

Book Reviews

Charles SIMPSON. *Inside the Churches of Christ: The Reflection of a Former Pharisee on What Every Christian Should Know about the Nondenomination Denomination*. Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2009. 296 pp. \$12.25.

Simpson has worked through a very tragic religious experience that was traumatic for both him and his family, especially his mother who stated that his growing habit of visiting a Baptist church was “the biggest disappointment’ in her life.” He described his life in an “ultra conservative” Church of Christ (a cappella) as one that was served a spiritual diet of negativism and suspicion, long on condemnation, short on love, leading eventually to the above maternal reaction. He eventually found spiritual fulfillment in the Southern Baptist church, but could barely bring himself to the point of forgiving the Church of Christ (whom he calls CofC) for having deprived him of this fulfillment all of his life and for having led people like his mother into such narrow Phariseeism. The remainder of the book is an acrimonious screed against the mentality of the CofC which he contends basically states that they are the only true church and all others are going to hell. He carefully documents such conclusions by numerous citations from CofC publications, noting that proportionately the CofC publishes more per member than any other denomination in the United States. Chapters are dedicated to the key tenets of the church which are: no human creeds (yet they have noncreedal creeds), unity of believers (only if you believe what we teach), one true church (it’s ours, not yours), no instrumental music in worship (instruments in worship are the devils devices), baptism as an essential part of the conversion experience (blasphemy to the evangelical mantra, “faith alone”).

With so many references to CofC publications accurately given, one has to give some credence to what Simpson is contending. Many of the references reflect the judgmental and exclusivist nature that the author senses. On the other hand, what is often overlooked is that the Churches of Christ (a cappella), though overall quite conservative, nonetheless represent a wide range of attitudes toward their “tenets of faith.” As in all conservative groups, some are much more condemnatory on the one hand and others much less so on the other hand. Simpson, perhaps without realizing it, quotes primarily from the most conservative side of the church, thus reinforcing his point, without recognizing that the mainstream majority, though holding to the same tenets would not be nearly as condemnatory. There was a time when Churches of Christ (a cappella) tended to be overall more judgmental, but for most, those times have long passed.

Is the CofC guilty of Phariseeism? Yes, to the extent it practices that, as would be true with anyone who practices Phariseeism, which is a tendency of any

conservative group. But to have definite views of doctrine in itself does not make one a Pharisee. Simpson's own personal, tragic experience has made him sensitive to a Phariseism that was true for his life, but which he has projected onto a whole church, which is simply in the main not accurate, though for a part it may always be true.

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James W. SIRE & Carl PERAINO. *Deepest Differences: A Christian-Atheist Dialogue.* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009. 203 pp. \$15.00.

With the popularity of Dawkins and Hitchens, Christian publishers have tried to get books out on the market that might offer a rebuttal to the perceived attacks. In what has become a hostile environment of ideas, this volume is a refreshing way to display how atheists and Christians can have an open and honest dialogue.

Apologist James W. Sire and retired biochemist Carl Peraino exchange over eighty emails in hopes of persuading the other into adopting their own way of thinking about the universe. This book traces their email correspondence about topics of religion, science, morality, and mind-body dualism.

What is favorable about this book is the way in which both parties are able to maintain an amiable friendship while asserting discordant opinions about reality. When Peraino admittedly falls short of this standard, he is quick to apologize, and it is Peraino who does a superior job of trying to understand the other side of the debate.

What is the most frustrating about this book is James Sire himself, who does not miss a chance to recommend his own books when an impasse in the dialogue arises. While Sire may do a fine job keeping the tone of the debate cordial, he fails miserably when it comes to making sense of the other position. In addition to that, Sire tends to hide behind unhelpful labels such as “nihilism” in an effort to pigeonhole the opponent. Consistently, Peraino has to ask Sire to clarify what he is trying to say because Sire uses so much label jargon in the discussion that it impedes progress.

This volume does not claim to resolve any issues and it is not until the last few pages that the reader is enlightened regarding the deepest differences among these two friends. In his summation, Peraino rightly identifies the major philosophical reason why they disagree: Sire is a dualist. Alternatively, in his summation, Sire says that the point of divergence is as follows, “I say they [atheists] need a foundation in something outside human opinion or human desire. He [Peraino] says no” (177). Sire believes that what is central to the Christian faith, is not the risen Jesus, but rather, “the notion of a transcendent foundation for

both morality and rationality” (177). In fairness, Sire would probably want to say that this is not an either/or choice, but that the risen Jesus *is* that transcendental foundation for morality and rationality. However, Peraino argues that Sire’s point is unnecessary “within a relatively stable physical environment, natural selection leads to the extinction of a species in which self-destructive tendencies prevail, and it favors the survival of a species that creates a cultural environment that fosters the realization of that species’ potential” (40).

What happens when Sire is shown his indefensible weak spots? Sire claims that the reason why all his good arguments failed in the book is because of Peraino’s “spiritual blindness” to the truth (181-182). This response is a cop-out. Instead of letting atheism into dialogue to help aid theology in its weak spots, Sire demonstrates how to warmly batten down the hatches.

Readers would do well to search out trained theologians or philosophers that handle these debates in much better ways. Merold Westphal’s *Suspicion and Faith: The Religious Uses of Modern Atheism* (Fordham, 1999), Alister McGrath’s latest two volumes, *The Open Secret: A New Vision for Natural Theology* (Blackwell, 2008) and *A Fine-Tuned Universe: The Quest for God in Science and Theology* (WJKP, 2009), and David Bentley Hart’s *Atheist Delusions: The Christian Revolution and Its Fashionable Enemies* (Yale, 2009) are all books that are recommendable.

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John W. LOFTUS. *Why I Became an Atheist: A Former Preacher Rejects Christianity.* Amherst, NY: Prometheus, 2009. 448 pp. \$19.95.

The subject matter of this book is not nearly so important for this forum as is its author. John Loftus is a former minister and Christian scholar, a graduate of Lincoln Christian Seminary and Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. He studied with one of the finest theologians in the Stone-Campbell Restoration Movement, James D. Strauss, and with one of the finest evangelical Christian philosophers working today, William Lane Craig. He was a brilliant student and remains a brilliant mind. In seminary I was privileged to call him a personal friend.

He is also an avowed, vocal, and well-reasoned atheist. This is a combination that requires the strictest and most respectful attention from any who avow a rational foundation for the faith we proclaim.

While Loftus embraces the label “atheist” unashamedly, he is what philosopher William Rowe has called a “friendly atheist.” He believes himself to have solid, convincing arguments for his position, but understands that there is such a thing as rational belief in the truths of Christianity. He attempts throughout his book to treat the best arguments for theism in general and Christianity in particular with the charity and respect they deserve. In short, Loftus recognizes what is

often forgotten in popular and scholarly levels of debate over these questions—that there is such a thing as rational disagreement. Controversial issues are controversial precisely because there are good cases to be made on both sides. It does our pursuit of truth no good to pretend that there can be no such thing as convincing arguments against a position we hold dearly.

It is here that Loftus’s book will come in handy for the well-read minister or Bible student. He presents a compendium of well-reasoned arguments (wrapped together nicely in a steadily developed “cumulative case”) against the central beliefs of Christianity—that there exists an omniscient, omnipotent, morally perfect creator and sustainer of the universe, and that this creator has provided redemption for humanity through the death, burial, and resurrection of his divine-human son Jesus of Nazareth. Loftus’s arguments are not the easily refuted caricatures so often offered in Bible college textbooks and Sunday school materials. They are the genuine article—clear, well-articulated statements of plausible arguments by one who finds them overwhelmingly convincing. I dare say very few preachers, teachers, and Bible students have its like on their shelves. And it should be there.

All of that said, there are several significant problems with Loftus’s work that help explain why its presentation will not be nearly as convincing to educated believers as he hopes. From a contemporary philosophy of religion standpoint, there is very little new here. In fact, some of the finest presentations of philosophical atheism in recent years go completely unrepresented (such as Paul Draper’s enormously influential—and troublesome—evidential argument from evil). Also, Loftus’s representations of contemporary Christian apologetics leave a great deal to be desired. For example, his chapter on the resurrection of Jesus makes no mention of the very finest defense of the resurrection ever written—N.T. Wright’s *The Resurrection of the Son of God*. Wright’s massive tome answers virtually every one of Loftus’s concerns with evidence well grounded in both contemporary theology and philosophy and first-century *Weltanschauung*.

The book also suffers from several conceptual and terminological infelicities. Most notable among these is Loftus’s tendency to treat atheism, agnosticism, skepticism, and a rejection of Christianity as synonymous, which they certainly are not. His indiscriminate juggling of these and cognate terms often leaves the reader puzzled as to exactly what position Loftus is trying to defend. And he regularly fails to distinguish between positive arguments for atheism or the falsity of Christianity on the one hand and refutations of arguments for theism or Christianity on the other. While Loftus does indeed present many fine lines of reasoning that deserve careful consideration by anyone who values rational foundations for faith, he does not present anywhere near as fine an overall case as he thinks he does, owing largely to this and other failures in philosophical sophistication.

I must hasten to point out that Loftus says up front that his presentation is not intended as an academic treatise, but is aimed at a popular audience.

However, as many fine books by his former mentor Craig show, one need not sacrifice scholarly rigor for the sake of marketplace accessibility.

One final note is due concerning the importance of this book for a Stone-Campbell Restoration Movement audience in particular and an evangelical one in general. Loftus makes clear that his move from belief to unbelief was precipitated as much by personal experience as by rational inquiry. As a minister Loftus was treated with inexcusably unchristian cruelty by those who supposedly represent Christ on earth. His early enthusiasm for the promise of a Christ-centered message was dashed mercilessly on the unrelenting rocks of that excruciating life we call “the parsonage.” Like far too many ministers, John was lied to, betrayed, taken advantage of, and treated with the general disdain and thoughtlessness that drives many out of the pulpit and out of the church every year. Most suffer in silence or live a life of guilt and shame at having put their hands to the plow and turned back. John has spoken out. And, despite the fact that his message could be improved, it is one that is vital for the church to hear before more excellent minds, hearts, and souls are lost to the kingdom.

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Justo L. GONZÁLEZ and Catherine Gunsalus GONZÁLEZ. *Heretics for Armchair Theologians*. Illustrations by Ron Hill. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2008. 200 pp. \$16.95.

For the Armchair Series, which typically centers upon the life and thought of a prominent theologian, such as Aquinas, Augustine, or, more recently, Martin Luther King, Jr., this new entry, with its emphasis on ancient heresy, marks somewhat of a departure. This short volume does not address a single theologian but a cluster of heresies and controversies from the first five centuries of Christian thought. Between introductory and concluding chapters dealing with the issue of heresy generally, the Gonzalezes treat the heresies of the Ebionites, Gnostics, Marcion, the Montanists, the Donatists, and Pelagius along with the Trinitarian and Christological controversies of the fourth and fifth centuries.

In the first chapter, “Why Heretics?” the Gonzalezes portray heretics as “believers struggling with truth” (14). They were neither open-minded martyrs persecuted by a narrow-minded church nor intentionally deceptive warriors against established doctrine. Rather, these heretics represent clashing perspectives stemming from the diversity within early Christianity. According to the authors, the main distinction between heretics and the church is revealed in the designation “catholic”: the church, striving to define a faith “according to the whole,” allowed diversity, while heretics narrowly focused upon their own views (10-12). This theological claim, which deserves a fuller treatment, is here supported by

contrasting the inclusiveness of the Christian canon to the heretical insistence upon a smaller canon or single book. Certainly the church was not as narrow-minded as some scholars and novelists would have it, but the reverse does not necessarily follow.

The central chapters of the book are well-organized, appropriately detailed, and accurate. Each chapter describes the historical beginnings of the heresy, what is at stake theologically, the catholic response, and later religious developments that resemble ancient heresies in some way. The longest part of each chapter explains the theological issues, and here the book is at its strongest. The lucid descriptions and frequent analogies make these complex figures and controversies understandable. Though the work is by nature a short survey, the Gonzalezes include an impressive amount of material and specificity. The major figures are given full treatments, but lesser-known figures such as Basilides, Celestius, and Lucian of Antioch also make appearances. More importantly, the authors present this complex material straightforwardly and accurately. Of course, one could quibble with certain aspects of the presentation; for example, they state that after the Council of Nicaea in 325 controversy focused upon the term *homoousios*, though even Athanasius was reticent to argue for the term until the 350s (88). Still, specialists would generally be pleased that the Gonzalezes describe the intricacies of the debate and emphasize the long struggle rather than simplistically and anachronistically portraying the fourth-century christological controversies as a debate between Athanasius on the side of established orthodoxy and Arius on the side of faithless philosophy. Unfortunately, the connections between later religious developments and the ancient heresies are often tenuous. The authors are more interested in recurring theological problems than historical connections and occasionally exaggerate certain issues. They admit a bit of exaggeration at the end of a chapter in which they claim that Pelagianism denies the essentiality of grace—something Pelagius himself would never have done (128). Each chapter is an interesting introduction to the topic.

Regarding the diversity within the early church and the development of doctrine—development largely spurred by heretics—the concluding chapter asks “What Now?” The Gonzalezes suggest that “neither a ‘simple’ return to the NT nor an absolute reliance on the authority of the church” is the appropriate response (152). Doctrines developed out of struggle, and contemporary Christians should look to the ancient controversies for help in avoiding similar errors.

Ron Hill’s playful illustrations, which appear on approximately every other page, are generally innocuous, sometimes helpful, and occasionally distracting. On the one hand, the goofy illustration accompanying the discussion of gnostic myths partially subverts the authors’ attempt to make the attraction of Gnosticism intelligible to contemporary readers (34–35). On the other hand, Hill’s baseball-themed sketches throughout the discussion of christological controversies help

fully illustrate a recurring analogy in the text: that describing the divinity and humanity of Christ is like attempting “to produce a square baseball” (137).

The book concludes an index and suggestions for further readings, which are geared for a nonscholarly audience: more-detailed surveys (several of which are written by Justo L. González). Only a few scholarly monographs appear, and those are dated.

The current volume certainly achieves its purposes, providing a balanced introduction to the important and controversial world of early Christian thought, with brief reflections upon heresy in general and the ongoing significance of ancient heretics. It is not intended for the scholar, but scholars will find some material presented in a way that translates well to the introductory classroom. The book will be most valuable to those reading for nonscholarly reasons; anyone who is interested should benefit from this brief, accurate, and enjoyable work.

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James R. PETERS. *The Logic of the Heart: Augustine, Pascal, and the Rationality of Faith.* Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009. 304 pp. \$32.99.

The current volume is a significant work in analytic philosophy that carries broad sympathies with Alvin Plantinga’s proper basicity of belief in God. Peters offers a closely reasoned work of philosophy of religion and religious epistemology. His purpose is to defend the Socratic and Augustinian way, as he explains them, of understanding the nature of reason and the relation of reason and faith. Pursuing this goal, Peters gives a thorough analysis and critique of David Hume’s religious epistemology before turning to Blaise Pascal as a modern expositor of the Augustinian way. Peters’s work then ends with a substantial engagement, on Augustinian grounds, with several postmodern philosophers.

This volume has as a central concern exactly what reason is, and what it therefore means for a person to be reasonable. Peters promotes a “Socratic” understanding in which the role of reason is to help us know ourselves, assisting us to make sense of our lives. Socratic philosophy denies human possession of final certainty concerning the meaning of life yet calls for a thorough questioning—testing—of all our central beliefs. The purpose of this philosophy is to help us live excellent lives by (re)discovering who and what we really believe and are. Socratic reason is thus an “embedded” reason that functions within the context of a life.

Within the Christian tradition, Peters finds the Socratic ideal especially fulfilled by Augustine. Augustine expounds a passionate reason that is, and ought to be, directed by our fundamental nature as lovers. A person is functioning most reasonably when living out a life of love. The desire that motivates and shapes our

process of intellection is not a stranger to reason; rather, desire provides the necessary context for right reasoning and the ability to follow what our reason discovers. Augustinian “believing in order to understand,” therefore, is recognition that without being placed in a position of humility and love our reason will achieve no good end.

Peters has three targets in this work: the Enlightenment view of rationality represented by Descartes and Locke, David Hume’s skeptical and psychopathological critiques of religion, and “radical postmodernism” (to be defined below). Creatively, Peters’s first engagement with Hume is to analyze the way Hume savages the overrational theism of Locke. According to Locke, religious (or any other) belief is only admissible if justified rationally, and the nature of rationality is to produce deductive proofs from certain foundations. Peters claims fairly that an Augustinian theist owes Hume a debt of gratitude for dismantling Locke’s claims. Peters goes on to show—with great thoroughness—that Hume’s criticisms of religion are not well founded if applied to Augustinian theism, a theism that, like Hume, insists on a logic of the heart.

Turning to Pascal, Peters finds a philosopher/theologian in the Augustinian tradition with whom to oppose the Enlightenment’s reductionist and antireligious program. Examining especially Pascal’s *Penseés*, Peters cogently explains the way Pascal argues for a Christianity that is not irrational but is beyond reason, a faith in God that is known through the heart. Thus, Pascal presents many arguments for faith but expects none of them to work well if the reader is not equipped with a receptive attitude of humility and love.

In the volume’s final chapter, Peters examines the claims of “radical postmodernism,” analyzing such seminal figures as Deleuze, Derrida, Foucault, Lyotard, Rorty, and de Man. Peters’s purpose is to argue that an Augustinian logic of the heart, exemplified by Pascal, can address and ameliorate many of the claims and concerns put forth by these authors. Perhaps the greatest difficulty here is that all of these thinkers (with Bishop Berkeley and Gordon Kauffman thrown in) are quite different one from another. As David Tracy remarks, we need really to speak of different postmodernisms. Peters strives to address each of their main concerns, but understandably strains to provide the kind of thorough contextualizing he gives to Pascal and Hume.

The best way I can commend this book is that in the process of reading it I repeatedly thought to give it to colleagues of mine I thought would find it helpful. Especially in his examination of Pascal and Hume, Peters does yeoman’s work. I would recommend it for a graduate-level class in apologetics or philosophy of religion.

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Heidi A. CAMPBELL, and Heather LOOY, eds. *A Science and Religion Primer*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009. 227 pp. \$19.99.

The current volume is unusual, compiled by editors Campbell and Looy to address a specific gap in the available theology and science literature, and fulfill a particular pedagogical need. Interest in issues in religion and science is heightening, not only in academia but in mainstream culture (albeit with an often rather negative “conflict” view); yet, at the same time, the interdisciplinary nature of this terrain often means that even those interested and actively involved in the emerging field religion and science have only a piecemeal knowledge, and entering the conversation initially can be daunting. Noting this, the editors hope to ameliorate this situation by offering an accessible and inexpensive primer which contains introductory essays and a glossary of definitions of important concepts.

The emphasis is placed upon the interaction of Christianity and science, rather than religion in general. The four introductory essays, each authored by a senior scholar in the field of religion and science, offer an entry point into the four core areas of the primer: history (Peter Harrison), philosophy of science (Nancey Murphy), science and technology (Holmes Rolston III), and theology (Celia Deane-Drummond). The individual glossary entries also correspond to these four areas of focus, including entries on important figures, events, and various philosophical, historical, scientific, and theological concepts, arranged alphabetically.

The editors’ very specific goal means that the primer is not intended to be comprehensive, but instead to function as the gateway into further reading of the more detailed resources that already exist. Thus, while the glossary of concepts and terms may seem idiosyncratic (there is, for example, no entry for “neuroscience,” but there is an entry for “posthuman”) this is a forgivable idiosyncrasy given the book’s intent. Moreover, the organization of the brief explanations of key concepts into three sections—a basic definition, a list of “key points/challenges,” and a suggested book list for further reading—means that each entry provides not simply a definition but highlights the main points of discussion and an immediately available means of following up with more research. The book’s structure, therefore, mirrors the editors’ stated intent.

