases in the expositions. For example, on John 1:19–29, Sproul writes, “God promised that someday the King’s highway would be built and the King would enter into the midst of His people” (p. 11). But he does not explain that the Baptizer’s highway to God is repentance. In a similar manner, the chapter on John 3:14–21 is given to

lengthy discussion on 3:16, but this is to the minimization of the exposition of the rest of this pericope. The reader would do well, however, to remember that this commentary derives its content from sermonic expositions, for emphases in sermons vary from preacher to preacher. Therefore the content, expectedly, is different from that of an exegetical commentary; imbalance is germane to this genre.

Third, the author speaks with certainty on items of controversial interpretive or textual discussion without giving good support for his view of the issues. One example that stands uniquely and unexpectedly is the conclusion that the story of John 7:53–8:11 “is nothing less than the very word of God” (p. 149). One might ask about the basis of Sproul’s trust of this text or why his discussion juxtaposes the “overwhelming consensus” of scholastic testimony of apostolic authority against the manuscript evidence. That is, if the majority of scholars would say that John 7:53–8:11 is inauthentic, would this be the basis for rejecting this text? Sproul’s explanation sounds much like the critical method of the liberal scholars he opposes. Yet this reviewer is confident that the great defender of inerrancy did not mean for his explanation to sound like this.

Fourth, there are other various items the reader might find surprising, such as a personal testimony about tithing that seems to lack a concept of grace (pp. 171–72). Sproul also repeats an old error of contrasting dispensationalism with Calvinism instead of covenant theology (p. 316). For this reviewer, in particular, it was most shocking to see that an illustrative question concerning those outside of the revelation of Christ is framed and answered in terms of the colonial worldview: “The theological question I hear most often is this: ‘What happens to the innocent native in Africa who has never heard the Gospel?’” I would recommend that the editors of the series consider how such illustrations, which might not be controversial to Sproul’s congregation, might sound to readers of a commentary.

Despite these detractions, Sproul’s *John* is a welcomed addition of expositions of the Gospel of John in the tradition of Calvin’s preaching style and Calvinistic theology. This reviewer enjoyed using the commentary devotionally and in preparation for sermons. Blessed is the congregation that receives such exposition and pastoral care Sunday to Sunday. Blessed will be those who utilize Sproul’s *John* as they read the words of life in the Fourth Gospel.

Eric C. Redmond

Reformation Alive Baptist Church and Washington Bible College  
Lanham, Maryland, USA

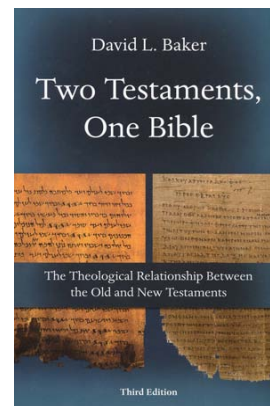
David L. Baker. *Two Testaments, One Bible: The Theological Relationship between the Old and New Testaments*. 3rd ed. Downers Grove: IVP, 2010. 362 pp. £16.99/\$29.00.

Originally a doctoral thesis, this is the third revision of a valuable work which should be read by more people than merely the original university examiners. It has the rigor of a thesis, but has been so well rewritten that it is readable, informative, and useful to students and pastors. The book aims to defend the value of the OT by surveying and critiquing approaches to the relationships between OT and NT. There are four sections to the book: (1) a history of biblical interpretation from the patristic era to the modern period is surveyed; (2) several modern approaches are detailed; (3) some key themes used to relate the Testaments are explored; AND (4) conclusions are drawn relating to doctrine and church.

The history of biblical interpretation is necessarily brief in its sweep. However, the most important points are made. Calvin gets less than a page, but the salient insight that he focused on the unity of the Testaments more than Luther is well made (pp. 39–40). More detail is given of modern approaches. This is helpful as these often lie behind the more destructive approaches to the Bible which still reign in many places of theological scholarship. The updating of the book permitted a new section on the 1990s, which highlights the influences of postmodernism, theological readings, and globalization (pp. 57–59). The whirlwind tour of biblical interpretation is helpful in sensitising us to possibilities—we so often plod along in our studies, assuming that the way we interpret the Bible is the way all sensible people have always read it.

The second part outlines four modern approaches to the relationship between the Testaments: the NT is the essential Bible; both Testaments are equally Scripture; the OT is the essential Bible; the two Testaments are one salvation history. Students will find this section invaluable in helping them to trace the origins of various texts they may have to study. Ministers and interested lay people will appreciate afresh the sheer complexity of the issue of relating the OT and NT. Weighing options and seeing the good intentions behind views we ultimately reject may lead to useful insights. Modern theologians such as Pannenberg, Moltmann, and Cullmann are critiqued with clarity and deftness.

The third section of the book is the part which will be most consistent with the beliefs of evangelicals; the previous sections having alerted them to earlier and alternative views. This third section considers four ways in which Christians have attempted to articulate the development of the Bible's narrative: (1) typology, (2) promise/fulfilment, (3) continuity/discontinuity; and (4) covenant. Again, it is surely a good thing to have it impressed upon us that expressing the relationship between the Testaments is no simple matter. The Lutheran who strongly emphasizes discontinuity and distinguishes law from gospel needs to wrestle with the underlying unity of God's purposes. The Reformed theologian who sees law and gospel as a unity may need to be unsettled by the NT's contrasting of new and old covenants. The literalist may do well to reflect on the typology used in Scripture and what it suggests about God's use of language. The richness of Scripture is a cause for rejoicing and motivation to read it afresh. As the author observes, "The diversities within the Bible tend to be ignored or harmonised in the process of maintaining traditional beliefs. Catholics and Lutherans, Puritans and Pentecostals, conservatives and liberals, all have their favourite parts of the Bible (canon within the canon)" (p. 233).





David Baker has produced a masterful work, offering a pathway through what may well claim to be the most complex theological issue revealed to us by God, the relationship between the OT and NT. Every time we read the Bible, every time we preach, every time we make a statement about God's character, we implicitly build upon a view of the relationship between the Testaments. This book will help us build on better informed foundations and is highly recommended. When it was submitted as a thesis in 1975, it was a solid academic survey. Now in its third updated revision it is a goldmine of theological insight which has matured over thirty-five years of reflection.

Peter Sanlon  
Oak Hill College  
London, England, UK

---

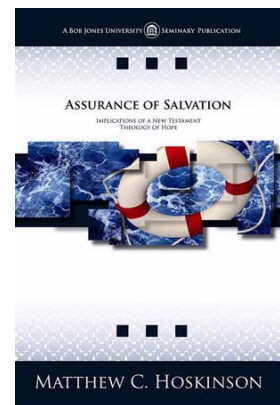
Matthew C. Hoskinson. *Assurance of Salvation: Implications of a New Testament Theology of Hope*. Greenville, SC: Bob Jones University Press, 2010, xii + 228 pp. \$22.95.

---

This volume represents Hoskinson's dissertation written at Bob Jones University. Hoskinson examines a matter of perpetual interest in considering the theme of assurance relative to salvation. Hoskinson begins with an introduction where he specifies his purpose and method for the book. Chapter 1 consists of a helpful and illuminating historical survey on the doctrine of assurance. Obviously, the history is selective, focusing on the contributions of Roman Catholicism, Luther, Calvin, and Wesley. Aquinas and Rome argue that those who claim assurance of salvation are presumptuous, unless God grants them such by special revelation (which is highly unusual). Luther and Calvin both maintained that assurance was of the essence of faith, while also acknowledging that believers could grow in assurance and may sometimes struggle with a lack thereof. Wesley argued that believers may be assured today of their right standing with God but must not presume that they would be saved on the final day.

Chapter 2 surveys contemporary views on assurance. The "present only view" of assurance, which picks up Wesley's thought, maintains that one can be confident today that one belongs to God. Nonetheless, apostasy is a possibility in the future, so believers cannot be certain that they will be saved on the last day. Hoskinson labels the second view "the time of conversion view." Scholars who propound this view say that assurance is of the essence of saving faith, focusing on the promises of God to save his people. Works have no place at all in terms of final salvation, but those who do good works will enjoy God's blessing during their life on earth. The third view is identified as "the composite view." The composite view, unlike "the present only view" teaches that one can have certainty of final salvation. In that sense it is similar to "the time of conversion view." It also argues that the fundamental grounds for assurance are God's promises. But this view differs from "the present only view" by insisting that perseverance and the bearing of fruit are necessary for salvation. Christ is the only basis of assurance, and so works are not the basis of salvation but are a means of assurance.

Hoskinson defends the composite view in the remainder of the work by exploring the theme of hope in the life of Abraham, hope in the NT historical books, hope in Paul's writings, and hope in the General Epistles. Hoskinson helpfully exegetes these texts, showing that hope is fundamentally based on



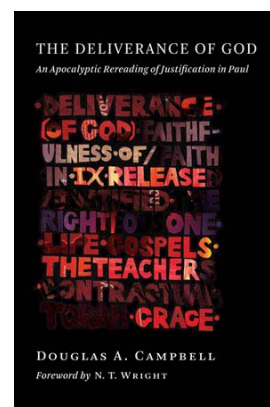
God's saving work and his promises. At the same time endurance in faith is necessary for salvation. Only those who continue in faith and obedience will receive the final reward of eternal life. In the conclusion the author argues that the composite view best represents the teaching of the NT. He clarifies that God's promises are fundamental and primary in terms of assurance. Persevering faith and obedience are a result of the salvific work of Christ and therefore are "a secondary—but necessary—means of assurance" (p. 203). The writer includes an appendix where he argues that assurance is of the essence of saving faith, but such a conclusion does not rule out the truth that believers can grow in assurance.

Hoskinson's dissertation is an excellent survey of the biblical teaching on assurance, and I would argue that he also convincingly defends the composite view. He carefully summarizes the various views and exegetes the biblical text, and he synthesizes the various positions well theologically. Few scholarly studies treat the issue of assurance well, and Hoskinson's study is a needed and insightful contribution. The numerous tables in the book pictorially summarize the argument and make the book user-friendly. Hoskinson probably ties his study too closely to the word "hope," since there are texts where hope is featured but the term is missing (e.g., Rom. 8:31–39). He could have more clearly pointed out that hope is not only based on texts where the word occurs. On the other hand, no study can cover everything, and so the lacuna in this area is not a major weakness. On occasion Hoskinson overemphasizes the tenses of verbs, arguing that a present tense refers to a present time and aorist to past time, etc. Such conclusions may be legitimate contextually, but Hoskinson does not show awareness of recent studies in verbal aspect, and so readers may be suspicious of arguments based on the tense of the verb. But this minor quibble does not affect the fundamental thesis of the book. The quality of research is high and the conclusions drawn are convincing and pastorally important. Hoskinson nicely balances both the indicative and imperative, maintaining delicately the tension between God's saving promises and the need for enduring faith. We can look forward in the future to further scholarly contributions from this gifted young scholar.

Thomas R. Schreiner  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary  
Louisville, Kentucky, USA

Douglas Atchison Campbell. *The Deliverance of God: An Apocalyptic Rereading of Justification in Paul*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009. xxx + 1,248 pp. £33.99/\$60.00.

To my knowledge, there is nothing that quite matches this massive tour de force. To be sure, Campbell takes up many of the elements of Paul's thought that have been the subject of debate, past and present, regularly affirming revisionist positions. The "faith of Christ" is Christ's faith and faithfulness, and likewise the manifestation of God's righteousness (Tom Wright). As the title already suggests, "righteousness" and "justification" have to do with the saving work of God, deliverance from the power of sin (as Käsemann, and many in his wake rightly have insisted). Paul's soteriology is fundamentally participationist, as Deissmann, Schweitzer, and especially Wrede have claimed. Paul does not think in introspective, individualistic terms (Krister Stendahl). Most of the questions that have become part of academic debate make their appearance





here. Campbell's work is set apart by his thorough-going dissatisfaction with virtually all the work that has gone before him. No one seems to measure up to his standards. Indeed, while he regards his work in a sense as "deeply Protestant if not Lutheran" (p. 934), he also suggests that it is "an important step in the recovery of the authentic and orthodox Pauline gospel" (p. 935). *Post tenebras lux!*

In exegetical terms it is Campbell's rereading of Rom 1:18–3:20 that is of greatest significance. The first section of this argument, Rom 1:18–32, is nothing other than the position of a false teacher, which Paul proceeds to dismantle in what follows (pp. 469–600). It is a novel interpretation, which ought perhaps to be considered briefly. But it is not likely to prevail.

Beyond his clear appeal to rhetorical analysis and apocalyptic theology, it is Campbell's rejection of what he calls "Justification theory" (or sometimes "Justification") that drives his work. That "theory," in brief, has to do with a God of retributive justice, who condemns human beings for living up to the rational conclusions they can reach about the world around them, even though as fallen human beings they are unable to do so. Salvation is given on the condition of faith in Jesus, who paid off God for our sins, a condition that in Reformed theology is inconsistently joined to election and divine sovereignty (pp. 11–95). The main culprit is thus found within the Reformed tradition in "covenant theology." Yet all Protestant theology seems more or less to share in this "Justification theory." Even Catholic thought, in so far as it shares in an Anselmian understanding of the atonement as satisfaction, turns out to be defective. Rather than engaging the traditions in depth, Campbell constructs a straw man with whom he then holds his debate. His relatively brief discussion of Luther, Melancthon, Calvin, and Augustine (pp. 247–83) does not deflect him from his critique of the model of Protestant thought that he himself has constructed. This abstract and artificial theological "debate" fatally weakens his work.

Errors in judgment unhappily abound. A single, fundamental problem may be mentioned here. The "Justification model" that Campbell rejects "achieves its soteriological pressure on individuals largely by arguing for the necessary prior perception of a forensically retributive God" (p. 16). It is not at all clear that this claim holds. Indeed, Luther's reformational turn was precisely a rejection of a covenant-theology that requires the human being to fulfill a minimal condition in order to experience the otherwise overwhelming grace of God. Admittedly, the Reformed thought generally takes a different structure, with divine demand granted priority. But here, too, God's grace and goodness more than meet his demands. The real question at stake is whether it is biblical and Pauline to speak of judgment and retributive justice in any form.

According to Campbell's alternative, we ought to speak instead of a benevolent God who saves human beings without "coercive violence" by transforming them through Jesus. He finds this theology especially in Rom 5–8 (pp. 62–95, 931–36).

Several observations are in order. In the first place, one wonders what has happened to the right of the Creator over the human creature living in contention with him, as Käsemann rightly has underscored. Campbell somehow loses from view the understanding that he himself later articulates, namely, that God's wrath expresses divine benevolence, the rejection of evil and the deliverance of those oppressed by it (p. 930). "Sin" is present in this world only as it is embodied in human beings and their deeds. The biblical, and consequently Christian expectation of a final judgment is the hope for the rectification of all things. To say that Protestant theology (in Campbell's terms, "Justification") can offer no coherent protest in relation to the Holocaust (p. 206) is blatantly false. Quite the opposite: it is Campbell's proposal of transformation without judgment that fails the test. It is not enough to hope that the perpetrators at Auschwitz should be transformed. There has to be an accounting for their

deeds. One can hardly read the Psalmists without seeing their hope for vindication and justice. Paul has certainly done so, and richly cites them, particularly in the catena of Rom 3:10–18. The wonder of it all is that God deigned in Christ to humble himself and become the victim of our violence: the feet that are swift to shed blood, shed his blood (Rom 3:15, 25). In Christ's cross and resurrection, our violent rejection of both God and our neighbor meet with judgment—and forgiveness. Indeed, there can be no forgiveness where there is no judgment.

Similar criticisms might be directed to Campbell's complaint about making "faith" a condition of salvation: unless human beings are to be regarded as nothing more than blocks of wood or stone, some accounting of human response to the Gospel has to be rendered. Likewise, Campbell's attempt to do away with the individual dimension of Paul's thought fails from the start. A decided individualism, and unhealthy one at that, necessarily must creep into his own transformationist views: all of us are transformed, but some are more transformed than others.

It is truly a pity that this massive work, into which so much labor and intense study obviously has been invested, should bear such fundamental flaws. One can only admire Campbell's effort and pray that in the future it might be crowned with greater success.

Mark A. Seifrid

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

Louisville, Kentucky, USA

---

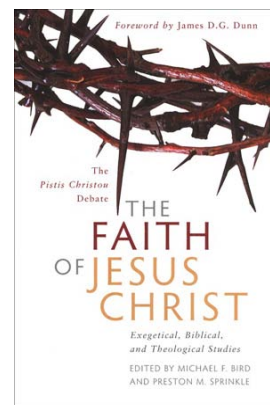
Michael F. Bird and Preston M. Sprinkle, eds. *The Faith of Jesus Christ: Exegetical, Biblical, and Theological Studies: The Pistis Christou Debate*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2009. xix + 350 pp. £14.99/\$19.95.

---

This anthology consists of a foreword by James D. G. Dunn and seventeen essays, the first of which is a helpful introductory chapter by Michael F. Bird that summarizes the rest of the papers. The initial section, entitled "Background of the Debate," includes two essays: one by Debbie Hunn reviewing the history of the controversy and another one by Stanley E. Porter and Andrew W. Pitts arguing that a grammatical analysis of the phrase *pistis Christou* supports the so-called objective genitive interpretation (Christ as the object of faith).

The second section, "Pauline Texts in Contention," begins with an essay by Douglas A. Campbell, who asserts that a subjective genitive understanding (Christ's faithfulness) of Rom 3:22, "coupled with a messianic construal of Habakkuk 2:4 in Romans 1:17b [i.e., referring to 'the Righteous One'], . . . is the only interpretation" that explains all the data (p. 66). In contrast, R. Barry Matlock, focusing on four passages that include additional uses of the noun *pistis* or the verb *pisteuō* (Rom 3:22; Gal 2:16; 3:22; Phil 3:9), argues that this repetition of the vocabulary clearly selects the correct sense, i.e., Christ as the object of faith. The next two essays, by Paul Forster and Richard H. Bell respectively, focus on Eph 3:12 and Phil 3:9 and reach opposite conclusions—Forster arguing for "Christ's faithfulness" and Bell for "faith in Christ."

Section 3 purports to present "Mediating Proposals and Fresh Approaches." Mark A. Seifrid prefers to understand the phrase as a genitive of source, depicting Christ as the author of faith (*pistis* referring,



however, to our act of believing, not to Christ's faithfulness). Francis Watson, highlighting the expression *ek pisteōs* ("by faith"), seeks to refute the messianic interpretation of Hab 2:4, thus undermining the subjective genitive understanding. Preston M. Sprinkle argues for a "third view," namely, that *pistis Christou* refers to the eschatological Christ-event proclaimed in the gospel, as expressed especially in Gal 3:23–26. Finally, Ardel B. Caneday discusses the broad argument in Galatians, emphasizing the contrast between *pistis Christou* and *erga nomou* ("works of law"), and concludes that the former "placards the faithfulness of Christ Jesus who accomplishes what the Law could not" (p. 203).

The fourth section considers "The Witness of the Wider New Testament." It begins with an essay by Peter G. Bolt, who argues that the "narrative substructure" of the Synoptics and Acts "supports, or even demands" the subjective genitive interpretation (p. 222). Willis H. Salier deals with the Fourth Gospel, which stresses the importance of both Jesus' obedient work and the act of believing (thus John "has interesting and important things to say on both sides of the wider issues involved," p. 237). Bruce A. Lowe discusses Jas 2:1 in detail and concludes that a rhetorical reading of the passage "suggests convincingly" that the phrase "the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ" refers to Jesus' trust in God (p. 256). The book of Revelation, argues David A. deSilva, uses *pistis* in the sense of faithfulness shown by Christians to Jesus.

The final section of the book includes two essays dealing with "Historical and Theological Reflections." Mark W. Elliott deals briefly with attempts in the patristic, medieval, and modern period to "reintroduce" the concepts of Jesus' faith and faithfulness, even though such attempts are not in step with the tradition of Christian theology. Finally, Benjamin Myers provides a substantial discussion of Karl Barth, whose work suggests that it is a mistake to pit anthropological and christological readings of Paul against each other.

The book as a whole is certainly worth reading (in spite of some minor carelessness here and there, as in the table of contents), and a few of the articles serve scholarship well. For instance, Preston Sprinkle's suggestion of a "third way" deserves careful reflection. To be sure, I do not see his proposal as a true alternative to the two positions being argued these days (to his credit, he is upfront in recognizing that a reference to the Christ-event just does not work in such a key passage as Phil 3:9; see p. 183). But Paul's striking language regarding the eschatological arrival of *pistis* (Gal 3:23, 25) needs to be taken more seriously than it has been in the past. Because the expression is clearly parallel to that of the arrival of the seed (3:19; cf. also *eis Christon* in 3:24), Paul surely personifies *pistis* here as a reference to Christ, who is the object of faith (note the smooth transition from *tois pisteuousin* in 3:22b to *tēn pistin* in 3:23a). Yet that is not enough to account for the remarkable character of his language. I would argue that not only the coming of Christ but also the very reality of faith must be viewed as a redemptive-historical event. Of course, it is not that people did not believe prior to the first century, but that their believing would be meaningless without the manifestation of Christ, who alone makes true faith possible.

One could make other positive comments about several of the essays. It is most doubtful, however, that this volume will alter the structure or physiognomy of the debate. Indeed, it may only add to the confusion. For reasons that can probably be identified only by a psychoanalyst, the topic has become more and more intractable, and one cannot help but wonder whether well-meaning scholars have begun to spin their wheels, searching for any faint evidence that might support their position while ignoring or minimizing the obvious and indisputable. In some cases, unusual and highly unlikely proposals are made that give the superficial impression of being plausible, and no doubt there are readers who will be impressed by them—all of this is a kind of confirmation that if you set your mind to it, you can "prove" pretty much anything.

Consider, for example, Mark 11:22, *echete pistin theou*. Virtually every standard commentary and translation understands this clause to mean, “Have faith in God” (though a fanciful preacher here and there has been known to encourage congregations to appropriate the very faith that God exercises). Because the standard interpretation is well-nigh universal among scholars, some years ago I thought it might provide a useful illustration of the factors that play a role in forming interpretative consensus (M. Silva, “Faith versus Works of Law in Galatians 2–3,” in *Justification and Variegated Nomism*, vol. 2: *The Paradoxes of Paul* [WUNT 2.181; ed. D. A. Carson et al.; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004], 217–48, esp. 231). Peter Bolt, however, turns the tables (pp. 212–14 in his article) by addressing the very factors I listed and seeks to demonstrate that in fact the clause should be rendered, “You have God’s faithfulness” (meaning, we are told, that the disciples are able to depend on the faithfulness of God). Bolt recognizes that “the occurrence of this phrase is unusual,” but in fact “unusual” here is a very generous adjective. Is there any other example of people being said to “have” a comparable divine attribute (e.g., You have the kindness of God, or We have the patience of God)? But improbabilities do not seem to matter, and the fact that, for example, *echō* plus *pistin* elsewhere refers to people believing and never to God’s faithfulness (see esp. *echete pistin* in Mark 4:40) has no apparent function in Bolt’s exegesis.

With regard to the debate as a whole, I happen to believe, naively perhaps, that the evidence is not all that ambiguous—or to put it more accurately, that the ambiguities in the data are plainly resolved by Paul’s many unambiguous statements. If by *pistis Christou* (which in isolation can indeed signify any number of things) the apostle had meant either “Christ’s faith” or “Christ’s faithfulness,” it would have been ridiculously easy for him to make that point clear beyond dispute. Among various possibilities, he could have, for example, indicated—in the same contexts—one or two ways in which Jesus believed and how those acts of faith were relevant to the matter at hand. Or he could have told us—again, in the same contexts—that his message of *dikaïosynē* (“righteousness, justification”) is true because *Christos pistos estin* (“Christ is faithful”). What could have been simpler? And considering the theological importance of this issue, one would think that he might have made a special effort to clarify matters.

Instead, if some scholars are to be believed, Paul did not have enough sense to realize that the phrase *pistis Christou* is ambiguous. And to make matters worse, he unwittingly misled his readers by using the verb *pisteuō* with *Christos* as direct object again and again in the very same passages that have the ambiguous phrase! His bungling proved spectacularly successful, for in the course of nearly two millennia, virtually every reader—including ancient scholars for whom Greek was their native language—understood the phrase to mean “faith in Christ” and gave no hint that it might mean something else. (I might add that when Campbell, in a footnote on p. 67 of his article, seeks to undermine the linguistic argument in view here, he shows only that he has not quite understood that argument.)

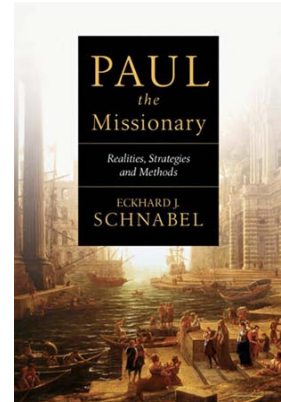
Although I am not hopeful that this collection of essays will bring a resolution to the impasse, it remains true that there is much to be learned from the volume, and the editors deserve our thanks for bringing it to fruition.

Moisés Silva  
Litchfield, Michigan, USA

Eckhard J. Schnabel. *Paul the Missionary: Realities, Strategies and Methods*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2008. 518 pp. £16.99/ \$32.00.

---

Was Paul a “cross-cultural” missionary? Did he have a strategy? How might Paul’s missionary work relate to present missiological concerns like contextualization and financial partnerships? These are some of the questions addressed in *Paul the Missionary* by Professor Eckhard Schnabel of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. Schnabel writes “to challenge pastors and missionaries, students and practitioners to read Paul again, more closely than before, and to evaluate the goals and the methods of their pastoral and missionary ministry in the light of the missionary work of the apostle” (p. 14). Two key assertions by the author give a flavor for the book’s argument. First, “Paul’s missionary methods cannot be separated from the message that he preached as a missionary” (p. 29). Second, “Missionary work and theological reflection about the gospel depend on one another” (p. 140).



In the introduction, Schnabel stresses that “mission” characteristically involves both *intentionality* and *movement*, as illustrated by Jesus’ own understanding of his “mission” in Luke 4:18–19. The primary intention of Paul was “to reach as many people as possible with the gospel,” and so he was willing to move “to any locale in which people would be willing to listen to the message of Jesus Christ” (p. 35).

In chapter 1, Schnabel analyzes the account of Paul’s missionary work in Acts. In contrast to popular descriptions of Paul’s “three missionary journeys,” Schnabel more precisely identifies fifteen phases or locations of Paul’s missionary work. Several of these phases—such as Arabia, Spain, and Crete—are implied from Paul’s letters or other sources (e.g., 1 Clem 5:6–7). The author notes that Paul’s missionary career was not begun in Antioch in Acts 13:1–4, but in Damascus and Arabia nearly fifteen years before.

In chapter 2, Schnabel examines Paul’s letters and asserts that the apostle understood himself fundamentally as God’s servant, called to proclaim the crucified and risen Jesus Christ in total dependence on God for success in missionary work. In chapter 3, “The Missionary Message of the Apostle Paul,” Schnabel asserts, “The central emphasis of Paul’s missionary preaching was the proclamation of Jesus as the Messiah of the Jewish people and the Kyrios of the world” (p. 183). In discussing Acts 17:22–31, Schnabel notes that while Paul’s speech in Athens includes “elements of contact” with his hearers (p. 171), the apostle’s response to their religious beliefs and practices “was, ultimately, not accommodation but confrontation” (p. 182).

Paul’s missionary goals and methods are addressed in chapters 4–5, respectively. Paul did not follow a clearly defined plan to ensure ministry success.

The apostle’s primary missionary task was gospel proclamation, and his only real “strategy” was to utilize all venues conducive to disseminating the news of Jesus Christ. The apostle’s patterns, such as preaching in synagogues and organizing converts for private meetings, are best explained by the convergence of Paul’s basic convictions about the gospel message and the historical-political realities in which he found himself. Schnabel critically analyzes modern definitions of culture in chapter 5, concluding that they do not readily fit with the realities of the Greco-Roman world. He argues that Paul was not truly a “cross-cultural” missionary, as he did not learn a new language or move into a new cultural context. Rather, the apostle’s bicultural identity meant he was “able to function comfortably . . . both in Jewish and in Greco-Roman culture” (pp. 329–30).

Chapter 6 addresses the missionary task in the twenty-first century. Here the author discusses various contemporary issues such as the seeker-sensitive movement, the challenge of culture, and global partnerships. Schnabel thoroughly critiques McGavran's "homogeneous unit principle" and contends, "Paul established local assemblies of followers of Jesus irrespective of their ethnic, cultural, or social identity, insisting on the unity of the local expression of the people of God" (pp. 409–10). He rightly stresses that ministry methods must not be adopted based on effectiveness but on faithfulness to the gospel message, since methods are not neutral, but "influence the content of what is being communicated" (p. 453).

Overall, Schnabel's work is strong exegetically, though his analysis in several instances lacks precision. For example, he asserts that Paul and Barnabas may have planned a new missionary initiative to Cyprus for some time prior to being sent out in Acts 13:1–4. However, the text is silent regarding their plans beyond Antioch but stresses the Holy Spirit's initiative in setting apart the missionaries for a new work. Later, when discussing the same passage Schnabel sets up a false-dichotomy when he claims that they "are not sent by the church but by the Holy Spirit" (p. 392), though Acts 13:3 explicitly records that the church prayerfully and obediently sent them off. Further, Schnabel's claim on page 282 that Jesus, like Paul after him, "preached before as many people as possible" is questionable. Jesus does address the crowds and synagogues, but his main ministry focus was the disciples, and he ministered almost exclusively within the traditional borders of Israel, while Paul traveled to major cities throughout the Greco-Roman world. Surprisingly, Schnabel does not treat in detail the important themes of suffering and persecution in Paul's missionary calling, experience, and instruction (cf. Acts 9:15–16; 14:22; 20:23–24), even though these issues have particular urgency for the burgeoning missions efforts of the global South.

There is some overlap with the author's earlier two-volume *Early Christian Mission* (IVP, 2004), though *Paul the Missionary* seeks to address a broader audience of pastors, missionaries, and students with a view toward application, which comes mostly in chapter 6. Unfortunately, the book's length and technical discussion at various points may put this excellent book out of reach for some of the intended readership. In the preface and throughout, Schnabel relates his work to Roland Allen's classic *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours* (London, 1912). However, *Paul the Missionary* is not merely an updating of Allen's work but is a substantial, fresh analysis of the apostle in light of his first-century context with a view to modern ministry challenges. In conclusion, Schnabel's greatest contribution is his interdisciplinary synthesis of biblical exegesis and missiology. Schnabel's book calls pastors and missionaries to reassess their ministry aims and methods in light of Paul's, while challenging students and scholars toward a deepened concern for the church and mission.

Brian J. Tabb  
Bethlehem College and Seminary  
Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA

Michael J. Gorman. *Elements of Biblical Exegesis: A Basic Guide for Students and Ministers*. Rev. and expanded ed. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2009. 286 pp. \$19.95.

---

Michael Gorman is well known for his widely used books on Pauline theology. This book is of a quite different nature. It is a handbook on the practice of exegesis. As such it cannot be evaluated according to its literary beauty or theological depth. This is a “revised and expanded” edition of a work which has already been developed over a period of years from an original version published in 1994 under the title *Texts and Contexts*. It is arranged in three uneven parts.

Part 1, entitled ‘Orientation,’ sets out Gorman’s view of the task at hand. He considers exegesis an investigation, a conversation, and an art. In presenting his view, he uses clear and accessible English. As far as his own approach goes, Gorman favors a text-centered method, without neglecting historical questions. Gorman briefly discusses the value of knowing the biblical languages, but he is realistic that many people will do exegesis in English. So there is a helpful discussion of the relative merits of English Bible versions, including study Bibles, for exegesis.

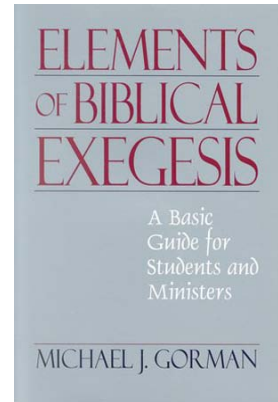
Part 2 deals with the key elements of exegesis according to Gorman’s approach. In comparison with some other guides to exegesis, Gorman helpfully limits the elements to seven: survey, contextual analysis, formal analysis, detailed analysis of the text, synthesis, reflection (theological interpretation), and expansion and refinement of the exegesis. While some of these terms may be criticized as being somewhat vague, and while each category includes various distinct tasks (e.g., ‘detailed analysis of the text’ includes tasks such as word study, relationships between sentences, consideration of sources and redaction, and narrative detail), these elements provide a useful and easily memorized framework for exegesis which covers the key issues.

Part 3 collects various resources, including discussion of possible pitfalls to avoid in doing exegesis; a substantial and up-to-date discussion of resources including books, journals, commentary sources, Bible software, and internet sites; and tables which illustrate the use of critical tools. Particularly useful are the brief outline of the exegetical method, which will be a helpful resource for students, and the sample student exegeses which are supplied.

Other useful features of this book are the clear chapter summaries, the helpful hints, and the suggestions for further reading and practice.

At almost 300 pages, this book is perhaps going to be most useful as a reference tool, although it has been designed to be used as a textbook where a class can devote a substantial amount of time to the basics of exegesis. Gorman provides valuable information but also encourages readers to ask good questions for themselves. He admirably emphasizes reading the biblical text as literature and also as the church’s Scripture; it is good to see theological interpretation of Scripture receiving significant attention. Although Gorman sometimes seems a little concerned about ‘conservative’ positions in some comments, he generally does a very good job of being inclusive of a variety of theological perspectives in terms of the resources he commends, and evangelical scholarship is well represented along with other works.

In summary, this book should be in every theological library as a resource for students. Many theological students (and those who have already completed theological studies) will want their own





copy as a handy reference, not only to help complete academic assignments but also to improve preparation of biblical teaching for the church.

Alistair I. Wilson  
Dumisani Theological Institute, North-West University  
King William's Town, South Africa

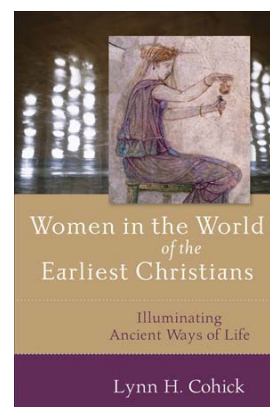
Lynn H. Cohick. *Women in the World of the Earliest Christians: Illuminating Ancient Ways of Life*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009. 350 pp. \$26.99.

The author is associate professor of New Testament at Wheaton College and coauthor (with Gary Burge and Gene Green) of *The New Testament in Antiquity* (2009).

At one level the goal of this book is transparent: “to fairly and accurately describe women’s lives” at the time of the earliest Christians (p. 27). But precisely here lies enormous challenge. Cohick’s sources for “the world of the earliest Christians” range from 300 years prior to Jesus’ birth to 400 years or more after it. Moreover, the sources are Roman, Greek, and Jewish, and many of them are rooted in two or all three of those cultural backgrounds. And the sources vary in nature. Many are literary, i.e., written for reading or performance purposes. But that could mean history, novel, drama, letter, philosophical treatise, political essay, religious reflection, or some other form of literary expression. And there are other kinds of sources, like artistic, epigraphic, archaeological, and commercial. What hope of an integrated portrait of “women’s lives” is apt to emerge from such a disparate range of sources? To take an analogy: what definite results could come of a book treating such vast temporal and cultural reaches and attempting to address “men’s lives”? It seems there is a dubious abstraction embedded in the book’s very conception.

Cohick brings order to what at first might seem only chaotic, irreducibly complex, and frustratingly vague. She does this, first, hermeneutically. She rejects “an extreme hermeneutics of suspicion, which understands all texts written by men (and most were) to be irredeemably androcentric, patriarchal and misogynistic” (p. 22). She affirms the possibility of arriving at “retrievable history” despite “the postmodern conclusion that rhetoric is reality and the attending corollary that history is lost behind this veil” (pp. 27–28). This claim is stronger in the book’s introduction than in the flow of the book itself, where Cohick often must “read the literary evidence against the grain” (p. 161), since she seeks something in the texts that is normally oblique if not foreign to what the authors intended to convey. But it is a salutary and welcome ideal toward which to strive.

Second, Cohick’s portrait is integrated thematically. Her nine chapters deal with (1) women as daughters, (2) marriage and matron ideals, (3) wives and marriage, (4) motherhood, (5) religion among Gentile women and god-fearers, (6) religion and “informal power” among Jewish and Christian women, (7) the work women performed, (8) women slaves and prostitutes, and (9) women as benefactors and the institution of patronage. By delimiting her focal points, the author ensures that a view of at least some parts of the forest will emerge despite the rank protrusion of so many trees.





Third, the book is integrated methodologically. It is, in essence, an exposition of primary sources arrayed under nine chapter headings and then subheadings within each chapter. This lends a clarity and coherence to the whole that is one of the book's strongest suits.

Fourth, Cohick hopes she has "encouraged the reader's imagination to think beyond the stylized snapshots of ancient women sequestered in cramped homes, barefoot and pregnant" (p. 324). In other words, a subplot of the book is to rescue the NT from readings in which women do no more than toil at home and care for children under the authority of overbearing males. This subplot helps hold the book together, though one wonders whether the implied Neanderthal reader is to some extent a straw man.

While claiming to remain aloof from the contemporary issue of women's ordination (p. 21), there is a consistent undercurrent of overturning how the NT has been interpreted through the centuries. The Samaritan woman was not immoral, nor does Jesus take a negative stance toward her marital or moral state (pp. 122–28). Lydia was Paul's benefactor and a leader in the church (pp. 188–90); later she might have left the faith and returned to the synagogue, which Cohick thinks could have existed at Philippi. Christianity had no more to offer the "women God-fearers" in the NT than Judaism did (p. 192). (At a number of points the author does not sound too thrilled with either religion.) Cohick does not depict Phoebe as a "servant of the church in Cenchrea" (*diakonon tēs ekklēsias tēs en Kenchreais*; Rom 16:1); rather, Phoebe's *diakonia* (normally translated "service" or "ministry") has to do with her acting as Paul's "agent" or "intermediary" in carrying the Letter to the Romans, which then segues over into bearing Paul's "authority" (p. 305) as he writes, "lauding her" for the sake of enhancing his own status (p. 306). "Paul, in benefiting from Phoebe's patronage, was himself showing his loyalty to her by recommending her to one of his patrons, the Roman church" (pp. 306–7). This sets up a tension with the Paul who scorned all personal rank and status as rubbish (Phil 3:8) and verified his apostleship by his stigmata (Gal 6:17), not by the support of people who were classier than he, whether female or male.

The strength of this book is its attention to primary sources. It is generally helpful in giving depth and texture to the real lives of women (whether actual or fictive) in the Hellenistic age. In this Cohick's work has lasting value and sheds welcome light on the social world of the first century church.

Robert W. Yarbrough  
Covenant Theological Seminary  
St. Louis, Missouri, USA

---

— HISTORY AND HISTORICAL THEOLOGY —

---

Gerald R. McDermott. *The Great Theologians: A Brief Guide*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2010. 214 pp. \$20.00.

---

“Is there any way I can get a handy introduction to these theologians you and other pastors talk about all the time?” the business man asked Gerald McDermott. “All I want is a little handbook to give me the basics of each of these great theologians,” he added. “That’s why I wrote this book,” McDermott acknowledges in the introduction to *The Great Theologians* (p. 11).

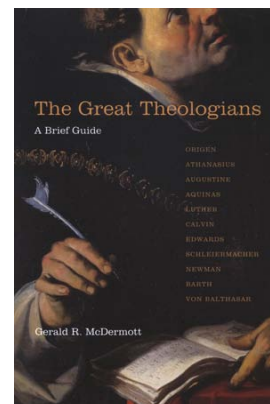
To the uninitiated, the primary audience for this book, McDermott’s credentials will be unknown but not irrelevant. McDermott, professor of religion and philosophy at Roanoke College, has authored numerous works related to the Christian faith and history. In addition to several useful books on Jonathan Edwards, he has penned material on Mormon-evangelical dialogue, world religions, and a theological guide for cancer patients and their families. Additionally, McDermott serves as teaching pastor at St. John Lutheran Church. Taken together, his academic and clerical backgrounds make McDermott an able guide into the church’s past.

McDermott chose to include in this short volume eleven theologians from the Great Tradition, church history. He chose those who “had the most influence on the history of Christian thought” (p. 13):

1. Origen: Oft-Reviled but “The Greatest Teacher after the Apostles”
2. Athanasius: The Black Monk Who Saved the Faith
3. Augustine: The Most Influential Theologian Ever
4. Thomas Aquinas: The Teacher of the Catholic Church
5. Martin Luther: The Monk Who Rose Up against Heaven and Earth
6. John Calvin: Greatest Theologian of the Reformed Tradition
7. Jonathan Edwards: America’s Theologian
8. Friedrich Schleiermacher: Father of Liberal Theology
9. John Henry Newman: Anglican Theologian Who Swam the Tiber
10. Karl Barth: Most Influential Twentieth-Century Theologian
11. Hans Urs von Balthasar: Stellar Catholic Theologian of the Twentieth Century

While some might complain that McDermott overlooks others worthy of inclusion—men like Leo the Great, Cranmer, Niebuhr, Henry—they cannot complain that his list is “too Catholic” or “too Protestant.” McDermott is very even-handed in his selection of influential theologians, introducing early church Fathers and Reformers, conservatives and liberals.

Each chapter provides a short biographical sketch of each man, detailing salient points of historical fact as well as mitigating factors that helped shape the man’s thought. Building on that skeleton, McDermott offers a glimpse of that thought, the theological framework within which each theologian worked. From there he then focuses on a theological theme unique to the theologian in question. McDermott helpfully concludes each chapter with what he believes to be helpful lessons the reader can and should learn from each theologian, lessons that do not always include embracing the theological



contributions just sketched. Finally, each chapter concludes with a morsel from the theologian himself, a sample from one of his most important works.

Rather than sampling each of the eleven chapters here, we will consider two representative examples: Augustine and Schleiermacher. If the audience in mind has ever heard of either man, it would likely be the former. McDermott seems to understand that fact or at least assumes it. He provides little biographical detail concerning Augustine's remarkable life except for his conversion, a surprising omission considering Augustine's detailed and beloved *Confessions*. Nonetheless, McDermott rightly informs the reader of Augustine's massive impact on the landscape of Christian history, noting his influence on many of theologians to follow. He then quickly walks the reader through fields of controversy traversed by Augustine: Manicheanism, the Donatists, and Pelagius. Theologically, McDermott highlights the centrality of human nature and sin in Augustine's thought. The chapter closes with a selection from Augustine's magnum opus, *The City of God*.

McDermott handles the chapter on Schleiermacher similarly. Whereas Augustine's biography received less than a page that included an introduction to the man, McDermott gives the German theologian over two pages of introduction. Having set the historical stage, McDermott moves to Schleiermacher's theology, identifying the feeling of absolute dependence as the keystone of this thought. Next, as he does in several chapters throughout the book, McDermott highlights the similarities and dissimilarities between Schleiermacher and Jonathan Edwards. His primary reason for doing so here is to illustrate the lengths to which Schleiermacher had gone in leaving orthodoxy. Finally, theologically, McDermott outlines Schleiermacher's theological method and its resultant unorthodoxies: a faulty Christology, a novel view of God, and a view of Scripture that lacks the traditional understanding of inspiration. This chapter well illustrates the value of McDermott's "What We Can Learn" from each theologian. For example, he argues, in Schleiermacher we have "an example of how not to do theology" (p. 145).

Overall this 200-page work offers a very readable, "short and accessible" introduction to some of the greatest minds the church has produced. To his credit, McDermott includes some of the best and some of the worst. He has done well to stick to his initial premise, providing an introduction, a brief guide, for those who want to know more about some of names often sprinkled in sermons for effect. He has given the church a handy tool for the uninitiated, a survey for the erstwhile novice. To that end *The Great Theologians* delivers on its promise. For that McDermott is to be commended and thanked.

For all of its good, however, a few possible negative responses might be leveled at McDermott's newest book. The first and most obvious area of potential consternation is the list of theologians chosen for inclusion or exclusion. McDermott understands and expects such a response. To his credit, he anticipated such a complaint, acknowledging that others would wish to treat others from church history while ignoring some that he had covered. Even the number included in this volume, McDermott suggests, deals with such an argument. He reasons that eleven, rather than the biblical model of twelve, implies that the list is incomplete, leaving the door open for other theologians, possibly even a sequel to this book.

Along the same lines, many readers, those outside of McDermott's target audience, people like informed pastors, interested laypeople, and professors may find the book handicapped by its intended brevity. Those who know a little about Jonathan Edwards want more than McDermott provides here. Those who've never heard of Balthasar might need more information to determine if he, among others, was the greatest Catholic theologian of the twentieth century and deserves to stand among the giant

oaks in this book. Unfortunately, when one chooses to stay on the mountaintops of history, he must necessarily overlook the beauty and detail in the valleys below.

Take, for example, the chapter on Aquinas. McDermott has done a good job condensing the thirty-five volumes of the *Summa* down to eleven pages. The result, however, is necessarily an anemic view of Aquinas' theology, a skeleton that betrays the depth of his thought. One glaring such instance that caught my eye was McDermott's treatment of Aquinas' use of Aristotle. The author does a wonderful job of pointing out this phenomenon, yet in a chapter that includes five pages dedicated to the sacraments, he never points out Aquinas' use of Aristotelian categories to redefine and systematize the Catholic Church's theology of transubstantiation. That the presence of Christ in the Supper receives such short shrift belies the importance of the issue in church history as a whole and in the lives of those theologians in the next two chapters, Luther and Calvin. Sometimes too much of a good thing can be problematic. Such is the case here with this volume's brevity.

A larger complaint will likely be voiced by some concerning McDermott's ecumenism. While he makes it clear throughout the book that he is a committed Protestant, his openness to Catholicism may provoke some. For example, McDermott acknowledges that he agrees with recent discussions between Catholics and Lutherans concerning the doctrine of justification and the resultant conclusion that both traditions believe the same thing. Likewise, in the chapter on Luther, he neither commends nor critiques recent Finnish Lutheran scholarship that argues that the Reformation as a revolution was theologically unnecessary based on Luther's theology alone. While that may or may not be an accurate historical interpretation, the intended readership lacks the theological tools to recognize the merits of such an argument or to reject them. They depend upon the author to guide them through these waters. The uncritical inclusion of this thesis suggests that McDermott does and his reader should agree.

Further, along these same lines, in the chapter on Aquinas the author rightly includes the aforementioned discussion of the sacraments. Here, McDermott presents Thomas's view of baptism over the course of three pages in a clear fashion, finally concluding, "there is a certain power in Thomas's presentation of baptism" (p. 76), something that paedobaptists like himself would find appealing, but something credobaptists would find problematic. Again, the length of the work prohibits a careful theological dialogue on just this one doctrine. Yet McDermott's treatment of the issue, whether right or wrong, will turn some off and perhaps lead others farther afield. Note, however, that to reject this highly useful book for McDermott's ecumenism alone would be wrongheaded and unprofitable. Potential readers or those who will use this text in the classroom, however, should be aware of these issues ahead of time.

That said, strengths and potential weaknesses acknowledged, *The Great Theologians* successfully fulfills the author's goal of providing untrained individuals a readable survey of the great minds in the Christian tradition. To that end, this book fills a very real need in many an erstwhile historian's library. McDermott has given the intended reader a one-stop catalog of some of the great theologians in the Christian tradition, offering a taste of their lives and thought without gagging him with more detail than he can or desires to digest. This reviewer, for one, will serve it up to his undergraduate students as a side dish to other more substantive volumes in the future.

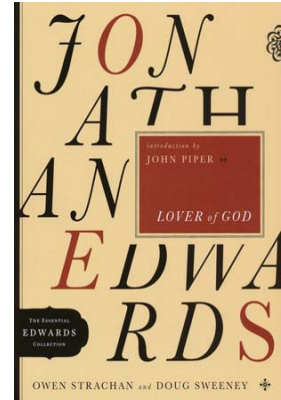
Peter Beck  
Charleston Southern University  
Charleston, South Carolina, USA

Owen Strachan and Douglas A. Sweeney. *The Essential Edwards Collection*. 5 vols. 761 pp. Chicago: Moody, 2010. \$44.99.

---

The last 100 years have seen a renewal of interest in the life and writings of Jonathan Edwards. What began as a trickle in the early twentieth century became a torrent in the twenty-first. In the last decade, interest peaked as historians, theologians, and informed friends noted the 300th anniversary of Edwards' birth. While slowing some since, interest in him has merely ebbed, not dried up.

With the introduction of Strachan and Sweeney's five-volume *The Essential Edwards Collection*, readers will ask again, "Do we need another book (or five) about Jonathan Edwards?" The simple answer is "yes." Edwards is too important to put back on the top shelf of history's dusty libraries. These volumes are too useful to relegate to the scrapheap of superfluous books meant only to capitalize on the growing interest in Reformed theology. Strachan and Sweeney have made a notable contribution to an understandably large field of study.



Sold individually or as a set, *The Essential Edwards Collection* seeks to make Edwards more accessible to those inclined to deepen their relationship with God and their knowledge of church history. Each volume offers a differing insight into the great theologian's heart and mind in a way that the uninitiated might plumb the depths of his thought without becoming adrift in the subtleties of his theology or the mire of his often difficult writing style. This set serves as point of entry for those not yet ready for the theological deep end but longing for the refreshing spiritual waters found in the life and piety of Edwards.

*Jonathan Edwards: Lover of God*, volume 1 of the set if it may be so labeled, mixes biographical narrative with autobiographical reflection to introduce the reader to Edwards' life. Doing so, the authors also provide a glimpse of Edwards's driving motivation, his "God-entranced worldview" as John Piper calls it in his introduction to the set, through a survey of his life story. While many wonderful Edwards biographies are now available, Strachan and Sweeney offer a readable, abbreviated overview of those events in his life that God used to shape him.

As the authors argue, "the Bible declares without interruption or apology that God is the starting and ending points of true religion" (p. 24). Edwards understood this vital reality, and *Jonathan Edwards on Beauty* explains this central truth. It is the beauty of God, his perfections in all their glory, that Edwards embraced and announced. This volume explores the way in which this divine beauty is revealed in the creation, Christ, the church, and life everlasting. All points to the Creator.

Volume 3 begins with a brief survey of the church's understanding of the afterlife, from the Middle Ages to the present. Having set the stage with this brief lesson, Strachan and Sweeney bring the reader to the threshold of Edwards's thoughts on the afterlife in *Jonathan Edwards on Heaven and Hell*. Tracing Edwards' teachings on the reality of hell and the beauty of heaven, the authors lead the readers to consider, with Edwards, the impact these ever-present realities must have upon their daily lives.

Happiness, Edwards once said, is God's purpose for man's life. God desires man to be happy, to be satisfied eternally in God both now and in the future. *Jonathan Edwards on the Good Life* guides the novice through Edwards' thoughts on God's plan for man's life, the life-destroying problem of sin, and

the joys of living in a right relationship with God. That, Edwards believed and the authors want the reader to see, is the “good life.”

*Jonathan Edwards on True Christianity* builds upon the arguments of the preceding volume to suggest that, as Edwards encountered in his own life and ministry, not all who claim the name of Christ live as true Christians. Contrasting nominal Christianity with the effects of living faith, Edwards once argued that there are certain traits that point to the reality of a vital Christian experience. To that end, he called his original readers. To that end, Strachan and Sweeney call theirs.

Overall, Strachan and Sweeney have accomplished their task. They’ve written a readable introduction to the life of Jonathan Edwards and covered many of the salient points of his theology. The five volumes of *The Essential Edwards Collection* offer the reader the opportunity to drink from the vast Edwards well of practical piety without being overwhelmed by a flood of thought beyond their ability to swallow.

In spite of that glowing recommendation, the reader may notice one glaring fault. Every volume in the set offers an introduction by John Piper. The problem is that each book contains the same exact introductory chapter. At first blush, this would seem to be an editorial oversight or worse. This one criticism, however, on deeper reflection becomes the grounds for even greater appreciation for these five little books.

Ultimately, *The Essential Edwards Collection* is not the grouping of five disparate volumes, related in name only. Each of the five forms one part of a greater object. Individually they’re helpful but incomplete. Together they tell Edwards’s story. Together they bring Edwards’s theology to a head. Together they paint a portrait of a vital Christianity. Thus, they are best when consumed as a five-course meal, not in the piecemeal suggested by the individual availability.

In the end, Piper’s introduction serves to introduce the reader to Edwards’s—and Strachan and Sweeney’s—greater desire: a holistic Christian life that is biblically informed, theologically concerned, and God-saturated. Buy the set, not the individual books. That’s how Edwards would have wanted it.

*The Essential Edwards Collection* offers a needed introduction, a helpful introduction into the life and thought of America’s greatest theologian. This set, though, is more than that. It offers more than history. Together the books are greater than a theological primer. The five short volumes taken together are a wonderful, Edwardsian introduction to the essential Christian life.

Peter Beck  
Charleston Southern University  
Charleston, South Carolina, USA

Randall Balmer. *The Making of Evangelicalism: From Revivalism to Politics and Beyond*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010. 89 pp. \$19.95.

---

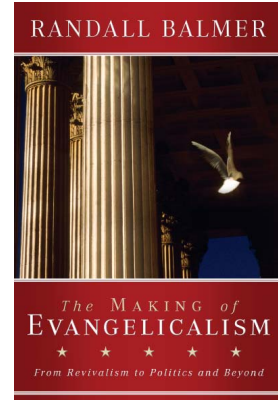
Among the cadre of self-professed evangelical historians who study their own movement, Randall Balmer stands out as a scholar with a particularly diverse portfolio. He has written his fair share of scholarly monographs, textbooks, and reference works. But Balmer is probably better known for his journalistic studies of American evangelicalism and mainline Protestantism and his personal reflections on growing up in a conservative evangelical household. Balmer's recent books have tended to fall somewhere in between the scholarly and the autobiographical, resulting in largely impressionistic interpretations of evangelicalism. This is certainly the case with his latest work, *The Making of Evangelicalism*.

This short book of eighty-nine pages reads like a series of published lectures, except there is no indication that this is in fact the book's genesis. In fact, for those familiar with Balmer's other books, it seems more likely that this book is a combination of classroom reflections and rehashed material from other books, albeit without any citations. While Balmer is an excellent writer who knows how to turn a phrase, his lively prose fails to compensate for the book's numerous interpretive shortcomings.

*The Making of Evangelicalism* is surprisingly reductionistic, long on oversimplification and short on nuance. Balmer has a good idea: tell the story of evangelicalism by developing a narrative that revolves around four turning points. He is also on basically sound footing when he discusses the movements that coalesce into American evangelicalism and is spot on when he argues, "The genius of evangelicalism throughout American history is its malleability and the uncanny knack of evangelical leaders to speak the idiom of the culture" (p. 3).