For readers in the Stone-Campbell tradition, for whom questions in religion and science are live points of interest but remain framed largely in hermeneutical terms (how do we faithfully interpret the creation account in Genesis in light of current evolutionary theory?), Campbell and Looy’s primer may serve as a useful entry point into the much wider religion and science discussion, allowing students, pastors, and interested laypersons a way to broaden knowledge at their own pace and according to their own specific interests. For professors of theology and/or the sciences, the primer may serve as a helpful resource to provide for students alongside other, more detailed texts which assume a working knowledge of the concepts covered in the primer.

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John MILBANK. *The Future of Love: Essays in Political Theology.* Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2009. 404 pp. \$44.00.

Arising in Britain in recent decades, Radical Orthodoxy represents one of the most provocatively interesting, if diverse, movements in contemporary theology. Milbank is its most prominent and controversial exponent. Well known for his *Theology and Social Theory* [TST] and *Being Reconciled*, in the current volume Milbank collects a number of his essays that have been published in a variety of journals over the last twenty-five years. TST's powerful critique of the dominance of the secular social sciences in liberal western society and its aggressive assertion of theology's proper, if not regal, place in scholarship places Milbank as a significant voice in theology. His distinctive Anglo-Catholic perspective joined with a scathing critique of neo-liberalism and capitalism is expressed in what maddens many as a "Blue Socialism" or "Red Toryism" (as Red and Blue do not have the same connotations in Europe that they do in the United States). While Milbank is a demanding read, this book welcomingly makes his social thought more accessible as these essays range from analyzing socialism and British society, to response to TST's critics, to relating theology to philosophy and religious pluralism, and his distinctive theology of gift-exchange.

Viewing capitalism as a Christian heresy that tends toward totalitarianism, Milbank contends for a robust nonstatist Christian socialism rather than a Christian Marxism. He would not exclude ethical value from economic exchanges. His approach to love emphasizes reciprocity as does his valuable notion of gift-exchange. The giftedness of life and love are not one-way streets, and that has implications for political theology. The essay "Liberality and Liberalism" particularly makes Milbank's case for a democracy based in that gift relation, rather than the contracts of markets, with monarchic and aristocratic elements, not unlike the civic republicanism of American civic thought. He realigns his basically Left position with "more primordial, 'classical' modes of thinking" (243) in order to criticize "this neoliberal slide into despotism" (245).

While at times vague, these essays make a place for a broadly conceived church. With some sympathy to the notion of Christendom, Milbank believes "along with Radical Orthodoxy in general, that only the church has the theoretical and practical power to challenge the global hegemony of capital and to create a viable politico-economic alternative." (xi) Capitalism, not Islam, is the principal foe of Christian faith.

Ecclesiologically, in contrast to current church growth trends, in one essay Milbank devastatingly critiques the market orientation of evangelical Christianity while lauding the orientation of geography and parish found in the Church of England.

Milbank is not shy about taking on received wisdom in secular or theological society. His Anglo-Catholicism is anything but humble as Anabaptists are irrelevant and Calvinism deplorably enables capitalism. Seeing himself as some-

thing of an Augustinian, he finds the Middle Ages comfortable at least until the debacle of Duns Scotus and his successors that eventually enabled the Enlightenment project of liberal society and capitalism. The neo-Platonism and the counterintuitive affirmation of some form of hierarchies and aristocracy in a democratic context that imbues much of his approach will trouble many as will his resort to argument by intellectual genealogy.

The essay format of Milbank's volume makes it perhaps one of the best ways to access Milbank's demanding and dense prose that is laden at times with post-modernist jargon. While Radical Orthodoxy might now be seen as an influential postmodernist exercise in the modern academy, the political themes raised in some of the pieces in this book point it toward a political theology with the potential for enabling a politically active confessionally Christian presence in society. Milbank's thought is well-worth engaging, though this collection of essays is best suited for a seminary course in contemporary or political theology. Frequently provocative, Milbank's essays join political theology and ecclesiology for a distinctively Christian approach to democracy that merits serious consideration.

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Harold SHANK. *Listening to His Heartbeat: What the Bible Says about the Heart of God.* Joplin, MO: College Press, 2009. 340 pp. \$28.99.

"What does Scripture say about God's inner being? What makes God smile? What pleases him?" (18) What makes God angry? These are some of the probing questions that Harold Shank, Professor of OT at Oklahoma Christian University, asks in his study of Scripture's revelation concerning the heart of God. He sets the stage for the journey by placing the reader in the shoes of the prodigal son returning to his father's embrace as depicted in Rembrandt's painting "The Return of the Prodigal Son." The son is on his knees, being embraced by his slouching father, with his ear firmly placed on his father's chest, perhaps listening to his heartbeat. The Luke 15 account does not give this detail, but it does say that the father was "filled with compassion" and that "he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him" (Luke 15:20). Shank speculates that "Rembrandt captured in a unique way how the son learned that his father was 'filled with compassion.' While the embrace and kisses surely followed, Rembrandt's painting depicted a crucial moment. What the younger son heard was the life of his father. He listened to the heartbeat" (17).

Shank limits his work to the nature of God's heart: "Our thesis is to listen to what the Bible says about the heart of God" (17-18). This is not a study of the

names of God, proofs for God's existence, theodicy, a history of views on God, or the numerous qualities of God. Instead, the journey to discover God's passions and desires will focus on five major tasks: (1) "focus on appropriate passages which speak of the 'heart' of God," (2) "study passages with talk of God's intentions," (3) "concentrate on what delighted and what hurts God," (4) "examine the passages in which God reveals Himself and His nature," (5) talk "about Jesus," in which "we see the fullness of God" (21). Shank covers 28 of the 31 biblical texts that refer to the "heart" of God, the majority of which come from the OT. God speaks of His own heart in 15 of the texts, and others speak about God's heart in the other 16. His aim is to give thorough attention to these relatively few texts: "We will settle in with the meat of one text, growl [meditate] over it, and enjoy the banquet" (27). From this point, he then seeks to follow "canonical trajectories" as Scripture presents a particular aspect of God's heart. Thus, this biblical theology takes a theological and topical approach, beginning with Genesis and following the concepts through the rest of Scripture. Examples of chapters are as follows: "Loyalty: God's Heart for Change (Genesis 6–9), Immanuel: God on Our Side of the Street (Isaiah 7), Jealousy: There Can Only Be One (John 14), Brokenness: The God Who Cares (Psalm 34), Violence: God and the Sword (1 Samuel 15), and Care for the Fatherless: Running Home to God (Psalm 68)" (13–14). Shank's topical limitations could be considered a weakness. His work certainly does not explore all of the things that God desires. However, Shank does not intend to do a comprehensive study. Such a study could be rather large and perhaps lack focus.

Each chapter demonstrates a high degree of scholarly competence, balanced with very accessible, interesting narrative. The reader will no doubt come away from this text with a significant amount of insight concerning the biblical passages deeply explored. However, as is consistent with the author's aim, the greater value to the reader will be in gained depth of insight into the nature of our Father's heart. Shank works to help the reader find not only theological connections to God the Father, but also emotional and personal connections, through the use of colorful exposition of Scripture and the telling of stories to illustrate his points. This book will cause the reader to reconsider the way he reads Scripture. Namely, it will help one consider the heartrending truths about God and his relationship with the world and his people.

Shank's volume would serve well as a supplemental text to an undergraduate course in biblical theology, or more specifically, OT theology. It would also serve exceptionally well as a text for an intermediate or advanced study in adult church-based education, such as Sunday School or a small group. Beyond its merit as a resource for the teacher, Christians looking for a deeper understanding of the nature of God would gain much by delving into this text. This book does much more than show the reader the nature of God. Instead, "This book seeks to do in print what Rembrandt did on canvas. It seeks to turn us into listeners. It puts

our ears next to the heart of God, so we can hear the beat of the divine heart” (33). Shank has succeeded in this endeavor.

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Rufus BURROW, Jr. *Martin Luther King Jr. for Armchair Theologians.*
Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2009. 187 pp. \$16.95.

This volume delivers exactly what is advertised. From beginning to end, King’s thought is accessibly presented with special attention to its origins and further applications that pertain beyond his times. Burrow does an excellent job of weaving the historical setting of King’s life and times with the theological influences that together shaped his views. The reader is led through the development of King’s thought and practice from one point to the next in a way that keeps one always mindful of the many forces that drove him to be such a powerful figure.

A good example of this is found when Burrow moves from the direct formation of King’s theology in chapters 2 and 3 to a brief account of the conditions faced by those who later became associated with King in chapter 4. While this might not be helpful in maintaining a narrative thread, it definitely accomplishes the purpose of pulling together the academic and practical aspects that lay in the background of King’s words and work. From the early teaching of his parents and grandparents to his time at seminary to his interaction with those on the frontlines of civil injustice to his confrontation with principles of nonviolence, all of the formative stimuli resulting in the uniquely prophetic and inspirational life of Martin Luther King are accounted for here.

Since this is a work that targets an audience less concerned for in-depth analysis, it is unfair to expect a more critical examination of King’s thought and practice. It is the stated goal of this book to merely provoke interest in further study on King’s life and work. For this reason, the reader should be ready to forgive a lack of probing investigation into the more controversial parts of King’s theology. That said, there are at least two issues that warrant a closer inspection in even this broad a treatment.

First, King’s thought contains latent tensions that affected his overall mission. The concept of nonviolence is complex as an academic study, as an element of Christian theology, and as a strategy for civil disobedience. The placement of Gandhian principles into Christian interaction with the world is not nearly so comfortable a fit as seems to be suggested. This is most easily demonstrated by the difficulty in talking about the civil rights movement led by King without including words like “fight,” “struggle,” “protest,” and “confrontation.” This tension is crucial in understanding the pressures surrounding King and the movement as a whole.

Second, Burrow makes an effort near the end of the book to demonstrate how King would have approached other important issues. While King's primary focus was the improvement of social conditions for African Americans, Burrow aptly points out that this was only insofar as King understood the good of all to be found in doing good to all. That being true, Burrow makes the case that King would have advocated for equal rights for women and homosexuals, despite the forthright discussion he presents to show that King demonstrated no deliberate interest in civil rights for women or homosexuals.

Overall, however, this volume offers concise but enlightening insight into the mind of one of America's greatest religious figures. It invites a deeper respect and a greater appetite for the ideas that produced such an influential movement in this country's thought and policy. For these reasons, and more, Burrow has given us something for which we can be grateful.

NATHAN SEGARS

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

A renewed interest in the theology of John Calvin in recent evangelicalism and the influence of the Reformed tradition on the history of the Stone-Campbell Restoration Movement demonstrates the value of studying the primary sources of this tradition, especially the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Lane's work offers a flexible, contemporary guide to the study of the *Institutes* for the specialist, student, and general reader. Anyone interested in examining Calvin's theology would benefit from this guide.

Lane designed this volume for use with the McNeill-Battles translation of the *Institutes* (Library of Christian Classics series). He identifies the key sections to read, offers critical commentary, and suggests contemporary application (a detailed reading plan is appended). He focuses on Calvin's "positive theology" while omitting long polemical sections and much historical material. The introductory chapter includes a brief biographical sketch of Calvin, a description of the five editions of the *Institutes*, and a discussion of the purpose and structure of the text. In the subsequent material, Lane introduces each of the four major divisions of the *Institutes* with a brief summary; each of the major sections within the divisions begins with an overview and suggested questions for discussion. He then guides the reader through the text of the *Institutes*, explaining important elements of Calvin's thought and calling attention to the most significant footnotes in the McNeill-Battles edition. He briefly describes the content of the omitted sections. His style is a dialogue, often encouraging the reader to explore noteworthy questions and themes.

This volume addresses all of the major elements of Calvin's theology in a clear outline and gives good insight into Calvin's methodology, style, perspective, tendencies, and favorite analogies. Lane identifies Calvin's summary paragraphs when present, perhaps the best feature of the content aspect of the book. The author provides excellent historical contexts for understanding the sources of Calvin's thought in the church fathers, medieval scholars, and, especially, Augustine. He often compares Calvin's conclusions with those of other Reformation era leaders such as Luther, Zwingli, and the Anabaptists. His perspective is also valuable: he points out that the *Institutes* were primarily intended to be used as a complement to Calvin's biblical commentaries for the purpose of developing Christian piety. Lane is certainly appreciative of Calvin's theological positions and takes opportunity to defend his doctrines and correct misunderstandings; but he also recognizes when Calvin is inconsistent, outdated, or simply wrong.

The current volume is caught between the desire to be concise and "user-friendly" and a thorough introduction to Calvin's *Institutes*. There are places where exposition of the omitted material would have been very helpful, especially in the polemical sections where Calvin is answering important questions raised by his opponents. By ignoring polemics, he excludes significant criticism of Calvin's positions. Lane makes brief comments without explanation ("unfortunate," "mistakenly")—more extensive footnotes would be welcomed by the reader.

This work would be very useful for the serious student of Calvin's theology and best employed in a classroom setting. It could be read for single topics of interest and is accessible enough for the general reader who would like to become familiar with this important source of Reformation theology. The specialist should also use Battles' *Analysis of the Institutes of the Christian Religion of John Calvin* (Baker, 1980) as a companion volume. Lane's work is especially relevant for Stone-Campbell interests as it gives insight into Calvin's covenant theology, the relationship between the Testaments, the nature of faith, essentials and nonessentials ("Calvin is delightfully vague here"), church discipline, and the sacraments.

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David W. HALL and Peter A. LILLBACK, eds. *Theological Guide to Calvin's Institutes: Essays and Analysis*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P and R, 2008. 508 pp. \$35.99.

The literature on the great reformer of Geneva, John Calvin, continues to grow, as documented in the updated Calvin bibliography published annually in *Calvin Theological Journal*. The bibliographer, Paul Fields, currently has his work

cut out for him, for the year 2009, the quincentennial of Calvin's birth, has brought all the remaining Calvin scholars out of hiding. The dozen or so major conferences commemorating Calvin's life and work were accompanied by a flurry of presentations and publications.

The *annus mirabilis* was anticipated by the 2008 publication of this guide to Calvin's most celebrated work, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Without doubt, Calvin's *Institutes*, whose final and definitive Latin edition was published in 1559, is to be numbered among the most influential theological treatises of all time. In their attempt to get the Calvin year off to a good start, Hall and Lillback have assigned eighteen different sections of *Institutes* to scholars who have elucidated the primary topics found in those respective sections. These eighteen essays are preceded by a chapter on historical context, an editors' preface, and a foreword by J.I. Packer. They are followed by a concise "essential Calvin bibliography," as well as an index of Scriptures and of subjects and names.

Although the purpose of this guide is not explicitly stated in its preface, it is implied when the editors refer to this volume as a "collection of commentaries on Calvin's *Institutes*" (xv). They also liken the book to a Festschrift presented posthumously to the reformer (xvii). The editors state that commentators were chosen who would be "sympathetic" in their readings of Calvin (xvi) and who shared a common commitment to "honor the text" (xv). Indeed, one contributor probably speaks for others when he refers to Calvin as "my mentor" (247). The book is apparently not intended to break new ground in Calvin scholarship as much as to synthesize and make accessible the reflections of these contributors in conversation with recent Calvin scholarship.

Because of the uneven quality of contributions, reviewing a book of collected essays is typically troublesome. Rather than running through the topics of each chapter, this review will offer some general reflections with a few specific examples. The guidelines for writing seem to have been fairly loose, given the various methods of approach represented in this collection. Some chapters stick fairly close to their assigned text of the *Institutes*, whereas others veer off rather quickly. The best chapters demonstrate a good balance of commenting on the text of the *Institutes* informed by Calvin's other works, interacting with scholarship, and addressing some current issues based on the text. Venema's chapter on eschatology is surely a good example of this balance.

In light of the occasion for the book, it is perhaps excusable that it is sometimes hagiographical in tone, particularly in the opening statement from Packer. The book appears to have been written above all by Calvinists and for Calvinists. In some contributions, however, this tone can become distracting and, even worse, hyperbolic to the point of clouding accurate description. By way of example, it is potentially distracting to a non-Calvinist reader when, in the opening chapter on historical context, Barker feels the need to point out that non-Calvinists have also offered positive assessments of *Institutes*. The references to a

“modern Roman Catholic scholar” and “another modern interpreter, Protestant but outside the Reformed tradition” (11) lend a provincial character to the book. An example of inaccuracy is provided in the same chapter, which goes on to claim that the “relation between theology and exegesis of Scripture” gives “distinctive character to the Reformed faith.” Since Calvin’s *Institutes* are a fine example of this relationship, Barker concludes that “the Reformed faith is aptly termed ‘Calvinism’” (14). In fact, the connection between exegesis and theology is not distinct to the Reformed tradition, but is the common heritage of all Christian thought before the Enlightenment; Calvin is not the only or the first Reformed thinker to reflect this connection.

Another criticism regards the issue of the book’s structure. It is evident from the chapter titles, which cite the respective sections of *Institutes* to be discussed, that the sequence of topics is meant to follow that of *Institutes*, and logically so (chapter two covers *Institutes* I.i-v, and so on). After all, Calvin himself was concerned about the proper arrangement of this work (“ordo recte docendi”), as he acknowledges in its opening chapter (*Institutes* I.i.3). Yet no explanation is offered for some topics appearing out of the order Calvin gave to them. For example, predestination (from book III) is situated in the midst of the doctrine of God (book I). Order may not change the content of the doctrine, but Calvin surely placed predestination in book III for a reason. Later, the editors placed eschatology after ecclesiology, thus reversing Calvin’s order and creating dissonance with Venema’s explanation of Calvin’s order (443-445). A commentary on a carefully structured book should stick with that book’s order, unless a good reason is offered for modifying it. This somewhat obvious imposition of an external method onto *Institutes*—without explanation—is probably not of immense interpretive significance *per se*, but it serves as a reliable indicator of the semi-popular genre of the present volume and reflects a subtle lack of attention to detail evident in some of the chapters.

With these caveats in mind, this guide to Calvin’s *Institutes* will serve as a useful reference tool for anyone (minister, student, or scholar) interested in Calvin but unfamiliar with current Calvin scholarship, as well as for anyone who desires an accessible introduction to the theology of *Institutes*.

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Brian STANLEY. *The World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh 1910.*
Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009. 352 pp. \$45.00.

Stanley’s volume is the 17th title in Eerdmans’ *Studies in the History of Christian Missions* series, in which he also serves as one of the general editors. It represents the best of historical research, with special attention given to primary

sources, including correspondence between the original planners of the World Missionary Conference. Stanley's analysis puts a new slant on the Conference, questioning the oft-repeated declaration that Edinburgh served as the starting point for 20th-century ecumenism. In truth, it was neither the beginning of the ecumenical movement, nor was it entirely ecumenical.

His first chapter places the conference in the context of early 20th-century expectations: this was to be a conference that would launch a new wave of missionaries bolstered by the church's adoption of the new methodologies of the social sciences. The groundwork of the Conference took place in eight preparatory commissions that prepared reports on the following subjects: (1) Carrying the Gospel to All the World; (2) The Native Church and Its Workers; (3) Education in Relation to the Christianization of National Life; (4) The Missionary Message in Relation to Non-Christian Religions; (5) The Preparation of Missionaries; (6) The Home Base of Missions; (7) Relation of Missions to Governments; (8) Cooperation and the Promotion of Unity.

Stanley goes on in chapter 2 to describe the political maneuverings that led to the makeup of the commissions, especially with regard to the mix between British and American members as well as the delicate care that was taken to include the Anglo-Catholic wing of the Church of England. Much of the success of the Conference was due to the careful diplomacy of Joseph Oldham, the young secretary of the Conference.

In chapter 3 the issue becomes: what is the world? Where does Christendom end and the world begin? Are nations with an established Catholic presence, such as those in South America, part of the mission field or the church? In the end, and more for political than strategic considerations, the planners of the Conference divided the earth between the workers and the fields, glossing over the complexities that most of the participants would have recognized.

Chapter 4 looks at the Conference in session, including logistical concerns, the program, and the conduct of the meetings as chaired by John Mott.

Chapter 5 gives consideration to the small minority of representatives from "younger churches," most of whom came from Asia. In spite of their paucity, their contributions served to challenge and even disrupt the almost unified sense of paternalism on the part of the "sending nation" delegates.

Chapters 6–10 go back to preparatory commissions 2, 3, 4, 7, and 8, with special attention given to the personalities within each commission. In each chapter Stanley examines not only the results contained in a commission's final report but what parts of the discussions never found their way into the report. While Stanley does analyze some of the results of Commission 1 in chapter 3 with a brief nod to what might be considered the home base of missions (Commission 6), it was disappointing that there was no treatment of Commission 5.

Finally, Stanley dedicates a chapter to a backward look at the Edinburgh Conference, from the missiological perspective of the early 21st century.

Stanley does an excellent job of relating history in context. He gives the Conference its due while acknowledging its shortcomings, particularly with regard to the attitudes expressed toward the animistic peoples of the world. Edinburgh did represent a significant step in cooperation between certain Christian groups, but it also represented a type of naïve triumphalism and Darwinian assumptions about Western cultural superiority. In the end, the most significant decision made at the Conference was to form a continuation committee.

This volume deserves a place in any theological library. Students would do well to take special note of Stanley's extensive bibliography that covers far more than the Conference itself.

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Herman J. SELDERHUIS. *John Calvin: A Pilgrim's Life.* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009. 304 pp. \$25.00.

Selderhuis presents to readers a personal, even heartfelt, image of the great reformer John Calvin. Selderhuis, professor of church history and director of the Institute for Reformation Research at the Theological University Apeldoorn (Netherlands), claims to approach Calvin as “neither friend nor enemy” and states, “I feel nothing for Calvin either way” (8). This volume reflects the truth of this claim, and readers will most certainly be drawn to the story of Calvin offered in this volume.

In ten solid chapters, Selderhuis accomplishes his goal of revealing the interesting person hidden behind the perceptions of Calvin as a “somber academic” (8). Each individual chapter focuses on a period of Calvin's life, moving chronologically and, like most biographies, begins with his birth and ends with his death. Each chapter carries with it a theme.

Chapter One, “Orphan 1509–1533,” begins to explain Calvin's devotion to God as his Father and to the church as his mother. Here, Calvin's respect for certain father figures, particularly Farel and Bucer, becomes clear. Chapter Two, “Pilgrim 1533–1536,” tells of Calvin's flight from France to Geneva. The image of a pilgrimage, however, is fitting for Calvin's entire life. As a pilgrim both in the worldly and spiritual sense, Calvin understood that he would find no permanent home and no rest until he reached his final heavenly home. Chapter Three, “Stranger 1536–1538,” describes Calvin's initial years in Geneva. Selderhuis helpfully examines the city of Geneva itself, both before and after Calvin's arrival, showing that Calvin did not rule Geneva as a tyrant. In fact, Calvin did not possess much authority at all in those initial years. Chapter Four, “Refugee 1538–1541,” informs readers of Calvin's activities during his time away from Geneva and his growing relationships with Bucer and Melancthon. It is during

these years that the author sees the real birth of Calvin as a “theologian and church leader” (86). Chapter Five, “Preacher 1541–1546,” illustrates Calvin’s work as a church leader upon his return to Geneva. Selderhuis emphasizes that for Calvin knowledge was not merely intellectual but was also existential (133). For this reason, Calvin “felt there was no room in the church for cold pastors” (134). Chapter Six, “Victim 1546–1549,” points out the rising tension between Calvin and Geneva. Calvin and Geneva were “not exactly on the same wavelength” (145). Problems regarding the church’s authority over against the authority of political officials plagued Calvin’s work in the city, especially in regards to church discipline. Chapter Seven, “Widower 1549–1551,” addresses Calvin’s marriage to Idelett van Buren and his views on courtship, marriage, and divorce in general. Here, readers will find it difficult to maintain the customary, stoic image of Calvin as they read of his loving devotion for his wife and his grief over the death of their infant son. Selderhuis’s comments on Calvin’s opinions on courtship exemplify the author’s often lighthearted and humorous interaction with Calvin, suggesting that “there was little for couples to do except read the *Institutes* together” (181). Chapter Eight, “Patient 1551–1554,” presents Calvin in light of his many physical and mental pains. Calvin was a sickly person his entire life, but, as the author points out, his illnesses were undoubtedly irritated by his many personal conflicts with others. They were, perhaps, also the cause of some of those conflicts, leaving Calvin with “less resistance and patience” and a “tendency to overreact” (196). This chapter also describes a shift in political power within Geneva, a shift which was certainly in Calvin’s favor. Chapter Nine, “Sailor 1555–1559,” focuses on Calvin’s strong work ethic and leisure activities, which included sailing. A portion of the chapter is devoted to Max Weber’s thesis that connects Calvinism and capitalism. Chapter Ten, “Soldier 1559–1564,” depicts the last years of Calvin’s life, which Calvin himself often spoke of as military duty. This final chapter highlights Calvin’s view of the Christian life as military service, explaining his final role as a “field commander” sending his trained troops out into the world. Here, the author also describes Calvin’s view of political resistance and rebellion.

Selderhuis accepts Calvin’s claim that “we learn most about people from their letters” (8). Thus, his main sources are Calvin’s numerous letters. Though he claims there is a “clear distinction between the Calvin of letters and the Calvin of personal conversation,” Selderhuis believes “that the real Calvin is to be found in his correspondence” (165). Individual readers must decide whether or not to accept the claim shared by Calvin and Selderhuis.

The strength of this work comes in its simplicity and thematic organization. Certainly, each chapter theme could, in some sense, be the organizing theme of Calvin’s entire life. But these themes are general motifs for the various stages of Calvin’s life, helping readers identify with the interesting person of John Calvin. Each chapter contains numerous subheadings, which allow readers to view Calvin’s life in scenes, much like watching a documentary film.

This text would serve well as an introduction to the person of John Calvin. It may also provide an alternative image of the great reformer for those already familiar with his life and work. While Selderhuis does identify a few of them, he does not expatiate much on the theological aspects of Calvinism, or more properly, Reformed Christianity. Thus, readers looking for a primer on the theology of Calvin or Calvinism will not find it here. Selderhuis refrains from using in-text citations including footnotes and endnotes. Sources are cited at the end of the book by page number. This allows for a more fluid reading, though it may frustrate readers interested in noting sources with a quick glance.

BRYAN SPRAGG

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Raouf GHATTAS and Carol B. GHATTAS. *A Christian Guide to the Qur'an: Building Bridges in Muslim Evangelism*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2009. 446 pp. \$24.99.

Raouf and Carol Ghattas are a husband-wife team dedicated to the evangelization of Muslims. Raouf is a native of Egypt, and although growing up as an evangelical, he was surrounded by a strong Islamic culture in which he was intensely interested from his early years. Along with his American wife, they have been involved in missions among Islamic populations in African and Middle Eastern countries. Carol has also become an expert in reaching out to Muslims from a Christian perspective.

Together they have published one of the best guides to the Qur'an for the uninformed Christian audience. A brief but helpful introduction to the life of Muhammad and compilation of the Qur'an is given, with a note of how the Islamic world views their holy book. The book is not intended to be so much an apologetical contrast between the Bible and the Qur'an as much as a comparison between the two with the intent of providing a bridge to opening discussions between Islamic and Christian believers. Since this is only a guide to the Qur'an, the exact text of the Qur'an is not cited. It is therefore advisable to have the Qur'an at hand so one can read the precise wording of the text.

Each of the Qur'an's 114 Suras (chapters) is dealt with separately and given a brief but meaningful overview. The remainder of a chapter is then divided topically and briefly explained. In each of these subsections the Ghattases point out the similarities and/or contrasts with the Bible, but, as noted above, with the intent of showing how Christians can use these similarities and contrasts to "bridge" into a discussion of the Christian perspective of the respective subject matter. For example, the first Sura introduces the Fatiha or most sacred prayer of Islam, with which anyone must familiarize themselves if they want to have a meaningful conversation about faith with a Muslim. The Ghattases suggest that

allowing the Muslim to recite the Fatiha as a statement of his faith could serve as an opportunity for the Christian to recite the Lord's Prayer and thus serve as a bridge for discussing the similarities. There are of course differences, but initially in the early stages of such conversations similarities are more important and less controversial, yet laying a groundwork of friendliness and openness that will make the more controversial contrasts less abrasive.

Another key example is found in Sura 2: Al-Baqara (*The Heifer*; although each Sura has a name, even Islamic experts have no idea why some Suras have names completely unrelated to the subject of that Sura). Here verses 30-37 present the creation of man and the origin of sin. According to the Qur'an Adam and Eve (never mentioned by name, but only as Adam's wife) were made in matters of knowledge at a higher level than angels. The angels feared that if God made man, he would shed blood. Nonetheless, God made man and commanded the angels to bow down to him, which all did except Iblis (Satan), who refused to out of pride. This was Satan's fall and the origin of sin. In verse 36, it appears that Satan made Adam and Eve sin. The Qur'an simply does not have a very meaningful explanation of the origin of sin nor of the absolute free will of mankind. Since all things come from Allah, who is the only true being of free will, then man was destined from the beginning to sin, making Allah ultimately responsible for sin. Adam learned from Allah "words of inspiration" (v. 37), evidently meaning repentance, which when followed, would lead to Allah's mercy in forgiving man's sin. The Qur'an has no meaningful explanation of Law and Mercy. In the Islamic system, man sins, Allah forgives with no explanation of how a perfect law can be just if it is broken: mercy cannot abrogate a perfect law. Here the Ghattases suggest explaining an understanding of how Jesus was the fulfillment of the law broken, thus the sacrifice for our sins through which God could show his mercy.

Another area helpful in understanding Islam is the many contradictions in different sections of the Qur'an which on the one hand preach the use of violence for the cause of Allah and in other passages teach mercy. The common explanation is that in the early days of Islam (Medina period), when it was suppressed, violence for defense was necessary, whereas in the later years (Mecca period), it was not under duress, and thus preached tolerance. However, as the Ghattases' point out, the Qur'an itself does not date these periods clearly, leaving the contradictions problematical.

Those of the Stone-Campbell Restoration Movement heritage will note the occasional reference to the Evangelical mantra "salvation by grace through faith alone" as the Ghattases (Southern Baptists) overemphasize the contrast of Islamic works salvation with the grace of Christ.

With the Qur'an in hand, along with Ghattases' *Guide*, those unfamiliar with the basic text of Islam will find a quick and helpful introduction. The similarities and much more the contrasts between the Qur'an and the Bible will be pointed

out within a context of how to use them as bridges to meaningful discussions with Muslim friends.

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Audrey BORSCHERL. *Preaching Prophetically When the News Disturbs: Interpreting the Media.* St. Louis: Chalice, 2009. 160 pp. \$19.99.

Audrey Borschchel serves as a minister of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). She is a featured speaker for many justice activist groups. Because Borschchel served both as a pastoral and music minister in several congregations of different denominations, this book comes from a pastor's heart.

Containing six chapters and six appendices, this book discusses how the pastoral minister needs to understand and deal with the disquieting and unsettling aspects of bad news. The author's introduction establishes the book's value by pointing out the power and strength of the news media, and the need for preachers to interpret today's news in the light of the gospel.

Chapter 1 looks at the biblical authority to preach the news that disturbs: those things that "shake the faith and well-being of the community." Chapter 2 examines the evolution of the news media and the decisions that determine how news is gathered and distributed. Chapter 3 introduces some important media literacy tools used to create, construct, and present news to the public. This helps the preacher weigh the merit and bias of any news story. Chapter 4 deals with the art of pastoral, biblical preaching when news disturbs. The author emphasizes the need to tie today's news with the Good News of consolation, hope, and resurrection. Chapter 5 discusses what preachers can learn from the way secular journalists deal with issues. Reminding us that the first-century church leaders were not unbiased or neutral in their proclamations, the author urges today's preachers to tackle difficult subjects with God's justice and mercy. Chapter 6 shares ideas, methods, and activities gleaned from an Indianapolis workshop dealing with the concepts of the book.

The appendices present the following: an explanation of liberation theologies and human rights movements that help determine how news is reported; four examples of sermons preached on sensitive topics or troubling news; and a survey developed by the author to "test (the) thesis that preachers need to respond to disturbing news events by addressing them from the pulpit."

We live in a complicated world where initial and incomplete news stories are immediately presented as truth, where anyone can become a reporter with a following via the internet, and where bias, prejudice, gossip, and slander can be presented as gospel. Many people react to both worldwide and local events through the sole source of the news media. The author gives preachers the needed and nec-

essary tools to analyze how the media creates and reports the news. More importantly, she challenges and inspires preachers to boldly and compassionately present Jesus Christ as the hope of the world even as terrible news erupts around them.

The book was published in March 2009. But because information today is shared at lightning-fast speed, the examples of cutting-edge news stories the author refers to can now appear to be less relevant today. Borschel's concepts, however, are timeless.

The author emphasizes that the reader should always be aware of the bias and slant of those providing the news. Likewise, every preacher has his or her own bias and slant. Though Borschel takes positions on issues with which some readers of *SCJ* might disagree (such as the death penalty, illegal aliens, and the holding of suspected terrorists), her call to offer the compassion and love of Jesus Christ must be heard.

This volume can be a significant tool in homiletics and practical ministries classes in Bible colleges and seminaries. It will become an invaluable aid for the preaching minister who needs to proclaim Jesus as the hope of the world to people who are bombarded with hopelessness.

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Fred Brenning CRADDOCK. *Reflections on My Call to Preach: Connecting the Dots.* St. Louis: Chalice, 2008. 117 pp. \$19.99.

For those who don't know Fred Craddock, what might we say? Fred is one of the Stone-Campbell's greatest preachers of the late twentieth/early twenty-first centuries—some might argue the greatest. He is a highly-respected and noted professor of preaching and NT, influencing scores of preachers in the Stone-Campbell streams and far beyond as well. He is a humble man of small stature with a huge heart and a concern for the Kingdom who can tell stories in ways that intermingle God's Story into the stories of our lives, a man who in his own direct and indirect ways challenges us to be more and different than we are. And now comes this story, Fred's story, on his own call to preach.

The opening sentence of Craddock's Introduction notes that "there are three times when one can know an event: in advance of it . . . while it is going on . . . when it is over, in reflection on it. . . ." And then, in the final chapter, "Reflections on These Reflections," Fred observes that a "call is of a piece with one's entire life of faith" (113). From the beginning through the closing chapter, Fred looks in reflection on his eighty-some years' life in faith and call. Again, this time by connecting the dots of his own life, Fred offers yet another story that has the potential to challenge, and perhaps even change, its readers.

Readers who know Fred or have heard him preach will likely hear his voice in the reading of this book. If you are a “Fred Fan,” you will enjoy the book. If you are not, you may find the book to be one merely of good stories and a sermon illustration or two.

But this reviewer wants to urge you to consider a huger component of this humble, small work. In a culture where many of us have lost or never learned the art of communicating and calling-out *call* (God’s *Call*), this book is a treasure for helping us to pause and consider this very real dynamic. In true Craddock form, this book lends itself to helping the reader intermingle God’s Story into their own, to see where God has been calling them, us, all our lives (whether or not that is to a call to preach).

Some might want to relegate the current volume to a biographical or nice-personal-read category. Yet, it has far greater value. It would be as appropriate for use in an adult small group or Sunday School setting (its thirteen chapters lend themselves nicely to be used for a quarter), as it would be to discuss it with youth as young as ninth grade. One might think about giving it to a young adult or to someone contemplating—or who “should” be contemplating—a call to ministry, all the better if done so with a commitment for a follow-up conversation. And what a great option it might be for heavy-reading seminary classes addressing pastoral identity and constructive theology. On a personal level, as a middle-judicatory leader, I’ll be looking forward to sharing and discussing it with the pastors I reach and serve.

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Mark R. MCMINN. *Sin and Grace in Christian Counseling: An Integrative Paradigm.* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2008. 180 pp. \$18.00.

McMinn, clinical psychologist and professor of psychology at George Fox University, has authored several works discussing the integration of psychology and Christianity in both theory and practice. As its title indicates, this book emphasizes the importance of a biblical theology of sin and grace in the context of Christian counseling and psychotherapy. McMinn makes the point that sin and grace go hand in hand, and an incomplete view of one distorts and cheapens the impact of the other. The first half of the book is dedicated to engendering within readers a sound theology of sin and grace while the second half contains a practical model of Christian psychotherapy that demonstrates how these truths may be utilized within the counseling relationship.

McMinn begins his discussion by highlighting the fact that many Christian

counselors have moved from a vocabulary of sin and grace to a psychological language of maladaptive behaviors and pleasant feelings. This shift has come with the cost of undermining the impact of sin, both personal sins committed by individuals and the global effects of a fallen world. As sin then becomes less heinous, the magnificent beauty of grace becomes dull as well. Within the realm of Christian counseling, some have emphasized personal sin as the etiology of all psychological problems (stop sinning and the problems will dissipate), while others have focused solely upon grace (God loves you no matter what you have done). McMinn argues that both of these perspectives contain truth, yet both are lacking when not combined with one another. Confrontation of sin in the context of grace can help someone move toward healing and restoration of a right relationship with God.

The second half of the book presents the practical application of sin and grace within a theoretical model called *Integrative Psychotherapy*, developed by McMinn along with Clark Campbell. This model asserts that people interact in three domains, each grounded in the *imago Dei*. The functional domain is the most readily accessible to counselors, because it is typically a functional problem that prompts people to seek counseling. Here people may be confronted by the ways that their sins are impeding their functioning in the context of a grace-filled relationship. Next, the structural domain focuses upon core beliefs and schemas by which people interpret life events. In this domain the counselor uses many of the same techniques seen in cognitive-behavioral therapy. McMinn, however, cautions the Christian counselor to evaluate so-called “maladaptive” schemas in light of biblical truth rather than simply based upon the likely emotional outcome of holding to a certain belief. Finally, the relational domain considers how people interact with one another and highlights the fact that sin is primarily relational. McMinn emphasizes that sin permeates all three domains through both personal sin and the consequences of sin that mark this fallen world. Herein lies the need for the grace of God that brings healing and restoration.

McMinn’s emphasis on the importance of sound theology in the context of Christian counseling is one of the many assets of this book. The reader is challenged to explore and consider various viewpoints particularly in light of the fact that in our fallen state, people tend to seek out information that is consistent with what they already affirm. In a concise manner, he outlines a theology of sin and grace that may be applied both personally and professionally. The addition of practical examples set aside in the text help the reader to formulate an image of how these concepts may be integrated into the counseling relationship. Those who are familiar with McMinn’s work may find the second portion of the book to be redundant, as it is admittedly taken primarily from the text of *Integrative Psychotherapy* (McMinn & Campbell, 2007). To the less familiar reader, however, this framework increases the practicality of the book for professional, pastoral, and lay counselors. Students pursuing a career in Christian counseling will bene-

fit from the deliberate appraisal of theological viewpoints of sin and grace, particularly regarding how it will inform their theoretical orientation and practice of psychotherapy. To those who are already active in this arena, the concise nature of the book makes it quite accessible and provides an impetus to implement an understanding as well as a language of sin and grace in the context of each counseling relationship.