Balmer's four turning points make sense: the awakenings of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the shift in evangelical eschatological views around the turn of the twentieth century, the evangelical retreat into a subculture following the fundamentalist-modernist controversies of the early twentieth century, and the advent of conservative evangelical political activism since the mid-1970s. But the devil is in the details. Balmer simplistically describes the awakenings as little more than a transition from Calvinism to Arminianism. This results in his writing Calvinism out of the story completely (until recently), ignoring middle positions such as the New Divinity, and implying that most evangelicals become "Arminian" simply because most are not Calvinists. Balmer's real point is that the Arminians are the good guys, which becomes clear with his next turning point.

Balmer argues that, largely because of the decline of Calvinism, evangelicals became social activists who spend most of the nineteenth century defending women's rights, fighting slavery, and opposing alcohol consumption. Historians will recognize this as the so-called Wesleyan paradigm for understanding evangelicalism, which has been promoted by Arminian and/or post-conservative evangelical scholars such as Timothy Smith, Donald Dayton, Kenneth Collins, and Roger Olson. But just when it seemed like evangelicals would convert the nation through their good works, most of them became dispensational and focused exclusively on evangelism. Balmer virtually equates premillennialism with dispensationalism, exaggerates the extent of dispensationalism, and overstates the evangelical abandonment of social action, even among dispensationalists.



Balmer's strongest chapter is his discussion of the evangelical subculture that revolved around (mostly) independent schools and parachurch ministries between the 1920s and the post-World War II era. This subculture eventually divided into several camps, the two most important being the separatist fundamentalists, who took a mostly negative posture toward culture, and the new evangelicals, who were more willing to engage the culture for the sake of the gospel. In Balmer's narrative, it is of course the latter that are preferable—that is, until they went astray in the mid-1970s.

The final chapter is an almost totally negative account of the Religious Right, much of which is taken verbatim from Balmer's 2006 book *Thy Kingdom Come: How the Religious Right Distorts the Faith and Threatens America*. Instead of being focused on women's rights and racial equality like nineteenth-century (Wesleyan) evangelicals, Democrats, and Jesus himself, most contemporary evangelicals care only about moral issues like abortion and homosexuality and perpetuating economic injustice through their allegiance with the Republican Party. Though he has a couple of good historical insights, this chapter devolves into a jeremiad against conservative evangelicalism in general and evangelical political engagement in particular. The bulk of this chapter could just as easily have been written by Jim Wallis or Tony Campolo.

Balmer ends with some concluding thoughts and practical application. Some of it is perceptive, like the suggestion that evangelicalism is at its best when it exists on the margins of society rather than wedding itself to the cultural elite. Most of his concluding thoughts, however, just emphasize his sympathies for nineteenth-century Wesleyan activism and contemporary political liberalism, both of which are apparently more authentically biblical than the alternatives. The last few pages contain a helpful list of suggested readings related to American evangelicalism, including most of the standard works in the field.

*The Making of Evangelicalism* ultimately falls short in its efforts to provide a useful, brief introduction to American evangelicalism. While there are some noteworthy observations scattered throughout the work, most of the book tells the reader more about Balmer's own convictions than it does the history of evangelicalism. Those interested in studying American evangelical history would do well to begin with Doug Sweeney's *The American Evangelical Story*, which is another recent short introduction to the topic that is more even-handed and less ideologically driven than Balmer's book.

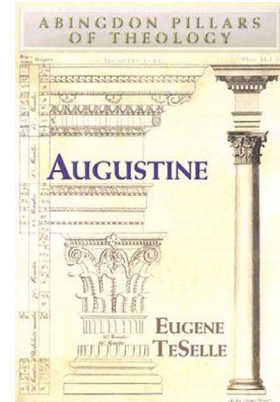
Nathan A. Finn  
Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary  
Wake Forest, North Carolina, USA



Eugene TeSelle. *Augustine*. Abingdon Pillars of Theology. Nashville: Abingdon, 2006. 105 pp. £6.99/\$13.00.

---

Every theologian and every historian of ideas must at some point wrestle with Augustine. It would be beneficial for many others to do so as well, since Augustine remains one of the giant Christian influences of the last 2,000 years. As this book concludes, “Western doctrine is a series of footnotes, commentaries, and questions to Augustine” (p. 73). Since he has been so influential, his legacy has been keenly fought over by people from various opposing traditions of thought and practice. Indeed, a scholar called Michael Baius (1513–89) became infamous, and earned more than one Papal condemnation, for interpreting Augustine’s theology as if he were actually Pelagian (Pelagius being one of Augustine’s arch-enemies).



This short introduction to Augustine may not be quite as bold and subversive as Baius, but it does provide a peculiarly skewed presentation of the fourth- and fifth-century bishop of Hippo in North Africa. The series is intended to help seminary students grasp the basic facts about and influence of major theologians. It certainly does give something of an overview of some of the salient points of Augustine’s life and teaching, historically aware and theologically informed. Yet this is crudely mixed in with a rather more contemporary agenda of a distinctively liberal flavor. Indeed, at times, Augustine himself simply disappears from sight altogether as TeSelle reflects on modern U.S. politics or society in ultra-politically correct fashion.

The book is structured around ten brief chapters on major areas of Augustine’s life and thought, from his Platonism, his views on time and creation, predestination and free will, and Trinity and incarnation, to his understanding of church and sacraments. Each chapter is followed by “questions for reflection” that are often helpful as a way of digesting what has been read, though some of these require a greater knowledge of Augustine’s writings than is actually communicated in the chapters themselves and could lead to shallow responses.

There are quite a number of unfair “guilt by association” comments throughout the book and some bewildering lines of reasoning that may annoy readers from traditions other than the author’s. Evangelicals come in for repeated attacks and may be left feeling especially uncomfortable with some of the rhetoric here. Or, alternatively, they may simply laugh as the leaps of liberal logic allow TeSelle effortlessly to link the Calvinist doctrine of predestination with the modern prosperity gospel, and Pelagius with evangelicalism and “compassionate conservatism.” There are tinges of chronological snobbery here and there, too, such as when he dismisses Augustine’s view of love by saying, “By our time we have learned that justice may be more difficult than love, for love without justice can lead to battered children and spouses and many kinds of manipulation of people ‘for their own good’” (p. 50). The impression left is that Augustine, and people who might dare to agree with him, would be entirely happy with battered children and spouses. Later, he lambasts evangelicals (again) for their triumphalism, especially when they point out that American liberals who ordain gay and lesbian people are in a minority of world Christianity that will be overtaken by the growth of more orthodox churches in Africa, Asia, and the Far East.

Some of this may give pause for thought, but much of it is simply tendentious, superficial, and narrowly partisan. In a typically postmodern conclusion, TeSelle even manages to argue that Augustine’s

greatest legacy is not anything he wrote or anything he did but the fact that he asked questions and sought the truth.

There is some useful end matter in the book (e.g., Scripture index, bibliography), but there are several minor errors in the text itself. At one point a work by the nineteenth-century Cardinal Newman is attributed to Augustine (p. 83n2). This book is not the best way in to Augustine, though as a twenty-first century liberal meditation on the great theologian's legacy, it could be said to be provocative and ironically amusing.

Lee Gatiss  
Cambridge University  
Cambridge, England, UK

---

Douglas A. Sweeney. *Jonathan Edwards and the Ministry of the Word*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2009. 208 pp. \$20.00.

---

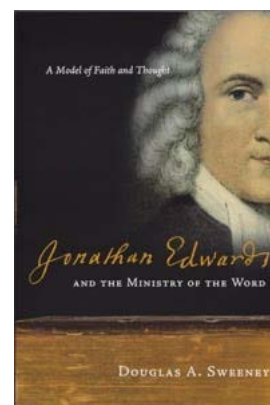
Of the writing of books on Jonathan Edwards, there seems to be no end. As a result, many features of Edwards' thought and life have been examined. But one of the perennial questions that evangelicals face in studying Edwards is how to appropriate his vision of the Christian life and ministry while living in a very different time and place. As professor of church history at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and author or editor of several scholarly books on Edwards, Douglas A. Sweeney is well-positioned for such a task.

In the introduction Sweeney situates Edwards within his historical, social, and cultural contexts as a means of demonstrating the significant differences between Edwards's world and ours. The most important difference is that Edwards lived in a society in which every aspect was shaped by the Bible. People in Edwards's day "wanted their pastors to be learned more than flashy, therapeutic, businesslike or even approachable" (p. 30). In light of such differences, the goal for those who seek to apply Edwards's insights is to ask, "What can we do *in our own world* to draw attention to the Word, enhance the ministries of the church and deepen faith in the things of God?" (p. 31).

Sweeney answers this question by highlighting at least three key areas of modern application as he walks through Edwards's life.

The first is Edwards's engagement with Scripture. In addition to comments throughout the course of the book, Sweeney discusses at length specific aspects of Edwards and his Bible. Preaching was the main form for this engagement, and Sweeney explores various features of Edwards in the pulpit (pp. 73–82). Also noteworthy is the extensive system of cross-referenced notebooks on various subjects where Edwards recorded his thoughts, exegesis, and even notes from his reading. As an interpreter, Edwards was an heir to the Reformation tradition, practicing both literal and spiritual exegesis (pp. 83–106). Typology was especially prominent in Edwards's thinking, evidenced by his willingness to move beyond explicit biblical types to viewing all of nature as typological of spiritual truths.

A second key area is Edwards's pursuit and promotion of spiritual awakening. Edwards's role in the First Great Awakening put him on the map, as his accounts and defenses of these awakenings brought him international recognition (pp. 107–44). According to Sweeney, these writings on revival "represent



the most important body of literature in all of Christian history on the challenge of discerning a genuine work of the Holy Spirit” (p. 120).

Edwards’s sizable intellectual pursuits are a third key area (pp. 145–64). Sweeney highlights four treatises: *Freedom of the Will*, *Original Sin*, *End for Which God Created the World*, and *Nature of True Virtue*. Sweeney overviews each work, diligently making such challenging treatises accessible to the reader. The place of the mind in loving God and the role of the Holy Spirit are singled out as key features in Edwards’s intellectual life.

Sweeney concludes the book with “Seven Theses for Discussion” as a means of summarizing what we may learn from Edwards (pp. 197–200). Thus, Edwards shows us (1) the importance of working to help people gain a vivid sense, an urgent impression, of God’s activity in the world; (2) that true religion is primarily a matter of holy affections; (3) the advantages of keeping an eschatological perspective on our lives; (4) how God uses those who lose their lives for Christ; (5) that theology can and should be done primarily in the church, by pastors, for the sake of the people of God; (6) that even the strongest Christians need support from others; (7) the necessity of remaining in God’s Word.

The strengths of this book are legion. Those who have already read George Marsden’s *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* or even his recently released *A Short Life of Jonathan Edwards* will already be familiar with the basic contours of Edwards’s life. But Sweeney’s particular contribution is to filter that narrative through the dual lenses of Edwards’s love for the Bible and his passion that people experience divine realities in daily life. He combines lucid prose with a passion for people to embrace Edwards’s vision of the Christian life and ministry. Scattered throughout the book are helpful applications to today. Yet Sweeney’s obvious affection for Edwards does not blind him to Edwards’s flaws, as his discussion of Edwards’s ownership of slaves and his poor handling of several pastoral situations reveals. The seven theses for discussion are thoughtful discussion starters for appropriating Edwards today. Also helpful are additional features such as a timetable of Edwards’s life, a list of his family members, a map of his world and name, and subject and Scripture indices.

One area where the book could have been strengthened would have been to expand the discussion of the “Seven Theses for Discussion.” At a mere four pages the reader is left longing for Sweeney to flesh out further how each thesis might apply today.

In sum, this is a book that will benefit every Christian. But pastors, missionaries, theological students, and everyone else in vocational ministry especially should read this book. In fact, if you can only read one book on Jonathan Edwards, make it this one. You will not be disappointed.

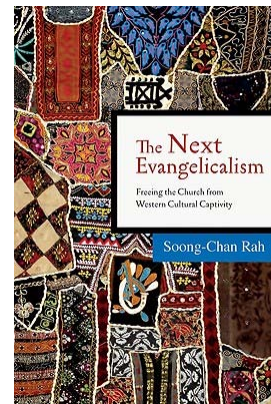
Matthew S. Harmon  
Grace College and Theological Seminary  
Winona Lake, Indiana, USA

---

Soong-Chan Rah. *The Next Evangelicalism: Releasing the Church from Western Cultural Captivity*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2009. 228 pp. \$15.00.

---

Soong-Chan Rah currently teaches at North Park Theological Seminary in Chicago, where he is the Milton B. Engebretson Assistant Professor of Church Growth and Evangelism. Having grown up in America as a second-generation immigrant from South Korea, Rah offers a unique contribution to American evangelicalism from a historically minority point of view. As a former church-planter and current academic, Rah brings theoretical and practical insight to the vital discussion of the changing face of American evangelicalism. He builds upon foundational works in this discussion by seeking to suggest the removal of certain cultural baggage associated with American white evangelicalism and substituting the fuller expression of global Christianity.



Rah begins this work with a helpful introduction in which he discusses his motivation for writing the book, asserts his central thesis, and summarizes his argument, which he faithfully follows throughout the remainder of his text. The central thesis is that the church in America is not dying simply because white evangelicalism is apparently declining, but it is actually healthy and growing among immigrant and ethnic minority communities (p. 14). Rather than the future of leadership resting upon the shoulders of white Westerners, American evangelicalism will reflect its changing composition.

In arguing for this thesis, Rah asserts that the white male culture of America has wrongly captured Christianity for personal gain (p. 22). Rah believes this captivity has three sinful roots: individualism, consumerism and materialism, and racism. Individualism, the idolatrous root of American evangelicalism's current state, neglects corporate responsibility and leads to a reduced, therapeutic religion (p. 39). Rah then claims American Christianity is captive to the values of consumerism and materialism (p. 49). Racism is a sin invented by American white men to retain control over women and minorities by withholding rightfully leadership due to others (pp. 64–67).

Part 2 discusses three expressions of this cultural captivity of American evangelicalism: the church growth movement and mega-churches, the emergent church movement, and the cultural imperialism of Western, white males. The individualistic pragmatism of white, Westerners shaped the church growth movement and mega-church paradigms, which were eventually applied throughout America and exported by missionaries (pp. 97, 103). The emergent church movement is an expression of American postmodernity with an evangelical spin (p. 109) that enables the white metanarrative to control non-white, non-Western, non-male Christians (pp. 113–14) and betrays postmodernity's great promise to hear minority voices (p. 119). Concluding this section, Rah argues that imperialistic missionaries transport cultural manifestations of Western, white Christianity rather than contextualizing the gospel.

The book's third section draws lessons from minority and immigrant Christians for American evangelicalism. From such sources, Western white evangelicals should learn the theology of suffering rather than being limited to the theology of the privileged; they should learn the theology of celebration because God is not only the Lord of abundance, but he is also the God of poverty, suffering, and marginalization (pp. 143–44). Rah eventually advocates holistic ministry rather than the mere salvation of one's soul, extending to social justice and love to those in need—prostitutes, the homeless, and the oppressed (p. 167).

*The Next Evangelicalism* contains several strengths, making it a good read concerning future evangelicalism. First, Rah grounds his work in biblical arguments rather than allowing it to become a study bemoaning social injustices. Second, Rah creates a beneficial dialogue between multiracial, theological perspectives such as the theology of celebration and the theology of suffering (p. 153). Another helpful contribution is Rah's excellent insight concerning the bankruptcy of many popular movements within American Christianity such as the consumeristic pursuits of the church growth movement or the neglected ministry to the urban oppressed in the pragmatic suburban church (pp. 96, 98, 103).

Rah's insights are certainly intriguing, but they also contain unaddressed questions and unsubstantiated assertions. Rah's points of strengths discussed above ultimately fall short in substantial ways such as questionable interpretations of prophetic texts in calling for the downfall of Western, white evangelicalism in the same sense of Babylon's demise (pp. 122–23) and murky discussions of black, feminist, Asian, and Western theology (pp. 77–78). Rah also constructs over-generalized evaluations of Western, white secular culture and evangelicalism without helpful distinctions between the two (pp. 22, 162–63). His poorly "hedged" argument leads to historically misinformed views: racism is an American male invention (pp. 66–67), "evangelicalism" is misused (pp. 125, 160), and Western, white evangelicals are equated with the pre-Reformation papacy (pp. 20–22) and Twentieth-Century theological Liberalism (pp. 42–43). Rah redefines such historical considerations to further his social frustrations with Western, white evangelicalism. Finally, Rah's poor offering of practical and constructive thought on bringing about a culturally diverse American evangelicalism is glaring. For example, he believes, "what is needed is not merely the collapse of modernity, but the collapse of the Western, white captivity of the American evangelical church" (p. 122). His desire for the collapse of Western, white evangelicalism offers little constructive thought, the only solution becoming the removal of anything white and Western, thus creating an overall disgruntled tone.

While Rah attempts to discuss the next stage of evangelicalism, his pages reveal an unhelpful message: do away with Western, white, and male Christianity; do not celebrate positives within this heritage; and replace it with global Christianity. His apparent disdain for one aspect of historical, American evangelicalism casts a cloud of suspicion over his work, negating potentially positive contributions. This work addresses a necessary topic, but it will likely prove an ineffective book because of Rah's tone. The simple conclusion to which one arrives is that there are better resources available within this conversation that lack such belligerence.

J. Ryan West  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary  
Louisville, Kentucky, USA



## — SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY AND BIOETHICS —

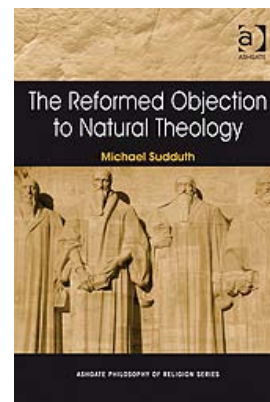
Michael Sudduth. *The Reformed Objection to Natural Theology*. Ashgate Philosophy of Religion Series. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009. x + 238 pp. £55.00/\$99.95.

Michael Sudduth's monograph is a resounding "Ja!" in response to Karl Barth's infamous "Nein!" Barth's is but one voice among many who have contended, under the banner of the Reformed church, that Christians ought to be skeptical of the propriety and efficacy of natural theology (broadly defined as the use of natural reason to acquire or supplement our knowledge of God). This book takes on the task of sympathetically but critically evaluating the most prominent "Reformed objections" to natural theology. The result is an exemplary piece of analytical theology.

The introductory chapter lays some important groundwork for the book's main argument. Sudduth first distinguishes two understandings of natural theology: (1) natural knowledge of God ("natural theology  $\alpha$ ") and (2) rational proofs or arguments for the existence and nature of God ("natural theology  $\beta$ "). There is little question that Scripture endorses natural theology  $\alpha$  (e.g., Ps 19; Rom 1). Natural theology  $\beta$  can be viewed as the project of clarifying, developing, and defending the content of natural theology  $\alpha$ . Sudduth also makes a crucial distinction between the general project of natural theology  $\beta$  and specific models of natural theology  $\beta$ . By "models" he means different ways of thinking about the role and function of theistic arguments, and how they contribute to the broader context of theology. As he subsequently demonstrates, many of the Reformed objections to natural theology are, at most, objections to particular models of natural theology  $\beta$  (e.g., theistic arguments as a necessary foundation for dogmatic theology). Sudduth's thesis is that none of the Reformed objections considered in the book constitute a good objection to the overall project of natural theology  $\beta$ . Furthermore, none of them rules out what he calls the "dogmatic model": the use of rational theistic argumentation by Christian believers as a means of reconstructing the natural knowledge of God within the context of dogmatic (biblical) theology.

The body of the book is presented in four parts. Part I refutes the notion that the Reformed tradition has been characterized by hostility to natural theology from the outset. Sudduth shows to the contrary that Calvin and his fellow Reformers strongly endorsed natural theology  $\alpha$  and also made positive, albeit qualified, statements about the use of philosophical arguments for theism. Enthusiasm for natural theology accelerated among Reformed scholars in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; it was only at the turn of the twentieth century that the tide began to turn, with substantial (and diverse) objections being raised from such varied quarters as the Dutch Calvinist school (Kuyper et al.), the Neo-Orthodox movement (Barth et al.), and the new "Reformed epistemologists" (Plantinga et al.).

The remainder of the book deals with three distinct kinds of Reformed objections, which the author judges to be the most prominent and worthy of evaluation. Part II considers whether the Reformed consensus that knowledge of God is naturally implanted in the human mind (and is therefore innate or immediate rather than inferred) renders natural theology  $\beta$  either inappropriate or redundant. Sudduth surveys three different Reformed models of the natural knowledge of God, concluding that none of these models undercuts the project of natural theology  $\beta$ ; on the contrary, they furnish a foundation for it. Chapter 4 examines whether Alvin Plantinga's model of warranted theistic beliefs ought to



engender the degree of ambivalence (even hostility) to natural theology that Plantinga expressed in the early part of his career. Sudduth's treatment here is particularly valuable inasmuch as he accurately depicts Plantinga's basic model and is sympathetic toward it; as it turns out, Plantinga's own "Reformed objection" to natural theology can be neutralized without having to reject his model for the natural knowledge of God. The overall conclusion of these three chapters is that there is no good Reformed objection to natural theology  $\beta$  from the immediacy of natural theistic knowledge. There is room for both immediate knowledge and inferred knowledge of God, particularly if the latter is understood not as a substitute for the former but rather as reinforcing, refining, and extending it.

Part III evaluates several versions of what may be the most common objection to natural theology from Reformed writers, namely, that the doctrine of total depravity renders natural theology a futile enterprise. On this view, the fall has so corrupted man's intellect that he is blinded to the natural revelation of God, and his reasoning about God inevitably leads him into error. This particular objection has been fleshed out in different ways. Some have argued that the fall entails the corruption or even eradication of the natural knowledge of God, thus undermining both natural theology  $\alpha$  and natural theology  $\beta$ . Others have argued that sin has rendered our reasoning faculties so unreliable, particularly in theological matters, that all natural inferential beliefs about God are suspect. Sudduth's analysis shows that these objections prove either too much or too little. His most significant response to this form of objection is saved for chapter 8, where he argues that such criticisms typically overlook the dogmatic model of natural theology and its two most important features: its recognition of the reversal of the noetic effects of sin through regeneration and sanctification, and its acknowledgement of an indispensable role for Scripture in providing justification and guidance for the project of natural theology  $\beta$ .

Sudduth turns in Part IV to consider a third kind of Reformed objection to natural theology, one that targets the logic of theistic arguments. The charge here is that the classical arguments for God's existence simply aren't good arguments: they don't constitute logical demonstrations of the existence and nature of God because their premises are neither self-evident nor indubitable, and even if sound they fall short of proving the existence of the Christian God because they fail to establish every biblical attribute of God (the "descriptivist objection"). Sudduth exposes the surprising extent to which Reformed objectors have borrowed philosophical assumptions from Hume and Kant in their criticisms of the classical arguments. His systematic dismantling of these criticisms is impressive. Of particular note is his argument that the descriptivist objection threatens natural theology  $\alpha$  no less than natural theology  $\beta$ ; it thus proves too much, given that natural theology  $\alpha$  has been a staple of Reformed theology from the outset.

In sum, Sudduth presents a meticulously researched and compellingly argued case for the historical pedigree and philosophical legitimacy of Reformed natural theology. His articulation and defense of the dogmatic model is especially valuable for dispelling prevalent misconceptions about the role of natural theology. I daresay that most readers will find their own views challenged at some point. Those looking for a triumphant defense of classical apologetics in the Princeton mold may find themselves disappointed by the modesty of Sudduth's conclusions. They may feel that those forms of natural theology that emerge unscathed from the Reformed objections (the cogent ones, at least) are thin gruel, offering little of value for positive apologetics with unbelievers. Even so, they shouldn't underestimate the value of his defense of theistic arguments, for the criticisms he refutes are found as often in the mouths of atheists as believers. On the other side of the field, presuppositionalists may deem the book's conclusions too generous, but they will be forced nonetheless to reevaluate some of the foundations

on which their own fort has been built. Whatever the case, no reader will fail to appreciate the clarity and force of the book's argumentation, the precision of its analysis, and the invaluable contribution it makes to contemporary discussions of natural theology—not only among the Reformed, but across the spectrum of Christian thought.

James N. Anderson  
Reformed Theological Seminary  
Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

---

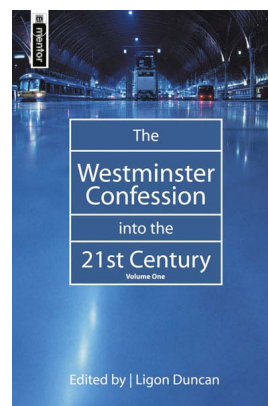
Ligon Duncan, ed. *The Westminster Confession into the 21st Century: Essays in Remembrance of the 350th Anniversary of the Westminster Assembly*. 3 vols. [[vol. 1](#), [vol. 2](#), [vol. 3](#)] Fearn, Scotland: Mentor, 2003–2010. 532 pp. £22.99/\$37.99 each.

---

Over the past eight years, Ligon Duncan has led the way in orchestrating three volumes on the Westminster Confession (WC). In each volume Duncan compiles essays on the history and theology of the WC, each seeking to show the importance of the WC for the twenty-first century. The following will seek to bring out some of the major themes by highlighting some of the best chapters.

The first theme that permeates these three volumes is the persistent refutation of those such as Perry Miller, Karl Barth, Basil Hall, J. B. Torrance, Alister McGrath, and R. T. Kendall, who seek to place a wall of discontinuity between Calvin and Calvinists at Westminster. Mark Dever, in “Calvin, Westminster and Assurance,” argues against the claims of Kendall that while Calvin saw a “freeness” in salvation, the English puritans subverted Calvin by introducing works. Kendall believes Beza’s limited atonement is to blame, since the believer must question whether Christ actually died for him. Consequently, so the argument goes, the Puritan practice of self-examination is auto-soterism (saving oneself by one’s own life). Dever responds, “If this charge is true, it is a damning indictment of the gospel presented by the Westminster standards” (1:305). Countering Kendall, Dever shows that “Calvin taught that subjective assurance was distinct from saving faith, and came not through simply reflecting on one’s own process of believing, but through looking to Christ as the sole basis of salvation, living a Christian life, and the direct witness of the Holy Spirit in the believer’s heart” (1:320). Dever concludes by arguing that the English Puritans did not diverge from Calvin, but they also emphasized the troubled believer’s need to turn to the objective work of Christ. For example, for Richard Sibbes the life of the Christian is an evidence of his spiritual state (though not always discernable) and the Spirit is an internal witness to the troubled believer. “Yet, throughout his preaching, Sibbes was always clear that the objective work of Christ was the sole basis, not merely of salvation in abstraction, but of one’s own participation in it” (1:334). Therefore, contra Kendall, the objective work of Christ, yes even the limited extent of Christ’s atonement, is not cause for despair but assurance.