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Mark A. YARHOUSE and James N. SELLS. *Family Therapies: A Comprehensive Christian Appraisal.* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009. 496 pp. \$35.00.

This volume is divided into four parts: a Christian look at the family, existing family therapy theories and a Christian analysis of them, common issues in family therapy and a guide for “. . . integrative Christian family therapy/counseling/ministry” (10-11). In their prelude Yarhouse and Sells claim one of their purposes is to provide guidelines for students, Christian therapists, ministers, and lay leaders by presenting “some ideas for critical engagement and practical applications” in family therapy (9).

Although the authors mean for this book to reach a wide audience (10), the predominant focus of this work is academic as opposed to practical. This book could be assigned reading in a collegiate counseling program, but it is unlikely that a minister or lay counselor would be interested, in part due to the length. In addition, even professional counselors would struggle to complete this work considering its comprehensive nature and the overwhelming caseloads they often experience.

Yarhouse and Sells also indicate they are attempting to provide counseling professionals a new resource, but in reality they have merely repackaged therapeutic surveys in a Christian framework. Truly lacking in the field are new strategies to implement in the faith-based treatment process, so a fresh, new presentation of ideas and techniques would better suit the Christian family therapist.

On the other hand, part three of this book, which addressed current family issues such as divorce and its effects on both children and parents, has strong appeal. The same is true of the crisis and trauma section, which challenges helping professionals to empathize with the client’s unique situation by considering his present position. For example, the authors compare the “‘compassion-fatigue’ literature” and “‘crisis/trauma counseling literature” (326) and suggest that the “‘compassion-fatigue literature” is better able to “track the family’s experience more closely” (326). This finding prompts the family therapist to seek out new tools that will enable him or her to have a more complete picture of the family’s circumstance.

Another helpful strategy was the “multi-directed partiality” technique (359) which validates each family member’s own experience in a given situation. The authors do a sufficient job of explaining this technique and others, such as empathizing with families (360). This reminds professional counselors to integrate these techniques into their own practice; however, these approaches may prove difficult for lay persons or ministerial staff not so familiar with the counseling process. It would have been better for the authors to have provided more of a “how-to” for both professional and nonprofessional audiences.

Furthermore, part three could have given examples of how the life and teachings of the “Wonderful Counselor,” Jesus Christ, could be used to help families. For instance, Paul exhorted husbands in Ephesus to love their wives in the same manner Christ loved the church, through self-sacrifice. The application relevant in this volume would be that family members could respond to each other with the same love and compassion Christ showed by putting each other above themselves and actively loving and accepting each other.

Even though some sections of the book are very useful, Yarhouse and Sells fall short of a full integration of family therapy theories and Christian perspectives. A more successful integration of therapeutic theories and biblical example would have emphasized Christ as the ultimate example and used his Word to incorporate new techniques into treatment, thus completing the connection between the church as family and the modern family. Professional Christian counselors who have taken faith-based integration courses will likely have been exposed to a stronger integration than that presented in the current volume. Consequently, this book provides nothing new for a professional Christian counselor and leaves one longing for more practical, biblical application.

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Andrew R. WHEELER. *Together in Prayer: Coming to God in Community.* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009. 184 pp. \$15.00.

The current volume aims to lay out the groundwork for establishing responsible, meaningful prayer ministry within a church small group. Wheeler starts by highlighting the connection between God and the believer that comes through prayer. In the Foreword it is noted that the tone of this book—“the fact that he, in all of his splendour, will stop and listen intently to our every word, as if nothing could be more important to him at that moment, is truly breathtaking. God desires relationship with us, and our dialog with him through prayer is where he reveals the deep things of his nature” (7). Throughout this book Wheeler also makes the comment that as with an individual so with a community (he is particularly talking about small groups in the life of a church), prayer reflects the relationship of the community with God.

Wheeler commences by making a case for community prayer. He acknowledges that many Christians struggle with an effective prayer life and particularly that community prayer has a bad reputation. This book is not an academic examination of prayer but an impassioned plea for good communal prayer in small groups. Wheeler does not set out to write a “how to do it step by step” manual but seeks to give small group leaders skills and prods that will enable them to better develop their particular group’s prayer life. Scattered throughout the book are a number of tips for the group leader.

I was particularly impressed by first examination of the NT to elicit an understanding of the importance of prayer in the life of the early church. He also looked at what principles could be gleaned from these NT references. Whilst not referring specifically to Stone-Campbell churches, he comments: “Even churches that strive to base themselves on the New Testament model often neglect this crucial area of life together” (25). This would be my experience from ministry in churches in both Australia and New Zealand within the Stone-Campbell Movement.

Wheeler concentrates particularly on the person we are addressing in prayer and how our understanding of God should influence the content of our prayer. Too often our prayers are more about ourselves than they are about God, and we often neglect the whole area of praise and honour. I was reading the current volume while attending a minister’s refresher and was particularly struck by the terrible content of the public prayer in contrast to what Andrew Wheeler was suggesting should be the content of prayer addressed to God.

It was refreshing to read about some of the areas of difficulty in group prayer (praying in tongues, spiritual warfare, prayer, and healing) and have reflection on dealing with these issues as the group leader. Wheeler’s comment should be a guiding principle in any church small group ministry: “Entire prayer theologies are sometimes developed around a couple of oblique references and key terms. The accuracy of these beliefs and practices is not provable” (135). Wheeler’s approach is to look at problems sensitively and then encourage group leaders to help their groups come to a consensus so that all were brought together.

The one section that I had some difficulty with was his advocacy of confession in the group prayer life. The depth of confession he was advocating would need a very mature and loving group to ensure that it did not end in real problems. It is an area that we need to be more honest about in church; however, discretion is very much needed for this to work well.

Overall I would recommend this book to anyone looking at developing the prayer life of small groups or of developing a prayer ministry within the life of a church.

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Todd D. HUNTER. *Christianity beyond Belief: Following Jesus for the Sake of Others.* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009. 198 pp. \$22.00.

This volume is a valuable book for those wishing to reflect on discipleship, faith, and the Christian journey. Hunter, who is well known for his work with Alpha Course, has published a work that challenges readers to focus on discipleship in their spiritual growth in the kingdom. Hunter begins by discussing his conversion to Christ as a desire to “get to heaven.” As the book unfolds he discusses his maturity process in moving from “desiring to be saved and go to heaven,” to Christianity as a journey and development of faith.

Hunter explains that many Christians are taught that salvation is based on a desire to end at heaven. However, in this volume he describes Christianity as a journey that involves spiritual growth, aligning with God’s story, and calling others to this same journey. Hunter engages the reader in his personal story of reaching people, engaging others in the vision and ministry of Jesus, and moving together for the kingdom of God. This involves not only understanding the vision of Jesus but truly desiring to become a part of this vision. Aligning with God’s story is also a call to discipleship. Christians are called not just to come to salvation, only to walk from the faith years later, but to become part of God’s story of transformation, grace, love, and outreach.

Hunter also discusses engaging others in the journey through outreach and community involvement. He suggests that outreach involves connecting with others, becoming active in the community, and embracing community issues. He has obviously grown from his initial conversion experience where preaching salvation involved a Sunday morning revival and outreach consisted of inviting people to a special meeting. His emphasis on small groups engaging communities and its empowerment of others is evident from the Alpha Course.

This book was engaging and challenged my faith and my preaching. I didn’t expect to be stirred when I first began to read the book but found that Hunter’s ideas work in the back of my mind to subtly help me question things I have been taught in the past. Two days after finishing this book I was explaining the faith as a journey to a person visiting our church and wanting to know more about the faith. I wondered where I had read some of the ideas I had shared with her. It didn’t occur to me until I saw the book on my shelf that evening that I was quoting much of what Hunter wrote. His thoughts are very helpful in a quiet and subtle way.

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Craig VAN GELDER, ed. *The Missional Church & Denominations: Helping Congregations Develop a Missional Identity*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008. 282 pp. \$26.00.

From the premise that the missional understanding and practice of ecclesiology is relatively a fringe movement, this volume seems a bit strange. Van Gelder has assembled a host of writers to give not only the philosophical basis for congregations to move away from attractional or institutional-based praxis but also to provide a pathway for whole denominational structures to adopt a missional mind-set. The case studies for movement to a missional polity within denominations come from representatives within the Episcopal, Evangelical Lutheran Church, and the Evangelical Covenant Church.

Van Gelder is careful to distinguish that within these suggestions is the very subtle distinction between “denominations and denominationalism” (6). The majority of Van Gelder’s introductory chapter as well as Alan Roxburgh’s robust cultural analysis are built upon two key themes found in much of contemporary missional church writing and practice. The first is the idea of a *liminal* church polity, namely that the church is temporary, and therefore the structure of the church should reflect that reality in its approach to its role in the world. A liminal church is not concerned with promoting its own preservation as an institution but can be free to fulfill its role as God’s people sent to the world. The second is a *Trinitarian* conception of ministry that emphasizes all aspects of the Godhead in the activity and work of the church instead of a solely *christological* conception typically found in the contemporary church. These are the orienting themes for most if not all writing and thinking on the missional church movement.

Alan Roxburgh’s insights into the formation of organizational culture and the impact on the church are solid and subtly painful to the accepted structure of many attractional churches today, and his four major dynamics of denominations are helpful for discussion of missional polity. Van Gelder’s insight that a shift has taken place in the church from a place based on “privilege of birth” (belonging to the church of your family heritage), to a “fluid organization of choice” (the church that best fits personal preference). The implications of this change are both the rise of the megachurch and the thinking that has created impetus for missional thinking and practice. Marion Wyveta-Bullock’s section on identity in leadership in missional polity (112) and Dwight Zscheile’s insight that “the polity of a church is always contextual” (133) are both key pieces of discussion fodder for any conversations on missional church polity.

Sadly, the downside of this book is that the section that is the single most important piece is the part that seems the most strange and out of place. The representatives of the three denominations mentioned above offer an apologetic for how their particular denominational polity can transition into a missional polity. On the whole, the discussions slightly resemble the hapless mimicking character “Me Too, Me Too Iguana” from a popular children’s book. Each representative’s

application seems to be pleading the case for the sake of the title of the book. Most if not all of the suggestions the authors make are geared toward gaining the new and (sadly) “trendy” missional church program without changing any of the existing denominational structure.

The weight of this book falls on the first four chapters. The final four are substantially weaker and serve as little more than historical introductions to their respective denominational systems. From a nondenominational perspective, the last four chapters are interesting tours through denominational foundations whereas the first four chapters could indeed serve to instruct and guide nondenominational churches on the movement from an attractional or institutional mind-set to a missional approach toward ecclesiology. In either case, the value of this book is in what one might do with the content in each chapter as opposed to what one may learn from a strictly cognitive perspective. The audience that will value this work most are those involved in teaching and actively serving in contemporary ministry contexts. Even those in denominational structures may find some discussion-worthy pieces in the final four chapters. The academic reader will enjoy both Van Gelder and Roxburgh’s introductory chapters, with Roxburgh serving as the bracing cultural historian.

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Bonnie THURSTON. *For God Alone: A Primer on Prayer.* Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009. 227 pp. \$18.00.

Thurston’s primer on prayer will be an eye-opener for many Christians because she explores methods of prayer which some will consider foreign. She says “three historic Christian modes of prayer” (5) should be considered as one tries to discover what works best for them. The prayer modes Thurston investigates are: *oratio* (prayers with words), *meditatio* (prayers of thought) and *contemplatio* (prayers of waiting).

Thurston is clear at the outset that she understands some readers may view portions of the book as “useless (or incomprehensible)” (6) due to the fact that for most Christians prayer is simply *oratio*. Chapter 2 deals with this aspect by addressing nine familiar types of praying with words (confession, adoration). Thurston continues by inviting readers to experiment with other modes of prayer as well, reminding them that the more passive forms of prayer, such as meditation, have been neglected by the Western Church.

In chapter 5, Thurston provides a bridge of sorts that slowly moves a person from *oratio* to both *meditatio* and *contemplatio*. She introduces the “Jesus Prayer,” an inner mystical prayer made famous by the monks of the Eastern

Church. It is “a spoken prayer that is a means to the contemplative state, a word prayer that is intended to lead us to wordless prayer” (88). Making use of the Jesus Prayer involves silence, relaxed breathing, imagination, repetitions, and chanting.

Thurston continues by addressing how one can pray with the body. She says, “if you want to bring your whole self to God in prayer, you need to bring your flesh along” (126). Thus, she provides the reader with suggestions for “exploring breath, heart and walking meditation” (111). The ultimate goal is to “prepare the body for quiet prayer” (128).

Chapters 8–9 address *contemplatio*. This form of prayer involves listening, solitude, silence, and focus. Thurston draws attention to many biblical passages that address “waiting on the Lord.” With passion Thurston argues that the current generation is one of too much noise and overactivity. Christians must seek silence and solitude so that they can focus on God and really come to know him.

While Thurston provides a well-rounded picture of prayer, many readers will be disturbed over her continual references to Buddhist and Islamic practices. Second, Thurston states many times over that the Christian wanting to learn more about some of these modes of prayer may want to contact a spiritual guide for help, something which may be impractical for some. Third, while placing Thurston’s comments in context makes a tremendous difference, some of her statements still sound odd. For example, “thank the various parts of the body” (114), “Jesus’ Name is a carrier of divine energy” (91) and “the prayer of waiting helps us to become aware of God within” (163).

On a more positive note, Thurston will cause the reader to explore methods of prayer which are not purely vocal. Therefore, the thrust of her argument is on target as she says, “To pray is to become aware of his presence. . . . Thus prayer is more a matter of attention than it is of any particular thing we say or do” (15). What follows is that prayer must be distinguished from prayers (19). Thurston also notes how both the Incarnation and Holy Spirit remind us that God is always with us. She maintains that “all of our difficulties in prayer begin with the assumption that God is somewhere else” (20).

Thurston says with honesty that prayer is difficult due to the problem of distractions, feelings of isolation, boredom, and the unwillingness to persevere. Yet, we should move forward in our efforts because “As long as you are praying, you are doing the right thing” (187). After all, it expresses that we desire “to be in loving relationship to God” (17).

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Frank VIOLA and George BARNA. *Pagan Christianity: Exploring the Roots of Our Church Practices*. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 2008. 295 pp. \$17.99.

One could argue that George Barna has made a career out of promoting controversy. From his early work *The Frog in the Kettle* to his more recent *Revolution*, Barna has never held back from presenting shocking information about the American church and its relationship to the culture. This is no less true of this volume, coauthored with Frank Viola, a leader in the contemporary house church movement. This volume is actually an updated edition of an earlier book by Viola covering similar ground.

Since its release, the book has generated a fair amount of hype and controversy. (Even the youth minister at my church informed me that the book has caused quite a stir among our students.) The publisher (Tyndale) anticipated the controversy by adding a disclaimer at the beginning: “Tyndale does not necessarily agree with all of the authors’ positions and realizes that some readers may not either.” Even the publisher of this volume seems to be second-guessing itself.

The authors’ goal is to demonstrate that many of the practices in evangelical Christianity originated not from the Bible but from cultural practice throughout church history. Furthermore, they assert that these practices prevent the church from becoming a fully functioning Christian community as pictured in the NT. The bulk of the book is devoted to uncovering the history of such practices as the use of church buildings, the order of worship, the sermon, the paid minister, Sunday morning dress, music ministers, tithing and clergy salaries, baptism and the Lord’s Supper, and Christian education.

It is not difficult to imagine why Christian leaders would react negatively to the book. The vast majority of Christians practice their faith in and through local churches—communities that feature the very practices Viola and Barna repudiate in this volume.

However, this volume does have a number of strengths in its favor. Readers of *SCJ* will certainly appreciate Viola and Barna’s emphasis on the local church. They advocate a way of “doing church” that is perhaps more focused on “restoring the NT church” than any Restoration Movement church I have ever seen!

Throughout the book, the authors correctly identify many of the problems and excesses of modern Christianity. For example, in the chapter, “The Church Building,” they state, “The disjunction between worship and everyday life characterizes Western Christianity. Worship is seen as something detached from the whole fabric of life and packaged for group consumption” (39). Anyone who understands biblical worship would be hard-pressed to disagree here. One of the difficulties of the book is that it is long on identifying problems, and short on offering solutions to the problems they raise. (To the authors’ defense, Viola’s follow-up, *Reimagining Church*, is a sequel of sorts that offers much more detail on positive solutions to the issues raised in this volume.)

Another strength of the book—and this gets to the heart of its primary intention—is that it causes us to look at many of our church practices and ask, “Why do we do that?” This is a valuable question because our tendency as humans is to elevate traditions simply because “we’ve always done it that way.” This volume would have us examine our practices to see how they compare with Scripture. This is always a valuable process.

This brings us to some shortcomings in the book. While the questions they ask are extremely valuable, some of the assumptions they bring and the conclusions they draw leave something to be desired.

First, a word about the footnotes (whose tiny font size makes them nearly impossible to read). The book would have been much better served by either using endnotes in a bigger font size or increasing the physical size of the pages to accommodate larger footnotes. This may seem like a small complaint, but the tiny footnotes make the reading quite laborious after a few pages since the authors use dozens of footnotes per chapter.

Second, and more significant, Viola and Barna seem to write from an interpretive standpoint that views the house church model as the only true biblical expression of the church. At times the NT shows Christians meeting in homes (Acts 2:46; 5:42; 12:12; Rom 16:5; 1 Cor 16:19; Col 4:15; Phlm 2), yet Acts shows Christians meeting in other places as well: Solomon’s Portico (5:12), the temple (5:21,42), a meeting hall (19:9), and even a riverside (16:13). Acts also shows Paul and his companions meeting with people in the synagogues (13:14; 14:1; 18:4,19,26; 17:2,10,17; 19:8). Although the authors go to great lengths to point out problems in the modern evangelical church, they cannot point to the house church model as the only biblical solution to these modern maladies. If one goes looking for a “Thou shalt only gather in the homes of believers,” it simply isn’t there. Christians gathered in houses out of necessity, not divine command.

Two key verses seem to form the basis for the interpretive lens of this volume which is upholding the house church as the primary model for Christian gatherings. The first is 1 Cor 14:26: “What then, brothers? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up.” (The ESV is used here and in other Bible quotations in this review.) The authors spend much of their time arguing that modern church services forsake this model of open participation; they do not encourage or allow participation by everyone, but instead force the congregation to sit passively most of the time. The real question here is whether the gathering pictured in 1 Corinthians 14 is *prescriptive* or *descriptive*. I would argue, against the authors, that it is *descriptive*; it gives a picture of what a gathering of Corinthian believers looked like. Christians everywhere, at all times, are not commanded to hold meetings that are open to participation by everyone.

A second passage that seems to form the crux of their argument is Heb 10:24-25: “And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good

works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.” This volume rightly refers to these verses as a model for Christian community, yet Christians meet together and encourage one another in all different types of settings. There is no logical connection between these verses and the specific house church model they advocate.

Space does not permit a more detailed examination of the book’s arguments. For those who want to dig a little deeper, Ben Witherington has an excellent series of blog posts interacting with the book in detail, and allowing Frank Viola himself to respond. You will find much to chew on in these posts (see <http://blog.beliefnet.com/bibleandculture> and search “Pagan Christianity”). You will also get a clear sense of Viola’s heart.