Paul Helm takes up the case for continuity in “Westminster and Protestant Scholasticism.” Helm, contra McGrath, Hall, and Kendall, demonstrates that the Calvinists that came after Calvin have been wrongly accused of adopting an arid rationalism, turning from Christology to an abstract focus on the divine decrees, subverting revelation for natural theology, replacing Calvin’s warm-styled





Christocentrism with “speculative hair splitting,” and abrogating Calvin’s gospel of unconditional grace. To tackle but one of these accusations, it is alleged that the Reformed scholastics, in contrast to Calvin, made the divine decrees of first place and of axiomatic importance in their dogmatics. Helm thoroughly demonstrates, however, that “while Calvin’s treatment of predestination occupies a fairly subordinate place in the final edition of the *Institutes*, his treatment of providence remains appropriately early, and remains noticeably predestinarian in character” (2:102). In comparison to Westminster, Helm goes on to demonstrate that “although the order of their treatment of the doctrine is different, as is the style, the doctrine itself is substantially the same” (2:112).

A final chapter that again reiterates the case for continuity is William Traub’s “Karl Barth and the Westminster Confession of Faith.” Barth served to propel the myth of downgrade after Calvin, and he was very critical of the theology of the WC. For example, Barth rejects the emphasis the WC places on the *ordo salutis*, claiming it shifts emphasis away from God’s revelation to the Christian’s experience. Traub’s critique is penetrating:

Unfortunately, in his proper disdain for the psychologizing and historicizing of theology and revelation, Barth leaves no room for the application of God’s grace in the lives of believers. Barth seems unwilling to allow for any purpose of God’s grace beyond simply revealing who he is. Grace and salvation remain, at best, tangential to man and one is left not knowing if they have any meaning or have had any effect at all. (3:217)

Traub’s chapter exposes the dilemma evangelicals face today, namely, if Reformed orthodoxy is to be adopted, Barth’s theology must be laid aside. In Barth’s time, creedal formulations were abandoned, and Barth’s criticisms of the WC did not help. (It is surprising that Barth was called upon to lecture on the Reformed creeds at Georg-August-Universität Göttingen when he confesses he had never even read the Reformed creeds prior to Göttingen!) Yet Barth is one of the most influential figures today, as his neo-orthodoxy continues. Traub, however, shows that despite Barth’s popularity, Reformed orthodoxy and neo-orthodoxy are incompatible.

A second theme to take notice of is the very helpful rebuttal of the New Perspective on Paul (NPP), an issue hotly debated today and represented in the writings of James Dunn, E. P. Sanders, and N. T. Wright. Donald Macleod, in his chapter “The New Perspective: Paul, Luther, and Judaism,” is lucid: “historic Lutheranism and historic Calvinism stand shoulder to shoulder on the core issue: the Judaism confronted by the Apostle Paul was a form of legalism” (3:302). Has the NPP rendered this view untenable? Macleod answers with a resounding no. The NPP is right that Judaism was a faith rooted in grace; this “does not prove, however, that there was no legalism in Jewish thought” and even “less does it prove that the Judaizers with whom Paul was in conflict were not legalists” (3:303). MacLeod explains, “Judaism, like Christianity, embraces a wide range of opinions, and even if the evangelical note was dominant there may well have been other voices much more legalistic in tone. These voices may have been very influential in the circles in which Paul (and Jesus) moved.” Sanders even concedes this when he admits that Matt 23 is an example of legalistic Jews. Yet Sanders thinks that the surviving Jewish literature does not reveal this. Macleod, in a brief survey through Judaic literature, shows Sanders to be utterly wrong on this point. Sanders admits (in *Palestinian Judaism*) that texts like 4 Ezra embarrass his thesis and do prove the existence of a Judaism functioning under self-righteousness, and yet Sanders dismisses such a case, arguing that examples like these are the minority to the prevailing view of covenantal nomism. Yet Macleod points out that it may have been within such pockets of Judaism like these that an opposition to Paul evolved. Moreover, we “have no right to conclude that, prior to AD 70, it represented only an

insignificant minority of Jews” (3:306). Furthermore, a host of other texts also support such a mentality within Judaism (see *Apocalypse of Baruch* and Josephus). In short, the NPP mishandles key rabbinic material and ignores significant biblical texts (Isa 1:10–20; Amos 8:4–6; Jer 7:4–14; Matt 3:7–10; 15:1–20; Luke 18:9–14; John 3), which demonstrate the battle over self-righteousness.

The third theme that is to be recognized is the emphasis of Westminster on the doctrines of grace, an issue that continues to be hotly debated among Calvinists and Arminians today. The WC magnificently articulates and represents the doctrines of grace in biblical perspective. However, the Calvinism of the WC was severely attacked by Charles Finney, the nineteenth-century revivalist Presbyterian-turned-Congregationalist. In the theological lineage of the New Haven Divinity of Nathaniel Taylor and Joseph Bellamy, Finney rejected Westminster’s doctrines of original sin, the bondage of the will, and the necessity of efficacious grace and supernatural regeneration, as evident in his sermon “Sinners Bound to Change Their Own Hearts.” B. B. Warfield concluded that Finney was a return to Pelagius, as Finney argued that there is nothing in religion beyond the ordinary powers of human ability. This led Finney on the issue of justification to embrace a “works-righteousness that exceeded the Counter-Reformation position” (2:391). Unfortunately, Finney’s pragmatism continues today, and in some circles Finney’s *Systematic Theology* continues to be used as a supplementary text to Scripture. Horton is right in concluding that Finney’s naturalistic religion is a major step towards liberalism and must be rejected if our churches today are to remain orthodox, let alone Reformed. Lest evangelicals think they are exempt from such a theology, Horton reminds the reader of a recent interview where Jerry Falwell claimed Finney as “one of my greatest heroes” (2:411). Horton’s chapter is a sobering reminder that without faithful subscriptions to biblical confessions and creeds, churches can easily slip back into the theology of Finney.

A fourth and final doctrine that permeates these volumes is covenant theology (CT). The most detailed chapter comes from Ligon Duncan, who writes his essay as an “attempt to sound a call for the revival of classical federal theology in our gospel preaching and theological reflection” (3:479). Duncan begins by listing five reasons he believes that covenant theology has been neglected: (1) There is a general impatience amongst us with historical theology. (2) The function of CT (even in Reformed circles) has either been limited to sacramental discussions or deployed in an eccentric form as a justification for some specialized view of children in the household of faith. (3) The widespread influence of dispensationalism in evangelical and Reformed circles has eroded the effect and appreciation of CT. (4) Objections to systematic theology come to bear on CT also. (5) CT has suffered attack from those within the Reformed community (Dorner, Lindsay, Torrance, Rolston, Kendall, Bell, Heron, Barth). Duncan enlists even John Murray as one who has done “semantic back-peddling on the covenant of works which has proved unhelpful to his theological descendents” (3:481). Duncan, relying to a degree on Donald Macleod, then gives a very meticulous response to fifteen of the most common objections to federal theology, specifically those voiced by J. B. Torrance and Karl Barth. To give but one example, it is objected that federalism’s inter-trinitarian covenant opens up dualism in God. However, Duncan shows that the *pactum salutis* or covenant of redemption is a biblical inference from Scripture, where it is the Father who sends the Son (John 5:37; 6:44, 57; 8:16–18; 12:49; 14:24), the Son who obeys and dies (John 14:6; Acts 4:12; 1 Tim 2:15), and the Spirit who is sent by the Father and the Son to testify concerning Christ (John 14:26, 15:26). “These tasks were not assigned at the incarnation, but were embraced before time in the eternal purposes of God, in which the three persons of the Godhead, in one common purpose, chose to save sinners (1 Pet 1:20). Thus, the covenant of redemption does not open up God to dualism since it is one common purpose within the Godhead to save sinners, despite the diversity of function within the outworking of this plan of redemption” (3:486–87). Likewise, Bavinck states, “The

pact of salvation makes known to us the relationships and life of the three persons in the Divine Being as a covenantal life, a life of consummate self-consciousness and freedom” (*Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:214). Duncan’s response to these fifteen objections not only corrects caricatures but presents arguments in favor of CT, demonstrating that it cannot be easily dismissed.

In conclusion, the reception of these volumes remains to be seen. Those of dispensational and Arminian persuasions will disagree with much, if not most, of what these three volumes represent. However, those of a Reformed background and even those not persuaded entirely by covenant theology but committed to Calvinism’s view of grace (i.e., Reformed Baptists) will find themselves pleased and encouraged by these essays. If a criticism is to be given of these volumes, it is that there are not yet chapters on the attributes of God, the person and work of Christ, or the inerrancy of Scripture. Nevertheless, such chapters may be forthcoming, and Reformed evangelicals will warmly welcome from Duncan a fourth and final volume, as these previous three have proved that the Westminster Confession is relevant, significant, and necessary today.

Matthew Barrett  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary  
Louisville, KY, USA

---

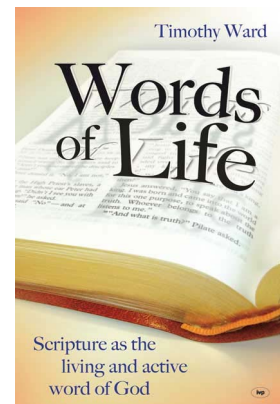
Timothy Ward. *Words of Life: Scripture as the Living and Active Word of God*. Nottingham: IVP, 2009. 184 pp. £9.99/\$22.00.

---

I read book reviews for numerous reasons: to read someone else’s opinion on a book I have read, to read someone else’s summary and opinion on a book that I have not read (and probably will not read), and sometimes to read someone tell me if it really is worth reading the book. If someone else reviewed Tim Ward’s *Words of Life* and did not tell me to read this book, he would have done me a great disservice.

Ward’s book gives a theological understanding of how God speaks and forms his covenantal relationship with us through Scripture; Ward explains this in such a way that we finish his book with renewed confidence that God does indeed use His word to speak to us today. This is the book’s greatest strength: it is not just a dry treatise on the infallibility of the Bible, but a book written by a man who understands that the truthfulness of the Bible is the basis of our confidence that God does speak to us clearly today through His word. Along the way, Ward deals with many of the views put forward about Scripture and interacts with them with the help of Reformed thinking. He draws heavily from Calvin, Turretin, Bavinck and Warfield, and ably defends the views of these theologians against some of the misunderstandings made against their writings.

The first chapter deals with Ward’s understanding of how God uses Scripture to communicate, and Ward argues that God’s Word is an extension of himself and his actions. He surveys the OT and NT, showing the close relationship between God’s actions and his words. This argument counters the accusation that some Christians privilege the Bible above God, thus worshipping the Bible, not God: Ward shows that it is when we listen to the Bible and obey it that we are listening to and obeying God, since God does not separate his actions from his words.



In the second chapter, Ward argues that the doctrine of Scripture is rightly located in our understanding of the Trinity: in other words, we do not formulate a view of Scripture in contradistinction to our doctrine of God. In fact, our doctrine of Scripture comes from the fact that God is a communicating God, and so Scripture is his way of entering into communion with us. In arguing this, Ward finds the concept of “speech-act theory” helpful. Speech-act theory, in its most basic form, argues that all words create a relationship: so, for instance, when a judge declares a defendant guilty (or not, as the case may be), the judge’s words have the effect of making a new relationship. Ward argues that this basic theory helps us understand how God speaks through Scripture: every time we hear Scripture spoken, God is declaring himself and his actions to us in order for us to enter into relationship with him. Scripture is God’s means of establishing a covenant with us. Although some Christians are suspicious of arguing from current philosophies (such as “speech-act theory”), Ward shows how the whole of Scripture is God’s speech-act in the most basic sense that God establishes a relationship with us through Scripture.

There are also useful discussions in chapter 2 on how we are to understand Scripture as both divine and human, and the Spirit’s role in inspiring, persevering, and illuminating Scripture.

In the third chapter, Ward uses this theological basis to present definitions and clarifications on the necessity, sufficiency, clarity, and authority of Scripture. Therefore, he interacts with some of the current debates among Christians today on the role of preaching (where he proposes that preaching must be faithful to Scripture if it is to be used by God to establish his relationship with people), and on the definition of inerrancy and its relation to interpretation.

In the last chapter, Ward deals with the relation between the church and Scripture. First, he deals with the question of Scripture and church tradition, contrasting the Catholic and Anabaptist positions with that of the magisterial Reformers at the time of the Reformation. This is a brilliant defence of why we cannot merely “start all over again” with the Bible, and ignore our church heritage: in some ways, this analysis is worth the book alone. Second, he deals with practical issues in the life of the church and of the Christian today, looking at the role of the preacher, and the use of the Bible in private reading: his warnings and advice in this area are healthy for any local church wishing to hear and obey God today.

Although Ward covers a lot of ground in 180 pages, he helps us as readers by pausing and giving summaries of his argument.

So, I am not going to do you a disservice: this is one of the clearest and most helpful books written on Scripture that I have read. It has given me greater confidence in using Scripture in my ministry so people can more clearly hear what God is saying to them, so it is a book worth buying and studying.

Andrew Curry  
SIM (Serving in Mission)  
Senegal, West Africa



traditions” and to imagine that the debate over predestination could be settled merely “through the collation of sufficient biblical evidence” (p. 217)—that “all but extinguished the *mysterium tremendum* of predestination” (p. 218), thereby making the doctrine seem “deadly—and sometimes deadly boring” (p. 217) to many in the church. It is the ever weakening “hold” of an appropriate sense of “sacramental” and “dogmatic” mystery on “the Christian imagination” (pp. 216–17), then, that is the real reason for the doctrine of predestination’s loss of both significance and “power” (p. 13) from the time of the Puritans to the present, or at least so argues Thuesen.

On one level, Professor Thuesen’s volume is a remarkable success. His overview of the American career of this contentious doctrine not only surveys territory that is generally familiar to most students of American church history, but it also summarizes aspects of the story that will likely be entirely new to readers who, like me, are not church historians themselves. For example, while I appreciated Professor Thuesen’s overview of the more familiar debates between those in the Presbyterian and Baptist camps in chapter 6, I found his discussion of the debates in the Catholic and Lutheran camps in chapter 5, and his analysis in chapter 4 of those “upstart religious movements” that were united by their “opposition to the monarchial God of Calvinism” (p. 103), to be particularly instructive, largely because of gaps in my own reading.

On another level, however, Professor Thuesen’s analysis leaves something to be desired because it begs a host of questions that are relevant to the history of the doctrine in the American context. For example, Professor Thuesen essentially ignores important questions regarding the nature of religious truth and the locus of religious authority. But how judiciously can one tell the story of such a contentious doctrine if one disregards precisely those questions that ultimately account not just for the positions of the various participants in the discussion, but also for the judgments that are rendered—often, in this case, through the provocative use of adjectives and adverbs—throughout one’s analysis? In my estimation, Professor Thuesen’s discussion would have been far more helpful and compelling if he had addressed methodological kinds of questions more forthrightly throughout his analysis.

Paul Kjoss Helseth  
Northwestern College  
Saint Paul, Minnesota, USA

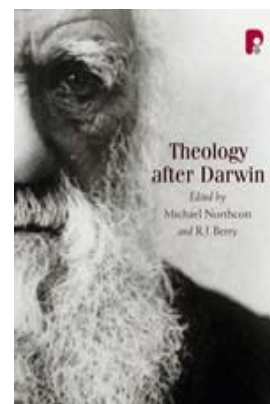
---

Michael Northcott and R. J. Berry, eds. *Theology after Darwin*. Colorado Springs: Paternoster, 2009. 222 pp. £14.99.

---

This volume, consisting of eleven chapters, an introduction, and epilogue, is the fruitful result of a symposium held in Edinburgh on the 150th anniversary of the publication of Darwin’s *Origin of Species*. Eleven able scholars from a variety of fields—biology, genetics, ethics, biblical studies, and theology—have written very clearly on such ever relevant matters as ‘Biology after Darwin,’ ‘Intelligent Design,’ ‘Providence,’ and ‘Doctrine of the Fall and Sin after Darwin.’

All of these writers wish to uphold the biblical tradition and to speak it into the contemporary culture. Every chapter shows broad and deep awareness of the subject matters the author addresses, both in terms of history and of current scholarship. For that reason, whether one agrees with all of their positions or



not, this volume is well worth reading and puts one in touch with serious scholarship, past and present, in many related fields of research.

All of the authors unquestioningly assume that some form of Darwinian evolution is correct and that biblical interpretation must adjust itself to it. As one who believes in biblical creation, I would wish to take a different approach here. In his chapter, 'After Darwin: Is Intelligent Design Intelligent,' Denis Alexander states that 'Another significant problem with the suggestion that Intelligent Design represents a scientific hypothesis with explanatory power comes from a false conclusion inherent in its argument' (p. 32).<sup>1</sup> But what if theological scholarship based on the assumption of evolution is itself grounded on a false presupposition?

Though I am no scientist, it does appear to me that Dr. Alexander's essay rather too quickly disposes of the empirical arguments brought forward by proponents of intelligent design. Maybe I have missed something, but I cannot see how he has really proven that 'the irreducible complexity' of the cell has been falsified (pp. 34–35). It appears to me that many of those who assume the truth of evolution are too ready to place any and all empirical evidences raised against it as falling into the category of 'religion' and therefore being thrown out of court as 'non-scientific'. That may be an effective tool of debate, but does it represent an open seeking of truth wherever it may lead?

Dr. John Bimson's essay on 'Doctrines of the Fall and Sin after Darwin' certainly raises the right questions for Christian theology. He shows that the historicity of Adam and Eve is integral to the traditional biblical understanding of the origin of sin, evil, and death (pp. 114–15). He is correct when he states that the straightforward biblical teaching (e.g., Gen 3 and Rom 5) 'is clearly incompatible with a Darwinian understanding of human origins' (p. 122). He hopes to retain some sense of 'the Fall' (p. 122), but I fail to see how one can hold to an originally good and sinless created order and at the same time posit evil, death, and evolutionary struggle long before 'Adam's' first sin, which is what Scripture teaches us brought the judgment of death, and the origin of evil, in the first place.

The same problem is addressed in Dr. Neil Messer's 'Natural Evil after Darwin' (pp. 139–54). He takes Christopher Southgate to task for denying any connection between the fallenness of the world and 'the suffering and destruction resulting from the evolutionary process' (p. 149). His chapter is itself an intelligent demonstration of the incommensurability of Darwinism and the biblical teaching on creation and fall. One cannot at the same time hold to both of them as a true account of affairs.

Michael Northcott's 'Theological Ethics after Darwin' sensitively assesses the ethical consequences of 'the rejection of teleology and the doctrine of final causes' (p. 127). Commenting on Michael Ruse, he notes, 'evolution is still performing the role of source of morality, and morality is consequently reduced to the accidental status it has in the Darwinian mainstream' (p. 131). Professor Northcott certainly wishes for something better, but I was unclear as to exactly what it would be.

Professor David Fergusson's 'Darwin and Providence' carefully and accurately discusses Christian theological views on providence from Hodge, McCosh, Warfield, and others down to the present, such as Polkinghorne (pp. 78–83). He shows how quickly evangelicalism in Britain and America accommodated itself to evolutionary theory (pp. 86–88), and 'The Threat to Human Significance' of this accommodation (p. 85). As an alternative to the denial of human uniqueness, Dr. Ferguson suggests

---

<sup>1</sup> Editor's note: The original version of the review erroneously quoted Dr. Alexander and thus made it appear that he believes that Intelligent Design represents a scientific hypothesis, which he does not. We apologise for the mistake.



‘phenomena such as consciousness, our moral capacities, and spiritual discernment that demand different forms of explanation and understanding from those available to the natural sciences’ (p. 85).

One of the most intriguing essays I have ever read concerning ‘final fulfillment for nonhuman creatures’ is ‘Hope for Creation after Darwin: The Redemption of “All Things”’ by Dr. Denis Edwards (pp. 171–89). It is a particularly interesting meditation on Rom 8:18–25: the final redemption of the entire created order. He discusses ‘the transfiguration of the material universe’ (p. 178), drawing on Staniloae and Rahner. What he writes about ‘Hope for the Animals’ may or may not be right (pp. 184–89), but I tend to hope that he is right! Whether one assumes evolution or creation makes little practical difference to the themes developed in this meditation.

In sum, one has to appreciate the herculean efforts of these Christian scholars to retain as much of traditional biblical theology as possible in conjunction with their belief that there is simply no intelligent alternative to evolutionary theory. But since I remain unconvinced that evolution is a fact rather than a theory, I believe that modern intellectual culture needs to be addressed in a different way.

Douglas F. Kelly  
Reformed Theological Seminary at Charlotte  
Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

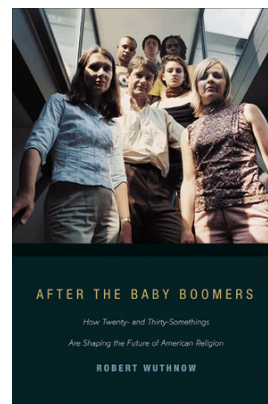
---

Robert Wuthnow. *After the Baby Boomers: How Twenty- and Thirty-Somethings Are Shaping the Future of American Religion*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007. xvii + 298 pp. £16.95/\$24.95.

---

Many years ago I came across a quote that posited that an interdependent relationship existed between sociology and theology: “Sociology without theology is powerless and the latter without the former is blind.” I confess that I cannot remember where I read this, nor if I am quoting or paraphrasing. Yet I have found myself continuously juxtaposing these two speciously disparate disciplines. As a Christian sociologist, I sensed a sociological and theological juxtaposition with respect to Robert Wuthnow’s *After the Baby Boomers*. As Wuthnow’s text entails a sociological endeavor, not a theological one, I will accordingly engage with his book primarily as a (Christian) sociologist; too often theologians (erroneously) massacre sociology, and sociologists do the same regarding theological counterparts.

Wuthnow is an established (understatement) sociologist at Princeton who specializes in the subfield of religion. In *After the Baby Boomers*, he states, “If I were a religious leader, I would be troubled by the facts and figures currently describing the lives of young Americans, their involvement in congregations, and their spiritual practices” (p. 214). He is troubled because “the future of American religion” resides in young adults who are forty-five and younger (p. 1) and that the proportions of this particular group’s religious participation is shrinking. He further claims that “unless religious leaders take younger adults more seriously, the future of American religion is in doubt” (p. 17). Wuthnow clearly argues from a sociological (as opposed to a theological) view by focusing on how structural components impact young-adult religiosity. In fact, he argues that various institutions bombard Americans until they turn twenty-one whereby these young adults are essentially abandoned (p. 12). The unintended consequence is that young adults are therefore “forced to be individualistic” as “they have no other resources but themselves”





(p. 13). The claim that a lack of structural opportunities will impact group behavior is of course nothing new in sociology (cf. Oscar Lewis' "culture of poverty"; Elaine Bell Kaplan's "motherhood strategy"; Carol B. Stack's "swapping"; etc.). Rather than continuing to be involved in religious institutions (which according to Wuthnow is partially the institutions' fault), young adults have become "*bricoleurs*" or "tinkerers." Wuthnow claims, "The single word that best describes young adults' approach to religion and spirituality . . . is *tinkering*. A tinkerer puts together a life from whatever skills, ideas, and resources that are readily at hand" (p. 13). Sociologists would make a connection between "*bricoleurs*" and Ann Swidler's "tool kit" analogy. However, tinkering becomes a highly individualized endeavor: "Each person is a tinkerer. Each individual claims the authority . . . to make up his or her mind about what to believe" (p. 15).

Wuthnow bases his claims on an extensive set of statistical data (cf. pp. 233–54). In fact, the depth and breadth of his data is a pleasant surprise after having also recently read his book *America and the Challenges of Religious Diversity*. In that book (unlike *After the Baby Boomers*), he explicitly lays out his presuppositions: "I write as a humanistically oriented social scientist. I view the encounter between Christianity and other religions as an instance of how we are shaped by our culture and of how we engage in cultural work. I am interested in the fact that religious diversity is embedded in cultural memory" (p. xvi). The shift from that book (a Weberian and ethnographic approach that emphasizes interpretation) to *After the Baby Boomers* is stark; the latter book is much more data-driven in a Durkheimian sense of "social facts" and is not what I would call an "ethnographic" approach per se. Interestingly, Wuthnow claims, "Ethnographic studies provide rich descriptive detail, but they are not well-suited for drawing broader generalizations. . . . More systematic evidence is needed before making such generalizations" (p. 190). A strength of *After the Baby Boomers* is the generalizability of the abstraction of "young adults" because it is so rich in quantitative data (sets).

However, employing a nominal category ("young adults") is always challenging regarding the applicability of generalizations versus particulars. "Young adults" may be a useful category regarding age, but becomes problematic when incorporating religion and "immigration and ethnic diversity" (in ch. 9). Books have been written on this intersection. Nonetheless, Wuthnow should be commended on his attempt to employ such large data sets. A complementary (perhaps supplementary) study that focuses on "emerging adults" (18- to 23-year-olds) and their religious patterns is Christian Smith's *Souls in Transition*. However, Wuthnow's data sets are much more extensive. Although both employ statistical measures of association (Wuthnow employs log regressions and Smith employs Pearson's *r*) and Smith's approach is longitudinal (three waves), Wuthnow's approach is more rigorous.

Wuthnow appears to push against a rational choice of economics approach: "Some scholars believe these choices about religion and spirituality can be understood as rational choices and thus reduced to the same logic as economic decisions" (p. 113). In fact, Wuthnow employs a sub-heading, "Thinking Beyond Winners and Losers" (p. 71), that happens to correspond with a sub-title of a book that many consider to be a definitive work in the sociology of religion via a supply-side of rational choice (economics) by Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, *The Church of America, 1776–2005: Winners and Losers in Our Religious Economy*. Could Wuthnow have incorporated supply- and consumer-side rational choice of religion models, delimited rational choice, and structural factors regarding the contexts of departure and reception for non-white young-adult immigrants? Yes. Does this denigrate Wuthnow's contribution? Absolutely not. Methodologically, Wuthnow levels a challenge to all who would venture

in the sociology of religion particularly because of his attempt to employ so much evidence via data (sets).

However, let me make a few comments as a *Christian* sociologist. These comments are not to be leveled against Wuthnow in particular but also against the discipline of sociology of religion in general. First, social constructs and forces often assume a self-contained world, and this counters my understanding of a transcendent and eternal God (not a totem) who decides to interact with his creation (redemptive history). Second, the fate of the church does not reside in “young adults” or any other persons. As mentioned in the quote regarding the interdependency between sociology and theology, I believe that sociology is valid as a means of description and inference. It is a valid means regarding societal diagnosis via a “sociological imagination.”

However, it is severely limited regarding prescription. If the church employed sociology as a prescriptive means, then Christians would have to find a way for “women keeping house” (p. 59) and for pronuptialism and pronatalism, if in fact “being married or unmarried has a stronger effect on church attendance than anything else” (p. 62). I am reminded of Paul and his admonition regarding marriage and singlehood (1 Cor 7). In God’s providence (without obviating human responsibility), he proclaims his victory through the church “already-not-yet.” Finally, I find that Christian concepts such as “spiritual” and “church” (like the “meaning” of a “rainbow”) have been co-opted (and or commodified) via social constructs. In my understanding, Paul coined the adjective “spiritual” and used this word twenty-four out of the twenty-six uses in the NT. The word is particular to the Person and works of Jesus Christ. A new realm (sociological parallel of sacred and profane) was created via Christ, as the Anointed in redemptive history (cf. John 4:21–24). Persons (and things) can be deemed “spiritual” when associated with Jesus Christ. Unfortunately, this word is used willy-nilly and used contra matter (or establishment). Further, in this vein, church is not merely organization but it is also organism. The viability of the church is not dependent upon social forces but upon the nexus with Christ (John 15:5). Thus, we are defined and empowered via the triune God, and yet our content (theological aspects) is to be actualized pending our settings (sociological aspects) via various forms. On this note, Wuthnow’s work can be helpful to enable the church(es) to “become all things to all men” (1 Cor 9:22) as “*bricoleurs*” in the parameters of “his-story.”

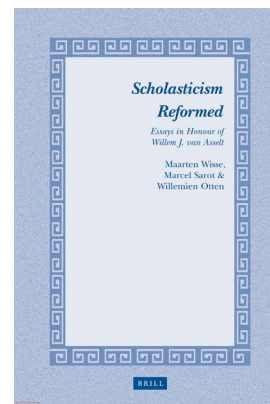
Henry H. Kim  
Wheaton College  
Wheaton, Illinois, USA

---

Maarten Wise, Marcel Sarot, and Willemien Otten. *Scholasticism Reformed: Essays in Honor of Willem J. van Asselt*. Leiden: Brill, 2010. 390 pp. \$185.00.

---

It is quite fitting for the editors to dedicate this work to Willem J. van Asselt, one of the foremost scholars of our generation on the topic of post-Reformation Reformed scholasticism. The revisionist interpretation of this development in Reformed theology began over three decades ago through the efforts of Asselt along with such prominent scholars as Richard A. Muller of Calvin Theological Seminary. Asselt agrees with Muller’s definition of scholasticism primarily as a theological method and with the argument in favor of the essential continuity



between Calvin and his successors. Asselt's contributions to the field have been substantial both in publications as well as in his role in developing the next generation of scholars, who have continued the basic thrust of his work. The depth of gratitude of his colleagues and students displayed in this volume is striking.

The essays are divided into three sections: Reformed scholasticism and the Scotist heritage, Reformed scholasticism at home and overseas, and scholasticism and modern systematic theology. I found the second section to be the most interesting because it focuses on the theology of specific Reformed figures of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in the Netherlands and in England. Some of these are relatively well-known such as Gisbertus Voetius and William Perkins. Others have received relatively little scholarly attention such as Thomas Barlow and Patrick Gillespie.

Of particular interest are the essays by Muller on Barlow and by Raymond Blacketer on Perkins. Barlow (1607–91) was a theology professor at Oxford who virulently opposed the incursion of Arminianism into the Church of England. The essay focuses on his use of Aristotelianism in opposition to the revival of Epicurean philosophy and its “atomism” as espoused by such scholars as the French philosopher, Pierre Gassendi. Barlow specifically objected to the Epicurean position on the existence of “empty” space, arguing that such an idea was preposterous since, according to Aristotle, when one object was moved from a space, something else had to take its place. Another major issue was the alleged eternity of atoms that ran counter to the basic Christian notion of creation *ex nihilo*. Furthermore, Barlow's opponents such as Walter Charleton, the Epicurean philosopher of the British Royal Academy, redefined the nature of time as a series of events, and because God interacts with temporal beings, he cannot be considered in the “eternal now,” a view that has resurfaced in the contemporary “openness of God” debate. Barlow again used Aristotelian theosophy against such a position and in defense of what he defined as orthodox theology. The significance of this discussion for Muller is that Barlow was not a “rationalist” as many of the proponents of Reformed scholasticism have been accused; his Epicurian adversaries were the true rationalists. Barlow preferred to use philosophy as the handmaiden of theology rather than as its master.

Blacketer centers his discussion on Perkin's method of preaching and its importance for reform from within the Church of England. A convinced Ramist, Perkins argued that rhetorical and dialectical analysis of Scripture were essential for proper exposition from the pulpit. Once the text was mastered, the pastor had to tailor his approach to the intellectual and spiritual capacities of the parishioners. There was a significant difference, he argued, between basic Christian teachings that should be taught briefly and clearly and more complex topics such as the incarnation. The key was to communicate biblical truth correctly, which was more important than mere oratory. However, when one moves from instruction to exhortation, a more forceful style would be helpful. By distinguishing between scholastic loci and basic doctrinal instruction, Perkins displayed how a scholastic approach to theology played an important role in Reformed preaching.

These two essays represent examples of the depth and quality of these essays, which are designed primarily for scholars or advanced students and assume a sophisticated knowledge of the language, content, and history of the period. Many figures are introduced without a basic biography or context that would certainly have enriched the dialogue. The editors include a bibliography of Asselt's Dutch

and English language publications. There is no general bibliography, but the editors have included a helpful index of names.

Martin I. Klauber  
Trinity Evangelical Divinity School  
Deerfield, Illinois, USA

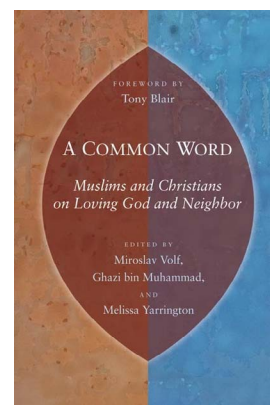
---

Miroslav Volf, Ghazi bin Muhammad, and Melissa Yarrington, eds. *A Common Word: Muslims and Christians on Loving God and Neighbor*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010. xiv + 242 pp. £6.99/\$14.00.

---

This book is about an open letter addressed in October 2007 by 138 Muslim leaders and scholars to the Pope and other church leaders. It is a consensual Islamic response to Christian perceptions of Islam in recent years (especially since '9/11'), in particular to the characterisation of Islam as a violent religion by the Pope when, in his September 2006 Regensburg lecture, he quoted the Byzantine Emperor Manuel II Paleologos. His Royal Highness Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad bin Talal of Jordan is the principal drafter of the letter, whose title comes from Sura 3 (The Household of 'Imran) verse 64:

Say: O People of the Scripture! Come to **a common word** between us and you: that we shall worship none but God, and that we shall ascribe no partner unto Him, and that none of us shall take others for lords beside God. And if they turn away, then say: Bear witness that we are they who have surrendered (unto Him).



This open letter represents a landmark initiative. For the first time a representative and highly influential Muslim group has issued a solemn invitation to Christian leaders to join them in order to work together for global peace, not just for peaceful relations between the two largest monotheistic communities in the world. However, despite the significance of this document, as a Cambridge Muslim scholar pointed out to me in a private conversation, it does not represent a *fatwa* or a binding legal ruling.

Many Christian leaders, organisations, and academic institutions responded enthusiastically to this initiative. One of the first and most significant responses was given in November 2007 by the Yale Center for Faith and Culture (headed by M. Volf), which set up in July 2008 a conference at which a number of Christian and Muslim speakers discussed various aspects of this initiative. Apart from the 'Common Word' document and the 'Yale response', the book reproduces the papers delivered at this conference, and includes a 'Frequently Asked Questions' section about these two texts. (The full text of the 'Common Word' is on the official website of this initiative: [www.acommonword.com](http://www.acommonword.com). The 'Yale response' is also available here along with many other responses: [www.acommonword.com/lib/downloads/fullpageadbold18.pdf](http://www.acommonword.com/lib/downloads/fullpageadbold18.pdf).)

The Muslim signatories believe, 'Islam and Christianity share, at their core, the twin "golden" commandments of the paramount importance of loving God and loving one's neighbor' (p. 3). No Christian will be surprised by this emphasis on the twofold greatest command in Christian doctrine. What is unprecedented is that, first, Muslim scholars have summed up Islamic teaching in the same

way and, second, they backed up their claim by quoting extensively from both the OT and NT as well as from the Qur'an and the Hadith (Prophetic Tradition).

Volf highlights the great potential for this initiative to transform Christian-Muslim relationships. If Christians and Muslims 'commit themselves to love God and neighbour, the "Common Word" initiative will open up a new future for Muslims, Christians, and Jews—a future in which many swords will be turned into plowshares and countless clashes will be replaced by peaceful coexistence' (p. 27). The vast majority of Christians, especially in the West, responded positively to this initiative. However, Muslims too need to be engaged, and it is the responsibility of Muslim leaders to invite their community members to open a new chapter in their relationships with Christians, including those who live in Muslim-majority countries.

The Yale response is so enthralled by the Islamic letter that it goes further than what it actually says about God in particular. It is indeed remarkable that Reza Shah-Kazemi entitles his paper 'God, "The Loving"' (pp. 88–109) and that Prince Ghazi translates the Divine Names *Al-Rahman* as 'The Creator-through-Love' and *Al-Rahim* as 'The Savior through Mercy' (p. 11). However, the letter does not go as far as to describe God 'as being Love' as it is alleged in the Yale response (p. 54). We need to be careful not to read things Christian into an Islamic document. H. A. al-Jibri asserts, 'we cannot say according to Muslim belief that God is love, because love is an attribute' (p. 84). If love is a divine attribute, one wonders why none of the traditional lists that enumerate 'God's 99 Most Beautiful Names' includes *Al-Muhibb*, 'The Loving', though *Al-Wadud*, 'The Lovingkind', is among them—there are four such lists, two of them are found in the Hadith compilations (Ibn Majah, *du'a* [Invocation] 10; Tirmidhi, *da'awat* [Invocations] 87). See D. Gimaret, *Les Noms Divins en Islam* (Paris: Le Cerf, 1988), 51–68.

It is worth noting that the 'Common Word' quotes Sura 2 (The Heifer) verse 256 ('Let there be no compulsion in religion') and presents justice and freedom of religion as 'a crucial part' of loving one's neighbour (p. 47). Traditionally this verse has been interpreted in the sense that Jews and Christians should not be forced to convert to Islam, *not* that Muslims have the right to convert to a religion of their choice. (The Universal Islamic Declaration of Human Rights asserts the right to freedom of conscience and worship [art. 13], but significantly, unlike the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it does not specify that this right includes the freedom for a person to change his or her religion.) One would have expected Christians at the Yale conference to raise the issue of the Islamic law on apostasy (which prescribes the death penalty) and its compatibility with the command of loving our neighbour, in this case a Muslim neighbour who converts to another faith. (To be fair this issue is alluded to in a footnote by Martin Accad, an Arab Christian from Lebanon [pp. 160–61].)

The open letter quotes the twofold greatest commands according to Mark's Gospel, which includes the *Shema Israel* (12:28–34). At the same time the letter's main author suggests in the book's introductory chapter that the Christian doctrine about the Holy Trinity is alien to Jesus' teaching and to the whole Bible (p. 9). The question arises whether the letter considers the Christian community to be nevertheless a genuinely monotheistic community. If it stated more clearly that this is the case, it would have demonstrated more convincingly its intention 'to focus on popular rapprochement and mutual understanding between Christians and Muslims' (p. 11). So far Muslim exegetes have understood the above quoted Qur'anic text (3:64) as an invitation to Christians to sign up with Muslims to a common statement about God's oneness that would require them to renounce their beliefs in God's Trinity and Christ's divinity (e.g., see Razi's exegesis on this text in his *Great Commentary* [vol. 8]). If the letter

plainly indicates a fresh Islamic interpretation of this text, it would undoubtedly achieve a considerable step in Christian-Muslim theological rapprochement.

Finally, the ‘Common Word’ makes many biblical references and quotations to build its case. Many Muslim theologians believe in what is known as *tahrif lafzi* or ‘falsification’ of the Bible, a concept which means that the biblical text has been substantively changed and is therefore no longer trustworthy. Does the letter imply that the Bible is still God’s reliable Word? Otherwise its whole argument would be seriously flawed. If it does, this initiative will in the long run transform Christian-Muslim dialogue and make it more fruitful than it has ever been.

Chawkat Moucarray  
World Vision International  
Milton Keynes, England, UK

---

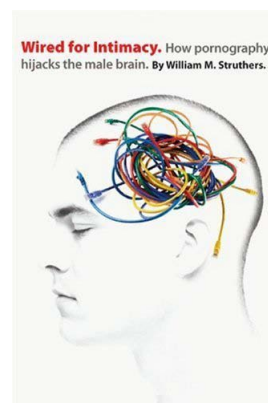
William M. Struthers. *Wired for Intimacy: How Pornography Hijacks the Male Brain*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2009. 196 pp. £10.85/\$16.00.

---

Any man must be applauded who is willing to wrestle with the issue of pornography, a plague of manifold dimensions in modern times to both Christians and non-Christians. While Struthers states that pornography is increasingly being “consumed” by women, his focus is its effect on men. Likely, pornography will always be a greater problem for men because for them, “sexuality is core to (their) essence” (p. 59). So Struthers’ focus should have considerable interest to Christian ministry today.

Chapter 1, “Saturated with Porn,” cites the prevalence of porn in our society through “magazines, escort service, strip clubs, phone sex, and pay-per-view cable channels.” But the most dominating and dangerous avenue is the internet with its ready “accessibility, affordability, and anonymity.” Literally, at any time that a man is on a computer, pornography is only the click-of-a-mouse away. Chapter 2, “The Corruption of Intimacy,” concerns the sinfulness of pornography, the heavy guilt it causes, its powerful pull as lust, patterns of becoming involved, and excuses that men use for their involvement. He discusses “healthy” sexuality that enhances intimacy in marriage and “unhealthy” sexuality that replaces intimacy with “technique” and “meaningful sexuality” (p. 55). Chapter 3, “The Consequences of Porn,” introduces the concept of “addiction” to pornography, citing the origin of the term from the abuse of drugs. However, Struthers prefers to use “addiction” as only “loosely” applying to this area (p. 76).

Chapter 4, “Your Brain on Porn,” states that porn “creates neural pathways . . . Grand Canyon-like gorges in the brain . . . making escape nearly impossible” (p. 85). Struthers then discusses the biochemistry, physiology, and anatomy of the brain in considerable technical detail, relative to what may be happening with “addictive” use of pornography. This chapter reflects the author’s primary area of expertise in neuroscience and biopsychology. Chapter 5, “Male Made in God’s Image,” briefly discusses what is the image of God in man and “embodiment,” which “the neuroscientist emphasizes” (p. 121). He goes on to “maleness” in its genetics, biochemistry, physiology, and psychology. He continues this theme in chapter 6, “Masculinity,” including the application of some biblical principles.



Chapter 7, “The Male Needs for Intimacy,” begins with Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs” and proceeds to “drives and sanctification,” “sexual energy,” “types of intimacy,” “living single,” “masturbation” (whether it is sin), and “defusing shame.” Chapter 8, “Rewiring and Sanctification,” concerns sanctification for the man caught in the web of pornography. Appendix A lists online and actual resources to help with “recovery.” Appendix B references books on the subject.

This noble attempt to weave together modern neurophysiology (NP) and biblical principles on a subject that is difficult to address falls short. Further, it is part of a growing emphasis on NP and an insufficiently biblical psychology from Christians who intend well but are dangerous to a true and thoroughgoing biblical worldview. Struthers states that one is “wired,” not spiritual; “hijacks” distances one from personal responsibility; and then, there is the “brain,” instead of the mind, heart, soul, and spirit. Struthers’ discussion of the “image of God” displays his weak biblical orientation. Numerous theologians, whether past or present, have developed this concept in rich ways, and the fruit of their work is easily accessed through books and online. This book mixes relatively “objective” physiological science with secular psychological themes. It is a wonderful book on the former; it is destructive of a biblical approach for the latter. Simply, a husband is to love his wife “as Christ loved the church” (Eph 5:25) and much more, as other Scriptures indicate. Biblical love may be defined as a sacrificial commitment to apply all the directives of Scripture to others in our defined social relationships.

Struthers’s discussion of how to overcome pornographic domination is perhaps his worst effort. He does not discuss the mind- and habit-changing put-off and put-on of Scripture and the development of a full-orbed biblical life in family, vocation, society, and church. His appendices include no biblical or nouthetic counselors or their resources, while he recommends secularists and “professional therapists” (p. 186) for “severe” cases—the implication being that Christian approaches work only in more superficial instances. This relegation of the “severe” to the “secular” indicates his greater reliance upon empirical methods rather than biblical truth.

The question may be asked, “Is it reasonable to expect a professor of neuroscience and psychology to be a theological expert?” My answer is that if we do not expect such training and knowledge in Christians with such credentials, then Christendom will continue to be further weakened by an apparent spirituality that is based upon secular concepts with a little “Christian” and biblical flavoring. This judgment is not spur-of-the-moment, but my having worked in the areas of medicine, bioethics, and psychology for almost forty years. Many observant theologians, pastors, and laymen have lamented that Christians are hardly distinguishable from the world—we are “in” the world and “of” the world, having failed to heed our Savior’s command. “You shall know the truth and the (biblical) truth will make you free”—free of dominating pornography and all other abominations (1 Cor 6:9–11).

Franklin E. Payne  
Medical College of Georgia (retired)  
Augusta, Georgia, USA

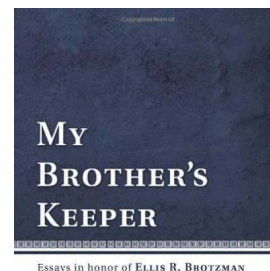


Thomas J. Marinello and H. H. Drake Williams III, eds. *My Brother's Keeper: Essays in Honor of Ellis R. Brotzman*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2010. xi + 285 pp. £20.00/\$33.00.

This collection of essays was written and assembled by faculty and board members of Tyndale Theological Seminary, located in Badhoevedorp, the Netherlands, just outside of Amsterdam. The publication commemorates the school's twenty-fifth anniversary and is dedicated to Dr. Ellis R. Brotzman upon his retirement after being at Tyndale for nearly its entire history.

The fifteen essays offer wide-ranging and diverse studies from various theological disciplines. Part 1 contains five biblical studies essays. Dr. Brotzman himself addresses the "synoptic problem" of the three accounts of Hezekiah's reign (2 Kgs 18–20; Isa 36–39; 2 Chr 29–32), suggesting that the author of Kings was reliant upon Isaiah. W. Creighton Marlowe examines the meaning of *אֱמוּנָה* in the Psalter, concluding that in most cases "loyalty," "reliability," or "trustworthiness" are preferred translations over "truth." Walter L. Liefeld provides a reading of the Emmaus narrative (Luke 24:13–35) that helps readers "enter into the experience of the two travelers as they met the risen Christ" (p. 43). Martin Webber examines the role the Lord's Prayer played in developing Christian identity *vis-à-vis* Judaism through the middle of the third century. He concludes that as early Christians moved from reliance on oral to written authority the prayer was increasingly associated with baptism, became less Jewish, and established itself as *the* distinctly Christian prayer. H. H. Drake Williams III contends that much misunderstanding has followed from treating Jas 5:16b without regard to its literary, Jewish, and Christian contexts. In redressing this he concludes that James encourages prayer by emphasizing the type of prayer and the type of person praying (more than, say, the use of oil) that results in "extensive, life-giving, divine blessing upon God's people" (p. 86).

Part 2 consists of six theological studies essays. Philip A. Gottschalk argues that Martha Nussbaum's study of Hellenistic philosophers, especially Seneca, is incomplete without an examination of pre-medieval Christian sources. This lack of due diligence may be more the result of Nietzschean prejudices than warranted omission. Linda Gottschalk-Stuckrath provides a very helpful study of the history (national, institutional, and personal) leading up to the Arminius-Gomarus debate in Leiden in the early seventeenth century that resulted in the *Remonstrance* and the *Canons of Dort*. Thomas J. Marinello details the central importance of the Lord's Supper in Brethren communities as a mark of unity and, to some, purity during and after the Reformation, having perceived in some Protestant circles a "relegation of the 'remembrance feast' to a place of secondary importance" (p. 128). Ronald T. Michener attempts to counterbalance too hastily drawn judgments against postmodernism by evangelicals. After delineating four tenets of postmodernism, with both negative and positive propositions, Michener argues that more paradigms of postmodern thought can be seen as friends to evangelicalism than have sometimes been tolerated. David P. Parris considers the historical event of the resurrection in view of contemporary practices of historiography. He shows that Ernst Troeltsch's principles of criticism, analogy, and correlation "are not necessarily antagonistic towards the resurrection as a historical event," but that "[t]he more intractable issues that confront someone arguing for the historicity of the resurrection arise from the presuppositions that the historian brings to his study," often (usually?) in the form of "chronological superiority" (p. 171). Ralph W. Vunderink examines the OT background and NT material on the sacrifice of Christ and reviews the historical progression of the ransom, satisfaction, and love theories of the atonement. He concludes that victory over Satan, satisfaction to God, and divine



Edited by  
THOMAS J. MARINELLO  
H. H. DRAKE WILLIAMS, III





love for sinners are three motifs underlying Christ's atonement; no one should be isolated at the expense of the other two.

Part 3 comprises four pastoral and intercultural studies. Gerald C. Ericson lays out why encouragement, affirmation, and motivation from leaders are so important and gives guidance for staff-level application of the same. Stephen B. Kellough provides pastoral guidance for "Resting in a Fast-Food World" (his essay title), namely, by learning from Jesus' observation of the Sabbath. Mark A. Lamport demonstrates the need for, and offers steps toward, making churches places of Christian culture leading to individual formation. Finally, Cecil W. Stalnaker critiques "postmortem evangelism" in its various forms and exposes its many shortcomings.

While each of these essays deserves further attention and interaction, I am going to exercise my reviewer's prerogative and comment on only two of them, Parris's and Michener's.

Parris's essay ("Why Does the Resurrection Perplex Historians?") provides a refreshing approach to the historicity of the resurrection at a time when evidential arguments seem to have been exhausted (and perhaps overused and over-relied upon). He provides a thorough yet concise review of Western philosophical trends before exploring the methods historians use in their work. From there he demonstrates how these philosophical trends and methods combine to result in flawed approaches to the historicity of Jesus' resurrection. Conversely, he also shows how those same methods support the historicity of the resurrection when unburdened by illegitimate philosophical assumptions. For details, I simply recommend the essay.

Michener also broaches philosophical trends in his essay, "Kingdom of God and Postmodern Thought: Friends or Foes?" This too is a helpful counterbalance to popular trends in apologetics, providing a more sympathetic presentation of postmodernism. That said, I do wonder if Michener puts postmodernism's *worst* foot forward. Granted, postmodernism "is a mood or condition challenging many of our epistemological comfort zones that stem from modernity" (p. 143). However, modern epistemology is not postmodernism's only target. *All* metanarratives come under postmodernism's attack, and that includes the gospel of Jesus Christ's universal lordship. Moreover, Michener tells us that understanding is community based. Again, granted. However, do postmodernists speak of a community-based *understanding* or a community-based *truth*? If it is primarily the former, then I will again agree with Michener's assessment. But if it is the latter, then I cannot see postmodernism's compatibility with the gospel on this point. The church of Christ does not ground, create, or define the truth, but is grounded, created, and defined *by* the truth. While I appreciate Michener's attempt to balance our understanding of postmodernism, overcompensation can result in imbalance as well. I for one think that further consideration of the role that special revelation plays in Christian epistemology can help in our interaction with postmodern thought.

In sum, *My Brother's Keeper* gives us a window into Tyndale Theological Seminary. The eclectic collection of essays touches on the diverse types of skills pastors and missionaries need to possess: exegetical, theological, pastoral, lexicographic, text critical, historical analytic, biblical theological, philosophical, homiletic, intercessory (and the list goes on). If the caliber of these essays is in any way indicative of the quality of education provided at Tyndale, we all have reason to be encouraged.

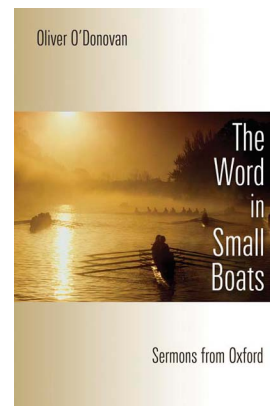
Nicholas G. Piotrowski  
Wheaton College  
Wheaton, Illinois, USA

---

Oliver O'Donovan. *The Word in Small Boats: Sermons from Oxford*. Edited by Andy Draycott. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010. xiii + 172 pp. £11.99/\$18.00.

---

When he lived in Oxford, Oliver O'Donovan was Regius Professor of Moral and Pastoral Theology and Canon of Christ Church Cathedral. He is now a professor of Christian ethics and practical theology at New College, University of Edinburgh. In the editor's foreword, Andy Draycott nicely captures the emphases of this collection of individual sermons preached mainly at Christ Church, Oxford. This collection "is in a sense a theological statement about, and celebration of, preaching and the preacher" (p. vii). The thirty-two sermons, including two that are an introduction and conclusion, intend to "mirror the scope of Oliver's theological writings" (p. ix). Though the sermons were preached from 1984 to 2006, they appear not chronologically but rather under the headings "The Mission of God's Word," "The Community of God's Word," "Tradition, Truth and the Public," and "Launched upon Life by God's Word." Each sermon has a short title, a briefly quoted text, a date, and on sixteen occasions some further information about the church calendar or some contemporary event that provides some relevant context to the sermon. The introduction and conclusion and the final sermon in each section end with a short prayer. The sermons are from two to six pages of typescript and reflect what Dr. O'Donovan spoke since he speaks from "a prepared full script" (p. viii).



O'Donovan has a capacious mind and has stocked it well. The sermons themselves are usually a cross between a homily and an oral essay, almost always starting with or referencing a biblical text called for by the lectionary. Many sermons begin with a reference to the original setting of the passage and then bridge to wide-ranging and nuanced insights about the contemporary world. His style is lucid but dense with rich content that would challenge the most attentive listener to absorb even a fraction of it in an oral presentation. Often the sermons notice a surprise in the text and exploit it rhetorically to make a point. Provocative one-liners are common. For instance, in an advent sermon he writes, "When Christmas loses contact with past history, it loses contact with the future" (p. 54). In response to the crisis surrounding the election of Gene Robinson as Bishop of New Hampshire, O'Donovan preached on 1 Kgs 13:3 and wrote, "The servant of God's word must be the servant of the word only, beholding to nothing and no one else" (p. 65).

Many sermons are pastorally rich and touch on such topics as civility (pp. 101–7), true spiritual maturity (pp. 160–61), marriage (pp. 150–55), and facing death (pp. 162–65). O'Donovan makes helpful but very subtle distinctions, such as those between "authority" and "authorization" (p. 42), "space" and "place" (p. 86), "reflective" and "deliberative" (p. 157), and "religious liberty" and "religious freedom" (p. 167). He does not hesitate to interpret texts allegorically: Job "is all of us when we are suffering," and "the comforters, on the other hand, are all of us when we are *not* suffering" (p. 163). He freely opts for opinions on authorship, for instance, of Matthew and Isaiah, that more conservative evangelicals will not embrace (pp. 10, 140), but he respects the canonical text and gives it a "privileged place at the heart of Christian liturgy" (p. 73).

What makes these sermons remarkable is not that they are necessarily closely tethered to the text. Instead they provide an opportunity for O'Donovan to offer noteworthy insights and provocative wisdom. For instance, in a sermon on the part of Ps 95:5 that says, "The sea is his and he made it,"

O'Donovan traces both negative and positive implications of this biblical assertion. Describing how its incomparable beauty delicately balances chaos and order, he writes, "The sea, as the Bible understands, is the closest thing on earth to primordial chaos. Of itself the element has no form, no borders, no stability; it affords no point of rest, no place for the sole of the foot. Yet it is *bounded* chaos, for God has drawn the coastlines round it, giving it its sinuous shape, and has pinned it in a press between the upward thrust of the ocean floor and the downward thrust of the weight of air. He has made, as it were, a frame fit for the most unframeable of elements, so creating that fragile equilibrium and containment that pierces us to the heart" (p. 131). He goes on to describe how in the sea God has provided both an escape from ourselves and a teacher through whose class we must pass to reach port.