What value might this volume hold for those in the Stone-Campbell movement? Although I have taken space to point out some of the book’s shortcomings, we can resonate with its high view of Scripture. I don’t agree with all of the conclusions the authors draw, but I certainly appreciate their effort to model the values of the NT church today. As people who identify ourselves as a “New Testament church” and “people of the Book,” do we hold an equally high commitment to putting the Bible into practice, both in our lives and in the church?

What value might the book have for Christian leaders? First and foremost, despite the shortcomings I have raised, it’s important to hear what Viola and Barna are saying. I would encourage any Christian leader—particularly ministers, teachers, and professors—to read the book because of the questions it raises about the validity of modern church practices. Each person should interact with the book and come to his or her own conclusions. If our students and church members are reading this volume, we need to read it as well and be able to respond accordingly.

In a way I’m thankful for books like these because they bring an interest and awareness to the biblical and historical basis for our faith. Although we may have our disagreements with the content, at the same time it provides a wonderful opportunity for learning and discussion.

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Vincent D. ROUGEAU. *Christians in the American Empire: Faith and Citizenship in the New World Order.* Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2008. 233 pp. \$29.95.

Rougeau, law professor at the University of Notre Dame, contends against academic and political voices seeking to align Roman Catholics in America with the Religious Right and the Republican Party. “During the 1990s,” he writes,

“powerful new voices arose that actually began to make some headway with the argument that only one political party in the United States was consistent with a serious Catholic faith commitment” (*viii*). Insistence that “real” Catholics should make their political home with other faith-based conservatives, steadfastly supporting the Republican Party and the George W. Bush administration, was amplified in the aftermath of 9/11. Prominent among the spokespersons for this kind of Catholic-Conservative convergence, which Rougeau is compelled to oppose, are Richard John Neuhaus (the late editor of the journal *First Things*), George Weigel (senior fellow with the Ethics and Public Policy Center) and Michael Novak (an American Enterprise Institute scholar).

In arguing against the marriage of Catholic Christians and conservative politics, Rougeau articulates a critique of American conservatism he maintains is grounded in interconnected values or characteristics deeply-rooted in the American experience: individualism, free-market liberalism, libertarianism, and consumer-driven materialism. These are strongly at odds, he asserts, with Catholic theology and Catholic social teaching, which embraces a much more communitarian, public-regarding ethos. Indeed, the main foundations of Rougeau’s argument are laid by the end of chapter two, in which he explicates Catholic social teaching’s four “permanent” principles: human dignity, the common good, subsidiarity, and solidarity. The remaining four chapters employ these four principles of Catholic social teaching to evaluate, in turn, issues of race (affirmative action), class (poverty and welfare), immigration policy, and global justice (America’s posture and conduct on the world stage). Rougeau’s analysis in each case leads to conclusions that are quite opposed to the positions demanded by the Religious Right.

Strengths of the book include: providing perceptive insights about the philosophical underpinnings of conservative political views in America, providing alternative and provocative ways of viewing important political questions, providing a primer on Catholic social teaching, and providing a stimulating example of an effort to engage political questions from a Christian faith perspective. Although not every reader will agree with Rougeau’s arguments and conclusions, these strengths are all good reasons why this book would be worthwhile for Christian readers, Catholic or not.

Catholic readers already inclined toward more liberal political views will be affirmed, encouraged, and intellectually armed by Rougeau’s thoughtful and articulate presentation of Christian faith and politics. Likewise, evangelical Christian readers bothered by assertions (and assumptions) that “real” Christians are by definition conservative Republicans will feel a sense of fellowship with Rougeau on this score as well as, perhaps, a newfound appreciation for Catholic social teaching. However, evangelicals may also wish that Rougeau had grounded his Christian perspective in biblical texts as well as Catholic social teaching or, at least, that he had unpacked the exegetical bases of Catholic social teaching.

While Rougeau states that “Catholic social teaching relies on biblical exegesis, tradition, and intellectual argument drawn from the global reach of Catholic Christianity” (59), he primarily quotes from papal documents in the last 120 years, particularly from Vatican II forward, without reference to any biblical exegetical grounding behind these pronouncements. Unfolding exegetical support for the Christian worldview presented may, arguably, have been beyond the author’s concept for the book. However, to speak effectively to a wider audience of American Christians, it would have been more compelling to do so.

In addition, many evangelical readers will recoil at being lumped together in general statements about “evangelicals and fundamentalists” as the twin pillars of the Religious Right. (5, 57) This in spite of Rougeau’s awareness that “In recent years a growing number of evangelical movements have aligned themselves with progressive political issues like environmental protection and global poverty” (28). Actually, evangelical academics like sociologist David Moberg, historian Richard Pierard, and political scientist Stephen Monsma have been engaging issues of Christian social concern, American civil religion, justice, and “structural sin,” all addressed herein by Rougeau, in their published work dating back to the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. Rougeau does show that he is aware of significant evangelical voices like Jim Wallis, Tony Campolo, and Ron Sider, but he apparently discounts them as peripheral compared to an evangelical core still dominated by the Moral Majority, the Christian Coalition, Focus on the Family, and the Family Research Council.

Finally, it is hard to imagine that conservative Catholics or evangelicals would be moved or persuaded by Rougeau’s presentation. Moreover, even sympathetic readers who might regard the Religious Right, conservative Republicans, and the Bush administration as targets well worthy of critique from a Christian perspective may wonder whether, in the end, Rougeau’s primary frame of reference is liberal politics (now justified and sanctified by Catholic social teaching) or his primary frame of reference is a Christian worldview that approaches a thoughtful analysis of contemporary political issues and American public policy. That, to be sure, is a question that all Christians who attempt to address faith and politics must continue to ask themselves with honesty and humility.

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James K.A. SMITH. *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation.* Cultural Liturgies: 1. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009. 238 pp. \$21.99.

Smith, Associate Professor of Philosophy at Calvin College, builds on his previously published material, such as *Speech and Theology: Language and the Logic of Incarnation* (Radical Orthodoxy Series, Routledge, 2002). This volume is the

first work in a series of three volumes. It focuses on the formative aspects of both Christian and secular liturgy and how they relate to education, while the second volume is expected to detail philosophical anthropology in its formative aspect, and the third volume will deal with political theology.

This volume is laid out in an introduction chapter and two main parts, each with three chapters. The introduction outlines the format of the volume, which will be to note the liturgical aspects of culturally significant items and then point out how they form the individual to love items that may or may not be according to the Kingdom. In the first two chapters of Part One, Smith will define anthropology. In the last chapter of this section he will illustrate how the shopping mall, sports arena, and the university form individuals in negative ways. Here, he raises the suggestion that many Churches and Christian universities form their people according to the same desires as these secular institutions. In the first two chapters of Part Two, Smith explains Kingdom liturgy. In his final chapter, he re-addresses the Christian university and suggests ways in which the university can assist the Kingdom in correctly forming both students and faculty.

In an anthropology that hails back to Augustine, human beings are described as entities that primarily love, and only later think and believe. Heidegger pushed back Descartes' maxim, "I think, therefore I am" a step, noting the noncognitive aspects of being. He decided that people care or feel before they ever think. Smith pushes Heidegger's thought one step further noting that love or the need to love is the primary way people interact with their environment. He makes connection between his ideas and the thought of Augustine (50). Education is then defined as that formative process which shapes our desires.

Smith's insight on the formative aspects of the shopping mall, sports arena, and university are compelling and insightful. The mall forms an individual for consumerism, an extremely wasteful materialism. The sports arena, among other things, forms an individual for patriotism. Other things which form patriotism include certain school functions and certain movies. The university forms an individual for progressivism primarily although it may form an individual for consumerism and patriotism as well. Smith's "take" on patriotism may be offensive to various heroes of our nation, but his statements fairly warn readers especially when the aim of their patriotism might run counter to Christian ideals. In a footnote (104), Smith draws a parallel between Roman Empire patriotism and that within the United States. Here, he makes no distinction between nation and empire, equating national patriotism with empire patriotism. Historically, nationalism forced the demise of empire. It seems unfair to note the similarities without addressing the possibility of a moral difference. If he understands the United States as an empire, then equating its patriotism with nationalism may be inaccurate.

Smith notes that the liturgy of the church is unique from secular liturgy in that it has an aim to form us into beings fit for the Kingdom. This formation is not a direct result of the liturgy, but an end result of having been brought "face

to face” with God (150). The Christian university should not emulate a secular university in forming students to be consumers, hedonists, or humanists, but should form students to perform the Great Commission. Smith points out that accreditation can be a hindrance to solving the dilemma since the government controls what the Christian university teaches (218). Smith highlights three ways the Christian university forms students: chapel, community, and in connecting body to mind by getting students involved in missional work. It is hoped that Smith will follow through with his promise to further develop a work which addresses faculty at Christian universities (230).

This volume is written at the popular level with several technical terms which are explained in the text. It could be used as a supplemental text in a class on Christian culture or as a book in a discipleship class. While this work is useful for research since it has many footnotes which connect the reader to various scholarly works which support the discussion, it does not overwhelm the casual reader with too many details. This enhances the readability of the work. This volume contains an index of names and an index of subjects. Since this volume does not contain a bibliography, the reader will have to peruse the footnotes for sources. This work has several excurses containing either an illustrative narrative or a challenge to the reader’s thought, which serve to enhance the current volume for use as a textbook.

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Mark A. NOLL. *God and Race in American Politics: A Short History.*
Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008. 202 pp. \$22.95.

Noll has brought together a wealth of research and thought into this brief but effective work on the tangled and confusing relationship of race, religion, and politics in American history. A subject that has motivated a great deal of Noll’s academic energies, he has delivered in this book a case for understanding the developments in each of the areas of race, religion, and politics to have been significantly shaped (or mis-shaped) by one another. While all three of these occupy their own distinct existences on the surface of American life, Noll observes that the forms those existences take on the surface are the result of a long history of interactions, conflicts, and collaborations that lie beneath that surface—often-times not very far beneath it.

Noll begins his account with the events leading up to and present during the Civil War. He might have started all the way back to the colonial period as he calls upon those times as the seedbed for the conflict from time to time. But the purpose and scope of the book are better served by taking the Civil War as its introduction. The purpose is better served because Noll identifies the Civil War as one

of the three major crises in American history (along with the “Redemption” and the civil rights movement) where the conflux of race, religion, and politics produced an outcome that changed the course of that history. The scope is better served because as a “short history,” a careful treatment going back to the origins of American history would likely have derailed the ability to focus on that purpose.

Within the Civil War era, Noll lays out how the political moves and hesitations involved had deep connections to the conflicted relationship between race and religion. Noll faults much of the unfinished business of the Civil War and the Reconstruction that followed for a failure to work carefully through that relationship. This same tack is taken for the historical periods that follow. The heated opposition of religious positions both for and against slavery during the Civil War are shown to have an effect on the resolution of the country to work on its deep-seated race problem. While the Reconstruction period allowed broader freedoms for African-Americans, especially in the rise of their own distinct forms of religious thought, the ability of the central government to maintain this was interrupted by the strange combination of religion and politics found in the Southern Redemption. However, that small space carved out for the free growth of African-American religious groups provided enough resources to eventually flower into a civil rights movement that has completely altered the way American politics is done.

As Noll carries the reader through each of these historical steps, he continues to build his case that the way America works today—and will work for the foreseeable future—is a result of the combined influences of race and religion in politics. While he shows the dominant voice of those three to shift and change through the years, Noll believes that America is what America is because of these influences. By the end of the volume, he is ready to claim that even the popular voting trends in the most recent elections are the result of the odd ways that race and religion have partnered from the Civil War all the way to civil rights.

Noll’s work is deeply compelling and delivered with a force and alacrity that pull the reader along. Even if the reader were already aware of the influence that race and religion have on American politics, Noll legitimizes that recognition with tangible support. While at times Noll may overstate the specific ways race, religion, and politics are influenced by one another, he leaves the reader with no doubt but that any future the country has must include attempts to resolve this often-troubled relationship.

There is much to learn from this kind of work. We better understand what shapes our political consciousness. We are more reflective of our own attitudes and biases. We are more mindful of the interplay between religious and social forces. All of this makes this particular telling of history more interesting. As Noll says himself at the end of the volume, this account ends up being more of a “theological history” than a secular one. Since it is difficult to impossible to recount

a pure history devoid of some interest or motive, it is a pleasure to find a history here that takes a theological interest in the telling.

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

Oswalt has done the evangelical world a tremendous service by authoring the current volume. His purpose is to respond to the question of how unique OT Israel's religion (and thus the OT's description of it) truly is. Currently, as Oswalt states in his introductory chapter, "It is widely affirmed that Israelite religion is simply one more of the complex of West Semitic religions, and that its characteristic features can be fully explained on the basis of evolutionary change" (11). Oswalt desires to challenge such thinking and to articulate which theological and philosophical convictions best explain the contents of the OT record. The result is a compelling apologetic that is on a par with Kenneth Kitchen's *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* (Eerdmans, 2003), but without the hard data that Kitchen's work includes. It would be highly useful as required reading in a seminary class on OT backgrounds, OT criticism, or cultural settings. The book would also be a helpful resource to recommend to a Christian in a secular educational setting who is facing attacks on the integrity of the OT record.

Oswalt's book is divided into two main sections: the Bible and myth, and the Bible and history. Regarding the topic of myth, Oswalt observes that much of the controversy surrounding the Bible and myth revolves around the definition of myth. He carefully examines this pivotal issue and makes the case for distinguishing the Bible from the realm of myth in terms of transcendence versus continuity. Transcendence is the biblical perspective: "God is radically other than his creation" (81).

What Oswalt repeatedly stresses in his discussion of these concepts (and it really cannot be overstated) is that whereas one may find certain OT principles (monotheism, for example) in other writings or records from the ancient Near East, it is *only* the OT that *consistently* promotes such a principle. "What is unique about the Bible is that it maintains monotheism as the only ruling principle throughout. It is not an idea to be considered from time to time along with other possibilities" (64, n. 3). Furthermore, "one can repeat this point [on consistency] on concept after concept; it is not that Israel is the only people who ever thought of an idea, it is that Israel is the first, and in most cases, the only culture to have carried that idea to its exclusive and logical conclusion" (144).

The same methodology is used in analyzing the Bible and history. The term

history is defined (again contrasting the perspectives of transcendence and continuity), then the OT's unique view of history is boldly set forth, highlighting the necessity of giving revelatory status not only to God's acts in history but also to the *interpretation* of those acts as recorded in the OT. Oswalt nicely builds a bridge to the NT event of the incarnation of Jesus, which was, as he puts it, "the logical continuation of what had been taking place since the beginning of the human race" (147).

The book's final chapter (prior to the conclusion) offers a critique of current alternatives to the biblical worldview—those proposed by John Van Seters, Frank Cross, William Dever, and Mark Smith. With each position, Oswalt poses the question of whether it is truly "sufficient" to explain the particularities of the OT as they now stand. His conclusion is that each raises more questions than it answers.

The contemporary relevance of Oswalt's discussion is powerfully presented in the concluding section of the book, where he explains how the continuity mind-set associated with myth has become ingrained in the contemporary mind-set. The ten outcomes of embracing the continuity point of view found on pages 191 and 192 will demonstrate how the contemporary Western world is indeed reaping what it has sown.

I must also add a word about the very first footnote in chapter 1 (21), where Oswalt admits to writing as a Christian. He therefore will refer to the sixty-six books of Scripture as *the Bible*, calling the first thirty-nine the OT and the last twenty-seven the NT. And he will refer to the time prior to Christ's birth as BC (not BCE) and the time since that event as AD (not CE). Good for him!

I recommend this book without hesitation or reservation.

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Lee M. FIELDS. *Hebrew for the Rest of Us: Using Hebrew Tools without Mastering Biblical Hebrew.* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008. 281 pp. \$29.99.

In the last quarter of the twentieth century theological schools began to develop courses that were characterized as baby Greek or baby Hebrew, but were formally known as biblical language tools courses. Fields has designed this book to fill the need for a basic textbook for such courses. It was created to give the students a valid learning experience in which they gain a working understanding of the basics of biblical Hebrew and the proper use of the available tools for the study of the OT in Hebrew. It is billed as a companion tool to *Greek for the Rest of Us* by William D. Mounce. In addition to its intended role as a textbook for a

biblical language tools course, it would also benefit someone who has studied Hebrew, but has let skills grow rusty or die.

The book is written in a conversational style that reflects the personality of the author. In the table of contents one's attention is drawn to cute titles like "Yes, Virginia, There Are . . . Clauses." This levity does not detract in any way from the usability of the book; instead, in the current cultural climate, it adds to the likelihood that the student will successfully complete the course.

The work begins with an excellent introduction to the alphabet, character formation, and the pronunciation of the Hebrew words. It then discusses the various parts of speech under the categories of function words, nominals, and verbals. It concludes with a series of short studies on how to do word studies, tools for further study, and two discourses on Hebrew prose and poetry.

The book does an especially good job of thoroughly and clearly presenting the material. Among other good points, two in particular should be noted: the sections on sentence diagramming and word studies. These are two topics that are not always included in traditional grammars but are needed.

A negative point is that too often material is included that is unnecessary for completing the course or understanding the point. For example, when verbals are covered there is a discussion on the formation of each type of verbal. An example is the material on the formation of the participle (202). Participle formation is of minor importance in a course that emphasizes available analytical tools to parse the word. These sections on formation could have been placed in a text box to inform the student that the information is of lesser importance. However, since students taking this type of course are often intimidated by language courses, the danger is they might suffer from information overload.

As a second concern, the book requires access to other books or computer software. The author lists three types of books as essential for the completion of the course: an analytical concordance, a Hebrew interlinear Bible, and a word book. Later one discovers that access to a fourth type of book is necessary: an analytical lexicon or an analytical key to parse the words as they appear in the Hebrew text. If students is to use this effectively in personal Bible study after college or seminary, they must spend two to five hundred dollars for the supporting materials. The book would be a more useful tool if it were linked to one of the major pieces of software that is readily available, such as Bible Works or Logos, which will do all the functions of the suggested books and are easier to use.

One further annoyance is that the book needs an index for terms. When students read in a commentary the word "Hiphil," they may remember that is a word that was used in the book but may not remember it is a type of verb. This can be easily rectified in a later printing.

The book should be considered by teachers who are called upon to teach a course like the one Dr. Fields has outlined. It is not a book for dummies or

an idiot's guide to Hebrew, but a serious book that is thoughtfully written and presented.

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Bill T. ARNOLD. *Genesis*. New Cambridge Bible Commentary. Cambridge University Press, 2009. 432 pp. \$26.99.

Arnold's commentary is a welcome addition to the vast array of interpretive literature generated by continued interest in the Bible's first book. Though brief (400 pages including the NRSV text) this commentary is more than a primer. Its ambitious format offers clear and concise comment on the text of Genesis as well as a brief look at various scholarly methodologies that have been applied to the book. Arnold's work gracefully dances between often competing schools of interpretation gleaning valuable insights from both diachronic and synchronic readings of Genesis. Seeing these scholarly disciplines as complementary rather than competitive, Arnold follows a number of scholars in proposing an interpretive method that reads Genesis on two levels—first to explore its compositional history (source, form, and redaction criticism) and second to examine the various literary features of its canonical form (narrative criticism and discourse analysis). Through this “holistic” approach Arnold lays an interpretive foundation from which he attempts yet a “third” reading designed to explore salient philosophical, theological, and ethical implications of the text for the modern reader. These he discusses in a series of excurses called “Bridging the Horizons.” In another set of excurses (“A Closer Look”) Arnold puts the text in dialogue with its historical and literary contexts in ways that deepen the reader's grasp of the author's meaning.

Insights drawn from Arnold's holistic method abound on every page. Especially valuable are his discussions of the relevance of ANE context and Hebrew literary features for our understanding of the authors' (JE, P, H) intents. In the opening creation narrative (1:1–2:3), for example, Arnold posits that, though the Genesis account does offer apologia against the prevailing ANE cosmogonies, its primary purpose was not polemical but theological. It was designed to explain the unique and exalted position of humanity in God's world and provide a rationale for Israel's dietary laws and Sabbath observance. As such this initial pericope of the Hebrew Bible serves as formal prologue to the salvation-history and religious response found in Exodus–Numbers. In similar fashion Arnold argues that 3:1–24 is not merely an Israelite version of ANE myths but, more intentionally, a theological explanation of the current human condition = human misuse of freedom to ruinous effect. The “ancestral narratives” (chs. 12–36) should likewise be read not as loosely connected folk tales but as part of a continuous theological story of the God who created the world, choosing to create

Israel. The “Joseph Novella” (chs. 37–50)—an independent short story in its own right—serves as a theological and structural bridge between the ancestors and the exodus.

Arnold’s commentary is an excellent introduction to the current state of Genesis scholarship. It not only invites the reader into a serious search for the authors’ intended meaning, it also informs the reader of the interpretive tools necessary to that task. Especially valuable are the author’s investigations of the ANE backgrounds to the biblical text. Arnold is able to demonstrate the biblical authors’ awareness of the ANE myths and to clearly delineate how the text of Genesis employs them for its own unique theological interests. Helpful, too, are his explorations of the importance of genre studies for the reader’s understanding of the text. Arnold’s appreciation of rhetorical criticism informs his respect for the book’s canonical form and results in insights that heighten the reader’s appreciation for the literary genius of the biblical writers. The one area of weakness in this work—few and limited explorations of biblical intertextuality—does not undo an otherwise exemplary investigation of the meaning and purpose of the Bible’s first book. This commentary says much in few words and will quickly establish itself as an essential first read in Genesis studies.

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Thomas B. DOZEMAN. *Exodus*. Eerdmans Critical Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009. 868 pp. \$55.00.

The book of Exodus has received its due of late in the form of excellent commentaries by Propp, Meyers, and now Dozeman. This latest volume in the Eerdmans Critical Commentary series seriously engages the biblical text’s origins and literary architecture, drawing judiciously on the best contemporary scholarship to illuminate the earliest recoverable meanings of the text. While less theologically oriented than Childs’s 1974 volume, Dozeman’s commentary, with its keen literary sensitivity, does provide the raw material for theological reflection on Exodus. The volume’s 52-page bibliography, ample discussion of the state of Pentateuchal studies after the Documentary Hypothesis’s eclipse, and close pericope-by-pericope analysis well orient the reader to current research. Scholars and others should find the work stimulating at many points.

Following a series of introductory articles (1–52), the commentary divides Exodus into two major parts (1:1–15:21; 15:22–40:38), each consisting of several large units (1:1–2:25; 3:1–7:7; 7:8–15:21; 15:22–18:27; 19:1–24:11; 24:12–40:38). This outline is defensible, though other possibilities also exist. For each of the large units, the treatment includes an extended introduction of central themes, authors (really, a traditio-historical cum redactional analysis), and literary

structure, followed by detailed study of the subunits within each larger unit. The analysis of the subunits begins with a translation indicating typographically whether a given verse is from P or Non-P, text-critical and translation notes, and commentary. Fortunately, Dozeman treats in the text detail at the level of lines and words while avoiding the atomizing verse-by-verse arrangement that prevents many commentaries from capturing the flow of the text on which they are commenting.

The introductory essays position the commentary at the center of current research on the Pentateuch. Dozeman acknowledges the diversity of views in contemporary scholarship about the relationships of Exodus to the alternative origins traditions in Genesis and to the Deuteronom(ist)ic literature. He discerns numerous connections among the various texts in Genesis–Kings, ultimately deciding that Exodus consists of P and Non-P material, with both traditions reaching their current forms and being combined in the exilic or postexilic periods. Nevertheless, both narrative traditions contain older material. In other words, Dozeman takes a cautious position, leaving behind the Wellhausenian delineation of parallel sources without fully embracing the ultra-late dates for the material that sometimes appears in European scholarship.

The relationship of P to Non-P is not always clear in his presentation: sometimes P sounds like a redactional layer atop Non-P, while at other times the two are entangled, and at still others P seems to stand alone. Such complexity at one level illustrates the intricacy of the biblical text and the obscurity of its compositional history, but it may also signal the inadequacy of identifying only two major literary traditions (P and Non-P) behind the book's final form.

This inadequacy comes to the fore, in my view, on several occasions. Let me consider two. In his treatment of the Song of the Sea and the Song of Miriam (Exod 15; 318-344), Dozeman understands the first to belong to Non-P and the second to P, thus providing parallel solutions to the triumph over Pharaoh. Yet he also acknowledges the likelihood (with Cross and Freedman) that both songs are very ancient and the possibility (with Propp) that the second song functions as an antiphon of the first (with the editor giving the first line rather than repeating the entire song). It is difficult to discern the basis for assigning the songs to different narrative complexes. One also cannot but wonder if the ancient songs did not influence the shaping of the exodus traditions themselves, given the fact that the basic plot of the Song of the Sea (YHWH defeats Pharaoh and leads Israel to the holy mountain/pasture while the nations hear and tremble) structures the fleshed-out prose narratives of both P and Non-P.

A second example is the Golden Calf story in chapter 32. In his overview on pages 49-50, Dozeman lists the chapter in both the P and Non-P histories as a mixed text, whereas his commentary proper finds only one P verse in the unit. Again, the question of the nature of P's treatment of Non-P material comes to a head without a satisfactory resolution.

Having said this, Dozeman’s work is extremely useful regardless of one’s views of the development of the text or the adequacy of his treatment of the text’s prehistory. In fairness, no presentation of the evidence is likely to convince everyone at this point because the text’s evolution was extraordinarily complicated. Whether one focuses on the individual traditions that coalesced into large narrative complexes or on the complexes themselves has been the struggle of scholars for more than a century. To his credit, Dozeman refuses to dodge the problem by taking refuge in so-called synchronic, final form readings because such strategies ultimately beg the question by assuming the coherence that must be proven. On many individual pericopes and in its overall presentation, this commentary advances our understanding of Exodus, a fact for which the author deserves our appreciation.

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Telford WORK. *Deuteronomy*. Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible. Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2009. 333 pp. \$29.99.

The series aim must be kept in mind when considering its individual volumes. General editor R.R. Rino notes that the philosophy of the series is to view the individual books of the Bible as part of a unified whole, as a mosaic (7-8). The conviction of the editors of the series is that “dogma clarifies rather than obscures” (9), and that the Nicene Tradition (leaving ample room for differing interpretations of that tradition) gives adequate guidance to the commentators in the series.

Work’s aim in the Deuteronomy volume is “to form and discipline a contemporary apostolic imagination by reading every passage of Deuteronomy according to the sensibilities of the New Testament church” (18). Work intends to achieve this by using three key concepts: faith, hope, and love, plus the plain sense of the book (19). The order of these four basic approaches is not “. . . terribly significant, since each sense informs the others” (20). Although Work *generally* uses the order plain sense, faith, hope, and love (23-24), he feels free to vary this when he thinks it desirable.

However, Work *also* notes that “the plain sense” grounds all the other senses of the text (19). This seems to be in some tension with the contention that the order may be variable, and that all the senses inform all the other senses.

Work does not entirely “disdain” modern critical scholarship, but expresses his intention not to make many references to it (21). He also indicts modern critical biblical scholars and theologians for their own “fanciful literal readings” (20), and for intimidating into near silence or driving underground “a style of exegesis that yielded our New Testament ” (22). While Work acknowledges that some

will think that his approach “imposes a foreign agenda onto the text” (21), he holds that he is doing exactly what Paul and the evangelists did (21).

The major strength of this approach may also be its greatest weakness. Reading the book of Deuteronomy in conversation with the rest of the OT and NT does yield interesting insights. However, reading Deuteronomy in conversation with the other books of the canon, may make it more difficult to hear Deuteronomy’s unique voice. When too many conversational partners are talking at once, the conversation can become a cacophony.

In a nice, sit-down dinner, certain foods will be served together, yet they will be kept separate on the plate so that each type of food may be tasted in accordance with its own taste. Of course, there are casseroles which mix varied and diverse foods together. Work’s commentary is for those who like casseroles.

Preachers and teachers will find the commentary helpful to their work, if its aims and limitations are recognized. It will prove less useful for those who want a commentary which considers Deuteronomy simply on its own merits, or who want a large quantity of detailed philological analysis and verse-by-verse background information.

Those in the Stone-Campbell tradition will appreciate Work’s emphasis upon the NT, although the very mention of the Nicene Tradition may put some of us off. However, Work’s commentary might also be read as a refreshing attempt to reestablish “the ancient order of things,” a phrase which is near and dear to our hearts.

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Craig G. BARTHOLOMEW. *Ecclesiastes*. Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009. 448 pp. \$39.99.

On many levels, the book of Ecclesiastes resists an easy and straightforward approach. Translation, interpretive and background issues, and canonicity are all somewhat elusive. Bartholomew’s current volume represents a welcome foray into the often murky waters in which Qoholeth swims.

Introductory matters occupy the first quarter of the commentary. Bartholomew provides a thorough and useful survey of the history of interpretation of Ecclesiastes and deals with the typical introductory issues regarding biblical literature. Much of the introduction is a reutilization of material from his 1998 revision of his doctoral dissertation (“Reading Ecclesiastes: Old Testament Exegesis and Hermeneutical Theory”). He posits a postexilic date for Ecclesiastes, although its origins—date, setting, author—are ultimately uncertain. And, while microgenres are easily identified, the macrogenre of the text is diffi-

cult to determine, with comparative literature shedding an obfuscated light on the matter. Bartholomew synthesizes several of the various possibilities, suggesting that Ecclesiastes represents “a developed wisdom form of the royal testament or fictional autobiography cast in a frame narrative” (74). The prologue (1:1-11) and epilogue (12:8-14) provide the frame within which the wisdom content is placed. He methodically moves through Ecclesiastes, tending to engage the text at the primary point of difficulty, be it structure, translation, or interpretation.

Each pericope discussion is followed by a “Theological Implications” section in which Bartholomew filters the text through a contemporary theological lens. These discussions effectively place Ecclesiastes at the center of Christian faith, leaving little doubt that Bartholomew has long stood and reflected at the intersection of Ecclesiastes and the contemporary world. Bartholomew maneuvers postmodernism, consumerism, Nietzsche, epistemology, justice, Derrida, poverty, theodicy, politics, economics, ecology philosophy, and worship into productive conversation with Qoholeth’s conclusions on death, love, work, pleasure, and wisdom.

Bartholomew concludes with a brief but engaging postscript entitled, “Postmodernism, Psychology, Spiritual Formation, and Preaching.” Ecclesiastes functions much like postmodernity, deconstructing the assumptions of modernity, while providing a viable faith as an alternative to modernity’s “unraveling.” And while Bartholomew’s conclusion that “Ecclesiastes cries out for a psychological reading” may be somewhat overstated, Ecclesiastes addresses the legitimate need to find the appropriate balance between the ego (self) and the divine.

Strengths in Bartholomew’s book are numerous. He discusses comparisons with ancient Near Eastern and Greek contexts to offer illumination to Ecclesiastes’ use of royal lists, treatment of death, and hedonism. He interacts well with intertextual issues, particularly in relation to Proverbs. He alludes to Ecclesiastes’ intertextual connection to Genesis—an idea meriting more development. He also deals well with the interpretive fallacies, such as the kind of chronological fallacy that sexualizes texts like 4:11.

Weaknesses in the book are few, but serve as minor distractions for the reader. Arguments are occasionally repeated, no doubt reflecting compilation from his other work in Ecclesiastes. For example, Bartholomew opts for and effectively argues for translating *hebel* as “enigmatic” rather than the more cynical translations of “vanity” or “meaningless.” The constant emphasis on this particular definition of *hebel*, however, results in the recycling of similar arguments and material. Similarly, a similar discussion of Greek philosophy occurs twice, twice utilizing an identical quote by Michael Fox. Also, theological reflection occasionally drifts toward an anti-United States bias rather than a more appropriate criticism of the underlying cultural paradigms and systems.

Bartholomew’s work will prove useful in both pastoral and academic contexts. Preachers will find a profusion of material for delivering relevancy to the

contemporary world. Academics will find the content in the bibliography and the indices particularly useful as a springboard for further study. *Ecclesiastes* is well-written and will prove a valuable addition to both pastoral and academic libraries.

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Ruth A. CLEMENTS and Daniel R. SCHWARTZ, eds. *Text, Thought, and Practice in Qumran and Early Christianity. Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah 84.* Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2009. 326 pp. \$169.00.

This volume presents a diverse collection of papers with a common presupposition, that comparative analyses of the DSS and the texts of the NT can, with due caution, shed light on “the proper understanding of each corpus individually and also for the question of their possible interrelationships” (vii). The editors posture this volume as a “third stage” of research regarding the Scrolls and Christian origins. This stage neither affirms nor rejects a relationship between Qumran and early Christianity but rather approaches both as inhabitants of adjacent—even overlapping—social, cultural, and theological environments.

Markus Bockmuehl’s essay comparing Greco-Roman and Qumranic commentary traditions opens the first section, “Canon, Prophecy, and Commentary.” Despite Qumran’s aloofness, “[g]reat ideas . . . have a habit of crossing even the most impermeable cultural boundaries, and of taking root in contexts that appear in other ways radically opposed” (19). George Brooke offers a comparative analysis of the terms “prophet” and “prophecy” in the DSS and the NT. Both corpora understand themselves as heirs and continuations of the prophetic figures and texts of the past, but their use of prophetic language to express that understanding differs dramatically. Daniel Schwartz briefly explores references to biblical tradition in terms either of text (“the Torah”) or author (“Moses”) in order to highlight the NT’s (and especially Luke’s) efforts to demonstrate Jesus’ supersession *vis-à-vis* Moses/Torah.

Eyal Regev’s essay comparing the Temple and righteousness in Qumran and early Christianity begins the book’s second section, “Communities and Their Boundaries.” Regev approaches “the social ethos of these two movements” in terms of “their attitudes towards the system of Temple-priest-sacrifices on the one hand, and towards people outside the group who were still nonbelievers or sinners, on the other hand” (63). Adele Reinhartz continues the discussion of boundaries and boundary language in her analysis of *Miqsat Ma’ase Ha-Torah’s* audience and the personal pronouns used in 4QMMT C 7. Reinhartz raises the question of the impact of “the repertoire of texts that . . . form the background against which we view any new texts” upon our reconstructions of a text’s purpose and audience (89).

The third section, “The Scrolls and Johannine Literature,” begins with Harold Attridge’s essay, which examines “light” and “dark” in the Fourth Gospel in comparison with the same themes in the Scrolls. His analysis shows “the evangelist has gone in a very independent direction” from the Scrolls despite important parallels (122). Jörg Frey takes aim at the links some scholars make between Qumranic and Johannine dualism. Frey shows that the connections some have found between Johannine thought and IQS’s *Treatise on the Two Spirits* neglect a number of salient distinctions between them. He finds that Johannine dualism relates more directly to broader Jewish reflections on creation, Torah, and messianic hope, in addition to the language of conversion.

Gary Anderson’s exploration of the Tabernacle and its furniture in Second Temple Judaism begins the fourth section, “Beliefs and Interpretations.” Despite the aniconic nature of Jewish worship, “the Ark and other pieces of the Tabernacle furniture supplied an almost exact parallel” to statues of gods and goddesses in other cultures (166). When he turns to the Christian evidence, Anderson finds a parallel conception, namely, “that looking at the physical body of Jesus becomes tantamount to beholding the very person of God” (184). Menahem Kister turns to the Scrolls’ contribution toward our understanding of traditions of Jesus’ sayings. Kister’s analysis is striking for its proposal of literary interrelationships between the Scrolls and the NT texts (223). He approaches Matthew as “the link between the Qumranic procedure of reproof and the rabbinic process of asking for forgiveness” (228-229). Serge Ruzer also brings together NT and Qumran texts (on adultery, divorce, and remarriage) for comparative analysis; unlike Kister, Ruzer focuses on how “common exegetical patterns” (231) in both corpora help us to discern wider exegetical traditions in the first century CE.

The fifth section, “Demons and Saviors,” begins with Israel Knohl’s brief analysis of the fusion of priestly and regal roles in *11QMelchizedek* and Hebrews. In both texts, “[t]he union of kingship and priesthood in one figure attests to the perfection of the divine king. The model for this union is Melchizedek” (266). Hermann Lichtenberger continues the contextualization of NT texts as Jewish phenomena in his analysis of the demonology of the DSS and the NT. Demonological dynamics in both corpora suggest that these texts “share a common worldview which is deeply rooted in the Bible and in postbiblical developments in early Judaism” (280) rather than a direct literary relationship. Finally, Cana Werman sets out to reconstruct the nonextant *Oracle of Hystaspes* and compare its messianic expectations with those at Qumran. Werman finds some similarity between the messianism of her reconstructed *Oracle* and the Davidic Messiah mentioned in CD and IQS; however, the more important messianic figure awaited at Qumran—the Aaronic Messiah—differed markedly from the *Oracle*’s messiah.

The book closes with an Index of Modern Authors and an Index of Ancient Sources; there is no concluding essay drawing this collection of essays together and to a close.

These essays suggest promising directions for relating the Scrolls and the NT texts to their originative and generative contexts. This “third stage” of Qumranic and Christian origins scholarship raises larger historical questions than simply which texts birthed the other. Some essays provide more convincing answers than others; this is, perhaps, inevitable. But this book successfully challenges its readers to broaden the scope of our historical imagination to account for the social and cultural worlds in which the Scrolls and the early Christian texts lived and moved and had their being.

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G.K. BEALE and D.A. CARSON, eds. *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007. 1239 pp. \$54.99.

For this groundbreaking commentary, editors G.K. Beale and D.A. Carson—both influential Evangelical NT commentators in their own right (Carson on Matthew [1984] and John [1991]; Beale on Revelation [1999])—assembled an impressive array of well-known and emerging Evangelical scholars to explain how NT works refer to (quote, allude to, echo, or interpret) OT (and intertestamental apocryphal and pseudepigraphical) texts. This focus produces unconventional commentaries, sometimes with substantial gaps or cursory comments. For example, the brief entry for Philemon explains why it is omitted. The contributors and their assignments are as follows: C. Blomberg (Matt), R. Watts (Mark), D. Pao and E. Schnabel (Luke), A. Köstenberger (John), I. Marshall (Acts), M. Seifrid (Rom), R. Ciampa and B. Rosner (1 Cor), Balla (2 Cor), M. Silva (Gal, Phil), F. Thielman (Eph), G. Beale (Col), J. Weima (1–2 Thess), Towner (1–2 Tim, Titus), G. Guthrie (Heb), D. Carson (Jas, 1–2 Pet, 1–3 John, Jude), and G. Beale and S. McDonough (Rev). Full and up-to-date (into 2007) bibliographies with titles in Dutch, English, French, German, and Spanish complete each entry.