This volume is rich devotional reading for those willing to be stretched by its insights. The sermon "Possessing Wisdom" (pp. 144–49), preached at the beginning of the university year, is a good reminder to all of us who toil in academic settings. Both the style and content of these sermons will perhaps make them more accessible for those who have read a good deal of theology than for those who have not. The book shows how O'Donovan connects the roles of teacher and preacher—not a bad thing to learn for those who read this journal. Few who aspire to imitate O'Donovan's preaching style will succeed because of the sheer breadth of knowledge his preaching presupposes. This failure may not be a complete tragedy since Charles Simeon's counsel is still wise: we are not to preach the best sermons we can preach but the best our listeners can receive.

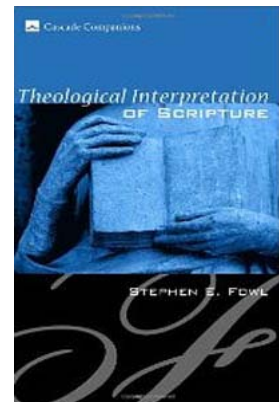
Greg R. Scharf  
Trinity Evangelical Divinity School  
Deerfield, Illinois, USA

---

Stephen Fowl. *Theological Interpretation of Scripture*. Cascade Companions. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2009. 92 pp. £8.99/\$13.00.

---

There is a "large and somewhat chaotic party" going on in the academy called the Theological Interpretation of Scripture movement. While much engaging and substantive conversation is taking place among the dinner guests, a recently arrived newcomer might only hear a cacophony of disparate disciplinary discussions and perhaps even the din of vitriolic rhetoric between competing approaches. In *Theological Interpretation of Scripture*, Stephen Fowl offers himself as a companion in order to rescue the bewildered reader in danger of spending the evening in a darkened corner, watching the theological theatrics from a comfortable distance. Having published a number of works in the field, Fowl is neither a stranger nor a neutral bystander in these debates. Accordingly, he recognizes that his presentation will shape the way readers encounter the crucial issues and that his companion represents one "interpretation" of theological interpretation.



Though the explosion of academic writing under the rubric of theological interpretation is fairly recent, believers have interpreted Scripture theologically throughout church history. Thus, one of Fowl's goals for the book is to examine the relationship "between this long-running and essential Christian practice and this more recent body of scholarly literature" (p. x). Fowl's guided tour of the movement

comes in four main parts, and his last chapter provides a brief annotated bibliography that situates his approach in the larger discussion.

Chapter 1 examines the nature of Scripture and the role it plays in God's drama of salvation. For Fowl, viewing Scripture in light of God's triune being "recalibrates the relationships between God, Scripture and Christians" (p. 6). Scripture is "chief among God's providentially ordered gifts directed to bringing about reconciliation and fellowship with God despite human sin." Thus, Scripture is "holy," because of "its divinely willed role in making believers holy" (p. 12). Scripture draws believers into relationship with God. Viewing Scripture as part of God's economy of salvation allows the church to trust in God's providential guidance in the formation of the canon "without diminishing [its] human, historical character" (p. 12).

Chapter 2 essentially puts a warning sign beside a number of issues that some have considered central to the movement. These areas of interest include historical criticism (pp. 15–24), biblical theology (pp. 24–31), OT studies (pp. 31–37), philosophical hermeneutics (pp. 37–40), theories of textual meaning (pp. 41–43), and issues of authorial intention (pp. 44–53). Fowl concedes that each of these concerns might have value on an "ad hoc" basis. However, for Fowl, a sustained concentration on these interpretive issues distracts the interpreter from the most important theological task. Because the goal of biblical interpretation is deepening communion with God, Fowl forcefully argues that these methodological matters "will not substantially advance the practice of theological interpretation" (pp. 14–15). For him, "there is a theological cost to be paid in letting hermeneutical concerns play a normative role in theological interpretation" (p. 51).

Chapters 3–4 represent Fowl's distinctive vision for theological interpretation. Foregrounding the example of pre-modern interpretation, Fowl argues that contemporary interpreters must "relearn the habits and practices that constituted a flourishing pattern of theological interpretation in the past" (p. 55). Fowl also calls for figural interpretations that "will use a variety of interpretive techniques to extend the literal sense of Scripture in ways that enhance Christians' abilities to live and worship faithfully in the contexts in which they find themselves" (p. 57). In addition to these interpretive techniques, Fowl argues that ecclesial practices must become primary pursuits (pp. 64–70). Acknowledging that there are certainly more, Fowl briefly highlights the practices of telling the truth, seeking reconciliation through repentance and forgiveness, and maintaining patience in the face of frustration. Rather than hermeneutical constructs, these habits are what will safeguard believers from bitter division and the temptation to interpret Scripture to justify sinful practices.

Fowl next suggests two prospects for the future of the movement. First, Fowl urges that there simply needs to be more "actual theological interpretation of Scripture" (p. 71). This task will require more "blurring of the lines" between theological and biblical disciplines. Churches will also need to play a more active role in shaping theological interpreters. Fowl's second main suggestion involves the format for theological interpretation. Noting the prominence of commentaries and scholarly articles, Fowl challenges contemporary interpreters to examine "how and in what ways sermons can become a mode for serious scholarly theological interpretation" (p. 73). This focus on the ecclesial context of the theological interpreter and his interpretive work rounds out Fowl's constructive proposal.

Many of the unique benefits of this slender volume are features of its function as a somewhat informal "companion." Anticipating typical objections to this type of task, Fowl makes a modest claim for the book and acknowledges his particular viewpoint. Thus, he sees his volume as a complement to rather than a replacement of a work like Daniel Treier's *Introducing Theological Interpretation of*

*Scripture*. Fowl's autobiographical sketch of his intellectual history is helpful in understanding the context and motivation behind his other major works in the field. There are also similar succinct historiographical snapshots of various approaches and movements throughout the book. For instance, his illuminating account of the rise and fall of the historical-critical method (pp. 15–21) represents the type of crisp analysis Fowl is able to provide in this format.

The subjects Fowl chooses to emphasize are also instructive. He begins by concentrating on Scripture itself. This starting point is especially appropriate because bibliology is the linchpin of much debate over theological interpretation. As he notes, “how and what Christians think *about* Scripture will influence the ways in which Christians might interpret Scripture theologically” (p. 1). His emphasis on the interpretive virtues and the “ends” of interpretation is also well taken. Indeed, theological interpreters neglect these formative issues to their own peril. As contemporary theological interpretation has sometimes been sequestered in the academy, Fowl's reminder can serve as a corrective to the pedantic bent of certain strands of the discussion.

Fowl states rightly that others in the movement will take issue at various points along the path that he charts for his readers. Even as he emphasizes ecclesial practices and the ends of interpretation, some will remain convinced that he neglects a number of essential hermeneutical foundations. Fowl's second chapter is by far the longest and most clearly adumbrates the differences between himself and the other guests at the party. To give one example, Fowl's understanding of the “literal sense” is hotly debated. Some might wonder why a single literal sense could not do the things Fowl argues it is incapable of doing (p. 56ff). Can a multifaceted understanding of the literal sense not accomplish some of the interpretive “aims” Fowl highlights? Fowl calls for a figural *extension* of the multiple literal meanings of biblical texts, while some of his interpretation appears to resemble an *application* of the stable meaning of the texts he examines (e.g., p. 63). His formulations here will not be as palatable to those who are interested in the ends of interpretation but who are still concerned with connecting meaning more closely with human authors.

A final observation is that Fowl's volume is a good example of the type of engagement he heavily critiques. At many points, Fowl downplays the importance of interpretive method and hermeneutical debate (e.g., pp. 36–37, 53). As noted above, he focuses on the “ends” of interpretation rather than the particular method used to discover meaning. Consequently, he rejects outright a focus on “general hermeneutics” (p. 39). There are many who will be much more reticent about dismissing the role of hermeneutics in the discussion. Though Fowl instructively points to the importance of the ecclesial context, one might wonder why hermeneutical discussion would necessarily be out of place in a church setting. Would not pastors and church members benefit from thinking critically about the “way they read” as they seek to become certain types of readers, informed by the theological and interpretive virtues? Why should pastors and disciplined church members not be welcome at the hermeneutical party? Perhaps the irony of Fowl's engaging work is that his volume makes this very academic discussion readily accessible to those uninitiated in the conversation. Fervent disagreement over interpretive method does not always lead to bitter divisiveness. In fact, Fowl's work is an example of the tone and level of discourse that will enable the dialogue to remain lively while preventing the “party” from turning into a brawl.

Ched Spellman  
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary  
Fort Worth, Texas, USA

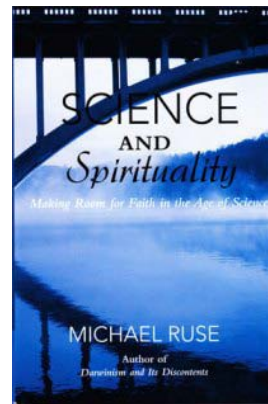
---

Michael Ruse. *Science and Spirituality: Making Room for Faith in the Age of Science*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010. 264 pp. £20.00/\$30.00.

---

Michael Ruse is to be commended for this refreshing, non-polemical contribution to the debate over religion and science. The sub-title of the book aptly reveals its central thesis: the natural sciences do not preclude religious, specifically Christian faith. While scientific inquiry stands out as our best form of acquiring knowledge about the world, it cannot answer some of the deepest questions we can raise about human life, nature, and whether or not God exists.

The introduction makes clear Ruse is neither in the vitriolic anti-theistic camp of Dawkins et al., nor is he a Christian apologist. But he also makes clear that the form of Christianity he defends in terms of intellectual integrity is not devoid of the traditional theistic claims about there being a Creator, an incarnation, and a resurrection. Ruse is not interested in a Christianity that carries no more commitments than Unitarianism.



Chapter 1, “The World as an Organism,” argues that worldviews, including scientifically grounded worldviews, involve one or more root metaphors. Such root metaphors may be indispensable though they also have limitations (e.g., if you think of the world as a plant, metaphorically, you are not thereby claiming that the world is, literally, a plant). Ruse characterizes the root metaphor of Darwinian evolution:

It is the metaphor of the world of organisms as designed. It may be that they were literally designed by God, but that is not the point in Darwinian biology. They are *as if* designed—truly not designed, but appearing so because of natural selection. Everything else is on top of—or, if you prefer, embedded within—this metaphor. (p. 24)

The first chapter fills out a teleological concept of nature, as found in Greek philosophy and construes Darwinians as conceiving of nature as if it is teleological.

Chapter 2 narrates a shift in root metaphors under the influence of Copernicus, Tycho, Kepler, Galileo, Descartes, Newton, and Boyle. These early modern European scientists supplanted the organic metaphor of the world with the metaphor of the world as machine.

Chapter 3, “Organisms and Machines,” examines the emergence of different mechanistic accounts of the world and the resistance to such accounts (and its root metaphor of the machine) by vitalism.

Chapter 4, “Thinking Machines,” is the most ambitious in its historical narrative, moving from the seventeenth century to contemporary cognitive science. All along the way, Ruse highlights the use of root metaphors of the world and how these can work to eclipse phenomena (the machine model is not friendly to belief in free will) and promote different forms of inquiry.

Chapter 5 begins,

The machine metaphor rules modern science. I do not claim that everyone is happy with this. Indeed, in the next chapter I will consider the thinking of those who want to think outside the metaphor. But the triumph of the metaphor is the taking-off point for the next part of the case I want to make. Indeed, it is this very triumph that does lead us forward. (p. 118)

And as Ruse moves forward, he begins to show the limits of scientific naturalism in answering the “big questions.” So Ruse contends that Dawkins inadequately addresses cosmological inquiry about the existence of our cosmos in terms of successive, contingent causes:

You need something to break the succession. Dawkins does not think this is possible. Aquinas was more optimistic, but he realized that—a possibility Dawkins does not consider—the way to break the succession is by pointing out that we are not looking for an end point to the chain, way back in the past, even if there is one. To speak of a First Cause is not to speak in a temporal fashion at all, even though it may just so happen that there was a point at which the chain did start. We have to be looking for a cause that makes the whole thing happen, then, now, and in the future (Hick 1961). If you like to think of time as horizontal, then we are looking for a vertical cause. Something that keeps the whole kit and caboodle in being and in action. And it is pretty clear—at least this is the traditional answer, and I see no reason to give it up—that this is going to require a being (let us call it that without prejudice) that is sufficient unto itself, needs no cause, because in some sense it is necessary. In a sense, it is outside time. You do not ask when  $2 + 2 = 4$  became true or when it will cease to be true. That is just not a sensible question. And the same has to be true of this being. And hence, obviously, this being is not going to be one of the chaps, a contingent fellow along with the rest of us. It cannot be a physical being, in the sense that we understand physical. That keeps us trapped in the chain. It has to be transcendent, whatever that might be. (p. 121)

Given Ruse’s other works in which he identifies himself as a non-theist, one wonders whether Ruse may be like Saul: “Is Saul also among the prophets?” (1 Sam 10:11 KJV). Also, Ruse adds, “I am not saying that any of this is true,” though he is claiming that the truth or falsehood of such cosmological reasoning goes beyond science (p. 121). And Ruse goes on to defend the intelligibility of asking why there is and continues to be a contingent cosmos. After considering a host of challenges from Paul Edwards to Adolf Grünbaum, Ruse writes, “I conclude, therefore, that the primordial question is not answered by science and is not obviously a meaningless question or directed toward a pseudo-problem” (p. 129).

As for ethics and morality, Ruse argues that science alone cannot ground ethics:

Science cannot justify claims about the basis for our moral beliefs and actions. (This is the part of moral theory known as metaethics.) Why should I be good? Why should I be fair? Why should I care about my kids rather than the kids of a stranger? Why should I care about the bloke I am about to shove on the rails? Philosophers and theologians and preachers have had lots to say on these issues. . . . What is relevant is that morality cannot be derived from the physical facts of the matter. More pertinently, it cannot be derived from machine-based science. (p. 133)

As for the emergence of consciousness of mind, Ruse argues convincingly that the current naturalistic, scientific account of consciousness “leaves the hard question untouched” (p. 140). Consciousness remains a challenge that naturalists and theists need to take seriously.

Ruse goes on to display the limits of answering questions about the meaning or purpose of human life and the nature of free agency within the root metaphor of the world as a machine.



Chapter 6 considers non-theistic accounts of the cosmos that seem to be at odds with natural science. Again, without endorsing such accounts (and their predominantly organic root metaphors), Ruse highlights weaknesses in what may be called scientism.

Chapter 7, “God,” goes to the heart of “making room for faith.” The coherence of theism is defended; there is a balanced, clearheaded philosophy of divine attributes, the problem of evil, miracles, and the compatibility of free will and omniscience.

Chapter 8, “Morality, Souls, Eternity, Mystery,” takes up the traditional claims of Christianity (not the diluted form of “Christianity” that denies an afterlife, miracles, and so on such as associated with the non-philosopher Bishop Spong in popular culture) and Ruse defends their compatibility with science. Ruse writes,

My argument in these last two chapters has been that, although the central claims of Christianity are still constrained by reason, and although there is still certainly the need (as with natural law theory) to make sure that one’s religion-based claims harmonize with modern science, these central core claims by their very nature go beyond the reach of science. I do not say that you must be a Christian, but I do say that in the light of modern science you can be a Christian. We have seen no sound arguments to the contrary. (p. 233)

What emerges in *Science and Spirituality* is an important endorsement of the vitality, integrity, and even the sacred nature of science (from a Christian point of view).

Apart from the fact that there will almost certainly always be the major areas into which science cannot move, remember that for Christians reason is one of God’s greatest gifts, the sign that we are indeed made in His image. Science therefore is a sacred task. It is also a difficult and challenging task, befitting creatures of our nature. Only slowly and with much effort will we discover the true nature of our home. As we do, our understanding of God and His nature and His works will obviously likewise change and mature. (p. 236)

Ruse concludes with the characteristic good humor, humility, and charity that characterize much of his work, as in his 2001 book, *Can a Darwinian Be a Christian?*

One doubts very much that today’s frenetic partisans, from science and from religion, are going to change their minds very much. But the challenge of seeing the proper relationship between science and religion is there, and, both politically and intellectually, it is an important challenge. The hope is that the ideas and conclusions of this book will inspire others to join with the author in working on the task before us. (p. 236)

This book is highly recommended to all those interested in the science-religion debate, both for its content and tone. It is clear, accessible, fair, engaging, and (compared to some books on science and religion) refreshingly non-bombastic, tolerant, and un-patronizing. Specialists and general readers will benefit from both Ruse’s historical narrative and his finely crafted critical and constructive arguments.

Lest this review seem overly enthusiastic, I reluctantly add a customary reservation, though the matter is quite minor. I suggest that Ruse’s historical narrative would have been more complete and stronger if he included the seventeenth-century Cambridge Platonists who had an important role in the relationship of science and religion at the end of the Renaissance and the birth of modern science.



This is, however, of minor significance, as Ralph Cudworth, Henry More, and other members of this important movement would have wholeheartedly endorsed Ruse's central lines of argument.

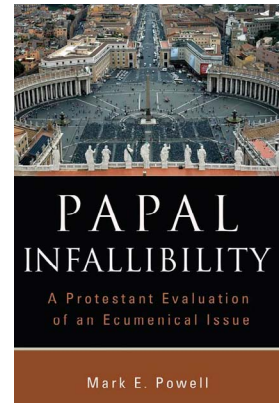
Charles Taliaferro  
St. Olaf College  
Northfield, Minnesota, USA

---

Mark E. Powell. *Papal Infallibility: A Protestant Evaluation of an Ecumenical Issue*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009. 238 pp. £26.99/\$40.00.

---

Mark Powell, associate professor of theology at the Harding University Graduate School of Religion in Memphis, TN, has provided an engaging study of the Roman Catholic doctrine of the Petrine office in his recent *Papal Infallibility: A Protestant Evaluation of an Ecumenical Issue*. What makes this book fascinating, beyond the fact that its topic is inherently interesting, is that Powell writes as a critically appreciative observer of the Roman Catholic Church. This book grows out of the author's dissertation and work with William Abraham's canonical theism project. The book comprises an introduction, a historical overview of the doctrine of papal infallibility, an examination of four Roman Catholic theologians on the subject, and a concluding chapter.



Powell's interest in papal infallibility stems from the similarities he sees between this doctrine and the evangelical doctrine of biblical inerrancy. Neither doctrine succeeds, the author suggests, because they arose in an enlightenment context in which absolute epistemological certainty was sought in places it just could not be found (pp. 1–19). Indeed, the search for certitude itself may be misplaced.

Powell provides a helpful overview of the history of the doctrine of papal infallibility which received its definitional formulation at Vatican I (1869–70) in the document *Pastor Aeternus* (pp. 20–48). The author helpfully shows the influence of Pope Pius IX on the council and also the historical setting in which the church was responding to the age of revolution (i.e., especially the French Revolution of 1789) and the upheaval of much of European society and culture. It was an era of uncertainty. Related to the formulation of the definition of papal infallibility was the articulation of two other infallible doctrines: the immaculate conception and bodily assumption of the Virgin Mary (pp. 42–48).

As Powell notes, the doctrine of papal infallibility is not as clear-cut and straightforward as one might be led to expect. What is the extent of the infallibility? Is everything said by a pope infallible? Or is the doctrine more nuanced than that? While Vatican I (*Pastor Aeternus*) set the definition of the doctrine of papal infallibility, it also received further elaboration (one could say constraint) from the Second Vatican Council (begun on October 11, 1962) in the document *Lumen Gentium*. In *Pastor Aeternus*, the author notes nine delimitations on papal infallibility (pp. 35–38):

1. The doctrine is not a new invention of the church.
2. The pope speaks infallibly when he speaks *ex cathedra* (“from the chair”).
3. Papal infallibility is connected to the office and not the person of the pope.
4. Papal infallibility relates to “doctrine concerning faith and morals.”

5. These are doctrines to be held by the whole church.
6. The grace that the pope exercises comes through the divine assistance promised to the Apostle Peter.
7. This infallibility falls within an infallibility promised to the church (often understood in terms of *indefectibility*).
8. Papal pronouncements are infallible apart from church councils.
9. Doctrines defined *ex cathedra* are irreformable.

These delimitations were given further explication at Vatican II as the author notes (pp. 38–42).

Powell then provides four chapters where he describes and evaluates the positions of four representative Roman Catholic theologians: Henry Edward Cardinal Manning (pp. 49–83), John Henry Cardinal Newman (pp. 84–122), Avery Cardinal Dulles (pp. 123–162) and finally Hans Küng (pp. 163–201). Manning reflects the maximal view of papal infallibility, Newman and Dulles present two forms of moderate infallibility and Küng represents the minimalist (actually, non-existent) papal infallibility position. All four theologians held, according to the author, to some form of epistemological foundationalism that played into their embrace or rejection of the doctrine.

Powell concludes with an assessment of the doctrine of papal infallibility. Not surprisingly, since he is a Protestant in the free church tradition, he rejects the doctrine. However, what makes this study interesting is that the author challenges the doctrine of papal infallibility not simply because it lacks biblical warrant, but because it stems from a poor epistemology: foundationalism. The author suggests that the office of pope should not seek to provide epistemological certainty but soteriological direction (pp. 202–13). As noted earlier Powell compares papal infallibility to biblical inerrancy, and he finds both wanting. The problem with this is that the author seems to assume that a concern with certainty arose with the Enlightenment. This is a typical viewpoint that one finds in postmodern assessments of theology. However, the concern with religious certainty predates the Enlightenment. At the very least we find a concern for certainty (under the name *assurance*) in the Reformation. Robert Cardinal Bellarmine, a brilliant counter-Reformation theologian once said that the most pernicious doctrine of the Protestant Reformation was personal assurance of salvation. One of the standard confessions of the Reformation, the Westminster Confession of Faith, devotes a whole chapter to the topic and refers to “certainty” (WCF 18.1–4). Of course, councils and assemblies can and do err. What does Scripture say about certainty? Is it arrogant to suggest that one can certainly know one is saved (just to consider one area where certainty plays a role)? This reviewer thinks there are far too many Scripture passages that provide a foundation for the idea that a Christian can be assured of his or her salvation (for instance, 1 John 2:3; 3:14; 5:13; Rom 5:2, 5, etc.). One cannot so easily separate soteriology from epistemology. Besides, Paul tells us to take every thought captive to Christ (2 Cor 10:5).

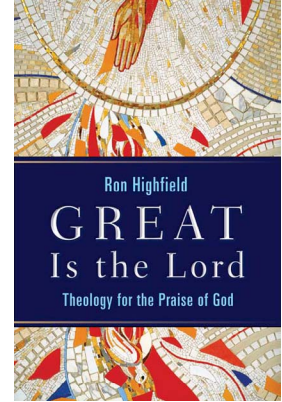
Papal infallibility is problematic, but that is because it lacks a proper biblical foundation. However, while this reviewer disagrees with the author about biblical inerrancy, the book is a valuable study of a doctrine perhaps otherwise unknown in its intricacies to evangelicals. The author is to be commended for providing us with a fair-minded treatment of papal infallibility.

Jeffrey C. Waddington  
Westminster Theological Seminary  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA

Ron Highfield. *Great Is the Lord: Theology for the Praise of God*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008. 467 pp. \$30.00

---

Ron Highfield's volume *Great Is the Lord: Theology for the Praise of God* is a systematic theology work that focuses on the doctrine of God. It is divided into three major sections: knowing God, the divine attributes, and ethics. Highfield is a professor at Pepperdine University and was a founder of the Restoration Theological Research Fellowship. Like the Stone-Campbell movement from which he hails, he reflects ecumenical values by developing an eclectic doctrine of God. Traditions he interacts with include Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, Reformed, Classical Liberals, and Early Church Fathers, but it is Reformed thought and Karl Barth that predominate. This volume will most likely appeal to seminary- and graduate- level students in systematic theology. His approach will appeal to conservative Protestants and those interested in contemporary Karl Barth-influenced theology.



Highfield states his goal for this work in both positive and negative terms. Positively, he seeks to “clarify the faith of the church community” (p. 57). Negatively, he is not interested in an apologetic for the doctrine of God that is focused on convincing outsiders. His ecclesiastical focus is laudable, and his statements about the state of theological studies in the academy are bold and courageous (p. 68). He is aware of the dangers inherent in Greek natural philosophy and philosophical theology (p. 272). The shortest section of the book is entitled “ethics” and provides foundational connections between theology proper and the ethics of “all human action” (p. 404). Here he expands on three basic ethical commands that derive from theology proper: seek God, imitate God, and praise God (p. 401).

The unique contribution of this systematic theology volume is its interest in doxology and the relationship between doctrine and the affections. Highfield laments the “cold” style that infects many books about God—a style, he claims that is not appropriate for the subject (p. xvi). Not only does Highfield frame the whole book in terms of “praise,” but he actually examines the relationship between the doctrine of God and the emotions in several places (pp. 10, 18, 46, 52). This interest in emotive doxology is consistently located in reference to God as the Trinity.

With regard to the problem of God's sovereignty and human freedom, Highfield takes sides against open theism and process theology. He finds that middle knowledge offers valuable insights but “sympathizes” with the Augustine-Calvin-Barth tradition (p. 331). According to Highfield, the Arminian tradition is “unsuccessful” at reconciling their model with the biblical data (p. 330). It would have been helpful to have some exposition of biblical passages that possibly support middle knowledge. He adheres to a type of compatibilism but is careful to avoid certain debates (p. 355). Overall, the discussion is charitable and will provide a good introduction to the intersection of Christian theism and soteriology. At one point I wrote in the margins, “This preaches!”

In spite of Highfield's stated goal to bring “clarity” to the doctrine of God, there is one gray area in a vital matter. If one privileges the *preparatory statements* that frame the whole book, it is denied that Scripture can provide “proof” for any doctrine, only “plausibility” or “warrant” (pp. xvii, 157). He explains that he is grounding the truth of his doctrine in the “long term and widely held teaching of the church” (p. xvii). Perhaps one could say that this concept of “plausibility” provides doctrine with an epistemological *web* rather than a *foundation* in Scripture alone. But if one privileges repetition

or *clarifying statements* provided later on, then Highfield is clear that Scripture is the “norm of all other norms” (pp. 28, 59, 62, 350). The relationship of doctrine to Scripture remains difficult because of the difficulty of “proof-texting” in systematic theology. While he denies he is proof-texting (he is plausibility-texting?), he supports the legitimacy of it as found in the work of others (p. 157). It simply isn’t clear how certainty about the truth of Scripture plays a role in his epistemology and theology of scriptural revelation.

Highfield’s hermeneutical convictions are conservative, and he maintains at least the “plain meaning” of interpretation (p. 28). This hermeneutic of looking “on the surface” may explain his reluctance to speak about scriptural “proof” for doctrine (p. 157). He holds to the infallibility and inerrancy of Scripture (p. 26). He clearly states that teachers in the church should “expect to have their theology judged by Scripture” (p. 26). And he holds to a Protestant perspective on the church’s role in “recognizing” what books belonged in the canon (p. 25). In addition to the erudition evident throughout, the text remains free from excessive footnotes. The back matter includes a bibliography, scripture index, and name and subject index.

David H. Wenkel  
God’s People Church  
Deerfield, Illinois, USA

## — ETHICS AND PASTORALIA —

Chris Castaldo. *Holy Ground: Walking with Jesus as a Former Catholic*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009. 236 pp. \$12.99.

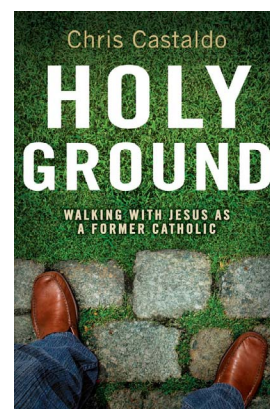
Some folks write to tell their story. Other folks write as an outlet for their research. Chris Castaldo has a story to tell, *and* he’s done his homework.