In a brief introduction, Beale and Carson attend to three tasks. First, they wave off easy criticism of the volume, explaining they wanted to attend to “the places where NT writers actually cite or allude to the OT” (xxiii) instead of surveying the methodological and exegetical issues present in contemporary debates of the NT use of the OT that, they insist, are treated sufficiently elsewhere. Second, they develop six questions each contributor was to attend to in his comments: (1) What is the NT context of the citation? (2) What is the OT context? (3) How is the reference treated in other Second Temple Jewish literature? (4) What text-critical factors arise from this usage? (5) What is the precise connection being made by the NT writer? and (6) What theological points is the NT writer making by this reference? Finally, a set of five unrelated points are offered: (1) The wide variety of ways NT works make use of OT passages demanded a com-

mensurate flexibility toward expectations of how contributors performed their work. (2) The relative consistency with which NT authors extend Israel-specific concepts to Christ and Christ-believers is noteworthy. (3) Also significant is the pervasive assumption by NT writers of an unfolding history of redemption seen most fully in the advent and coming consummation of Jesus: God’s work in Jesus is the key to salvation history. (4) NT writers believed their uses of the Scriptures were legitimate, organic extensions and understandings of those Scriptures. Lastly, (5) Contributors were asked “to deploy an eclectic grammatical-historical literary method” (xxvii) and remain aware of the limitations of current postcritical and historical-critical methods in wide contemporary use.

All the pieces engage much of the latest critical scholarship, attend to literary parallels from Second Temple Judaism, and are authored by men who have published monographs or studies on their assigned or similar document(s). The comments by Marshall, Balla, Thielman, Silva, Weima, and Towner are more discursive, probably because of the length of Acts and because of the paucity of OT citations and allusions in the respective epistles. The other commentaries more clearly follow the editors’ six programmatic questions. Most entries have cursory introductions, but those for Mark, Luke, John, Acts, Hebrews, and Revelation are exceptional for their breadth and quality.

Despite its impressive length and roster of contributors, the volume lacks at least three necessary essays and the editors appear insensitive to gender-inclusivity. First, both Beale (841, 1081-1085) and Carson (1015) admit the difficulty for, and lack of, methodological clarity in NT studies to distinguish between quotation, allusion, echo, and intraliterary dependence. Their decision not to constrain the contributors by methodological precision for these phenomena creates an understandable but substantial lacuna. A summative, clarifying essay by the editors that engages the seminal work of R. Hays (*Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*, Yale 1989) and draws examples from the completed contributions would have been appropriate. At the least, a current bibliography of works that attend to these issues should have been prepared.

Second, users of this volume would be well-served by an orienting essay that addresses the textual status of the “OT” used by NT authors. The contributors are clearly aware that to write of “the Hebrew text” or “the Septuagint text” masks substantial diversity among available Hebrew and Greek texts. It is not so certain that readers—Evangelical or otherwise—understand that diversity equally well. Any effort to understand the NT use of the OT must, in every instance, account for which textual form(s) the NT citation (allusion, echo) is compared against. An essay on the forms of the OT text used by NT authors is needful.

Finally, readers should be made more aware of the literatures of Second Temple Judaism of which the NT is a part and from which it draws. The editors and contributors produced this volume using canonical constraints: the (canonical) NT use of the (canonical) OT. Such limitations are entirely acceptable in

principle, but they raise problems in practice. As one example, Carson rightly (but barely) wrestles with *1 Enoch* 1:9 in Jude 14-16. Jude clearly holds *1 Enoch* 1:9 to be prophetic and presumably authoritative. What more would be needed for Jude to consider it inspired? Carson's claim that "it does not necessarily imply that he [Jude] thought all of *1 Enoch* was prophetic" (1078) evades the question. Of course it is not all prophetic, but that is not the question most readers ask: Did Jude consider *1 Enoch* Scripture? What considerations bear on the question of what is Scripture and what is not? An essay that explores the relevant issues and range of views on canon formation at least in Evangelical circles (from R. Beckwith, *The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church*, Eerdmans 1985, to L. McDonald and J. Sanders, *The Canon Debate*, Hendrickson 2002) is required for discerning users.

It is unfortunate that no women contributed directly to this volume. Perhaps the editors attempted to enlist the talents of female Evangelical scholars and were unsuccessful; if so, they would have done well to mention the fact. As it stands, they will appear to be insensitive to a sizable number of readers for whom gender inclusivity is a witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Many readers from the Stone-Campbell Movement will find this volume enlightening and useful. As heirs of, at times, a functionally Marcionite heritage, these contributions reinforce the importance of the OT (and other Jewish literature) for many NT concepts, not least of which is the idea of Scripture itself. Because of their fundamental assumption of the *continuity* between God's words and actions recorded in the OT, the NT writers drew insights and lessons that underscored God's faithfulness, particularly as demonstrated in Jesus' own responses to Torah and Prophets. Time and again, the contributors demonstrate how fully Jesus and the NT authors were formed by their native Judaism(s) and its literature. Despite its omissions, it is a required purchase for college and seminary libraries and should be on every preacher's and scholar's shelf of frequently consulted books.

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Gary M. BURGE, L. COHICK, and G. GREEN, eds. *The New Testament in Antiquity: A Survey of the New Testament within Its Cultural Contexts*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009. 458 pp. \$49.99.

Designed as a textbook for undergraduate students in the field of biblical studies, the current volume joins the ranks of the many comprehensive NT introductions that have preceded it. Yet it is not an introduction that is typical to that genre. The title itself highlights the distinctive focus of the book: to provide an introduction to the NT by first giving attention to the cultural context from

which it originated and to which its original audience belonged. In this work, this is not just a side-issue like in so many NT introductions. Rather, it is the lens through which the authors explore all things NT, both the gospels, letters, and apocalypse, as well as the major figures (Jesus, Paul) and events (Destruction of the Jerusalem Temple) that are found within it.

In the preface of the book, the authors have stated three additional aims. The first was to provide a textbook that is of high quality academically, challenging the reader by interacting with the views of current scholarship. The second goal was to write the book in such a way as to minimize the type of technical jargon that can confuse and frustrate a beginning student, while providing explanations of scholarly issues, maps, charts, and other visual guides for illustration. The third was to write from an intentional and unashamedly evangelical perspective, treating the NT as Scripture, rather than as just another historical work.

The book can be divided into three major sections. The first deals with the historical and cultural setting of the NT and the hermeneutical task of including this knowledge in the interpretation of its passages. The second—and the bulk of the book—is devoted to the study of the corpus of the NT, treating each gospel, letter, set of letters, and apocalypse on its own terms. The concluding chapter addresses issues of canon, text-critical matters, and the process of translation of the NT.

All students of the NT will benefit from reading this book. It is a great resource for the bookshelves of pastors, undergrad students, and seminary students. At times the discussion may seem heavy for one who has only begun his/her foray into NT studies, but this is balanced by the inclusion of a bibliography for further reference at the end of each chapter. The focus on the cultural milieu in which the NT was written opens up a world—the first-century world of Judaism and the Roman Empire—that has previously been unexplored by most readers of the Bible. It provides the necessary background for faithful and informed interpretations of the Scriptures we know and love.

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James D.G. DUNN. *Beginning from Jerusalem*. Vol. 2 of *Christianity in the Making*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009. 1175 pp. \$80.00.

This hefty tome is the second volume of a three-part series about the first 120 years of the Christian movement. It follows up the first volume, *Jesus Remembered*, by focusing on the period from AD 30 to 70. To reconstruct the history of the early church, Dunn relies on thirteen NT books that provide evidence for that period (although not necessarily written during that time): Acts, ten of Paul's letters (excluding the Pastorals), James, and 1 Peter. Dunn draws

extensively from his previous commentaries, monographs, and journal articles, but his previous research is here presented in a chronological format that focuses on historical reconstruction.

Dunn organizes this history as four major sections. The first section discusses the relation of Christianity to Judaism and the sources that can be used to reconstruct the history of the early church. The second section relies mainly on Acts 1–15 and Gal 1–2 to describe the first twenty years of the church from Pentecost to the Council in Jerusalem. Here Dunn also focuses on Paul’s conversion and first missionary journey. The third section covers the next decade of the Christian movement. Dunn describes the chronology of Paul’s life, his missionary tactics and church organization, his two Aegean missions, and the six canonical letters that he wrote during this period. The fourth section describes Paul’s imprisonment, death, and the three letters that he wrote from Rome (Philippians, Philemon, and Colossians); the ministries and deaths of Peter and James; and the three letters that were written by disciples of these three Christian leaders either near the end of their life or soon after their death (Ephesians, James, and 1 Peter).

Dunn’s approach to historical reconstruction is neither consistently conservative nor skeptical. He often gives the benefit of the doubt to the historical veracity of Luke and at times vigorously defends the plausibility of his account. But sometimes he also takes Luke to task for glossing over problems in the early church or leaving out information that would be useful to later historians. Occasionally he is skeptical that Luke’s account can be trusted. For example, he suggests that Luke invented the forty-day period of Jesus’ resurrection appearances. He also believes that Luke has read the practice of his day back into the account of Paul’s appointing of elders in the churches during his first journey.

In his analysis and evaluation of the NT letters, Dunn is sometimes cautiously conservative in his conclusions. For example, he defends the authenticity of 2 Thessalonians and suggests that perhaps Paul commissioned Timothy to write to the Colossians on his behalf. He also seems willing to accept Peter’s authorship of 1 Peter but concedes that a close colleague or disciple may have assembled Peter’s teachings. Similarly, if James himself did not write the letter attributed to him, it is at least composed from his teachings soon after his death.

At other times, Dunn follows a more speculative approach that attempts to fill the gaps in the historical record. He supports the dominant view that the Jerusalem conference described in Gal 2 is the same as the one described in Acts 15. This conclusion leads him to pile one speculation on top of another: Paul’s “famine visit” to Jerusalem recorded in Acts 11 never took place; the Apostolic Decree was formulated in Antioch and was never accepted by Paul; Peter’s withdrawal from the Gentiles caused Barnabas and the church of Antioch to disown Paul; the churches of Syria and Cilicia also ceased to support Paul; Paul reacted by developing his views in ever-increasing opposition to the Jerusalem leaders;

Paul's opponents won over his Galatian converts; Paul's visit to Jerusalem in Acts 18:22 resulted in an ever-widening rift between himself and the church there; the Jerusalem church spurned the offering collected by Paul. Some of these speculations are based on the silence of the text, and some require rejecting what the text says. Nevertheless, such speculative excesses are relatively infrequent, especially when compared to other major works on Acts and Paul.

Dunn also exhibits a temperament that is resistant to current fads in NT studies. He argues for the traditional view of *pistis Christou* as "faith in Christ," not "the faithfulness of Christ." He is not convinced by the political interpretation of Paul's rhetoric as anti-imperial. He also rejects classifying Paul's letters according to ancient rhetorical categories. He defends the Roman provenance of Philippians, Philemon, and Colossians. He is at times willing to buck majority opinions or the current consensus: for example, he offers a scathing critique of the "north Galatia" theory. Occasionally he offers an idiosyncratic interpretation, such as his conclusion that Luke intends the final verdict on Paul to be his identification as a god. Dunn's overall portrayal of the early Christian movement is that it experienced more tensions and fractures than is recognized by those who long to return to the pure ideal church of the apostolic age.

Dunn's command of the secondary literature is unparalleled, and the professor and scholar will find this to be a valuable resource and reference. Dunn's writing style is clear and accessible to ministers and educated laypersons, but due to its length only the most dedicated reader will desire to invest the weeks or months required to read it from cover to cover.

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Everett FERGUSON. *Baptism in the Early Church: History, Theology and Liturgy in the First Five Centuries.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009. 953 pp. \$60.00.

Ferguson in his latest work more than exceeds the high expectations he has created over a lifetime of scholarship in service to the academic world and the church. The breadth and depth of research and analysis in this work will make it a valuable resource for scholars, students, and libraries. Moreover, the wealth of material canvassed in this study has been arranged to make it accessible to Christian leaders and church members whose interests are more devotional and practical.

Ferguson organizes his work so that readers can focus on those "periods, persons, writings or topics" that correspond to their interests or needs. In addition to the survey of secondary literature, the work offers treatments of art, architecture, inscriptions, liturgical materials, and texts arranged under the following

headings: Antecedents to Christian Baptism, Baptism in the NT, each century from the second to the fifth centuries, and Baptisteries. Chapters within each unit focus on individual authors collected in regional clusters that allow the reader to trace regional developments across the centuries or to target authors of particular interest. More than ninety pages of indices help the reader pursue interests more efficiently.

Highlights of this study include the following: 1. the detailed word study on vocabulary associated with Baptism (38-59); 2. the identification of key biblical passages such as the great commandment (Matt 28:18-20; which appears nearly 50 times due to the frequency of early Christian allusion), Jesus' baptism (Matt 3:13-17 and parallels; which appear nearly 30 times), and Jesus' statement to Nicodemus (John 3:5; which appears nearly 60 times); 3. the identification of reoccurring themes for baptism such as those provided by Clement of Alexandria in the second century: Baptism is a bath, salvation, enlightenment, regeneration, God's gracious gift, perfection or completion, and the seal of divine ownership and protection (309-313); 4. the detailed treatment of key or intriguing figures: Clement of Alexandria (309-320), Tertullian (336-350), Cyprian (351-361), Cyril of Jerusalem (473-486), Ephraem of Syria (499-518), John Chrysostom (533-563), and Augustine (776-818). The literary evidence concerning the practices and understanding of the significance of baptism has been supplemented by a discussion of art (123-131), inscriptions (372-376), the baptistry of Dura Europus (440-442), and baptisteries across the Roman Empire (819-852). While each of these components of the book has great intrinsic value their greatest value is their contribution to the development of a comprehensive understanding of baptism in the early church.

Everett presents a compelling argument that adult baptism by immersion for salvation best reflects the whole range of evidence available for the first through the fifth century. Infant baptism drew comment initially near the end of the second century as a questionable practice, but quickly was accepted (along with deathbed baptisms by sprinkling) as a pastoral expedient to ensure the salvation of the dying. The use of burial inscriptions linking the baptismal and death dates of children was especially convincing (372-376). This accommodation would have long-term consequences. Augustine's argument for Original Sin was predicated in part on the occasional practice of infant baptism and subsequently led to the application of universal infant baptism in the West (but not in the East; 803-816).

Ironically, as I read this massive work, I found myself wanting more. I wanted summary statements at the end of each chapter that reiterated the key elements. Some chapters had them, others did not. Some summaries that did exist were almost cryptic, referring to a previous chapter rather than recapitulating immediate and previous findings. Fortunately, the final summation was very clear. I also wanted more evidence to justify the interpretation of the artistic depictions

of baptism. Using nonbaptismal art to validate conclusions reached in interpreting baptismal art would have greatly enhanced the effectiveness of this analysis. Such small quibbles should not detract from the overall accomplishment of this book. It is, after all, not a bad thing for an author to leave readers hungry for more.

Ferguson has quite properly limited his focus to a presentation of the evidence for the practices and beliefs of early Christians. He has furthermore presented an account of that evidence which confirms one of the central tenets of the Stone-Campbell tradition, namely adult, believers' baptism by immersion for salvation from sins. He has spoken my language as a fellow church historian. However, history is not the language of faith for most of our companions in the community of faith. Working in a highly ecumenical context, I regularly teach students who find that the seminal moments and beliefs of their own institutional heritage are markedly different from their personal beliefs. Rather, than be transformed by the revelation or moved to seek out a different community of faith, the vast majority choose either to ignore the contradictions or to create artificial reconciliations of their contradictory beliefs. Can the impressive amount of research and reflection represented by this book hope to provoke deeper appreciation of baptism and its role in salvation without raising contemporary theological questions?

Restorationist churches face a number of questions raised by this research. Granted that adult baptism has the only clear biblical warrant, how are believers baptized as infants to be received? What are the implications of this study for a more ecumenical church? As new churches proliferate across the Southern hemisphere independent of the missionary efforts of the Stone-Campbell Restoration Movement, how are we to address their varied understandings of baptism? While some of these issues have been addressed in other venues, this work has left us with the unspoken challenge to reexamine our own understanding of baptism.

Ferguson has also left us with a historical sermon as yet unpreached. In his assertion that practice often precedes theological reflection, churches of the twenty-first century are confronted with an unsettling truth. As we incorporate even the most innocent of pastoral innovations to make our worship and ministry more effective, we run the very real risk of establishing unhealthy theological precedents. The acceptance of infant baptism as a pastoral response to the fears of Christian parents later provided a justification for the wholesale theological revolution of Augustine's doctrine of Original Sin. Just so, today's creative innovations may lead to fundamental theological shifts. Given the quickened pace of societal transformation, we should not expect such changes to take 200 years, but rather 20 to 50 years. The history of baptism in the first five centuries offers a warning.

Ferguson has made to the church a great gift of his time, insight, and scholarship in this current volume. His efforts have paved the way for more fruitful

research and reflection on understandings of baptism in antiquity and in the present.

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John Howard YODER. *Christian Attitudes to War, Peace, and Revolution.*
Ed. by Theodore J. Koontz and Andy Alexis-Baker. Grand Rapids:
Brazos, 2009. 480 pp. \$34.99.

This book on the historical pilgrimage of Christian pacifism is a well-edited redaction of a course that Yoder taught with this name from 1966 at Goshen College to his last year alive in 1997 at Notre Dame. Over several years the lectures were transcribed and a first edition of this book was published in 1983. The book originally was intended to be a companion to the main text of the course: Roland Bainton's *Christian Attitudes toward War and Peace*. However, this edition of the book allows Yoder's work to stand on its own as an argument for pacifism. Primary audiences for this book would include ethicists, pacifists, and students of Yoder's life and work. Secondary audiences could easily include missionaries who will be involved in violent contexts, majority world scholars who wrestle with their own issues of violence, and Christian relief and development practitioners.

The reading is very engaging since it is primarily representative of classroom lectures. The book dives right in to complicated topics and addresses them with fervor and devoted scholarship. It also has impressive historical depth. From the early church to liberation theology, this course covered a massive spread of history. Included in all this history is Yoder's typology of war and his evaluations of the Just War and of the pacifist movement. A strong element of the book is that Yoder is not just concerned with this as a topic of historical debate. For him it is the historical and theological underpinnings for issues that Christians face today. Laws for conscientious objectors and the disciplining of soldiers are issues that must be addressed in light of a pacifistic view on violence. Yoder seems to hope that this work will shed light on those ideas. It is a broad and well-written book.

However, three foundational difficulties arise in the book. The first is Yoder's personal pilgrimage. If a reader is not familiar with the foundations of pacifism and Mennonite theology, some of his logical jumps could be questioned, such as the belief that Jesus was a pacifist. The second difficulty is that Yoder relies heavily on logic alone as his primary tool to critique Christianity's historical attitudes toward war. In this a clear dualism emerges that does not take into account the Holy Spirit or demonic entities as components in the violence debate. It also means that much of the thought and worldview of the Bible (as a near-eastern document) is viewed through only a modernist, western lens. The third difficul-

ty is that the book comes at the topic within the context of a political system that embraces and protects the pacifist under its military strength. Regardless of argument, it is a very hard stance to maintain emotionally since many have suffered for the very freedom Yoder uses to express his thoughts.

Nonetheless, Yoder brings a strong mind and a caring heart to this work. Violence is a vastly complicated topic full of pitfalls and obstacles, but Yoder's desire to be faithful to Jesus and be a clear thinker shines out. As Yoder wraps up the book you can hear his frustration with the nature of the debate within Christian circles. He notes that few people want to engage the topic with clarity or scholarship. Part of the problem is that opponents to pacifism are both numerous and strong, and emotions run high about this topic. If nothing else, Yoder's life and research was such that his book deserves to be read so that multiple voices can be heard about something so deeply important in any age.

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**Dale C. ALLISON, Jr. *The Historical Christ and the Theological Jesus*.
Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009. 128 pp. \$16.00.**

Allison's current volume, though brief, is one of the more interesting and important books on Jesus in the last twenty or thirty years. The book does not fall clearly into a particular genre, as repeated themes are as broad as his identity as a confessing Christian, his reiterations that the historical Jesus was an apocalyptic prophet, and his openness to numinous religious experiences. At the risk of oversimplification, this book is Allison's theological memoir of his career thus far in the quest of the historical Jesus, and his taking stock of the status of the discipline.

Particularly attractive is that Allison sheds the cloak of objectivity and discusses the explicit role of personal subjectivity in his research and even dares to opine on this role for others' research as well. This stance is refreshingly honest and supports his larger thesis that historical Jesus research at present has no "assured critical results" (10-11), only a variety of opinions tied inevitably to a variety of opinion-givers.

Given the personal nature of this book, another strength is that Allison sometimes comments on places where he has changed his mind from previous publications. As one example, he notes that he once bought into Schweitzer's view of "thorough-going eschatology" but does so no longer (95).

Another example of a mind-change for Allison, and one of the most prominent themes in the book, is that he no longer believes it possible to separate authentic strands of historical Jesus tradition from later church accretions, at least not with surety. Allison is thus skeptical of criteria of authenticity—"My question

is not Which criteria are good and which bad? or How should we employ the good ones? but rather Should we be using criteria at all? My answer is No” (55). He informs readers that he is convinced of this after years of his own scholarly attempts to do so (38), and that creating a Jesus apart from the earliest sources of him is impossible—“We cannot lay them aside and tell a better story” (66). Instead, Allison advocates an approach to the Gospels of “making inferences from patterns that characterize the sources as a whole” (92). This approach is wholeheartedly welcomed from this reviewer, especially as Allison bases it on the impact of memory on the Jesus tradition (61-78).

For all the insightful discussion, several matters arise with which one could disagree or at least wish for qualification, and I here cite just one. Although Allison claims his method contains “a canonical bias” (66), he really means a Synoptic bias. Indeed, he follows the last quotation by claiming, “Our reconstructed Jesus will inevitably be Synoptic-like” and that “nothing else . . . can carry conviction.” One notes an omission of John’s Gospel here, which he considers “a less than literal interpretation of apocalyptic eschatology” (99). In light of recent work that reopens discussion on the historical nature of the fourth Gospel, such as that of Richard Bauckham or some presenters in the John, Jesus, and History session at the Society of Biblical Literature, many will undoubtedly question Allison’s muting of the canonical voice of the Johannine Jesus.

Despite this minor criticism, no one should ignore the significance of one of the most important living Jesus scholars arguing that the rules of the game must change for both historical and theological reasons. Indeed, Allison’s book is critical for any scholar involved in Jesus research and it will not be a surprise if future generations see this work as the line of demarcation between an “early Allison” and “later Allison.” Since its discussion is dependent upon knowledge of the results of critical scholarship, as well as Allison’s own work, it will be most beneficial to readers familiar with such work.

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Marcus J. BORG and John Dominic CROSSAN. *The First Paul: Reclaiming the Radical Visionary behind the Church’s Conservative Icon.* New York: Harper One, 2009. 230 pp. \$24.99.

In his now classic work *Paul and the Salvation of Mankind*, noted Danish scholar Johannes Munck warned against a kind of secularizing of Paul that would divorce the apostle from his roots in Jewish apocalyptic thought. “Purely secular ideas have been used to describe the apostle and his call,” he wrote, “and those secular ideas have been imposed on the apostle himself as if they were his own thoughts and motives” (65). Now, some fifty years later, appears another attempt

at a secularized version of Paul in a book coauthored by two of the most well-known NT scholars writing for the public today, Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan.

Up till now, Borg and Crossan have made their mark primarily in Jesus studies, both being original fellows of the controversial *Jesus Seminar*. In this volume they cast their critical glance towards Paul, who, in the authors' opinion, was "remarkably faithful to the message and vision of Jesus himself" (11). But, it must be asked, which Paul? Answer: the *radical* Paul of the genuine letters (Romans, 1–2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, Philemon), a Jewish Christ mystic who challenged the dominant societal values of his day, especially slavery and patriarchy. This first Paul stands in contrast to the *conservative* Paul of the disputed letters (Ephesians, Colossians, 2 Thessalonians) that compromised this radical vision and the *reactionary* Paul or "anti-Paul" of the Pastoral letters (1,2 Timothy, Titus) that effectively negated it. The authors add a fourth "Paul" to the plethora of Pauls in the NT: the Paul of Acts, which the authors regard as an important secondary source, albeit used critically.

To hear the voice of the radical Paul, Borg and Crossan point the reader to a commendable and worthwhile goal: to wrest Paul away from his sixteenth-century Reformation context and place him back into his first-century Roman one, "to see him properly as contrasting not Christianity to Judaism or Protestantism to Catholicism, but Jewish covenantal traditions to Roman imperial theology" (7). By "Roman imperial theology," they mean Rome's embodiment of "the wisdom of the world" that achieves peace and justice through military conquest and imperial order, in stark contrast to Paul's vision of a society of equals committed to justice and nonviolence based on the radical "family values" of God as Father of all, the benevolent Householder of the entire world.

Borg and Crossan's previous work on Jesus is not unrelated to their work on Paul. "The radical Paul, we are convinced, was a faithful follower of the radical Jesus" (19). Both Jesus and Paul offered an alternative vision of how life on earth should be lived. Both opposed empire. Both were executed by empire. And both, one should note, were decidedly *non-apocalyptic*. While the authors admit that Paul expected the end-time to come soon, this expectation does not affect their reading of Pauline ethics in any meaningful way. In a stunning commentary on 1 Corinthians 7, Borg and Crossan state: "Since Paul was wrong about the timing of that consummation, we emphasize that only his vision of celibacy—*never his vision of general Christian life*—was derived from that incorrect presumption" (49, italics mine). In sharp contrast to Beker, who sees apocalyptic as the coherent center of Paul's thought, Borg and Crossan never even mention the word and only rarely (and much too late in the discussion to be of much significance) mention "eschatology" or "Eschaton." This benign neglect makes for almost a purely secularized version of Paul, one suspiciously amenable to Western democratic idealism.

Instead of a thoroughgoing eschatology, Borg and Crossan offer a thoroughgoing anti-Roman imperialism as the interpretive lens through which to see Paul. Sin and death are not hostile cosmic powers stemming from Paul's apocalyptic worldview but humanity's involvement in systems of violence and injustice; the crucifixion of Jesus is not the apocalyptic defeat of those powers but the result of "the violent injustice he had opposed justly and nonviolently" (166); the resurrection of Jesus is not an apocalyptic event that convinces Paul as a former Pharisee that he is living at the dawn of the new age but an affirmation that God's great cleanup of the world is already underway; righteousness is not a forensic-eschatological concept in Paul ala Käsemann but God's distributive (not retributive) justice by which God's Spirit is equally available to all; the gift of the Spirit is not an installment or guarantee of better things to come but "the Spirit of non-violent distributive justice . . . offered freely and gratuitously to all people" (183).

While this political reading of Paul may be appealing on a theological level, it fails to justify on an exegetical one. Borg and Crossan's interpretation of such key eschatological texts as Romans 8; 9–11, and 1 Corinthians 15 is strained at best, distorted at worst. Even the all-important baptismal formula of Gal 3:27–28 rests on an apocalyptic foundation ("no longer male and female") that the authors fail to recognize or else admit. Moreover, the authors' political reading of Paul runs into significant obstacles with a text like Romans 13, which encourages submission to a seemingly benevolent empire, not to mention certain features of Luke–Acts, which cast Rome in a positive or at least neutral light. (Can it be lost on our authors that Luke proudly proclaims his hero Paul on more than one occasion a *Roman* citizen?) Borg and Crossan are on stronger exegetical ground with their analysis of Paul's letter to Philemon, though one wonders whether Paul's appeal for manumission yields the wider social application Borg and Crossan wish to give it. Despite their proclivity for tendentious exegesis, the authors frequently appeal to what Paul really "meant" or how Paul has been tragically "misunderstood."

The first Paul was indeed the radical Paul. Unfortunately for these authors, he was also the apocalyptic Paul. Paul's social vision was inextricably tied to his apocalyptic vision that gave it birth. Any attempt to separate the two runs the risk, as Munck reminded us, of seriously misunderstanding Paul. In this light it is unfortunate indeed that much of liberal Christianity today desires the ethics of Jesus and Paul without the eschatology while much of conservative Christianity desires the eschatology of Jesus and Paul without the ethics. What God has joined together, let no one separate.

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

Zetterholm, Associate Professor of NT Studies at Lund University in Sweden, brings to the table his fourth offering on the study of early Christian beginnings. His previous works include *The Formation of Christianity in Antioch* (Routledge 2003), which received mixed reviews according to an Internet search; *The Messiah in Early Judaism* (ed., Fortress Press, 2007); and *The Ancient Synagogue from Its Origins until 200 C.E.* (Fortress, 2003).

In his latest monograph, Zetterholm does not attempt to develop a detailed history of Paul, nor does he seem to focus exclusively on “recent” scholarship, as his title suggests. A better subtitle might be “Historical Developments in Non-conservative (Lutheran?) Theological Circles Leading up to Recent Scholarship.”

Zetterholm does not seem to offer much on the criteria he used for selecting scholars to represent various viewpoints, although he does seem to provide a good mix of American, British, and European scholars. Giants of conservative scholarship on the subject, however, such as F.F. Bruce (*Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free*) and Ben Witherington (*The Paul Quest*) receive no mention in this survey. Even feminist scholar Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza only gets a passing mention in the bibliography.

Chapter 1 opens with a brief history of the life of the apostle Paul, with a special focus on Paul's view of law and grace, and how that will come to influence the views presented later in the book. The treatment is fairly typical, no real surprises, except to set the reader up for what has become one of the biggest debates in Pauline theology of late: Did Paul consider himself fully Jewish as he proclaimed Christ, or had he made a substantial, if not total break with Judaism?

Zetterholm begins to lay the foundation for recent scholarship in chapter 2, beginning with Hegel and the Tübingen School in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. He focuses here initially on the work of Ferdinand Christian Baur, and specifically on the degree and nature of anti-Semitism in the early church and in the nineteenth century. He goes on to discuss the Lutheran view along with Ferdinand Weber's work. He discusses the apparent German biases of these viewpoints that laid the foundation for the events and attitudes of the twentieth century, specifically the German hatred of Jews and the Holocaust.

In chapter 3, “The Formation of the Standard View of Paul,” the author moves the reader into the twentieth century, focusing on Rudolf Bultmann and two of his disciples, Ernst Käsemann and Günther Bornkamm. Why these three authors are the only ones worthy of the “standard view” is not made clear, save for the author's own apparent Lutheran perspective. Although providing a good summary of these scholars' views, Zetterholm seems to have an ulterior motive to place the blame for the Holocaust squarely on the type of Christianity these men propounded in that day.

Chapters 4 and 5, “Toward a New Perspective on Paul” and “Beyond the New Perspective” respectively, form the heart of the author’s discussion on “recent” scholarship (i.e., post-WWII), at least in the main. He begins with the “exegetical reorientation” of Krister Stendahl and moves to a discussion of E.P. Sanders’ “Covenantal Nomism.” Other scholars in these chapters include Heikki Räisänen (who is cited frequently throughout the book), James D.G. Dunn, N.T. Wright, Lloyd Gaston, Peter J. Tomson, Stanley Sowers, and Mark Nanos.

“In Defense of Protestantism” is the topic of chapter 6, featuring Frank Thielman and Simon Gathercole, among others. Chapter 7 discusses the nontraditional, nontheological approaches to Paul, with Kathy Ehrensperger of the University of Wales his leading figure on the feminist view of Paul. A section on Caroline Johnson Hodge’s view of Paul’s view of ethnicity from chapter 5 probably would have fit better in chapter 7.

For more conservative-minded NT departments, this book would serve as representative of Lutheran scholarship at least, and more broadly liberal scholarship on Paul. The first chapter as an overview of Paul would be good supplemental reading in a Pauline epistles course, while other chapters would be suitable as supplemental readings for century-specific or paradigm-specific theology classes.

Zetterholm’s writing is, over all, clear and concise, and I believe he has given a fair presentation of the views of his chosen scholars, although I would have liked to see more representation of conservative scholarship. He gives adequate space to comparing and contrasting the scholars as well, and as such, the book would have some value in a supplementary capacity for any course in Pauline studies.

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Gerald L. BRAY, ed. *Commentaries on Romans and 1-2 Corinthians: Ambrosiaster. Ancient Christian Texts.* ed. Thomas C. Oden. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009. 300 pp. \$60.00.

Bray, director for the Latimer Trust (London) and research professor at Samford University, is a recognized scholar of church history and historical theology and has published widely in both disciplines. He served as editor for the Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture series. Bray marshaled the expertise of many Patristic scholars in order to consolidate theological insight from multiple Church Fathers speaking on a particular text. The current volume serves as an installment for a new series labeled Ancient Christian Texts. This series brings to life elucidating perspectives of specific church fathers on individual books of the Bible—perspectives that were once unavailable to nonspecialists. This review considers the format established by Bray and briefly examines the arguments provided by Ambrosiaster in the commentaries.

In terms of Bray's contributions as translator, the commentaries follow a simplistic structure. While small groups of verses are combined occasionally, the normal pattern has each verse from each chapter of all three books receiving individual treatment by Ambrosiaster. This differs from the modern approach of examining a passage according to rhetorical limits; however, this does not mean Ambrosiaster was unaware of the logical progression of the argument. Also, where scriptural quotations or allusions appear in Ambrosiaster's comments, Bray has emphasized them in the body of the text and footnoted the specific reference for the citation. Furthermore, Bray supplies corrective readings to Ambrosiaster's comments as well as brief explanations of variant readings in the text. However, in view of Bray's desire "to allow the text speak for itself" (xi-xii), these features are overly selective.

With regard to the commentaries, some essential features are to be noted. Ambrosiaster seems to portray Romans as a theological narrative and thinks it should be read as such (1-118). In this way, the story of fallen humanity and its restored relationship to God is best understood through a theological interpretation of that two-part story. It becomes quite clear that this interpretation proceeds with significant concepts in mind: a Trinitarian view of God, a high Christology, the work of Christ as the mystery of God, inherited guilt (sin), a predestinarian view of salvation, and the notion of justification by faith. A potentially troublesome feature of this commentary is Ambrosiaster's view of Judaism in light of the work of Christ—he sees the latter as a spiritually enhanced form of and as doing away with the former, which is temporal and physical (see comments on Romans 5-8). His analysis on the nature of the Christian life as found in the latter portion of Romans bears out this perception (see comments on Romans 12-15).

Ambrosiaster, in his commentary in 1 Corinthians, delineates a multitude of issues plaguing the young church in Corinth—all of which need Paul's immediate attention (119-206). Ambrosiaster apparently defines the root cause in two parts: youthfulness of the church itself, and a continuous hold on that which is worldly. Thus, a key theme running throughout this commentary is the new life in Christ, which, for Ambrosiaster, stands in opposition to the former ungodly way of life. Once again, in addressing this concern, the Trinitarian view of God and the high Christology found in Romans can be traced throughout Ambrosiaster's argument. Issues that perplex modern commentators receive due attention—Christian liberties, women's roles in church gatherings, and the nature and role of spiritual gifts. However, while Ambrosiaster's conclusions in these areas might not find a wide assent today, they deserve to be read as one attempting to be sympathetic to Paul's theology and logic (see comments on 1 Corinthians 8-9, 11-14).

Finally, Ambrosiaster's treatment of 2 Corinthians proceeds in a way that seeks to maintain the theological and logical continuity between this letter and

1 Corinthians (207–265). For Ambrosiaster, the tenor of the letter is more cordial; any points of disagreement are localized to particular individuals and not necessarily overarching theological problems. As before, the Trinitarian view of God and the high Christology permeate Ambrosiaster’s treatment of 2 Corinthians; although, his views on predestination and justification by faith appear with some regularity as well. Also, as in Romans, his views on the distinction between the age of Judaism and the age of Christ (and the Spirit) can be readily found (see comments on 2 Corinthians 2–7). Scholars advocating partition theories for 2 Corinthians (1–7, 8–9, and 10–13) might be disappointed by the way in which Ambrosiaster seeks to maintain the flow of Paul’s argument.

In terms of contributive value, this particular work and the promise of the series as a whole provides wonderful insight into the minds of early theologians wrestling with biblical texts. Its clarity of presentation and accessibility of content provides opportunities for a wide readership. Some readers might be surprised to find that many interpretative struggles with key passages are not modern dilemmas; many Church Fathers struggled to make sense of the same passages and often for similar reasons (Ambrosiaster’s comments on Romans 9–11). This shared experience of wrestling with the text might serve as a means for narrowing the historical distance between the modern world and the world of postapostolic Christianity. If such a narrowing takes place as a result of this new series, then it will have provided a desirable and much needed service.

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T. Scott DANIELS. *Seven Deadly Spirits: The Message of Revelation’s Letters for Today’s Church.* Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009. 157 pp. \$16.99.

Every letter in Revelation 2–3 is addressed to “the angel of the church.” Daniels presents each of the “angels” of the churches as a community spirit, ethos, philosophy, or corporate personality that is embodied within the church. After an introductory chapter developing his thesis, Daniels then takes the reader through each of the seven letters, describing the historical background of the city, naming the spirit of the church, and making connections between each church and similar tendencies in modern Christianity. The final chapter attempts to give practical advice on how to identify the spirit of a modern church, preach and teach in such a way as to harness its power, and correct its wayward and destructive tendencies.

Drawing upon historical and exegetical research, Daniels presents the background of each city, places the letter squarely within its ancient context, and then tries to ascertain the spirit underlying the church there. Once that spirit has been identified, Daniels can then point out the benefits and pitfalls of modern church-

es demonstrating that same spirit. For example, because of its emphasis upon casting out false teachers (Rev 2:2), the church of Ephesus had lost its primary love for fellow believers (Rev 2:4). Daniels identifies this as the spirit of “boundary-keeping” which, on the positive side leads to protection against false doctrine, but when taken too far leads the church into an unloving, accusatory pattern. Many churches suffer from the same spirit today, and Daniels is quite happy to help his readers understand exactly how.

One wonders, however, whether Daniels is justified in interpreting the “angel” in this manner. He draws heavily upon the work of W. Wink and H. Berkhof for the initial idea (15-18), and then jumps to the philosophy of personhood (25-27) for further development. The reader expects to find a detailed discussion of whether or not the term *angelos* was ever used in this communal sense in antiquity, but is disappointed. At the end of the day, the book’s major weakness is the question of whether or not the presupposition to interpret the “angel” as a collective consciousness withstands linguistic scrutiny.

Nevertheless, the book is not without merit. In order to correctly name the powers that be, Daniels must first exegete the letters and place them in their proper historical contexts. Seldom have I seen descriptions of the ancient cities of Asia Minor simultaneously so succinct and accurate. The author never belabors the point, but presents the pertinent information in profound and accurate ways. The historical picture painted is not without proper documentation either, making this book succinct, readable, and credible. Students of Revelation will find Daniels’ blend of historical exegesis and modern application exciting and uplifting.

Because of its readability, the current volume is a text suited best for the undergraduate course on Revelation, a Sunday School class, or small group study. Small group leaders frustrated with studies that lean more toward application than credible exegesis will find this book (and the corresponding study questions) extremely helpful. I have already included this book as required reading in my upcoming course on Revelation. Its accurate presentation of city life in these Asian cities, coupled with its ease of readability, fills a textbook niche I have longed to fill for several years.

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- John W. Loftus, *Why I Became an Atheist: A Former Preacher Rejects Christianity* (James Sennett, Brenau University)
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