*Holy Ground* is written for evangelicals by a former Catholic who writes not as a new convert who’s eager to share his story with the world, but as a seasoned pastor who knows his Bible, holds firmly to evangelical theology, and ministers to real people—including real Catholics.

The terrain that stretches between Catholics and evangelicals is fraught with every kind of landmine, but *Holy Ground’s* approach is refreshingly respectful and gracious toward Catholics, without sacrificing conviction, truth, or humor. With so many books written on the subject over the last two decades, does *Holy Ground* have anything new to say? Is it worth skimming? Browsing a chapter or two? Reading from cover to cover? Yes. Yes. Yes. And yes.

*Holy Ground* is a ground-breaking book for evangelicals. Here’s why: Books about Catholics and evangelicals typically address the theological differences, historical developments, and/or the authors’ pilgrimage. This book does all that, *and* it devotes not an appendix or a throwaway chapter but nearly a third of the book—sixty pages—to “Relating to Catholics.”

This section alone is worth the price of the book. But don’t skip the first 120 pages, “Perspectives on Roman Catholicism,” just to get to the practical stuff. Writing in a conversational style, Castaldo weaves



personal stories, interviews with former Catholics, and history together with theology to give substance to the top five reasons people are leaving the Catholic church for the evangelical church. Castaldo calls the #1 reason “Motivated by Grace Rather Than Guilt.”

Not only is this section fascinating, but by the end of it you’ll begin to see what makes a Catholic a Catholic and what makes an evangelical an evangelical—really. The stories do more than build up the author’s credibility about all things Catholic. They demonstrate his respect for the priests, bishops, and institution he left, and they’ll lead you to worship Jesus Christ as you revel in the great gospel doctrines—expressed in some very old ways and in some fresh ways, too.

In the section “Relating to Catholics,” the chapter “How Catholics View Evangelicals” is an eye-opener, especially the piece on “What Evangelicals Can Learn from Catholics.” And, no, you won’t be thinking “This guy’s a closet Catholic” when you read it.

“Relating to Catholics” is at its very best in two practical ways: (1) when it helps us see that there are different kinds of Catholics—traditional, evangelical, and cultural—and how to relate to each; and (2) when it encourages us to communicate the gospel with grace and truth.

*Holy Ground* gets very practical when it comes to sharing the gospel with Catholics by using the imagery of a stoplight: red light (habits that must stop), yellow light (areas of caution) and green light (good regular practices). It reminds, encourages, and warns us about the emotional, relational, and practical opportunities and pitfalls of sharing the gospel with Catholics.

If your interest is in examining all the ins and outs of Catholic and evangelical theological positions, you’ll be disappointed. Castaldo provides an excellent introduction, but for a more comprehensive and nuanced discussion, I recommend *Roman Catholics and Evangelicals: Agreements and Differences* by Norm Geisler and Ralph MacKenzie. *Holy Ground* dedicates three whole pages to the sacraments and only one page to purgatory.

Or if you’re looking for a great story, with some breadcrumbs left along the way—perhaps to give to a Catholic friend—this book is probably not for you either. *Holy Ground* is written primarily for an evangelical audience.

Yes, a Catholic could read *Holy Ground*, and benefit from it—even as they disagree with the author’s conclusions—but if you’re looking for a book to put in Catholic hands, *Nothing in My Hand I Bring* by Ray Galea is an excellent choice. Similar to Lee Strobel’s *The Case for Christ*, Galea chronicles his pre-Christian conversations with a Catholic priest and an evangelical pastor.

And, finally, if you’re looking for something that will minister to you and encourage you to live more graciously and truthfully with your Catholic mom or dad, brother or sister, boss or employee, childhood friend or neighbor—then I commend to you this very good and godly book.

Tim Augustyn  
The Orchard Evangelical Free Church  
Arlington Heights, Illinois, USA



---

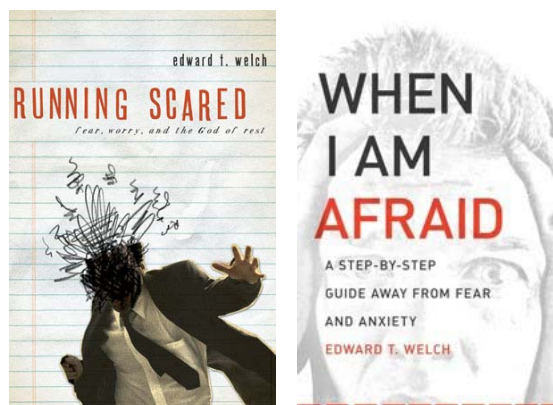
Edward T. Welch. *Running Scared: Fear, Worry and the God of Rest*. Greensboro: New Growth, 2008. 317 pp. \$15.99.

---

Edward T. Welch. *When I Am Afraid: A Step-By-Step Guide Away from Fear and Anxiety*. Greensboro: New Growth, 2010. 87 pp. \$12.99.

---

When I finished reading Ed Welch's previous book, *When People Are Big and God Is Small*, I immediately started reading it a second time. So I approached Welch's new book, *Running Scared*, with great anticipation. I was not disappointed. The focus of *When People Are Big* is the fear of man. *Running Scared* looks at fear and worry in general. Welch is a faculty member and counsellor with the Christian Counselling and Education Foundation (CCEF). *Running Scared* combines a model of how to apply theology to life with a light and engaging writing style.



We all have fears, from general anxieties to life-dominating phobias. Some fear is healthy (making one drive safely or treat strange dogs with caution), but we do not want to be overcome by fear. Free societies may resolve the fear of oppression but increase the fear of personal failure.

*Running Scared* does not tightly define when fear becomes sin, though Welch does warn us to 'worry about worry' because worry is inward-focused, self-reliant, and can be life-dominating. Instead, *Running Scared* is a pastoral response, an invitation to turn from fear to trust in God.

Welch begins by encouraging us to listen to our fear. Fear says, "I am vulnerable." In other words, fear wants to be in control. But the reality is that we are dependent, so fear is an opportunity to trust God. Fear says, "I need (and I might not get)." If we want comfort, we will fear pain. If we want approval, we will fear criticism. If we want money, we will fear need. "Worry reveals our allegiances. Fear and worry are not mere emotions; they are expressions of what we hold dear" (p. 161).

The Bible's most frequent command is "Do not be afraid." Welch takes the provision of manna as a paradigm of God's deliverance. But God provides on a day-by-day basis so we learn to trust him. Sometimes God delivers at the eleventh hour, encouraging us to trust him. Sometimes he allows the things we fear to happen, but then works a bigger deliverance through it. He uses adversity to replace the affections that underlie our fears with truer and better affections for God. The bridge could collapse. The spouse could be unfaithful. But God will give grace so we can accomplish his kingdom-purposes.

After providing a framework for understanding our fears, Welch explores three common specific worries: worries about money, the fear of man, and the fear of death.

The section on the fear of man reprises some of the concepts in *When People Are Big*. "Whatever you think you need will control you. If you need something from other people—love, acceptance, approval—they hold the key to something very valuable to you. You will live in fear that they might not deliver" (pp. 173–74). The problem is we move from desire to demand and then re-label "demand" as "need." "Beneath our use of the word *need* are the things we treasure, even worship" (p. 184). When I am concerned for God's reputation, other people's attitudes will matter to me, but not control me. "Jesus

shows us that to be truly human means that our desire to love others out-distances our desire to be loved ourselves” (p. 179).

*Running Scared* is more than a theory or approach. It not only tells you what you ought to do; the very act of reading will help counter your worry as the truth is presented in a variety of engaging ways. It is somewhat repetitive if read straight through (especially the final nine chapters), but then it is designed as thirty meditations to be read over a month. Each chapter ends with “a personal response” which points to application, but does so through Welch’s own struggles and questions.

*When I Am Afraid* is an accompanying workbook on fear with questions for personal application. It tracks the material in *Running Scared*, but there is enough prose summarising what is said in *Running Scared* for *When I Am Afraid* to stand alone. If you are a pastor wanting to help a non-reader struggling with fear, then I suggest you use *When I Am Afraid* with them while you read *Running Scared*. The questions in *When I Am Afraid* helpfully reveal our fears and how the gospel speaks specifically to those fears. They are, however, quite personal, so I suspect they would only work in a group setting in which the group is already intimate with one another.

In summary, these are two great resources that would benefit anyone as well as offer hope to those struggling with life-dominating fears.

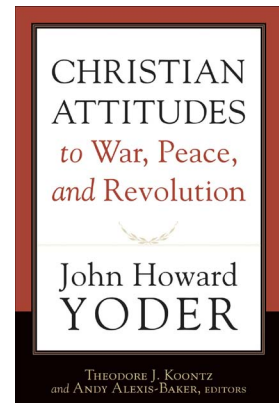
Tim Chester  
Northern Training Institute  
Sheffield, England, UK

---

John Howard Yoder. *Christian Attitudes to War, Peace, and Revolution*. Edited by Theodore J. Koontz and Andy Alexis-Baker. Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2009. 472 pp. \$34.99.

---

Although published posthumously, this volume contains material not altogether unknown to its prospective readership. *Christian Attitudes to War, Peace, and Revolution* is the latest version of a lecture series which Yoder taught to generations of students, from 1966 until just before his death in 1997. The series is based on a course by Guy Hershberger, which Yoder attended himself when he was a student at Goshen College (Indiana, USA). Inheriting the course from Hershberger, he chose to use Roland Bainton’s *Christian Attitudes Toward War and Peace* (1960) as his key textbook, and organised the lectures around it. In later years, when Bainton’s book became increasingly dated, Yoder began to edit his lecture material with a view to publishing it as a self-standing book. In his lifetime, this project did not advance further than several revisions of the lecture transcripts which long had been available to his students. It is only with the present volume that Yoder’s wish is realised: the editors streamlined and substantially shortened the text of the 1983 edition, thus making it more suitable for a wider readership. The result is still generous in size, retaining much of the original material, including its colloquial style. Users of the book will have to accept its genre for what it is—holding the middle between transcript and textbook. What they will get in return is a sense of what it must have been like to sit at the feet of the master and how entertaining it must have been.



Yoder's principal aim in these lectures is to 'provide the historical background students would need before they could proceed to do original thinking on issues of war and peace' (p. 15). Accordingly, the largest part of the lecture series (now presented as chapters) consists of a survey of how Christians (and Jews) throughout the centuries have responded in thought and practice to war—'just war' and 'pacifism' being the two major responses. The structure of the survey is roughly chronological: having offered in chapter 2 a typology of four basic attitudes to war ('blank check', 'holy war', 'just war', and 'pacifism'), Yoder discusses just war reasoning as it developed since the conversion of Roman Emperor Constantine (chs. 3–8); proceeds to chart the several types of pacifism that have emerged since the Middle Ages (chs. 9–17); then describes how in the 1940s Reinhold Niebuhr reframed the debate on war and peace (chs. 18–21); and concludes with an overview of relevant developments in the second half of the twentieth century (chs. 22–26). Yoder abandons his historical approach only in chapters 20–21, where he offers a reading of the NT that challenges Niebuhr's typology of pacifism—a reading that will be familiar to students of *The Politics of Jesus* (1972).

A key theme in chapters 2–8 is the 'Constantinianism shift': the point at which the Church ceased to be a persecuted minority in the Roman Empire and began its long career as an established institution, advising emperors and princes on political matters, including war. According to Yoder, this story of emancipation is really a tale of corruption and decline—of the Church adopting secular standards of political prudence, abandoning its faith in the power of the Crucified. This critique of Christendom is crucial to Yoder's pacifist counter-proposal. In fact, it's this critique that has become a commonplace in contemporary theological pacifism. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that within the book these early chapters stand out in terms of significance. At the same time, however, these chapters are slightly disappointing. The problem is not so much Yoder's evaluation of Christendom as such (that is another matter) as the way in which it is presented. Consider the following: 'Augustine's thought is a consensus kind of moral thought. . . . It just asks, does that make sense to all of us? Is that part of our cultural agreement?' (p. 64). Sweeping claims like these may be fine as long as they are voiced in a classroom, serving to help students navigate through the complex history of Christian thought—or (in this case) appreciate the change in attitudes when moving from the early Church to the world of Augustine. When committed to the pages of a book, however, these phrases simply beg for more evidence, precision, and nuance. It is here, then, that style does pose a problem. Indeed, the force of Yoder's characterisations comes close to relying on the very thing he set out to criticise—the perception of common sense.

More successful, perhaps, is the part in which Yoder describes the various types of pacifist practice and thought that have emerged over the centuries (chs. 9–17). The chapters on the 'First' Reformation in Bohemia (ch. 11), Anabaptism (ch. 12) and the Quaker 'Holy Experiment' in Pennsylvania (ch. 15)—to name a few examples—do more than 'just' provide historical background; they offer interesting and sometimes surprising assessments of the times and movements that are discussed. It is throughout the book, in fact, that Yoder challenges his readers (formerly his students) to reconsider their preconceptions and prejudices. His account of the role played by the Reformation in the 'legitimisation' of warfare (ch. 8) is a good example; or the relation he establishes between Reinhold Niebuhr's rejection of pacifism and the pacifist revival among twentieth-century Mennonites (chs. 18–19). It is observations such as these that make reading *Christian Attitudes* truly rewarding.

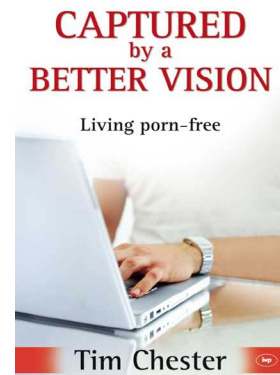
Guido de Graaff  
Harris Manchester College  
Oxford, England, UK



Tim Chester. *Captured by a Better Vision: Living Porn-Free* [American title: *Closing the Window: Steps to Living Porn Free*]. Nottingham, UK: IVP, 2010. 176 pp. £8.99/\$15.00.

---

It is a brave man who talks openly about sexual sin. It is an even braver one who writes a book about it! But Tim Chester now has an established track record of writing well-crafted, profoundly theological, but deeply pastoral books. This book specifically tackles the blight of pornography head on and follows naturally from his 2008 publication, *You Can Change*. That *Captured by a Better Vision* is needed and timely should not be in doubt. The statistics for pornography usage and the sex industry's profit margins are truly terrifying. Porn's repercussions (for users, for those involved in the sex industry, and for society as a whole) bear thinking about. Its pervasive presence among Christians is the western church's vast, unspoken secret. One survey Chester quotes suggests that out of every 100 adults, twenty-five men and ten women are struggling with regular porn use (p. 11). Yet despite its prevalence, it is a problem of such shame that it is confined to the shadows and never properly addressed.



So how to tackle it? That is the painful question for pastors who minister to such people, not to mention those who themselves struggle. The age-old resort of the well-directed rebuke, or naming and shaming, has never worked. Many caught up in pornography are wracked by crippling shame as it is, but that is barely enough to halt their indulgence. Furthermore, such an approach falls headlong into the trap of legalism, which can never bring transformation (only pride and defeat or both) and which is fundamentally incompatible with the authentically Christian gospel of grace.

This is something that Chester understands deeply—which is precisely why he is able to navigate so successfully through this pastoral minefield. His tactic seems to be as much about displacement as it is pastoral diagnosis. As his quotation from an anonymous article makes clear, porn addicts ‘need something more than mere information: they need to be wooed by the true and pure lover that their heart secretly seeks’ (p. 76).

Chester is determined to offer precisely that. This does not, of course, mean he is afraid to provide important information or to speak very frankly (as he warns in the introduction)—a topic like this demands straight talking. He thus rightly begins, in the first of his five sections, by piercing porn's façade of consensual pleasure and ‘harmless fun.’ He ruthlessly exposes what the sex industry actually does to people at every level—his list of twelve reasons to give up porn is brutal in its trenchant but indisputable analysis. It thus easily achieves his aim to make pornography abhorrent.

Fortunately, however, this is not the book's exclusive agenda. As the title suggests, Chester has a far more encouraging and inspiring concern. He wants to move us from abhorring porn to adoring God, with its resulting confidence of forgiveness and determination to battle sin. He has sought to understand, at a deep level, what insecurities and idols cause people to get hooked in the first place—and then proceeds to expose why the gospel is both infinitely better and far more compelling. He powerfully articulates the new confidence brought about by a believer's justification in Christ, and he nicely applies the apparent paradoxes of this divinely granted status: we are freed by Christ to be free; we are cleansed by Christ to be clean; we are made holy so that we can be holy (pp. 90–94). As he says, ‘battling porn in our lives is not an exercise in denying pleasure. It's about fighting pleasure with greater pleasure’ (p. 76).

‘So with every false promise of porn there is a true promise of God. Whatever porn offers, God offers more’ (p. 51).

Along the way, some inevitable pastoral conundrums need handling with care. What of the struggles of those who are not married? Chester tackles this, though probably not as fully as some might hope for (that is the remit of other books). Still, he makes clear how great the gospel compensations are for all, married or not. Or what of those who are in Christian leadership and struggle in this area? He is especially sensitive here. He does not pull his punches; he explains how detrimental porn can be for ministry. Yet he reminds us that ‘using porn doesn’t disqualify you from serving God. For one thing, you were never qualified in the first place!’ (p. 87). This is something everyone in ministry needs to hear, porn or no porn. His advice is to keep battling but earnestly look to Christ for our righteousness.

Chester’s writing is always lucid and biblical, but in this book his compassion is even more evident (as it needs to be). He makes frequent use of personal testimonies and experiences, from other books or from the anonymous research he carried out. These ground the book in reality.

Above all, though, the book is *encouraging!* I suppose I shouldn’t have been surprised by that, but I was. The presenting issue of the book is a crucial and painful one, and his critique and analysis are relentless. Nevertheless, I found myself swept up by a refreshed enthusiasm and excitement for the gospel as he spoke with relish and delight about the grace of God, the glories of Christ, and the wonders of sex in its right context. To my mind that clearly demonstrates he has fulfilled his aim of capturing us with a better vision. I certainly was.

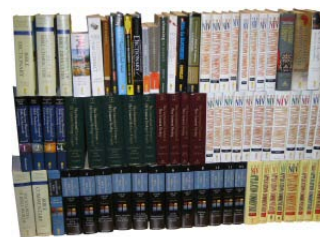
Mark Meynell  
All Souls Church, Langham Place  
London, England, UK

---

[Zondervan Bible Reference Bundle](http://www.logos.com/products/details/5656). 87 vols. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010. \$2,024.65. <http://www.logos.com/products/details/5656>

---

Users of Logos Bible Software rejoiced in September 2009 when Zondervan [announced](#) that they would partner with Logos. Logos users have been repeatedly requesting for nearly twenty years that Logos add Zondervan products, but for various reasons that has not happened until recently. Zondervan had been making their books available as software, but only in their own Pradis platform for the most part. Now they are producing new digital products in multiple formats and across many devices, and this includes licensing Logos’ technology to make their books available on the Logos platform. Zondervan’s first Logos collection is the Zondervan Bible Reference Bundle, which became available for download in April 2010. This 87-volume collection contains the following sets:



1. Frank E. Gaebelin, ed., *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* (12 vols.; 1972–92) and Kenneth L. Barker and John R. Kohlenberger III, eds., *Abridged Edition* of the EBC (2 vols.; 1994). This is the original EBC-set, not the Revised EBC that is partially published now. Over seventy scholars contribute to the series, and volume 1 is a valuable collection of introductory essays. The evangelical series is not as technical as NICNT, BECNT, WBC, NIGTC, or ICC, but it is not as light as NIVAC (below). A few

volumes (e.g., D. A. Carson, “Matthew”) are significantly longer and more advanced and rigorous than others.

2. NIV Application Commentary: [OT Prophets](#) (8 vols.; 1999–2006) and [NT](#) (20 vols.; 1994–2004). The better volumes include John N. Oswalt, *Isaiah*; Matthew J. Wilkins, *Matthew*; Darrell L. Bock, *Luke*; Ajith Fernando, *Acts*; Douglas J. Moo, *Romans* and *2 Peter and Jude*; Craig L. Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*; Frank Thielman, *Philippians*; and George H. Guthrie, *Hebrews*. NIVAC is relatively thin on exegesis and thick on bridging the text to relevant application, and it can be extraordinarily useful for preachers toward the end of sermon preparation.

3. Colin Brown, ed., [New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology](#) (4 vols.; 1975–78). This translates, revises, and expands *Theologisches Begriffslexikon zum Neuen Testament* (ed. Lothar Coenen, Erich Beyreuther, and Hans Bietenhard; 1967–71). Zondervan originally published the English translation in three volumes, and it reissued *NIDNTT* in 1986 with a fourth volume that comprehensively indexes the dictionary. Articles discuss the usage of particular words under three categories: classical and secular Greek, the OT, and the NT. The dictionary focuses on theology and discusses other information like history if it is theologically relevant. The main headings list English words in alphabetical order (e.g., “Life”), and subheadings list Greek words in alphabetical order (e.g., βίος and ζωή).

4. Willem A. VanGemeren, ed., [New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis](#) (5 vols.; 1997). This begins with a 215-page textbook-like guide to OT theology and exegesis, addressing five areas with reference to hermeneutics and theology: text, history, literature, semantics, and canon. Over three thousand lexical and topical articles by over 200 scholars follow. The lexical section is the longest (1:219–4:343), and *NIDOTTE* concludes with a topical dictionary (4:345–1322) and a corresponding index of semantic fields (5:1–216) and other detailed indexes. The lexical section alphabetically lists Hebrew words, and the topical dictionary alphabetically lists English words (e.g., the theology of each book of the OT).

5. Clinton E. Arnold, ed., [Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: New Testament](#) (4 vols.; 2002). This is the counterpart to the OT-set below; both sets are geared more for laypeople than Bible scholars and include hundreds of photographs, drawings, maps, diagrams, and charts. The commentaries are not typical but instead focus on the Bible’s cultural context. The NT-set draws on studies of Judaism, Roman culture, Hellenism, archeology, and other features of the NT-world. Contributors include George H. Guthrie (Hebrews), Douglas J. Moo (Romans, James, 2 Peter, Jude), Mark L. Strauss (Luke), and Robert Yarbrough (1–3 John).

6. John H. Walton, ed., [Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Old Testament](#) (5 vols.; 2009). Thirty international scholars contribute commentaries on the entire OT (e.g., Daniel Block on Judges; John Monson on 1 Kings) in light of archeology, history, geography, and manners and customs.

7. [Zondervan Encyclopedia of the Bible](#) (2nd ed.; 5 vols.; 2009). Merrill C. Tenney edited the first edition in 1975: the *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*. “The present revised edition,” edited by Moisés Silva, “seeks to preserve the original contributions as much as possible while at the same time updating the material to serve a new generation” (p. v). It includes about 250 international contributors; over 7,500 articles on the Bible’s history, literature, and theology; and nearly 2,000 colorful maps, illustrations, charts, and graphs. The target audience for this encyclopedia is wide: families, pastors, teachers, and students, both libraries and individual study.

The Zondervan bundle also includes twenty-two individual titles ranging from valuable to not-so-valuable. The former include Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* (3rd ed.; 2003) and *How to Read the Bible Book by Book* (2002); and J. Daniel Hays, J. Scott Duvall, and C. Marvin Pate, eds., *Dictionary of Biblical Prophecy and End Times* (2007).

Readers of this journal probably agree that most of the books in this reference bundle are valuable. But are they worth \$2,000? That's where the rub comes because consumers may want to purchase only some of the volumes in this bundle rather than all of them. Consequently, Zondervan is also selling parts of this reference bundle as [individual titles](#) (e.g., the 20-volume NIVAC NT sells for \$382.99, *NIDOTTE* for \$159.99, and *ZEB* for \$223.99). Owning these resources for the Logos platform is far superior to owning print copies, and the prices are reasonable. I have made a case elsewhere for using electronic resources—especially reference resources like commentaries and dictionaries—on the Logos platform: “[Review of Scholar’s Library: Gold, Version 3, by Logos Bible Software](#),” *DBSJ* 11 (2006): 151–60; and “[PNTC, BECNT, and NIGTC: Three New Testament Commentary Series Available Electronically in Libronix](#),” *DBSJ* 12 (2007): 81–99. In short, using electronic resources on the Logos platform is more efficient than using print resources because of the former’s searchability and versatility. Logos offers multiple searching capabilities that far exceed print books in both speed and thoroughness, and books in Logos are superior to print books with reference to accessibility, readability, marking, copying and pasting, saving, and linking. Plus Logos resources are now available on the [iPhone](#) (and other smart phones) and [iPad](#). The new partnership between Zondervan and Logos Bible Software serves Bible students well.

Andrew David Naselli  
Grace Bible Church  
Moore, South Carolina, USA

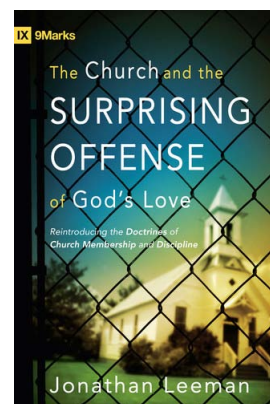
---

Jonathan Leeman. *The Church and the Surprising Offense of God’s Love: Reintroducing the Doctrines of Church Membership and Discipline*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2010. 375 pp. \$19.99.

---

Unfortunately, in-depth and biblically faithful books on ecclesiology are rare. Thankfully, Leeman’s book is one of those rare exceptions. Leeman argues that our culture and our theology shape our understanding of church membership and discipline (ch. 1). For instance, our culture prizes individualism and consumerism, which militate against commitment to one’s local church. Individualism dresses itself up as freedom and trumpets equality, but it actually contravenes love since it rejects God’s authority over our lives. Leeman rightly and profoundly argues that church membership commences with repentance, for believers submit themselves to God’s authority.

Leeman also maintains that Scripture must reshape our understanding of love (ch. 2). We define love as unconditional acceptance, thinking that true love makes much of us. But true love is holy love, and the supreme object of God’s affections is God himself. Love is not human-centered but fundamentally God-centered. God’s love must not be reduced to human affirmation, though it is the case that God delights in us. Since God’s love is a holy love and centers on himself, it both repels us and attracts us. It repels us because we are sinners who deserve



judgment, and it attracts us because God loves us even though we are sinners and has sent his Son to redeem us from our sins. On the other hand, like Adam we flee from God's holy love because he also judges us for our sins. We see here one of the reasons for the title of Leeman's book. God's love is surprising to our culture not only because of his great love but also because his holy love scandalizes us. We tend to think that love always involves affirmation and never takes the form of a critique. Church membership is off-putting in our culture because we exclude some from the body, and our culture resists drawing such lines.

One of the central themes of Leeman's work is the need for authority (ch. 3), but we resist authority because we have seen people abuse it so many times. The abuse of authority predisposes us to reject all authority. But as Leeman reminds us, there is no life if God is not our Lord. Authority and love are not polar realities; those who love God live under his authority and submit to his lordship. So, too, the local church has been given authority by Jesus Christ. Yes, this authority may be and has been abused, but such abuse does not negate the truth that believers are to submit to others in the body.

In one of the most important chapters of the book (ch. 4), Leeman explores the nature of the authority that God vouchsafes to the local church. Clearly, Jesus distinguishes between those who belong to him and those who are not truly part of the people of God. Leeman focuses especially on the keys that Christ gave to the apostles and to the church. He argues that God grants the church authority to proclaim the gospel, to certify who belongs to the people of God, to build up fellow-believers, and to exclude those who are not genuinely believers. I think Leeman's exegesis is on target here, and so it follows that the church exercises (not infallibly of course) Christ's authority on earth. It is unbiblical, then, for a believer to belong to a church without submitting to the authority of the local church. Incidentally, Leeman regularly acknowledges that there are exceptions, that churches may act unspiritually, and that there are times to disagree with a church's authority. He does not grant *carte blanche* authority to the church. Nevertheless, most of us are well aware of such exceptions. What is novel to *our culture* is that God calls us to submit to the local church.

What does love look like? How is it expressed? Leeman maintains that love is covenantal (ch. 5). Clearly, the covenant is a major theme in the Scriptures. In the new covenant, which is a better covenant, God transforms his people internally through Christ and by the Spirit so that his law is written on their hearts and they all know the Lord. Believers express the covenant love of God the relationship they enjoy and form in local churches. The church tangibly expresses God's covenant love, consisting only of covenant members.

What does it mean in the here and now to be covenant members of the same church (ch. 6)? Leeman acknowledges that cultures vary and so we must resist a simplistic one-size-fits-all pattern or program. Still, we must look for commonalities in the Scriptures, for the work and task incumbent on every church. Churches must be comprised of those who are believers, of those who give a credible witness to the faith, so that the church is not amalgamated with the world. Hence, the church should undertake its ministry in a way that is faithful to Christ crucified and risen. Christ has given it authority to discern (not infallibly!) genuine believers and to exclude those who resist Christ's rules in their lives. The church must guard the gospel doctrinally (what is the gospel?) and personally (do the members of the church affirm the gospel?). How many today think that such boundaries are the opposite of love! But Leeman rightly reminds us that it is precisely the opposite. True love always conforms to the gospel.

Finally, Leeman considers the relationship between submission and love (ch. 7). True love serves others and does not pursue selfish desire (Gal 5:13–15). Godly church leaders do not rule imperiously



but shape the church with the gospel of Christ, trusting the Spirit rather than the flesh to change people. Still, church leaders have authority, and Christians should be inclined to submit to the wisdom of fellow believers. Such submission is not meant to quash our personalities but make us more like Christ. Naturally, there are situations where Christians should not submit, where a wrongful authority is being exercised, and in such instances believers should humbly dissent.

I hope Leeman's book is not ignored or just put on the shelf. It is a vital word for our times. It is culturally insightful and biblically and theologically faithful, pointing us to what it means to be members of the church. God's love is surprisingly offensive and yet, as Leeman shows, it is surprisingly comforting and strengthening to live under Christ's authority as it is manifested in local churches.

Thomas R. Schreiner  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary  
Louisville, Kentucky, USA

---

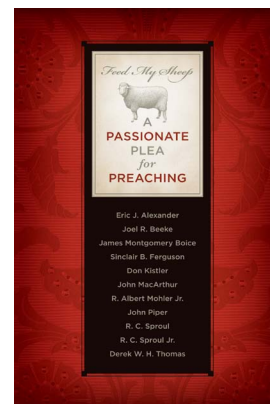
Don Kistler, ed. *Feed My Sheep: A Passionate Plea for Preaching*. Lake Mary, FL: Reformation Trust, 2002; repr., 2008. 156 pp. \$15.00.

---

As media saturation has continually distracted those in contemporary Western culture with undersized attention spans, the patience for deep, biblically rich preaching has become rare. It is no surprise then that deep, biblically rich preaching is a dying art. In spite of the necessary priority of authoritative, biblically grounded, expositional, transformative preaching as essential to growth in Christ, many voices today fail to give preaching the value it deserves. This calls for prophetically affirming the centrality of biblical preaching as a definitive mark of the true church. *Feed My Sheep: A Passionate Plea for Preaching* is such a call.

This short book is replete with stirring essays that are sure to awaken greater conviction for feeding God's people through his preached Word. It is an outstanding collection by some of today's leading preachers who are models of what they advocate. For all the negative effects the Internet has on us, it is wonderful that in seconds sermons by these authors can be on one's iPod in case you are wondering what the preaching they are calling for sounds like. It is good that publishers saw fit to reprint the 2002 edition in a more attractive hardcover format. I will try to summarize the main point of each chapter with one concise sentence and then offer a brief evaluation.

1. Albert Mohler, "The Primacy of Preaching." Preaching is at the heart of ministry and must take central priority in a pastor's life, motivating and defining the way he spends his time.
2. James Montgomery Boice, "The Foolishness of Preaching." Preaching must be grounded in the absolute authority of the Bible.
3. Derek Thomas, "Expository Preaching." The God-breathed nature of Scripture means that preaching must enable people to understand the whole Bible and thus must be expository.



4. Joel Beeke, “Experiential Preaching.” Reformed ministerial piety and experiential preaching must define our preaching.
5. R. C. Sproul, “The Teaching Preacher.” We must know and teach the truth.
6. R. C. Sproul Jr., “Preaching to the Mind.” Changed hearts and minds depend on changed minds through the preached Word.
7. Sinclair Ferguson, “Preaching to the Heart.” All biblical preaching is preaching to the heart.
8. Don Kistler, “Preaching with Authority.” Get some backbone, and preach with the authority Christ himself has given you.
9. Eric Alexander, “Evangelistic Preaching.” The whole Bible has saving and sanctifying power, so we should expect people to be converted when we preach any part of it.
10. John Piper, “Preaching to Suffering People.” Preaching is trying to accomplish the hardest work in the world: to change the minds and hearts of fallen human beings and make God so precious to them that they count it all joy when trials come, exult in their afflictions, and say in the end, “To die is gain.”
11. John McArthur, “A Reminder to Shepherds.” Point to the message (the gospel), not the messenger.

The preaching that *Feed My Sheep* calls for is a necessary requirement for true conversion, abiding in Christ, strong churches, and growing individuals. One might ask if the authors overstate the importance of preaching relative to other means of grace (e.g., the Lord’s Supper, baptism, fellowship, service, prayer, Scripture meditation). But as one seeks to answer that question, solid expositional preaching on issues related to that question seems to be the most important means of getting to the truth of the matter. And perhaps that shows that the book does not overstate the importance of expositional preaching. As the chapter summaries show, this is not the kind of book that evangelicals should have any significant disagreements with. Rather, they should pray that its message would be heard and heeded.

While each chapter highlights important elements of preaching, especially important are the chapters by Beeke, Kistler, and Piper. Along with Ferguson’s chapter, Beeke dispels the notion that preaching conveys information merely to be added to a purely intellectual database. The content of preaching must reach the heart and have a sanctifying effect. Kistler’s chapter on preaching with authority flies in the face of postmodern apathy toward truth and calls preachers to have conviction and backbone that should come from preaching *God’s Word*. Piper’s chapter calls the preacher to show and teach his people how to delight in God and have hope in the midst of the pervasive suffering all in our fallen world will encounter. Preaching hard truth about the relentless difficulty in our cursed world will prepare Christians to live for what lasts. Today’s Christian often views authoritative expositional preaching like meaningful church membership—as an optional spiritual discipline that may or may not fit into what they think they need to help them with their current spiritual condition. If pastors and their flocks take to heart the message of this book, they will rightly dispatch that unbiblical consumer mentality and practice a vital antecedent of revival with the fervor it deserves.

K. Erik Thoennes

Biola University; Grace Evangelical Free Church  
La Mirada, California, USA



Dave Kraft. *Leaders Who Last*. Re: Lit. Wheaton: Crossway, 2010. 155 pp. \$14.99.

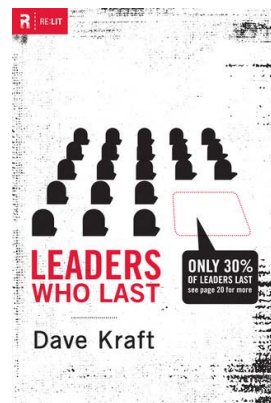
I am thankful for this book, which is one of the more recent titles in the theologically robust and consistently excellent Re: Lit series. It is written by Dave Kraft, a respected and seasoned Christian leader, currently the leadership development pastor at Mars Hill Church in Seattle.

The introduction states the basic premise of *Leaders Who Last*: ‘you can learn how to be a good leader and finish your particular leadership race well’ (p. 19). As suggested by this line and the book’s title, Kraft’s burden is to help Christian leaders exercise effective and enduring ministries. In contrast to many other books on leadership, which are based on “surveys and studies,” Kraft aims to draw from his own leadership experience in order to produce a “personal and extremely practical account of essential leadership principles.” I think he accomplishes what he sets out to do. The book is both personal and practical. Given that Kraft has been in ministry for forty years, he has a lot of credibility.

The book is divided into three parts. Part 1 deals with the foundations of a leader, with individual chapters devoted to the leader’s power, purpose, passion, priorities, and pacing. Part 2 deals with the formation of a leader. Consecutive chapters address the leader’s calling, gifts, character, and growth. Finally, part 3 concerns the fruitfulness of a leader, with chapters that address the leader’s vision, influence, and legacy.

The book has several strengths. First, it is written by a faithful and successful leader who has himself lasted in ministry. Kraft knows whereof he writes. It is a gift for the reader to have in hand the hard-won experience and wisdom of a godly man and leader. Second, unlike the rather mysterious cover of the book (which I have still not totally figured out—are those gravestones? But the ones missing aren’t 30% of the total, so how does it illustrate the claim made on the cover?), Kraft’s writing style is clear and accessible. Plenty of stories and illustrations are interspersed throughout, making the book easy to read. Finally, there are many solid insights and helpful bits of advice. For instance, the chapter on the priorities of a leader is helpful. While much of the advice is quite common sense stuff, Kraft’s contribution is to say it simply, memorably, and clearly and to relate how he has lived out what he says.

The book would be significantly improved if Kraft followed through more consistently and explicitly on his important call for leaders to be gospel-centered: “Leadership begins and ends with a clear understanding of the gospel and being rooted in the grace of Jesus Christ as a free gift” (p. 29). This is an intriguing claim. It raises a question: what does distinctively Christian, gospel-centered leadership look like? In what ways does it differ from secular leadership? Kraft engages these questions quite effectively in some chapters (e.g., his chapter on “The Leader’s Power”). But in other chapters the principles Kraft lays out, while not principles with which I would disagree (e.g., it is important to emphasize the need to prioritize and say “yes to less”), could just as easily have been written by a secular management consultant. I want to be fair to Kraft. Perhaps he didn’t set out to write a book about what distinctively gospel-centered leadership looks like. But given his call for leaders to be gospel-centered and the fact that this book is in the theological Re: Lit series, that’s the kind of book for which I was hoping. Kraft’s reliance on leadership writing and numerous secular examples of effective leadership diminishes his ability to highlight what is *distinctive* about Christian, gospel-centered leadership.



Perhaps one example will illustrate this point. I agree with everything Kraft says in chapter 3 on the importance of a leader's passion. He claims that it is important to be passionate about what you do in life, that passion is contagious and is a crucial component for leaders, and that passion "is a God thing, not a personality thing" (p. 53). Apart from the latter claim, non-Christians could readily agree with Kraft's main points in this chapter. Kraft digs a little deeper on the latter claim by saying that passion is "something that the Spirit of God creates in our hearts as a result of our deep convictions about who he is and who we are in him" (p. 53). I would like to see Kraft unpack this significant claim and further explore its implications. But instead of pursuing the distinctively gospel-driven nature of a Christian leader's passion, Kraft's next illustration of a leader's passion is a decidedly *secular* example (the passion of a young Communist party member for his cause). I'm left wondering how the gospel uniquely infuses Christian leaders with passion and how this gospel-driven passion differs from secular varieties of passion that have nothing to do with God. I would welcome a more substantial and biblically driven discussion of this question and also (particularly) of the topics raised in the chapters on priorities, pacing, the leader's influence, and the leader's legacy.

Despite this area for improvement, the book is solid and helpful, and we can be thankful to Dave Kraft for passing along much good counsel.

Stephen Witmer  
Pepperell Christian Fellowship  
Pepperell, Massachusetts, USA

---

— MISSION AND CULTURE —

---

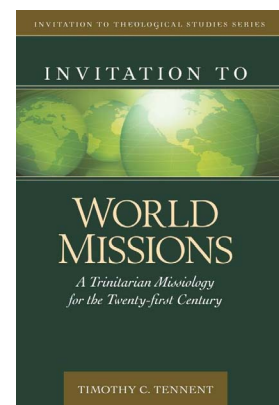
Timothy C. Tennent. *Invitation to World Missions: A Trinitarian Missiology for the Twenty-First Century*. Invitation to Theological Studies Series. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2010. 559 pp. \$38.99.

---

Author of several works including *Christianity at the Religious Roundtable* (2002) and *Theology in the Context of World Christianity* (2007), Tennent is former professor of world missions at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. He now serves as president at Asbury Theological Seminary. The current book celebrates the centennial of the 1910 World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh, Scotland, reconvened in June of this year.

*Invitation to World Missions*, if not quite a magnum opus, surely serves to draw together Tennent's thinking across a host of theological and practical issues. Over the twentieth century, the author contends, mission theory and on-the-field engagement have parted ways. This work seeks "to bridge the gap between a practical-oriented missions textbook and a more reflective missiology" (p. 9). Tennent grounds the entire work in a theology of *missio dei* and divides the bulk of the work under a Trinitarian rubric. He sets forth a biblical theology that avoids proof-texts while developing the metanarrative of God's working into all creation.

In Part 1, Tennent begins with a superb panorama of "Megatrends That Are Shaping Twenty-first Century Missions"—an overview that beckons reading by all Christian workers. The following two



chapters propose a missional theology that is distinctly Trinitarian. Whereas *mission* refers to “God’s redemptive, historical initiative on behalf of His creation,” the plural term *missions* entails “all the specific and varied ways in which the church crosses cultural boundaries to reflect the life of the triune God” (p. 59). As in classical theology, the phrase *missio dei* defines the Father as the initiator, the Son as the embodiment, and the Spirit as energizer. In this sense the church stands *within* the *missio dei* and only secondarily as an entity which itself sends.

The remaining thirteen chapters divide under three major headings: “God the Father: Providential Source and Goal of the *Missio Dei*”; “God the Son: The Redemptive Embodiment of the *Missio Dei*”; and “God the Holy Spirit: The Empowering Presence of the *Missio Dei*.” Under these major headings, Tennent packs quite a lot of missiology, albeit sometimes only tangentially related to the members of the Godhead. Under “God the Father” is included not only God as Planner of mission, but also the “Sent Church,” “A Trinitarian, ‘New Creation’ Theology of Culture,” and “An Evangelical Theology of Religions.” Under God the Son, the work includes three full chapters on the history of missions and another three chapters on cross-cultural communication as incarnation. The last major section discusses the Holy Spirit’s work in Luke-Acts (a blueprint for today), the Third Wave of modern Pentecostalism, and “Missionaries as Agents of Suffering and Heralds of the New Creation.” The book concludes with “The Church as the Reflection of the Trinity in the World.”

*Invitation to World Missions* more than invites; it entices. It exceptionally overviews not only issues in current missiology but within a biblical structure of *missio dei*. If occasionally the Trinitarian structure seems a ploy to unload a full course in missiology, nevertheless, Tennent does it well. Little is left wanting as he seeks to work through everything from Niebuhr’s *Christ and Culture* to soteriological pluralism, church-mission (modality-sodality) relations, and C-5 insider movements within Muslim and Hindu settings. Enlivened with the author’s Indian and worldwide experience, the work is properly a textbook, balanced and well researched while not tediously documented. Twenty-two pages of bibliography and twenty-seven pages of indexes augment its usefulness.

Nevertheless, no primer can do all one wishes. Although the book’s subtitle is *A Trinitarian Missiology for the Twenty-first Century*, the doctrine of the Trinity is neither clearly defined nor particularly explored, including its apologetic force before other world religions. Many major Trinitarian works are absent as are books by L. Boff, O. Ogbannaya, and J. Y. Lee that specifically contextualize Trinitarian models. Whereas Tennent admits that his purpose is not broad Trinitarian reflection, his focus on missions itself here invites further reflection.

Second, a familiar theme of Tennent’s *missio dei* is the inbreaking of the Kingdom of God, the “New Creation,” as the church lives amidst the “now” and “not yet.” But just what constitutes this New Creation remains ambiguous. No one has all the answers. Yet we are left asking what the church in its mission should seek and expect now versus what awaits Christ’s return.

Minor suggestions may refine a second edition. Several typological errors are evident, especially in chapter 1 (cf. pp. 30, 34, 41, 49). Moreover, the work tends to be overly didactic, with “first”-, “second”-, and “third”-listings multiplied in every chapter. Finally, from my vantage, Tennent underappreciates the vibrant missionary force rising up throughout Latin America.

In spite of these gentle salvos, my copy of *Invitation to World Missions* is covered with exclamations of delight and sentences to be quoted. This is Tennent at his best: packed and lucid. He succinctly works

through nearly every major missiological issue on the table today and does so very well. The book's critiques and nuanced proposals are invaluable—beacons for guidance into the decades to come.

J. Scott Horrell  
Dallas Theological Seminary  
Dallas, Texas, USA

---

Paul G. Hiebert. *The Gospel in Human Contexts: Anthropological Explorations for Contemporary Missions*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009. 217 pp. \$21.99.

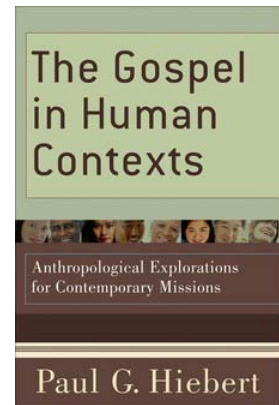
---

Published posthumously, *The Gospel in Human Contexts* is the product of many years of careful thought and faithful ministry by the late Paul G. Hiebert, who served as a missionary in India, a professor at Fuller Theological Seminary, and then as distinguished professor of mission and anthropology at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School.

Hiebert reasons that just as it is essential for those who minister the gospel to be trained in the exegesis of Scripture, it is also essential to master the skill of human exegesis in order to be effective ministers. But a minister must not stop there either. He must also know how to communicate the gospel effectively in human contexts so that the message is understood for the purpose of transforming lives. Hiebert argues that missional theology—the process of effectively communicating the gospel in human contexts—is a third way of practicing theology alongside of systematic and biblical theologies. The book has three sections: part 1 is on “Theoretical Foundations,” part 2 “Exegeting Humans,” and part 3 “Mission as Intercultural Mediation.” These sections work together successfully describing the needed elements for effective contextualization.

Part 1 describes various views on how the gospel relates to human contexts. Readers of other Hiebert works (e.g., “Critical Contextualization,” in *Anthropological Reflections on Missiological Issues* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994], which first appeared in *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 11:3 [July 1987]: 104–12) will quickly notice his emphasis on “critical contextualization,” which Hiebert equates with “missional theology” (p. 29). Cross-cultural workers who are not practicing critical contextualization perhaps see no need for contextualization at all. To them, the gospel is simply equated with their interpretation of Christianity. Hiebert observes that although missionaries may be aware of the need for at least a minimal contextualization, many attempt to preserve civilized Christian “home” culture while living abroad—which can cultivate an unhelpful “others, not us” mentality. “To become Christian and civilized, the people must become like us” (p. 22). Hiebert argues that an uncritical or even a radical contextualization, however, is not the answer. Such cultural sensitivity distorts the gospel, resulting in a syncretistic message.

Hiebert coauthors a chapter with Tite Tiénou entitled “Missional Theology” (first appearing in *Missiology* 34:2 [2006]: 221–38), which explains how missional theology draws from and completes biblical and systematic theology, providing a comprehensive understanding of the gospel: “It makes theology live for us” (p. 57). After outlining three steps in missional methodology, Hiebert concludes by providing two cases that illustrate his methodology—one from Scripture (Acts 15) and a second hypothetical case regarding polygamy that draws on real missions case studies.



Hiebert uses the first few chapters in “Exegeting Humans” for a historical overview of anthropology and missiology. In his chapter “Changing Image,” Hiebert explains that society naturally builds social categories around differences between us and others. This concept is nothing new historically. Hiebert traces “European encounters with others and otherness.” In the High Middle Ages, “others” were either “monsters” or “infidels”; in the Age of Exploration (1500–1700), “others” were “savages”; in the Age of Enlightenment (1700–1930), they were “primitive”; in the Age of Post-Enlightenment (1930–), “others” became “natives,” yet still “others.” The biblical view, however, affirms the oneness of humanity and the oneness of believers in Christ. True discipleship includes making “human” and “Christian” primary identities, which then naturally allows one to celebrate differences of ethnicity, gender, and culture.

Two chapters trace anthropology from “Early Anthropology” (ch. 4) through “Recent Anthropology” (ch. 5). Chapter 4 explores the relationship between anthropology and missiology as well as various anthropological paradigms that have shaped missions. Chapter 5 is a brief but excellent analysis of postmodernity. It discusses terminology such as “glocal,” which “refer[s] to the fact that people live locally, but participate to varying degrees in the emerging global networks of goods, services and information” (pp. 118–19).

Chapter 6 presents a “Systems Approach” to studying peoples, which examines various components or “mini-systems” holistically. This system-of-systems approach demonstrates the interrelatedness of human physical, biological, psychological, social, cultural, and spiritual systems. Most importantly his observations about systems help the reader know how to make the gospel clearer in another’s social and cultural contexts.

Finally, “Mission as Intercultural Mediation” presents mission in the twenty-first century as mediation. Hiebert notes two factors that are becoming increasingly apparent: (1) “missions to people who have yet to hear the gospel must continue,” and (2) “a growing number of missionaries are inbetweeners who stand between different worlds, seeking to build bridges of understanding, mediate relationships, and negotiate partnerships in ministry” (p. 179). “Inbetweeners” must bridge certain gulfs by incorporating into local systems socially so that they learn best how to contextualize appropriately. “Inbetweeners” must be educators, teaching sponsoring churches to be outward-focused communities, able to identify with people from elsewhere. “Inbetweeners” need to be continually connected to both scholarship and on-field missionary work so that they bring the best research and theory to the field.

Hiebert propounds that in a glocal world “missionaries and global leaders must increasingly be transcultural mediators—people who live between cultures and deal with issues arising among different communities” (p. 188). Global mediators are to some extent insiders in each society, yet because they never fully become members of any one culture, they are “outsider-insiders.” Hiebert writes, “To become transcultural mediators we need transcultural identities. This requires developing a metacultural mental framework that enables us to live in different worlds while keeping our core identity secure” (p. 198).

The organization of the book is such that certain ideas are repeated throughout the book. While this structure is very helpful in clarifying key themes, certain paragraphs sound almost completely redundant (e.g., cf. pp. 40, 43 with 127–28). Several paragraphs also overlap with Hiebert’s recent work (also published posthumously) *Transforming Worldviews: An Anthropological Understanding of How People Change* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008). While *Transforming Worldviews* is about 150 pages longer and has a different emphasis, large portions of chapters overlap (e.g., ch. 3, “Worldviews in Human Contexts”).

As customary with the many of Hiebert's works, he includes many vivid illustrations and figures that effectively clarify and summarize his overall point. The book includes a helpful index that could serve as a term sheet for an introductory class on contextualization. Paul Hiebert has left us with an incredibly helpful resource with compelling scholarly information that will assuredly help practitioners flesh out their "missional theology" in the field.

Kevin Paul Oberlin  
Bob Jones University  
Greenville, SC, USA

---

David K. Naugle. *Reordered Love, Reordered Lives: Learning the Deep Meaning of Happiness*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008. viii + 216pp. £11.99/\$18.00.

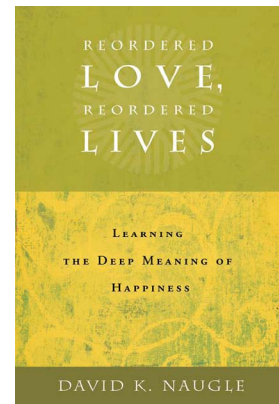
---

David Naugle's *Worldview: History of a Concept* (2002) is the major recent summary on integrating faith and learning in Christian university education. Now in *Reordered Love, Reordered Lives*, Naugle helps readers to distinguish between misbegotten driving forces and driving forces that lead to fully satisfying lives. Naugle focuses on right loves as the hallmark of a genuine Christian life. Naugle is alert to a surprising selection of popular, academic, and theological writers, but draws mainly from Augustine of Hippo (A.D. 354–430) to underwrite his project. *Reordered Loves* recovers an old emphasis that has been obscured, for Protestants at least, and makes it fresh.

Chapters 1–2 set the agenda. The first chapter justifies happiness as God's goal for humanity from the Garden of Eden and, after the fall, through redemption. Though Christianity has been ambivalent about human happiness, genuine happiness is God's wholeness, his shalom across six key dimensions of living. He rightly ordered the good created world, and people should genuinely appreciate it. Good loves enrich human life so that it is lived as should be. But the second chapter says, the world is far from the way it is supposed to be. The principle source of disorder is disordered loves. Bad loves distort lives. Since our loves drive us, loves not centered on the Creator must be centered on aspects of the creation, which can only distort lives.

Chapter 3 specifies bad loves and what they do. Naugle lists pride, envy, anger, sloth, greed, gluttony, and lust from monastic and medieval lists of seven deadly sins. Any of these underlying sin patterns is antithetical to love, while contrasting cardinal virtues incarnate it. Naugle is not the only recent writer to notice that the seven deadly sins and virtues challenge current culture with ancient insights. Os Guinness's *Steering through Chaos* uses the seven deadly sins as its map, and recent popular culture in print, music, and film has used them to cast a jaded eye on the present day.

Chapters 4–5 are imaginative takes on justification and sanctification respectively from the perspective of the Christian life, continuing in chapter 6 with a picture of future redeemed life in worship and virtues. These chapters are conventional but unstuffy presentations that are well suited to university classes in introductory theology or Christian spirituality. The concluding chapter sums up the Christian life as anticipating redeemed, fully human, life in the pursuits of a calling and classic Christian disciplines.





This book is a wide-ranging restatement of the apologist Francis Schaeffer's *The Mark of the Christian* some four decades ago. Naugle was influenced by the Schaeffers's L'Abri ministry, so his emphasis is not surprising. Though the main Protestant emphasis was on faith, specifically on justification, love as an outcome of the Christian life was never officially passé. After all, it is much in Scripture. But the restatement is necessary. Where the Catholic tradition understood justification as a lifelong process that involves holiness, the Protestant Reformers Luther and Calvin saw justification as an act by which God changes a person root and branch. The changed life would necessarily bring forth acts of love, as a good tree produces good fruit. For Protestants, right standing with God is verified less by the evidence of a holy life than by believing right propositions. In the Protestant context, listing specific virtues might have seemed likely to lead people to imagine them as ways of salvation. Given the Protestant eclipse of love, it is not surprising that Naugle's sources, such as C. S. Lewis or G. K. Chesterton, tend to be Catholic or Anglo-Catholic.

Taking *Reordered Love* with James K. A. Smith's *Desiring the Kingdom* (2009), one might ask whether evangelical Protestants in university settings are struggling with the limitation of the life of the mind in generating whole-person and social transformation. Nicholas Wolterstorff's writings on Reformed Christian education over four decades have stressed that much more than right cognition is the desirable outcome. Now Naugle, going to the roots of the Western Christian tradition, stresses that the life of the mind must be directed and fulfilled by right loves. Possibly these evangelical thinkers are feeling toward a greater embodiment of the faith that can express a communal Christian story in contrast with the powerful modern social imaginary.

Ted Newell  
Atlantic Baptist University  
Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada