Book Reviews

John M. IMBLER, ed. *A Passion for Christian Unity: Essays in Honor of William Tabbernee*. St. Louis: Chalice, 2009. 180 pp. $24.99.

This book is an anthology of thirteen current or former members of the faculty of Phillips Theological Seminary (including the editor, who wrote the introduction). As the title indicates, it was produced in honor of William Tabbernee who was president of the institution until his recent retirement. Ostensibly, the book is written to promote Christian unity, again, as indicated by the title. At the onset, a helpful list of contributors is provided that includes brief sketches of each author.

In the introduction, Imbler touches on certain historical aspects of Disciples history with a view to noting ecumenical developments. The focus then narrows to the historical development of what eventuated in Phillips Theological Seminary and its leadership under William Tabbernee. In 1951, the school took a "decidedly intentional path of openness" by seeking non-Disciples candidates when teaching positions came open (7). The openness has continued to expand over time, as indicated by the school's current statement: "The seminary does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin, age, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, or theological perspective." This commitment is reflected in their hiring practices and involvement in church and community (9). The introduction concludes with a short religious biography of Tabbernee.

The somewhat disparate nature of an anthology does not lend itself easily to an entirely coherent presentation since there is not a necessarily logical flow from one chapter to the next, thus reflecting the individualistic styles and particular concerns of each author. In the interest of space considerations, therefore, it would seem best to simply provide each chapter title with its corresponding author, and a simple summary statement of the chapter. I will then attempt to provide what appear to be underlying recurrent themes that permeate the entire corpus, thus reflecting the philosophical/theological bases of the writers. A critique of the themes and theological bases will follow.

Chapter one is "The Ecumenical Paradox in Three Linguistic Strategies" by Harold Hatt. The paradox is seen in the description of the church as a house built on "living stones" (1 Pet 2:5) and as also represented by the symbol of a boat (origin unknown)—a house built of living stones that floats like a boat (16). Chapter two is "'Give Me Thy Hand': Practicing Ecumenical and Interreligious Theology at a United Methodist Campus Ministry" by Ellen Blue. She traces how her husband practiced campus ministry by reaching out to non-Christian

groups, and the rationale for doing so. Chapter three is "Seeking Wholeness: Biblical Visions of Separation and Unity" by Richard H. Lowery. He presents a kind of "realized eschatology" by stressing the presence of God on earth now and reconciliation of all humanity on earth as a daily discipline (46). Chapter four is "The Idealization of Christian Origins in Acts of the Apostles" by Dennis E. Smith. He largely discredits Luke's account and advocates a new paradigm for discerning the "origins" of Christianity. Chapter five is "Clippings from *World Call*: Disciples Perspectives on Religious Pluralism 1919–1940" by Don A. Pittman. He traces the widening theological perspectives and practices as evidenced by articles from the Disciples magazine *World Call*. Chapter six is "It's about the Conversation" by Gary E. Peluso-Verdend. He creates fictional conversations between people from representative theological positions who discuss the nature of the church. Those people, however, often refer to real people and events in their respective discussions. Chapter seven is "Circling Back with Fresh Eyes: Christians Teaching Buddhist Practices for Peace at Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation" by Sandra Costen Kunz. Her primary focus appears to be promoting nonviolence by incorporating some of the practices of Buddhism (99). Chapter eight is "Labyrinth Walking as a Prelude to Spiritually Based Conversation" by Mady Fraser. She provides a brief history of the labyrinth and commends its current usage as a means of fostering an atmosphere of hope (for peace), humility, and hospitality (appreciation for other faiths). Chapter nine is "'Tell Me What You Want, What You Really, Really Want': Desire, Vocation, and Gifts for Service" by Duane R. Bidwell. He suggests that "desire" should be given greater consideration for determining God's call in one's life, but does acknowledge that primacy belongs to "vocation." Chapter ten is "Ties That Bind Too Tightly: A Reflection on Relinquishment and Self-differentiation in Women's Leadership" by Nancy Claire Pittman. She speaks of the need for leaders to learn certain forms of detachment to keep from being overwhelmed in ministry, and to separate self-perceptions from others' perceptions of oneself. Chapter eleven is "Does Constructive Theology Matter? What Political Candidates Can Teach Ministry Students about Theology and Pastoral Leadership" by Joseph A. Bessler. He sets forth five themes politicians use that overlap with five basic topics of Christian theology and shows what can be gained by such a comparison. Chapter twelve is "Deep and New: Earth-centered Ecumenism" by Elizabeth Box Price. She speaks of environmental crisis and the need for a shift to "move from an anthropocentric understanding to a biocentric understanding of the world and humanity's place in it" (153).

Some strengths of Imbler's book may be noted. The title of the book itself directs attention toward a theme that should never be taken lightly by Christians in light of Jesus' prayer (John 17:20-23), Paul's admonitions (especially 1 Corinthians 1–4), and a host of other scriptural passages. For those who prefer using "Restoration Movement" as a self-descriptive term, it may serve as a helpful

reminder that Christian unity is or should be a vital aspect of that which needs restoring to the life of the church.

Some brief, selective items may be noted for commendation. Contra American individualism, Lowery reminds us that humans are inherently social, and that we come by it "naturally" by way of "the communal character of God" (40). Kunz talks about developing a sense of spaciousness ("counting to ten"—by way of simple analogy [my analogy]) that allows us to respond appropriately to violence—"a space for forgiveness between violent action and violent response" (98). Bidwell refers to scripture (1 Cor 12:7) that tells us our spiritual gifts are for serving others, not ourselves, and that God should be acknowledged as the "source, object, and goal of [our] gifts for service" (115). Bessler's comparison of the five fundamental political topics with five basic topics of Christian theology is intriguing and insightful as it shows the overriding "soteriological" parallels (136-139).

The weaknesses of the book are manifold, but they seem related to or are predicated upon one or two fundamental shortcomings. It seems that a "low view" of Scripture allows these authors to wander away from biblical truths and results in a faulty understanding of what comprises legitimate Christian unity, or that an excessive desire for unity impels the authors to downplay or ignore vital aspects of biblical faith or to denigrate the "inconvenient" biblical record. By way of example, Don Pittman, while tracing the increasing liberalism of Disciples as set forth in *World Call*, quotes a supporter of the inclusivism, Stephen Neill, who implies the Christian gospel is not unique and final, and that it "might prove to be, after all, no more than a western myth" (74). Nancy Claire Pittman says, "The text [Matthew] is permeated with religious conflict and a *self-righteous sense* of persecution as Jews confessing Jesus to be the Messiah began to separate themselves from the synagogues of the ancient Near East" [Italics mine] (128). Price calls for a "new cosmology" which is different from "the Hebrew story of creation," but somehow needs to relate to it (156). Lowery virtually justifies the sin of Adam and Eve (and "blames" God?). He said it was prompted by their desire to be wise, to know the difference between right and wrong: "It is precisely the social nature of human being that makes moral discernment necessary. God's solution to the problem of human loneliness leads inevitably to the human desire, the need to know the difference between right and wrong" (42). Smith somehow makes it sound like it was more Eusebius's doing than the book of Acts that provided the primary source for understanding the origin of Christianity. He goes on to declare "it is now debatable whether any reliable details about Christian origins can be derived from Acts" (47). Smith relies on Richard Pervo's "massive, groundbreaking study" which concludes that Acts should be dated ca. 115, rather than the commonly accepted 85. Smith says that the author (obviously not the *real* Luke), was not, contrary to his assertion, a careful historian. Smith uses an argument from silence to discredit the Acts' account of the ascension story.

The miraculous accounts, in fact, were fabricated as evidenced by the "heavy-handed way" in which they were applied (51). Pentecost is said to be a fictional account that assures a "big bang" beginning (endnote, 166). Smith claims, "For the most part, Luke-Acts is made up of stories created by Luke out of bits and pieces from his sources and, in some cases, perhaps, out of whole cloth" (54-55). Finally, Smith supports Burton Mack concerning an alleged document called "Q" when Mack affirms that Q "testifies to a Jesus movement that . . . did not include any death and resurrection stories in their collection, thus indicating that the death of Jesus played no major role in their theology and piety" (56). It should be noted that, in spite of some scholars' imaginative re-creation of original source material, there is no actual "Q" manuscript. In fact, there is a relatively recent scholarly work that calls into question "Q's" very existence.

Such disparagement of Scripture calls into question if not blatantly denies the integrity of its claims and its authors, and calls into question what D.A. Carson calls the "great turning points of redemptive history." It seems that distancing themselves from the authority of Scripture makes it easier for these theologians to pursue their own agendas when they come into conflict with clear biblical testimony. This is evidenced by two recurring themes (among others) that permeate the volume.

First, in their pursuit of unity, these scholars go far beyond biblical warrant. "Unrestricted fellowship" is the goal (80). Blue speaks of conservatives as "fanning prejudice or denouncing heterodoxy." Also, she refers to the "tragic consequences that can spring from religious exclusivism" (31). Similarly, Fraser expresses concern for "hard-edged exclusive boundaries" and advocates "receiving the offerings of others without judgment" (108, 110). The flip side goes far beyond seeking unity with all professing Christians. It includes all of the world religions. Thus, "Progressive Christians" claim Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists are saved outside of Christ (31-32); the idea is expressed that all religions are part of one sacred community which includes "Buddhist, Sufi, Christian, Native American, Jewish, Goddess, Islamic, Celtic" (155); and "their ways [all beliefs] are true for them, as our ways are true for us" (24).

Second, there is ample evidence of "hierarchophobia"—a fear of any type of authority and distinction. The book of Acts is disparaged for justifying "the authority of a centralized leadership" (56). There is a concern for "breaking through hierarchical understandings of unity" (84). Feminists are commended for thinking of leadership in terms of a "spider's web over against the hierarchical models that have dominated our understandings of church for centuries" (126). Bessler suggests there might be a problem with the concept of the *Imago Dei*—"elevating human existence hierarchically above the rest of creation" (140).

In conclusion, according to the purposes and constraints of this review, I see no need to offer a substantive rebuttal of the various positions that have been set forth in *A Passion for Christian Unity*. Though the volume contains smatterings

of helpful ideas, they are sparse and meager. In comparison with biblical concepts and teachings, the contrasts and contradictions are clear enough and speak for themselves. However, those who see the Bible as "speaking in dialogue with itself" and who opt for a kind of progressive revelation that transcends biblical theology will find this work to their liking. Moderates or conservatives within the Stone-Campbell Restoration Movement will not find much in the way of helpful material, unless they are looking for an updated view of where current Disciples scholarship has landed. Belonging to the latter category, I would not recommend *A Passion for Christian Unity*, since much of what it promotes by way of unity is not commensurate with a biblically informed description of "Christian," which, to my way of thinking, is the only valid one.

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Maurice SINCLAIR. *Pathways of Wisdom: Human Philosophies and the Purpose of God.* Downers Grove, IL: InverVarsity, 2010. 324 pp. $26.42.

As I read Sinclair's volume, I not only wanted to accept his invitation to be a part of his "company on this journey," I found myself wanting to return to the classroom using his book as a primary text. Having taught philosophy and theology at both the undergraduate and graduate level and having recently retired as a seminary president, I readily imagined how helpful this book could be to first-year seminary students, especially for those who had had little or no philosophical or theological background at the undergraduate level. In my own seminary, Emmanuel Christian Seminary, an increasing percentage of our students are coming from state universities with a variety of undergraduate majors and little or no theology and philosophy. This book could give them an historical perspective on how God's revelation and human reason have interacted in forming the various intellectual traditions of our day. Often times, in later more technical seminary courses, teachers make references to these various traditions on the assumption that the student knows the material and can relate it to the specific concern at hand. This is not always a safe assumption! A good reading of this volume would do much to make it a more realistic assumption.

Upper-level undergraduates would also find this volume immensely helpful in understanding how the Christian faith has been a conveyer of the wisdom of God as well as a challenge to and a leaven for worldly wisdom. The book takes us on a journey through the Western intellectual and philosophical tradition with a surprising degree of comprehensiveness given the scope of the project. Sinclair writes with insightful criticism as well as that sense of fair-mindedness that characterizes the best of British scholarship. Having served on the faculty of the Alexandrian School of Theology in Egypt, he is able to include a helpful section

on the Islamic contributions to the search for wisdom. But his strongest criticisms are saved for the modern Western church in the many ways it has abdicated to the modern forces of secularism. And hence he concludes by calling for the church to reclaim a prophetic voice in contemporary secular Europe and North America.

I can only imagine the scope of Sinclair's preparation for writing this volume. Time and time again as I read it, I found him referring to and quoting primary sources and causing me to think, "I never got around to reading that! Maybe in retirement?" I had the opportunity to work with Sinclair during his days as principal of Crowther Hall, the missionary training college of Church Missionary Society for the Anglican Church located in Birmingham, England. At the time I was the principal of one of the newer Selly Oak Colleges, and I found him welcoming even to the point of inviting our staff and students for the occasional communion service (with of course his bishop's permission). His gentle spirit and firm faith made him an able administrator and teacher. After having trained so many missionaries it was not surprising to find him later serving in Argentina and then in Egypt. With all that he was doing I would not have expected him to produce such a masterly work as this, but he has, and I highly recommend it.

The first four chapters of this volume set the biblical context for this journey along the "pathway of wisdom." We are given a theological understanding of the creation stories and the beginning of God's redemptive work after the Fall that takes us through the Covenant and finally God's revelation of Himself in Jesus Christ, the personification of God's wisdom.

Chapter 5 through 7 introduce us to the Greek and Roman traditions of wisdom which served as a cultural context for the early church. Here we have a lucid overview of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, and how their philosophies where such a significant part of the human search for wisdom. Although Rome was to rule the world, it was Greek philosophy that set the agenda for the culture that the early Christian church sought to convey the wisdom of God in the person of Jesus, the Christ. It was this culture that the early church fathers attempted to engage in what proved to be a synthesis of Christian revelation and Greek wisdom.

Chapters 8 and 9 show the light of Christian wisdom shining in the Dark Ages, but Sinclair does not neglect the influence of Arab and Jewish scholars whose writings kept learning alive when the civilized world was plunging into darkness. It is in the monasteries that much of the intellectual life is preserved, but at the cost of theological controversies which eventually led to the synthesis of Thomas Aquinas.

Chapters 10 through 14 trace the rise and development of the scientific age which both enhances and challenges the search for wisdom that had been pursued by a dominant church. These chapters provide a good survey of the various philosophical traditions from what is known as the age of reason up to the mod-

ern era. I might have liked to have talked with Dr. Sinclair about his understanding of Kierkegaard and Wittgenstein, but given the scope of his survey, he presents the material with clarity and fairness. The challenges to traditional Christian understandings in the modern era have both chastened and energized the scholarship of Christian writers.

Chapter 15 gives the author an opportunity to reflect on his time in Egypt, especially as it gave him opportunity to reflect on the tradition of wisdom in the Arab world. For those of us whose academic life has been confined primarily to the Western tradition, Dr. Sinclair once again gives us a helpful overview of a predominantly Muslim country whose modern history is in many ways typical of the Arab Middle East.

As noted earlier, this excellent volume could be used as a text both at the graduate and undergraduate levels. However, I also recommend it to any informed Christian who would like to have a better understanding of how the Christian faith has interacted and impacted the various cultures in which it has found itself.

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Gerald R. MCDERMOTT. *The Great Theologians: A Brief Guide*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2010. 214 pp. $20.00.

Gerald McDermott again proves himself to be a writer capable of summarizing and explaining complex theological situations as he conveys the contributions of eleven of the greatest theologians in church history. The eleven theologians are as follows: Origen ("Oft-Reviled but The Greatest Reacher after the Apostles"), Athanasius ("The Black Monk Who Saved the Faith"), Augustine ("The Most Influential Theologian Ever"), Thomas Aquinas ("The Teacher of the Catholic Church"), Martin Luther ("The Monk Who Rose Up against Heaven and Earth"), John Calvin ("Greatest Theologian of the Reformed Tradition"), Jonathan Edwards ("America's Theologian"), Friedrich Schleiermacher ("Father of Liberal Theology"), John Henry Newman ("Anglican Theologian Who Swam the Tiber"), Karl Barth ("The Most Influential Twentieth-Century Theologian"), and Hans Urs von Balthasar ("Stellar Catholic Theologian of the Twentieth Century"). McDermott does not seek to present these eleven theologians as a definitive list. He admits that another writer could choose others, such as John Wesley, Anselm, Basil the Great, and Irenaeus. He chooses these men on the basis of their *influence* on Christian thought as a whole, whether that influence is positive or negative. His ultimate aim is not just to introduce the reader to these theologians but to allow the reader to see the history of Christian thought through the lenses of these great thinkers.

Each chapter is devoted to the life and work of one of the eleven theologians. It begins with a brief biographical sketch that focuses on important events in the theologian's life, especially those that had a profound effect on his theology. The second section presents an overview of the main themes found in his work, and proceeds to the third section that focuses on one major theme in great detail. The major theme is not chosen on the basis of whether it is the topic for which the theologian is most famous, but on its impact on Christian theology and the Church. The fourth section highlights important lessons to be learned from the theologian by approaching his thought both constructively and critically. The end of each chapter includes a short excerpt from one of the theologian's works, usually as an example of the major theme that was discussed in the chapter, a brief list of books both by the theologian and secondary sources about the theologian and his work, and finally, discussion questions designed for Sunday school classes and small groups.

Each chapter demonstrates a high degree of scholarly competence, balanced with very accessible, interesting narrative. McDermott is able to keep explanations of theological contributions of each theologian concise and accurate. This task is daunting when one considers the voluminous and complex works of many of these thinkers. The most important topics are given sufficient attention to promote understanding of the general shape of that theologian's contribution, including errors that may compromise the integrity of orthodox Christian doctrine.

This volume would serve well as a supplemental text to an undergraduate course in theology, or more specifically, historical 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 critical turning points and contributions of these great thinkers will find this book to be a very helpful introduction. As McDermott says it, "Once you finish this book, you will be able to nod appreciatively and even critically when a pastor—or a writer—refers to one of these 'greats.' You won't feel out to lunch, but will know that you have joined what has been called 'the Great Conversation'" (15).

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Thom STARK. *The Human Faces of God: What Scripture Reveals When It Gets God Wrong (and Why Inerrancy Tries to Hide It)*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2010. 268 pp. $29.00.

Stark, who has studied at Ozark Christian College and Emmanuel Christian Seminary, has not delayed a leap into scholarly debate. His first published volume

challenges the doctrine of biblical inerrancy (particularly as expressed by the Chicago Statement) and attempts to offer a new paradigm for believing communities to use Scripture as a moral and theological authority. The author explicitly addresses those of the Stone-Campbell tradition and advocates a separation from what he views to be a uniquely evangelical, fundamentalist approach to Scripture. For Stark, *sola sciptura* Christianity should mean parting ways with *all* doctrine that might compromise the interpreter's judgment—even inerrancy.

Stark's assurance in the preface that he is not "motivated by unspoken hostility toward the gospel" (xviii) is probably necessary. Some segments are impenitently unorthodox. A glowing endorsement from atheist author and blogger John Loftus can be found before the title page. The chapters that follow feature Stark claiming the Bible argues with itself (1), wondering if God might have lied (48), jesting that inerrancy stunts morality (67), designating David and Goliath as political propaganda (159), and concluding that Jesus was wrong (173-174). Though he admits his conclusions can seem "frightfully Orwellian" (15), Stark promises fellow Christians that nothing more than honest scholarship and an open search for the objective truth led to his current biblical beliefs. It was enough for me. Certainly it seems unlikely that insincerity or ulterior motives would produce passionate and witty arguments backed by an extensive bibliography.

As the author admits from the start, his case against inerrancy is not new and neither is the evidence he cites from Scripture. His hope, rather, is to bring such arguments to a wider readership that might be struggling to adopt Christian fundamentalism. Mainly, Stark builds a strong case for why inerrantist views are impossible to sustain. He shows how different interpretive models must be arbitrarily adopted in order to maintain the doctrine, even though the Chicago Statement expresses a commitment to the historical-grammatical approach.

Although the author's goals are twofold—"not just to tear down, but also build up" (xviii)—the bulk of the space is concerned with biblical evidence that historical-grammatical exegesis necessarily results in stories of genocide, human sacrifice, polytheism, national propaganda, and failed prophecy. The author remains convincing throughout his two negative arguments that dominate the first nine chapters (first, that inerrantists are not consistent with their hermeneutics and second, that allegorical, canonical, subversive, and progressive models also fail). Unfortunately, Stark's suggestions for how Christians and the Church should respond critically to problem passages are unnaturally squeezed into the few remaining pages of the last chapter. While Stark's assertion that moral struggle results in virtue (69) is a point well taken, his suggestion that seemingly immoral passages "be retained as scripture, precisely as condemned texts" (218) sets up a generic and unsatisfying conclusion.

Essentially, the author says that the shortcomings of Scripture should be a mirror for our own—that God's human faces should alarm the spiritual community into positive growth and change. Too many questions remain, however.

Even if believers find themselves capable of wrestling with moral ambiguity in their Bibles, what are they to do with theological or soteriological uncertainty? If full of mistakes, in what significant ways does Scripture set itself apart from other literature? How can inspiration be claimed without consistent evidence? It is unlikely that many churches will ever completely adopt Stark's version of biblical commitment. It would be very interesting to see how the author approaches the challenges of communicating his scriptural beliefs to those in his own faith community. Meanwhile, readers can only hope that Stark will soon expand upon his positive arguments for critical readings.

Regardless, conservative apologists will likely have a busy future responding to Stark's criticisms. He has already zealously disapproved of Paul Copan's *Is God a Moral Monster?* (Baker, 2011) in a mammoth (and at times venomous) critique available free online (http://thomstark.net/copan/stark_copan-review.pdf). Stark appears to be a prolific writer, regularly contributing to the Religion at the Margins website and already planning eight more volumes (titles and abstracts can be found at thomstark.net). Naturally, he finds quarrels with inerrantists who defend the OT "horror" passages involving genocide, slavery, and human sacrifice. His opponents should embrace the challenge. Certainly, scholars will be better off countering biblically educated views, rather than the considerably less-informed ones of the New Atheists and general skeptics. And though he entertains no fantasies of converting conservatives, Stark hopes that those who disagree with his conclusions can at least "sharpen their own swords" by his words (xvii).

I recommend that all interested in apologetics buy their copy of Stark's first effort—especially those unfamiliar with James Barr's earlier challenges to fundamentalism and inerrancy (*Fundamentalism*, Trinity Press International, 1981). Those partial to systematic biblical theologies might also benefit from the researched alternative viewpoints presented here. Finally, anyone of the Restoration tradition ought to give Stark due attention and understand his arguments. His work reflects a bright mind that has been heavily influenced by Stone-Campbell scholarship. Though it may not accomplish all it sets out to do, Stark's volume will undoubtedly entertain and educate. Look for this author to continue being a polarizing writer and scholastic heavyweight for years to come.

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Stanley HAUERWAS. *Working with Words: Learning to Speak Christian.* Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2011. 322 pp. $37.00.

In *Ethics as Grammar* (University of Notre Dame, 2001), Brad Kallenberg says, "When I once remarked to a contemporary philosopher that my project was to show the presence of Wittgenstein in Hauerwas's theology, his response was

telling: 'Hah! That will be a very short book!'" (6). Despite his colleague's cynicism, Kallenberg shows throughout that volume the "family resemblances" between the two thinkers. In this volume, Hauerwas again validates Kallenberg's thesis. A collection of essays, addresses, and sermons, written alone and in tandem with scholars like Romand Coles and D. Stephen Long, this volume shows that despite the inadequacies of language, theology is speech about God as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The book shows the need for Christians to learn to say "God."

Hauerwas begins the volume by saying, "I am able to write, or I find I feel I have to write, because I read" (ix), which shows in this collection as Hauerwas interacts with people like Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, John Wesley, Karl Barth, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, H. Richard Niebuhr, John Howard Yoder, Charles Taylor, Alasdair MacIntyre, and Jean Vanier. In his interactions with these figures, Hauerwas seeks to demonstrate how Christians should be trained to speak about God, evil, sin, Christianity, love, medicine, money, mission, and virtue. The pieces in the collection are organized into three parts: "Learning Christian: To See and to Speak," "The Language of Love: From Death to Life," and "Habits of Speech Exemplified: Some Teachers."

A few of the collection's pieces stand out. In an address entitled "Speaking Christian," Hauerwas follows postliberals like George Lindbeck in arguing, "To learn to be a Christian, to learn the discipline of faith is not just similar to learning another language. It *is* learning another language" (87). Learning the language Christian thus takes time and training. In "Methodist Theological Ethics," Hauerwas and Long write of the inseparability of theology and ethics in the writing of John Wesley. Building upon his previous work on Bonhoeffer, Hauerwas includes a fascinating essay on Bonhoeffer's friendship with Eberhard Bethge.

Hauerwas also continues his increasing emphasis upon theological exegesis of Scripture centered upon the church as seen in the recent books *Cross-Shattered Christ* (Brazos, 2005), *Cross-Shattered Church* (Brazos, 2009), and *Matthew* (Brazos, 2006). In an essay, "Why 'The Way the Words Run' Matters: Reflections on Becoming a 'Major Biblical Scholar,'" Hauerwas responds to Hays's analysis of his reading of the Bible in *The Moral Vision of The New Testament* (see pp. 253-266; Harper Collins, 1996). Hauerwas continues his argument from that "fundamentalism and historical criticism are but two sides of the same coin" because in them "the Bible was separated from the community necessary for it to be read as the word of God—that is, the church" (96). Hauerwas thus criticizes the separation of the reading of Scripture from the church's witness to Christ, and the separation of exegesis from theology and ethics within modern scholarship. In various sermons within *Working with Words*, Hauerwas demonstrates how this reading of Scripture would look in the church by preaching in a way that leads people to the celebration of the Eucharist and to Christian witness.

Many scholars in the Stone-Campbell Movement will have difficulty with the second half of Hauerwas's statement, "I remain unconvinced that so-called historical knowledge trumps or *is even necessary for how Scripture is to be read by the church*" (102; emphasis added), but Hauerwas still provides a needed corrective to the historical-critical method. The book also contains a few grammatical typos.

This volume builds upon Hauerwas's previous work, and would be helpful for graduate students, pastors, and scholars interested in the intersection of theology, ethics, and philosophy of language.

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James R. ESTEP and Jonathan H. KIM, eds. *Christian Formation: Integrating Theology & Human Development.* Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010. 308 pp. $29.99.

This collection of essays, authored in part by Estep and Kim, along with other evangelical scholars deals "with the interrelationship of theology and psychology by making available an integrated framework of spiritual formation to be used in both academic and church contexts" (3). Theology and the social sciences have not always formed a friendly relationship, but the assumptions of the editors place theology as "an indispensable and irreplaceable element" in spiritual formation, so the reader knows from the start that this will not be a secular approach, but rather one friendly to the Christian faith (5).

The unity of the volume suffers from the common problem that many similar collections often exhibit, namely, a lack of tight organization and structure. Each essay seems to be more of a brief sketch or summary of a particular field of study. For example, most of the sections that traced spiritual formation in theology seemed to cover familiar ground for this reader. They provided succinct summaries of some of the thought of a few of the usual suspects from a broad spectrum of Christian thought, including Anselm (163), Willard (*passim*), Foster (250-252, 260), Wesley (258-260), and Niebuhr (288-289). But most of these were mentioned only in passing or via a brief summary that was taken for granted by the contributors. Occasionally, though, a theory was given critical analysis. Timothy Paul Jones and Michael S. Wilder did this by carefully examining James W. Fowler's understanding of stages of development of faith (165).

This drawback of a limited overview, though, may also be a strength that will commend the book to many readers. As I moved from the theological portions of this volume to those focusing more on the social sciences, I wandered into areas where the names were not as familiar. The format of the book became much more attractive to me in new terrain. The discussions in theology or in biblical exposi-

tion were usually too limited and brief for my tastes, even though they did provide excellent documentation for further study. But in the social sciences portions of the work, I was grateful for the approach the editors chose in this volume. It was just right for a reader who was out of his field. Adequate introduction to each topic was provided while documentation was available if deeper study was needed.

This volume is replete with charts and diagrams to describe concepts or to categorize ideas. There are numerous brief summaries of more complex thought systems, which is both useful and problematic. It is helpful to be introduced to new ideas in a succinct summary. On the other hand, I often wished for a more critical discussion if the summary appeared to be too simple. For example, the "three ways" of purgation, illumination, and union were presented with little attention devoted to the historical setting out of which they arose or how they were developed in more recent centuries in moral theology (253-255). Are the "three ways" compatible with the evangelical theology the writers of this volume represent?

While not offering a "comprehensive overview of Christian spiritual formation and development" in this reviewer's opinion, nevertheless, this volume is highly useful to introduce the reader to either theology or the social sciences, whichever one has not been one's major field, and to encourage "the integration of theology . . . with the findings of the social sciences," hopefully to promote a healthy dialogue between these disciplines (4).

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Sidney GREIDANUS, *Preaching Christ from Ecclesiastes: Foundations for Expository Preaching*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010. 340 pp. $26.00.

Years ago, I heard of a sermon series entitled "Preaching from Porcupines." In the series, the preacher chose a number of really difficult passages, and preached on one each Sunday.

The book of Ecclesiastes is a whole *prickle* of porcupines. This volume seeks to help "preachers, seminary students, and Bible teachers" (xii), to understand and present one of the most prickly of books in the Bible. Greidanus acknowledges the difficulty of doing so and does an admirable job of giving much-needed help to the target audience. The volume is jammed with helpful insights. In particular, I found the introduction (1-29) useful in doing two things. First, Greidanus discusses the most difficult critical interpretive issues, which make it difficult to understand Ecclesiastes. Second, the author suggests various ways of approaching the task of preaching from Ecclesiastes.

In the introduction, Greidanus highlights three problems: "First, selecting a proper preaching text; second, formulating a single theme; and third, preaching Christ from Ecclesiastes" (22). He unpacks these difficulties on pages 22-25.

Greidanus counsels (wisely, I think) the preacher to choose an entire literary unit, rather than a mere fragment of such a unit or a verse (23). If a preacher *does* choose a smaller unit, the preacher still should be careful to interpret that smaller unit in the context of the appropriate larger unit (23).

Two major goals—introducing the critical issues, and giving the preacher helpful suggestions for preaching the texts of Ecclesiastes—run throughout Greidanus's entire volume. The core of the volume (30-310) divides Ecclesiastes into pericopes, introduces text and contents, as well as literary and textual features. Suggestions of various ways of remaining faithful to the text itself, while at the same time preaching Christ, are given. However, the preacher is left free to choose various paths to preaching relevant sermons for that preacher's own time and congregation.

One aspect that makes the volume enjoyable reading is the author's witty quotes and his own equally witty comments. For example, in introducing his chapter on Eccl 11:7–12:8, Greidanus quips, "Long ago Jerome observed that on this text there are 'almost as many opinions as there are people.' Today there are more people and more 'opinions' than there were in Jerome's time" (275).

Four brief appendices (311-325) follow the core of this volume. The first two are good, brief reminders of how to move from the text to the sermon (311-312), and some basic rules of the road for expository preaching. Appendices 3 (315-316) and 4 (317-325) give examples of a brief meditation and a longer, expository sermon based on Ecclesiastes, respectively. A good, current bibliography contains helpful major commentaries, monographs, and articles (326-329). The book contains a scriptural index (330-333), and a subject index (334-336). Two final brief sections on the "targets" (337-338), and "topics" (339-340) of sermons seem to me to add little to the book, and might have been combined with the subject index.

This volume will be useful to preachers, Bible teachers, and professors of preaching. Especially in the Stone-Campbell tradition, where the OT may be looked on as more a problem than an opportunity, this book is helpful in demonstrating various ways in which even such a problematic OT book as Ecclesiastes can be profitably used by a NT people.

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Dave BLAND and David FLEER, eds. *Preaching Character: Reclaiming Wisdom's Paradigmatic Imagination for Transformation.* Abilene, TX: ACU Press, 2010. 256 pp. $22.99.

I will admit that I approached this review with some trepidation. Over the past few years, I have read several of the earlier volumes in this series on preaching.

While some of the volumes contained accomplished individual essays, the series, in general, left me wanting. Thus, when I was asked to review this final volume, I thought that it was an ironic twist of fate. Thankfully, I was not disappointed.

In this volume, Bland and Fleer have assembled some of the finer voices in the fields of biblical studies and homiletics to discuss this oft-neglected portion of Scripture. Wisdom Literature confronts us with an exciting challenge—this material is unlike anything else in the canon. Wisdom literature carries a poetic essence about it, eternal truths wrapped up in catchy sayings and quips that cause us to reflect on what has been said. The goal of wisdom literature is to instruct us on how to live morally and ethically. As Bland and Fleer say in their introduction, "Wisdom capably negotiates the complexities of life. The wise person is one who develops expertise in living responsibly. . . . Divine order demands moral behavior and wisdom's ultimate goal is the formation of moral character" (16). In much the same vein as Vigen Guroian's book *Tending the Heart of Virtue* (Oxford, 2002), the contributors of this volume work under the paradigm that ethical living can only come through consistent and superior moral instruction.

Following Bland and Fleer's excellently written introduction, the volume proceeds through six essays on various aspects of Wisdom Literature and homiletics, each with two or three accompanying sermons taken from various Wisdom texts and delivered by Thomas Long, Stephen Johnson, Jennifer Green and Ken Durham, among others. In chapter one, Tremper Longman provides an in-depth discussion of what wisdom is and how it functions within the canon. In chapter two, Glenn Pemberton discusses how preaching from Proverbs becomes "a conversation of thought and action that results in character transformation" (66). In chapter three, Thomas Long discusses how Ecclesiastes provides a nonnarrative, "counter testimony" of reality to the superficial, therapeutic preaching that has become so common today (110). In chapter four, Alyce McKenzie takes the reader on a study of reversal as she shows how the emphasis on "the fool" is meant to encourage ethical living. In chapter five, Bland engages in a didactic study of Proverbs as curriculum for moral development. And, in chapter six, Scot McKnight shows how, when studied through the lens of Prov 1:1-7, James brings the tradition of wisdom teaching into the Christian community.

As noted earlier, I greatly enjoyed reading this final volume from Bland and Fleer's series on preaching. Yet, that does not mean this volume is without some limitations. First, the essay by Dave Bland does not come across as strong as I would have hoped it would. A noted scholar in the area of preaching from Wisdom Literature, Bland has a strong idea yet never seems to arrive at it. I would encourage Bland to rework this material and seek its publication, for I know that it would be readily accepted given his reputation as a scholar in this field. Second, I was disappointed to find only scant references to the Wisdom Psalms. Only one sermon text is from Psalms, and it is not one that is typically considered to be a Wisdom Psalm. Third, some of the sermons are not strong examples of preaching from

Wisdom Literature. Those who struggled in preaching from this material noted with honesty their struggle and valiantly preached anyway, showing that God can still speak mightily despite our limitations. As one who enjoys preaching from this portion of Scripture and who also teaches preaching, I certainly see myself using this volume as a resource in the future, and I would encourage both preachers and scholars alike to consider pondering what is provided here.

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Phillip CARY. *Good News for Anxious Christians: 10 Practical Things You Don't Have to Do.* Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010. 197 pp. $14.99.

Cary is concerned about the anxiety levels of his students. More specifically, he sees a trend developing within a "new evangelical theology" that is not only unhelpful, but actively detrimental to Christians. He attributes a large amount of his students' anxiety on this "new evangelical theology," and would like to see it debunked. His problem is that this "new evangelical theology" asks Christians to do practical things to hear God and grow closer to him. Cary thinks these things are hurting Christians; so freedom from these practices would be Good News.

Cary's volume is well outlined, and begins with a very clear discussion of the problem as he sees it. Following his preface he proceeds to dissect and refute the "new evangelical theology" piece by piece, either removing each practice entirely, or replacing it with something else. Essentially Cary takes issue with the locus of God's communication to us and the role personal revelation should play in the transformative nature of the gospel. Although the book addresses 10 "practical things," the core of the argument is twofold: how does one "hear God," and how is one transformed into the likeness of Christ?

The primary source for anxiety, Cary states, is the idea that God speaks to us in our hearts. Nonsense, says Cary; listening to your hearts will only reveal you, not God (3). God reveals himself to us as persons, in exactly the same way other persons do—from without. It is an external event. Therefore we should seek God in Scripture, and nowhere else. Doing so should remove anxiety because we are spared the messy task of parsing our own internal thoughts and separating them from the voice of God. We listen to our hearts to know ourselves, and listen to Scripture to know God.

Cary replaces the "listen to God in your heart" theology with a return to *sola scriptura*. The real practicality of the gospel is not "listening to God" about every decision, it's "learn how to think wisely" by being constantly grounded in the word. Rather than discounting intuition he reframes the discussion into a definition of what intuition is, how it is shaped, and the role Scripture should play in that shaping. The result, he asserts, is a less anxious approach to decision-making.

The discussion in chapter 2 of the nature of intuition and its role in decision making is particularly insightful. Cary does a fine job of outlining for the layman how intuition influences daily behavior and decision-making, as well as giving a concise breakdown of the ways our brain uses current activity to shape future intuitive moments.

Cary's dismissal of most personal revelation will resonate with many thinkers of the Stone-Campbell Movement who are grounded in the centrality of Scripture, while those more shaped by charismatic, mystical, or emergent theologies will find themselves constantly confronted. Cary points to Luther as his guide to the centrality and sufficiency of Scripture as the only necessity for discerning God's communication to his people.

This book is not intended for an academic audience, and some scholars will find the foundational research a little underwhelming. Clear definition of technical terms is lacking. Cary does little to cite the origins or coherence of the "new evangelical theology." He simply assumes it as a reality. Likewise Cary seems to completely dismiss the possibility that God might choose to speak to an individual outside of Scripture. While this may be an accurate assumption, seekers of a more grounded scholarly approach to the issues addressed will be somewhat disappointed.

As a discussion starter, this book excels. It succeeds in asking some very timely questions, getting quickly to the heart of the matter: how *does* God communicate his ongoing will to us, and what should we do (or not do) to find and implement that will within our lives. It is a polemic, subject to all the foibles of polemic arguments. The core questions, however, are valid.

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Collin HANSEN and John WOODBRIDGE. *A God Sized Vision: Revival Stories That Stretch and Stir*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010. 192 pp. $16.99.

Today's generation within the church is more experiential and desires to see God acting within their lives. As Hansen and Woodbridge assert in this volume, if believers want to see God act and start revival, they must understand how he has acted in the past. The authors' intent for the reader is to learn about the people, places, and circumstances surrounding great revivals, and how God worked in history.

Collin and Woodbridge state that, "This book is not for those who have grown comfortable with the Christian life," but for those who desire to see God do amazing things and are willing to embrace a "God-sized vision" of the world (12). They argue, "Few of us are tempted today to dream big. Rather, our vision

shrinks to the size of our limited experience" (12). They reason that to escape a vision of limited experience, one must look to history to see events which they themselves have not experienced.

The authors first examine revivals in the biblical text before moving on to the First and Second Great Awakenings. They show that revivals swept America; however, America was not the only place to have what they call a "God-sized vision." In Wales, Evan Roberts prayed for revival and it came, so much so that, "Wales talked of little but the revival" (103). The revivals that occurred in Korea also led to a dramatic change of people's lives which resulted in thieves confessing their sins (108). Likewise, when revival broke out in Manchuria, China, missionary Jonathon Goforth witnessed backsliders confessing their sins (143).

Upon reflection, there are some qualms with the volume. For instance, rather than specifically define revival, the authors give a broad and ambiguous definition (28-29). The biblical examples of revival provided are questionable, seeming at times as if the authors have read into the biblical text to get the desired result. Another concern is that the assumed cause behind these great revivals was God himself. The authors subjectively assume God caused the revivals, but give little justification as to why these events were acts of God.

It also seems the authors neglect important events in the history of some of the revivals. In the chapter entitled, "God and Men at Yale." the authors discuss the Second Great Awakening but focus only on the Yale revivals. They briefly mention other events during the Awakening such as the revival at Cane Ridge with Barton Stone; however, they do not go into much detail. It would have been beneficial to hear more about the Cane Ridge revival considering the enormity of this event.

This volume is not intended to be an exhaustive retelling of past events; rather, it is designed to show a brief history of revivals to educate Christians about the past so they may be convinced God has acted and can act in the future. Though they use history throughout the book, the real focus is not the scholarly study of history but using events to show how God has acted in the past. By telling these compelling stories, the authors encourage the reader to have a *God-sized* vision.

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Lee Martin MCDONALD. *Forgotten Scriptures: The Selection and Rejection of Early Religious Writings.* Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2009. 313 pp. $29.95.

This volume is a challenging work that sensitively addresses the outcome of writings once—but no longer—considered "scripture" by Jews and Christians. McDonald, President Emeritus and Professor of New Testament Studies, Acadia

Divinity College, is both thorough in his treatments and reasonable in his conclusions. With the resurgence of interest in so-called noncanonical writings in recent scholarly and popular literature, McDonald's sound contribution is a welcome voice that rises above the noise. Although it stands well on its own, this volume also serves as a follow-up study to McDonald's major work, *The Biblical Canon* (3rd ed., Hendrickson, 2007), with the current focus on what did *not* make it into the canon.

McDonald is addressing a number of questions within this work, the most prominent of which are: Did those who determined the scope of the Christian Bibles get it right? What criteria were used? And should the biblical canons be reopened today to include other books? The conclusions that McDonald comes to are honest and compelling, and not always comfortable for the traditional "evangelical," a category in which McDonald places himself.

McDonald concludes that most of the literature that informed early Jewish and Christian communities is included in the modern canon but not all. Sometimes the answer depends on which "Bible" is under consideration, since there are differences between the canons of today's churches. In other cases, no modern canon includes what was once authoritative. The *Shepherd of Hermas*, for instance, was cited more frequently than most noncanonical NT writings. A handful of such works now labeled "apocryphal" were once considered "scriptural."

Nonetheless, McDonald does not endorse reopening the canon, for the primary reason that such a development would more likely bring further division among churches than provide any benefit. At the same time, McDonald encourages every Christian to become familiar with the "noncanonical" books that informed early Christians. These works can reveal new information, clarify obscure biblical passages, and help create context. The church today has nothing to fear from getting to know the formative works that shaped Christianity.

Despite this solid contribution to the field, this volume is not without some flaws, primarily in terms of organization and flow. The book is divided into three main parts, a short introductory section, a section on the "First Testament Scriptures," and a section on the "Second Testament Scriptures." However, the content within sections is frequently repetitive and the organization is not always clear. The last part of the "First Testament Scriptures," for instance, concerns apocryphal Christian texts used by the early church, content that would be more appropriate in the "Second Testament" section. There are occasional errors or omissions: p. 48, the date of *Jubilees* should read 130–100 BCE not CE (48); McDonald states that no other writer of Irenaeus's time limited the Gospels to four, but this neglects Tatian's *Diatessaron*, a harmony based primarily on the four canonical Gospels (15). However, these minor drawbacks do not stand in the way of the greater message this book has to offer.

For readers in the Stone-Campbell Restoration Movement, McDonald offers a piercing observation in his preface: Many of the most conservative Christians

pursue the example of the early church but then hesitate to read or accept the texts that the early church used. One of McDonald's final points is that neither Jesus nor the early church operated with a "fixed" biblical canon. Faith does not depend on a stable set of scriptures, but rather in the risen Lord who stands behind Scripture. For both the student and the seasoned professional, this is a welcome message.

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Benjamin L. MERKLE. *Why Elders? A Biblical and Practical Guide for Church Members*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2009. 112 pp. $8.99.

The overwhelming evidence in the New Testament is that every congregation was led by a group of elders and not merely by a single pastor. . . . With all the duties elders are required to perform, it is no wonder that in His wisdom God meant for each local church to be led by a plurality of leaders who can share the burden of the ministry. (40, 51-52)

It only takes a cursory examination of journal articles and new publications in the field of church leadership to realize that many are looking to sources other than the NT for patterns/models of organizational structure. Interestingly, while many church leaders are moving in other directions, there are those in the corporate world who are discovering the many advantages of "servant leadership." In calling for "a return to a biblical model of government" (9), Merkle identifies the latter approach (servant leadership) as the corrective needed: "Leadership in the church is not about acquiring titles but about becoming a servant" (25).

Some might be surprised to learn that Benjamin Merkle, now the author of a second book advocating leadership of the local congregation by a plurality of elders, is an associate professor of New Testament and Greek at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. However, Merkle has espoused this emphasis consistently since his doctoral dissertation, which was a defense for the leadership of a plurality of elders in the local congregation published as *The Elder and Overseer: One Office in the Early Church* (Studies in Biblical Literature; vol. 57; New York: Peter Lang, 2003).

Actually, Merkle believes the NT supports a self-governing, congregational form of local church organization. He points out that many of the important decisions of the early church were not made by the elders alone, but were brought before the entire congregation. In this way, "the authority of elders is balanced by the authority of the congregation as a whole." In support of local autonomy he writes—"There is no evidence in the New Testament that elders exercised authority outside their own congregation (in distinction from apostles, who appear to have had authority over multiple congregations)" (38).

The volume consists of only four chapters—each providing an answer to the question "Why elders?" In fact, Merkle compares this book with his previous, *40 Questions about Elders and Deacons* (Kregel, 2008), stating that "*Why Elders?* is a summary of that work in a condensed format focusing specifically on the topic of why every church should have elders" (15). His chapter titles tell us the reason for elders: It Is the Pattern of the New Testament Church; It Provides Help and Accountability for a Pastor; It Produces a Healthier Church; and, It Promotes the Biblical Role of Deacons.

Merkle's treatment of the biblical basis for the role/responsibilities and the scriptural qualifications for elders/overseers is to be commended. He begins by comparing the qualifications for elder as listed in 1 Timothy and Titus. This is followed by a more detailed examination utilizing three categories: situational, family, and moral. A part of his conclusion is that "the focus of the qualifications is on who a person is more than on what a person does" (65), which he later describes as "one's maturity and moral character" (85).

On the negative side, I struggle with a couple of his positions regarding deacons. For example, though admitting that the origin of deacon is not known and that the noun *diakonos* (deacon) is not used in the passage, he reverts to using the Seven in Acts 6 as a "prototype." He seems to overlook the fact that these seven were chosen for a specific need (serving the Greek-speaking Jewish widows), which is demonstrated by the fact that all seven who were chosen all have Greek names and one is specifically identified as a recent convert to Judaism. Moreover, do we really want to compare the role of elder with that of Apostle, as in elders/deacons and Apostles/the Seven?

Second, maybe it is the use of the word, but I also shudder with his statement that deacons are "responsible for the *menial* and service-oriented tasks of the church" (27) [emphasis mine]. The structure of Acts points to the primacy of the ministry/work of two of these seven in particular, Stephen and Philip. They are described as doing miraculous signs (Acts 6:8; 8:6), teaching salvation history (7:2-53), and proclaiming Christ (8:4)—hardly the "menial" tasks of the church. I much prefer his later statement:

> For example, there is no indication in Scripture that the office of deacon is a lower office in the sense that one must become a deacon before he can serve as an elder. These offices are distinguished by their function in the church and the gifts of the individual. . . . The distinction between elders and deacons is not a distinction of rank but a distinction of function. (101-102)

Third, is it sufficient to pass off the issue of 1 Timothy 3:11 (γυναῖκας ὡσαύτως σεμνάς) by stating "For the sake of the discussion, we will assume the verse is speaking about the qualifications of a deacon's wife" (95)? Though the Greek word can mean both woman and wife, in this particular case there are no possessive pronouns; it is a section dealing totally with the church officials, and the four qualifications which follow for these women correspond with appropriate varia-

tions to the first four qualifications required of deacons. It should be noted that there is also precedence as early as John Chrysostom (ca. AD 395) of this particular verse being a reference to those who hold the rank of deaconess. Further, A.T. Robertson (*Word Pictures in the New Testament*, B&H, 2000) has taken the position that these were women who were serving as deacons and not women in general or just "wives of deacons."

Taking note of these issues, I still maintain that this volume would be an excellent addition to the church library. The readability, short length, and overall solid scriptural approach commend the book as an excellent preparatory study for anyone who desires/sets his heart on the noble task of being an overseer (1 Tim 3:1). The book could also serve as a tool for leadership development in the local congregation.

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Alan F. JOHNSON, ed. *How I Changed My Mind about Women in Leadership: Compelling Stories from Prominent Evangelicals.* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010. 270 pp. $16.99.

All the arguments for and against women exercising the same kinds of ministries as men can be found in the literature a century ago. The texts that are debated now were being debated then. What makes this volume different from previous ones on the subject is that it is more about testimony than argument. In 21 chapters (six coauthored by married couples) 27 self-described evangelicals trace the paths by which they moved from being opposed to women's equality in church leadership to being supportive. Roughly half of the authors are or were academics (Gilbert Bilezikian, Tony Campolo, Stanley Gundry, Alan Johnson, Walter Liefeld, Howard Marshall, Alice Mathews, Roger Nicole, Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., James Pleuddemann, Minette Drumwright Pratt, Ronald Sider, John Stackhouse, Jr.). The other half include pastors and/or conference speakers and popular writers (John Armstrong, Ruth Haley Barton, Jill and Stuart Briscoe, Robert and Alice Fryling, Lynne and Bill Hybels, Olive Liefeld, Carol Pleuddemann, John and Nancy Ortberg, John Bernard Taylor); one is a corporate executive for Coca-Cola (Bonnie Wurzbacher). Surprisingly, ten of the authors have backgrounds in Brethren churches (Grace Brethren, Plymouth Brethren, Brethren in Christ), where women are still expected to wear head coverings at worship and to take no visible leading roles in church life.

Although the chapters vary in length and the quality of writing, some common themes and position points emerge in many of them: (1) Nobody's mind was changed by exegesis or hermeneutics alone. Personal experience, including the

presence of strong, gifted, and mature Christian women in the lives of the writers was important. (2) NT texts referencing female coworkers of Paul and other female church leaders greatly outnumber and outweigh the texts that limit women's public leadership. (3) The texts that limit women's leadership are best understood as addressing short-term problems in specific locations, not as laying down permanent guidelines. (4) Emphasizing texts that exhort women to be silent while ignoring texts that forbid their wearing jewelry and having long hair is inconsistent. (5) The parallelism in the antebellum debates between Christians about slavery and contemporary debates about women's leadership is striking. The Bible nowhere condemns, and everywhere assumes, the legitimacy of slave holding, yet it is unimaginable that any contemporary Christian would support slavery.

For some writers, the decision to support women's leadership was less a matter of changing their minds than of following through on convictions that had begun to surface at a young age: "I finally let myself believe something I had always known" (Ruth Haley Barton, 35). "One day I asked my mother what was so special about the Pillar of Fire Mission and she told me, 'They let women be preachers'" (Tony Campolo, 67). Almost all of the contributors recount their having to do a careful study of biblical texts, using the best helps available to them. It is in these sections that we find exegetical and hermeneutical summaries of the "problem" texts.

The book is a quick and easy read, with only 37 endnotes and a "Bibliographic Primer" with nine titles. An odd glitch in the book is that, in many instances, the transliteration for the Greek word for "head" (*kephalē*) lacks the final *ē*, although the space is there for it. Those who have followed this debate in the more technical literature will find few surprises. No one will be "argued" into changing his or her mind by this book, but one should never underestimate the power of personal experience and testimony as factors in our decision-making. The chapters that moved me most in this regard are those by Bilezekian, Gundry, Mathews, Plantinga, and Stackhouse. I think the book could be particularly helpful to local church groups (perhaps elders) who are engaging the leadership issue.

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John C. NUGENT, ed. *Radical Ecumenicity: Pursuing Unity and Continuity after John Howard Yoder*. Abilene, TX: ACU Press, 2010. 238 pp. $24.99.

In recent years, an increasing number of scholars in the Stone-Campbell Restoration Movement, like Richard Hughes and Craig Watts, have renewed an interest in the pacifism of some early leaders (Alexander Campbell, Tolbert Fanning, David Lipscomb). Many of these scholars have also studied figures

devoted to nonviolence from other Christian traditions, such as Mennonite theologian, ethicist, and historian John Howard Yoder.

This volume stems from "John Howard Yoder and the Stone-Campbell Churches," a conference held in March 2009 at Englewood Christian Church in Indianapolis. The volume includes six of the papers presented at the conference by editor John Nugent (Christian Churches—Independent), Joe Jones (Disciples of Christ), Craig Carter (Baptist), Gayle Gerber Koontz (Mennonite), Mark Thiessen Nation (Mennonite), and Branson Parler (Reformed). Two additional essays come from Lee Camp (Churches of Christ, a cappella) and Paul Kissling (Christian Churches—Independent). The volume also closes with two essays by Yoder.

In the introduction, Nugent notes, "It is fitting that constituents of the Stone-Campbell tradition would engage Yoder since he routinely engaged them by name throughout his writings" (11). Yoder proves helpful to the Stone-Campbell Movement because he often corrected caricatures of restorationists and other Free Church groups, and called upon Free Church Christians to communicate their views "in ways that are clear, consistent, biblical, and historically disciplined" (12). This volume addresses many themes, but two prominent themes in the volume, as seen in the subtitle, are unity and continuity. The volume thus challenges those of the Stone-Campbell Movement to see themselves in "continuity with Old Testament Israel, the New Testament church, and wider Christian history," and to obey God's call to Christian unity (12).

The first essay, by Camp, discusses the themes of restoration and unity in Yoder, showing that Yoder's work on those themes avoided the extremes of paternism and sectarianism, and united doctrine and ethics. Nation then names "the strategy or politics of John Howard Yoder in . . . *The Politics of Jesus*," which includes a corrective emphasis upon the "'social-political-ethical' dimensions of the gospel" and a "holistic, biblically rooted theology" (37-38). Nation's essay includes a discussion of Yoder's views on pacifism, Christology, soteriology, ecclesiology, and witness. Koontz then addresses Yoder's ecumenical work as a participant-observer in the World Council of Churches, National Council of Churches, and National Association of Evangelicals, his teaching career at Notre Dame, and various other endeavors. Yoder sought and encouraged unity within local congregations and a relational unity, centered on integrity and open dialogue, in interchurch meetings.

Carter's essay critiques liberal readings of Yoder by emphasizing the necessity of Christ's lordship, biblical authority, and discipleship for Yoder's pacifism, and continuity in Yoder's thought. Jones proceeds to call the Stone-Campbell Movement, and the church at large, away from complicity to the world and to draw deeper connections between a radically orthodox trinitarianism (not à la Milbank) and radical discipleship. Kissling then provides a qualified critique of Yoder's reading of the OT (in particular his reading of Jer 29:4-9 and

Ezra–Nehemiah), while still seeing Yoder as a helpful model for the Stone-Cambpell Movement to overcome its ambivalent understanding of the OT.

Nugent develops a Free Church theology of vocation based on Yoder's scholarship, which would also have implications for ecumenical conversations about work. This theology centers vocation upon creation and eschatology, the ministry and reign of Christ, the church as servant, sign, and support, and a biblical critique of the powers. Parler critiques some readings of Yoder, like Paul Marten's understanding of the late Yoder's "secularism" and reductionism, by discussing Yoder's critique of ethics as an autonomous discipline and understanding of the interconnectedness of liturgy and the life of the church.

The first essay by Yoder, "The Ecumenical Movement and the Faithful Church," published as a pamphlet in 1958, analyzes the ecumenical movement from the time of the Evangelical Alliance (1846) to the time of the pamphlet's writing. Yoder focuses on the different streams of the ecumenical movement, from the missionary and interchurch organizations to the peace movement, in the light of Scripture and church history (especially of the Anabaptists). While Yoder does paint with a broad brush, Yoder helpfully notes, "*Christian unity is not to be created, but to be obeyed*" (206). Yoder gives some helpful principles to Mennonite Christians on how to obey Christian unity, which could also aid the Stone-Campbell Movement and the church as a whole in her mission to the world. In the second Yoder essay, "Is There Historical Development of Theological Thought?" originally presented at the Mennonite World Conference in 1967, Yoder focuses upon the Holy Spirit's continued guiding role in the church and the need for the church to "test the spirits" (1 John 4:1). Yoder makes these two points in order to call Christians to faithfulness in their time and place.

This volume shows that Yoder did not limit his interests to issues of violence. He also committed himself to other issues important to the Stone-Campbell heritage, such as restoration, church unity, discipleship, study of Scripture, church order, missions, and the sacraments. The work shows that Yoder should not be dismissed, for Yoder shows those in the Stone-Campbell Movement ways to be more faithful to Christ and to their own tradition. This volume will benefit students, pastors, and scholars with interests in the history of the Stone-Campbell Movement, Yoder, radical discipleship, and Christian unity.

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Shirl James HOFFMAN. *Good Game: Christianity and the Culture of Sports.* Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010. 341 pp. $18.96.

Millions of Americans—including many Christians—love few things more than competitive athletics; however, in our zeal for sports, have Christians unwit-

tingly adopted a dual morality in which ungodly practices are accepted and encouraged? In this thought-provoking work, Hoffman, Professor Emeritus of Exercise and Sport Science at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, addresses this controversial topic.

Hoffman's primary thesis is that the "popular sports culture" that has emerged in the last century has been widely and unquestioningly embraced by evangelical Christians, even though the worldview that this culture promotes is "diametrically opposed" to a Christian worldview (11). Hoffman's radical contention is that evangelicals have failed to see that the culture of sports today—from the youth level to professional sports—is best characterized as "narcissistic, materialistic, self-interested, violent, sensational, coarse, racist, sexist, brazen, raunchy, hedonistic, body-destroying, and militaristic" (11). Although Hoffman emphasizes that he is not a "sports hater," he does "hate what we have allowed sports to become" (22). Hoffman argues that there is a spiritually enriching way to engage in sports, and he laments that evangelical Christians have instead constructed a "folk theology." He labels this with the co-opted term "Sportianity" because it twists Christian doctrine in order to reconcile it with "sport's reigning orthodoxies" (14).

The volume contains eleven chapters and three main parts. In the first five chapters, Hoffman explores how the church has related to sports since the first century and how prominent Christian thinkers have assessed this relationship. This historical overview is intended to lay the foundation for a critique of the church's present association with sports. In chapters six through ten, Hoffman provides this critique by targeting specific aspects of "Sportianity" that he finds particularly troubling. Hoffman's primary concern is the glorification of competition and the promotion of a "killer instinct" mentality. He also harshly criticizes the damage that contact sports inflict upon the body (since it is the temple of the Holy Spirit), the illegitimate employment of prayer in sports, and the tendency for athletes to think that success on the playing field is a vehicle for honoring God or that winning is a sign of God's blessing. He also rejects using sports as a platform to evangelize since he considers the medium of competitive sports to be unchristian. Finally, chapter eleven proposes seven principles to redeem sports and make them congruent with a Christian worldview.

Hoffman's historical overview paints a picture of how Christians have both embraced and shunned the sports culture of their day at various times throughout church history. Among other things, Hoffman explores the early church fathers' condemnation of the pagan aspects and violence of the gladiatorial games, the church's flirtation with the sometimes deadly sport of jousting in the Middle Ages, the divergent views of sport held by the Protestant reformers, the Puritans' rejection of playing sports on Sunday, and the modern plummet into "Sportianity" that Hoffman believes was cemented in the mid-twentieth century. Hoffman's jaunt through history is absorbing and well-documented; however, it

is often slanted toward preparing the reader for his forthcoming lambasting of the modern sports culture.

The meat of Hoffman's book is his denunciation of almost all things related to the modern conception of competitive athletics. Unfortunately, Hoffman's many excellent insights in this section are overshadowed by his tendency to overstate his case. For example, Hoffman effectively exposes the tendency for many athletes to engage in superficial, ritualistic prayer that petitions God to aid in their own team's victory; however, Hoffman goes too far in proclaiming that one should not pray for a seriously injured football player because that player should not be engaging in an ungodly, body-destroying practice like football to begin with (253). Similarly, many will agree with Hoffman as he points out some of the dangers of overzealous competition; however, Hoffman's position becomes dubious when he broadly condemns athletic competition because it forces one to "squelch sympathy" for one's opponent in order to strive for victory in a contest that can have only one winner (147).

Ultimately, Hoffman argues that sport should be viewed as a "leisure-based" form of "play" that functions as a type of worship. Competition should be avoided, or at least no contest should be carried out between teams that represent a "larger cause" (a school, church, country). Furthermore, the "mere presence of spectators" encourages partisanship and is taboo (289). Teams and individuals should forgo all awards and recognition, and postgame celebrations are anathema (290). Moreover, contact sports like football violate the "theological significance of the body" and should be discontinued (284).

The sports fan will be tempted to reject Hoffman's entire project out of hand, but that would be a mistake. Whether one agrees or disagrees with Hoffman's ideas (and I found myself frequently doing both), this book will challenge one's thinking on matters that are often taken for granted. This volume is sure to generate lively debate and would be an outstanding launching point for an adult study group or college course on the relationship between Christianity and sports. The subjects that Hoffman addresses deserve careful consideration, and the process of dissecting his arguments is a great exercise in practical Christian worldview thinking.

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Francis J. BECKWITH. *Politics for Christians: Statecraft as Soulcraft.* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2010. 175 pp. $10.00.

In this volume the political muscularity of the religious right in American society finds itself linked with broader currents in American Christianity that reflect on the role of Christian faith in disciplines of the academy. A widely pub-

lished philosopher by training and a former president of the Evangelical Theological Society who left it to convert to Roman Catholicism, Beckwith has been a controversial figure as he has settled into his current position at Baylor University. In this early entry in InterVarsity Press's Christian Worldview Integration Series, Beckwith seeks to provide "the Christian student with an account of politics and government that includes an understanding and appreciation of liberal democracy that is not hostile to Christian participation and the shaping of public policy" (34). This aim represents important and vital work for both the development of public policy and the role of higher education in American society. Unfortunately, Beckwith's attempt cannot be viewed as a successful one.

Beckwith does not view his book as "a scholarly monograph" (39). However, it appears to function more as a tract for legitimating Christian involvement in public policy, but it does not convincingly argue for Christian participation in liberal democracy. Contending that statecraft is soulcraft more by assertion than by argument, Beckwith does provide a usable introduction to the theory of liberal democracy but not to the disciplines of public policy or political science more broadly. However, his critique of secular liberalism's value neutrality does represent a commendable service to beginning students of politics. In this brief book, Beckwith sketches an introduction to the field of politics before going on to address issues for Christian citizens relating to liberal democracy, the separation of church and state, the neutral state of secular liberalism, and concluding with an argument for the natural law tradition in public policy.

Beckwith overwhelmingly draws his illustrations from the issues of abortion and stem cell research with a distinctly antiabortion and research shading. While these examples may play to the sympathies of many evangelicals, a broader set of illustrations needs to be employed in order to effectively introduce the field to undergraduates. Health care reform, tax policy, welfare reform, war and peace, criminal justice—students need to be exposed to Christian appraisals of a spectrum of policy questions with at least a hint of the diversity in the Christian tradition concerning such questions. That is not this volume; rather we have a pro-life tract, which ignores the breadth of politics in order to fortify an intellectual justification for evangelicals and Catholics joining today's policy debates. I would have hoped that a political philosopher could have engaged in conversation the likes of Jeffrey Stout rather than just relying on the natural law tradition—a tradition that Catholics and some parts of the Reformed tradition may use, but which many Protestants affirmatively reject. To suggest but one alternative, instead of Beckwith's natural law approach, perhaps Christian students of politics would be better served to engage political life through a christologically grounded sense of responsibility in the spirit of Bonhoeffer's *Letters and Papers from Prison*.

As a teacher of public policy, I cannot recommend this volume as a core undergraduate textbook for a course, though perhaps an instructor might include

it as a supplemental text for an introductory course in political science or public policy. With the reservations that I have identified, individual students might profit from this introductory work.

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C. C. PECKNOLD. *Christianity and Politics: A Brief Guide to the History.* Cascade Companions, Vol. 12. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2010. 196 pp. $23.00.

To assert that Christianity and politics go together may not sound particularly scandalous. However, as Pecknold argues in this volume, a scandal emerges when the church begins to think about the notion of "body" and its political use and co-option through the centuries. Pecknold begins with four assertions: 1) Christian notions of "time" and "community" were borrowed by Western political imagination as it emerged in the early medieval period; 2) that Western political imagination then adapted notions of "mystical body" from Christian Eucharistic theology; 3) as a result, the *locus* of communal formation of character shifted away from the church and toward the prevailing Western political imagination; 4) this shift would eventually allow the nation-state (or more specifically the liberal, democratic nation-state) to emerge as the *locus* of the "mystical body." Thus, Pecknold's "argument is that we have to think in more complex ways about the relation of Christianity and politics, the relation between faith and political reason . . . [because the only] politics that truly liberates humanity is the politics that is truthfully ordered to the city of God" (*xix-xx*).

Pecknold begins his historical narrative with an account of politics in Athens (Plato and Aristotle), observing that for the Greeks, "Politics embodied 'the common good' that all were to have a share in" (2). In this context, as Pecknold shows, politics involved notions of god-given virtues and practices, which had to be lived in order to pursue the good. After developing this account of the virtues and how they manifested themselves in *polis*, Pecknold's narrative exposes a shift in political emphasis brought about by Imperial Rome. As Rome expanded, its political assumptions became "cosmic" with the result that "[t]he empire had become a procedural state that operated without any sense of a common good, or a divine command for participation in the life of the city" (13-14). Thus the Western political imagination became fragmented in late antiquity.

Pecknold's narrative skillfully shows how Augustine's theory of "two cities" not only shaped his contemporary political imagination but also the medieval tug between the Pope and prince. This in turn influenced the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century political theorists, who were able to construe the nation-state in terms of the *corpus mysticum* (or "mystical body"—a term which itself underwent

development in Christian usage as Pecknold's excellent account of Henri de Lubac reveals). Pecknold shows, for example, that Hobbes's portrayal of "Leviathan" betrays a profound theological shift. He writes, "If we look closely, we will see that this image perfectly represents [Hobbes's] view that human nature is violent, and that the 'natural' conflict of humanity can only be averted if everyone makes a pact, gives the consent of their will, gives up some of their individual freedom to a sovereign power in order to enforce laws that will promote peace" (79). Thus, for Hobbes, the sovereignty of the nation-state becomes the only hope for humanity—a claim that directly contradicts early Christianity's claim that the source of Christian hope is the victory established through Christ's cross and resurrection.

Pecknold concludes his volume with a constructive suggestion for the church's political witness. For Pecknold, the best model for relating Christianity and politics is that provided by our Lord—namely, that "God's will be done 'on earth as it is in heaven'" (147). Through participation in this eschatological hope—especially through participation in Eucharist—Christians are invited into a reality that "gathers humanity differently than the social contract as it is expressed in Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, and others. . . . [T]he Eucharist invites us to a politics that does not reduce human beings, but frees humanity for communion with God and neighbor in truth and love. Any configuration of power that is fundamentally closed . . . to this politics will inevitably find that it cannot guarantee human freedom" (161). Thus the practices of the church form it to live out the goodness of God, witnessing reconciliation and hope to the world.

Overall, this volume is a much-needed, contextualized examination of Christianity and politics. But more than simply providing an historical narrative, Pecknold provides the church with a vision for living out its political call. There are some events from the church's history—such as Augustine's alleged use of military force during the Donatist controversy and the peaceable witness of the Anabaptists' "third way" in Europe—that have been omitted from the narrative. These omissions emerge as this volume's major weaknesses, and readers from the Stone-Campbell tradition will especially miss any mention of Anabaptists. However, these weaknesses pale in significance when compared to the volume's strengths. Moreover, this work stands as one of the best brief introductions to the history of Christianity and politics available today. It will be invaluable both to historical and political theology classes—both undergraduate and graduate—and to churches that are interested in learning more about the history of the subject.

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Richard MOUW. *Uncommon Decency: Christian Civility in an Uncivil World*, rev. ed. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2010. 187 pp. $16.00.

Accusations of demon possession, treason, dishonesty and more are hurled toward those who merely disagree with received orthodoxy and politics of elite mouthpieces—and that is just American Christian media, much less talk radio and cable TV programs. Incivility abounds today toward fellow Christians and citizens, so we are fortunate that Mouw, evangelical Reformed scholar and president of Fuller Theological Seminary, has revised his call for a commitment to "convicted civility" among (evangelical) Christians toward those who differ from them in moral, doctrinal, and political views with a new edition of his 1990s title. While asserting his evangelical bona fides to a primarily evangelical audience, Mouw has produced a popular work that argues for civility in debate which respects the convictions of participants while being accessible to Christians of good will who may not fall into the evangelical camp—like myself.

Mouw begins by focusing his readers' attention on current incivilities before making his case for "convicted civility," a notion he appropriated from Martin Marty. Appropriately Mouw roots this public witness in God's concern for public righteousness and a certain limited modest gentleness. Unfortunately, he seldom finds the kingdom of God outside the church's confines and, in typical Reformed fashion, emphasizes right thinking over habit and practice.

Appreciating life's ambiguities Mouw deftly describes the attitudes that constitute civility: curiosity, teachability and (an almost Obama-like) commitment to empathy. He also argues that civility has spiritual underpinnings, including, importantly, hospitality. He affirms a pluralism of cultural diversity while regarding a worldview of pluralism as idolatrous. With respect to engaging other religions, he urges genuinely listening to Jews and Muslims in dialogue without denying evangelism. It is also worth affirming, with Mouw and any number of liberals, that Christian leadership serves its convictions best by persuasion rather than coercion. In observing internal church fights he contends for preserving evangelical identity with an insightful adaptation of just war theory. Mouw calls for being never less than civil, while seeking to move beyond mere civility. Arguing that in the end "it is all grace," Mouw concludes that civility involves an openness to God's surprises grounded in a patience of the eschatology of a "slow God."

Two topics merit particular mention: triumphalism and sex. Somewhat surprisingly, the neo-Calvinist Mouw laudably limits the Kuyperite triumphalism that claims "every square inch" of cultural territory for Christ by balancing it with the witness of Mother Theresa. However, Mouw could still benefit from further tempering the Reformed view of God's kingdom as sovereignty with a Christology of the cross that recovers the Gospels for dialogue with the Epistles.

The chapter on sex opens with Mouw recounting his guest column "Less Shouting, More Talking" (*Newsweek*, February 9, 2009) that responded as an

evangelical to vicious posturing on both sides surrounding the passage of California's Proposition 8 concerning gay marriage. While clearly affirming his evangelical orthodoxy in opposing both homosexual and nonmarital heterosexual intimacy, he does seek conversation among the parties, and he does so in a manner that cries for interaction with Jeffrey Stout's more substantive approach to political conversations. He even offers some pastoral sensitivity to gays and lesbians and to heterosexuals who live together. Though he rehearses the familiar distinction between public harm and moral censure, he could use a more robust politics as even a notion of public harm is rooted in some form of moral censure. Similarly, he too easily asserts the priority of sexual ethics over other concerns in a manner consistent with much evangelical prudery. After all, one could just as easily argue the priority of economic morality and justice from Scripture.

This engaging exploration of civil debate argues for permitting Christian participants to retain their convictions, which are held in humility, while negotiating concerns of tolerance and compromise. As such this effort is valuable for use in personal reflection and adult church school classes, though it lacks the rigor expected for use in many academic settings. For those who are comfortable in their evangelical certainties, Mouw has provided a hopefully persuasive brief for attending to those convictions in a civil manner with those who may not share those convictions. That endeavor in itself is a good thing, but the practices and convictions of nonevangelical Chistians, such as anabaptists or liberals, may have worthwhile words to offer the practice of Christian civility. It is a shame that Mouw could not have cast the net of convicted civility a little broader.

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Robert H. WOODS Jr., and Paul D. PATTON. *Prophetically Incorrect: A Christian Introduction to Media Criticism.* Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2010. 182 pp. $19.99.

The cover adorning the pages of this volume sets a picture of Rembrandt's "Jeremiah Mourning the Destruction of Jerusalem," within the 16:9 ratio screen of a high definition television set, perfectly transposing into our time and horizon the morose sense of impending doom that once affected the oft-afflicted prophet. Woods and Patton propose an approach to Christian interaction with media that is derived from major images of the prophetic vocation in the Jewish tradition. It is their belief that Christians have overemphasized the priestly vocation of the Christian's relations to technology and media, and that those sets of relations need to be re-imagined in prophetic terms. In order to accomplish this, the authors utilize the images of the OT prophets and their vocation and apply these images and postures to the contemporary context of media criticism. They draw

heavily on the work of Jewish philosopher, Abraham Joshua Heschel, and OT scholar, Walter Brueggemann. In particular, the authors appropriate their respective works on the prophets.

The volume skillfully oscillates between the development of the prophetic image in Hebrew history, and the subsequent application of those images, actions, and attitudes to modern media concerns, moving the conversation about media and culture well beyond the typical evangelical inventory of sex, violence, and profanity. The first several chapters lay out a context for the book: they establish a contemporary cultural *ethos* (buy-consume-dispose) to which the prophetic word must speak, and they develop the image of the cultural prophet who does the speaking, described through four characteristics borrowed from Heschel (felt burden, being consumed by the plight of humanity, rejecting acceptance, and trying to shock the complacent). The text then moves deeper into these characteristics of the prophetic office, devoting a chapter to each individual attribute. The final substantive chapter applies all of the preceding development in the form of a prophetic witness toward the media technology of television.

The volume itself is not, in principle, concerned with the direct application of the theoretical discussions taken up in the text, but rather—in the tradition of Neil Postman's *Amusing Ourselves to Death* (Penguin, 2005)—aims at beginning a conversation about how Christians can faithfully respond to the broad sets of concerns brought about through the proliferation of technology and media. In other words, this is not a proverbial how-to guide for media criticism. The volume attempts to lay a theoretical framework within which criticism can take place. By avoiding methodological application, the book is able to construct a viable theoretical structure for media criticism in a relatively small number of pages. The authors work hard to limit the use of technical vocabulary, which is helpful to the uninitiated, but may hinder the book's usefulness in certain contexts. The majority of the sources used to build the arguments of the various chapters are generally only alluded to (oftentimes with no reference to the author), and are only accessible should the reader choose to explore the forty-page labyrinth of endnotes at the end of the book. Despite these largely stylistic quibbles, the volume remains an excellent and timely treatment of the complex set of concerns to which the prophetic voice of Christ's church must speak.

The ease of reading, and the extensive use of popular examples make this text a legitimate candidate for use in a serious Sunday school classroom, but its solid research and immanent goals recommend it as a valuable supplementary textbook for undergraduate courses in communications, media ethics, or even worldview studies.

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Jerry L. SUMNEY. *The Bible: An Introduction*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010. 432 pp. $42.00.

Sumney introduces the Bible and the ways critical scholars approach the text. He intends that his volume serve academic and faith inquiries. The work features numerous illustrations, boxes, maps, charts, figures, biblical readings, a timeline, a glossary of key terms, and an index. Each chapter contains a bibliography for further reading, chapter reviews, and discussion questions. The publisher provides a companion website with resources for teachers and students.

Part I deals with the Bible and how it came into being. Chapter 1 focuses on the Bible as a gradually emerging collection and the emergence of the Hebrew and Christian Canons. Chapter 2 covers the history of the transmission of the text and introduces the reader to the issues of textual criticism and translations. Sumney discusses the history and nature of inspiration in Chapter 3.

Part II explores the story of the Hebrew Bible. Chapter 4 reviews the authorship, genres, and narratives of Genesis. Chapter 5 provides an overview of Exodus through Deuteronomy. Chapter 6 covers Joshua, Judges, Ruth, Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah. Sumney discusses the prophetic tradition in chapter 7 and Israel's Wisdom Literature in Chapter 8. He includes Esther in his discussion of Wisdom Literature because of perceived affinities with this genre. Sumney introduces the Psalms and Song of Solomon in chapter 9 as part of Israel's response to God. He summarizes the intertestamental period in chapter 10.

Part III introduces the story of the NT. Chapter 11 explores the origins of the Gospels, the search for the historical Jesus, and the relationship between the Synoptic Gospels and John. He introduces the four Gospels in chapter 12. Chapter 13 introduces the book of Acts. The Pauline letters are featured in chapter 14, and the Disputed Pauline letters in chapter 15. Chapter 16 covers Hebrews and the General Epistles. Chapter 17 introduces Revelation. An Epilogue summarizes the author's thoughts on different approaches to interpretation, the relationship of the Bible and science, and how various groups use the Bible today.

One of Sumney's goals is to help readers assess problematic elements in the text. He does a good job of this providing a valuable resource for pastors and professors who wish to address these issues. The historical overviews, discussion of problematic elements, and introductions to genre are the volume's strengths. The treatment of individual books is uneven, but this is to be expected.

However, this volume is not without its weaknesses. Throughout, Sumney reverts to making assertions concerning disputed issues (generally defaulting to current critical views). In his discussion of the Pentateuch, Sumney sets forward the documentary hypothesis without discussion of its merits or any mention of more recent theories of composition. The lack of accompanying argumentation or alternate views fails to promote critical thinking. Likewise, the review questions at the end of chapters simply require regurgitation of previously digested material; they do not promote critical thought. This weakness diminishes its value as a

college text. While the historical reviews provide a good backdrop for the text, the literary backdrop that frames the biblical material is largely ignored. None of these texts was written in isolation. The literature of surrounding cultures influenced the themes and genres of the biblical material, but Sumney does little to address this issue. This omission of literary backgrounds is most glaringly obvious in the discussion of the Psalms. Sumney does briefly discuss the Gilgamesh epic with reference to the flood narrative, but this discussion includes an error; Sumney ascribes action to Gilgamesh that was performed by Utnapishtim.

Sumney's writing style is clear and intentional. This is most noticeable in his treatment of genre and problematic issues. Therefore, it is surprising when Sumney implies that the Judeo-Christian God and Allah are the same. While discussing the conquest of Canaan, Sumney writes, "Whether we think of death camps, the armies fighting to defeat Hitler, or those who fly planes into buildings, some people have thought, at one time or another, that killing others was doing God's will" (108). Many readers of this journal will reject this premise.

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Gordon D. FEE and Mark L. STRAUSS. *How to Choose a Translation for All Its Worth*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007. 170 pp. $12.99.

Have you ever wondered how the English Bible you use came about? How did God's words (originally written in the ancient Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic languages and addressed to ancient peoples and cultures far removed from contemporary times) end up in modern Bibles in a form that the average Bible reader can understand without years of specialized training?

Fee (coauthor of the bestselling *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, Zondervan, 2003) and Strauss (author of *Distorting Scripture?* Wipf and Stock, 2010), are NT scholars with rich experience in Bible translation. Both serve on the TNIV translation committee and have been involved with other translations.

This illuminating guide is well-organized, with five main parts (11 chapters in all plus a useful glossary and an index): These sections introduce the task of translation, the issues involved in translating language, the issues involved in translating culture, the issues involving text (textual criticism), style, and format, and the history and nature of major English Bibles respectively. Fee and Strauss begin by succinctly explaining why it is necessary to translate the Bible, what is translated, and how this translation is done. Chapter 2 examines the nature of translation more closely, elucidating the distinction between the two basic approaches to translation (formal equivalence and functional equivalence) and outlining four criteria for excellence in translation (accurate, clear, natural, and audience appropriate). Chapters 3 and 4 reveal the complications and problems

faced by translators when translating words, words in relationship with other words, and figurative language. Chapter 5 is solely dedicated to the tricky problem of translating the Greek genitive case. Historical and cultural background, euphemisms, weights, measures, and money are covered by chapter 6, while chapter 7 focuses on the thorny issue of gender accuracy.

Remarkably, the authors communicate their difficult subject matter with great efficacy. Complex and technical matters (most notably translation theories, lexical semantics, idioms, metaphors, Greek genitive case, gender accuracy, and textual criticism, among many others) are described in a simple, clear, balanced, insightful, and engaging way with copious excellent illustrations from various English translations.

Equally impressive is how the authors manage to shed much light on the various issues and viewpoints involved in controversial modern debates over Bible versions and translation theories without becoming embroiled in the heat of the debates. They aptly recognize that, while all translation involves interpretation and meaning cannot be translated perfectly, translation can be done with a high degree of accuracy. While they clearly prefer functional equivalence translation theory, they rightly acknowledge that most major English versions convey God's word in language accessible to the majority of English-speaking people (they even recommend consulting any of the versions surveyed in chapter 11, which includes formal equivalent, mediating, and functional equivalent versions). The TNIV, a mediating version (and not a functional equivalent one), is their recommendation as the best general purpose Bible.

There is little to fault with this remarkable compendium. More could be said about considerations of syntax and higher discourse units in translation, so as to avoid perpetuating a mistaken preoccupation with word-level translation. The effectiveness of the volume may also lead to an unintended danger—some readers may think they have learned more than they actually have. Further reading (recommendations for further reading are helpfully given at the end of each chapter) and years of specialized training are needed to gain the expertise needed to practice Bible translation (as opposed to choosing and using translations with discernment).

Modern Bible translations usually represent the culmination of years of arduous work from committees of Bible scholars and other dedicated professionals, who must struggle with complex issues in translating language and culture. Fee and Strauss demystify this translation work and bridge the chasm between the producers of Bible translations and average users. They have written a masterpiece that will empower not only pastors and teachers, but also everyday Bible readers, to understand the differences among the various English translations and to make intelligent choices about the best version (or versions) to use for different purposes.

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Carl G. RASMUSSEN. *Zondervan Atlas of the Bible*. Rev. ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010. 304 pp. $39.99.

This volume is a revision of the *Zondervan NIV Atlas of the Bible* (Zondervan, 1989), the first edition of which won the ECPA Gold Medallion Award. The atlas is divided into two halves. Section 1, the Geographical Section, consists of a description of the major regions of the Middle East. Each section includes a description of the region, a summary of its history, and its significance in the Bible. Section 2, the Historical Section, is comprised of a review of the history of the events that occurred in the geographical areas under study, beginning with the third millennium BC and concluding with the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70. Both sections are beautifully illustrated with photos and include maps that help readers understand the geographical areas under discussion.

In the midst of the historical section, a separate chapter is devoted to Jerusalem (240-253), the most prominent city in the Bible, which is "mentioned 667 times in the Old Testament and 139 times in the New" (240). Rasmussen describes the geographical setting of Jerusalem and traces its occupational history from the Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Ages through the first century AD.

The historical section concludes with an excellent chapter on "The Disciplines of Historical Geography" (254-262). This chapter provides an excellent overview of the fields of philology, toponymy and archaeology. In his discussion of philology, Rasmussen summarizes the contribution of biblical and extrabiblical texts to geographical studies. In the Bible, territorial descriptions, lists of town names and records of expeditions and conquests scattered throughout the historical books all provide helpful information for historical geography. In terms of extrabiblical texts, numerous epigraphic finds have been made in the last hundred years in Egypt, Mesopotamia, Syria and, to a lesser extent, Israel, all of which have an important bearing on the historical geography of the Bible. Rasmussen's summary of toponymic study explains how scholars try to attach the ancient name of a settlement to its correct site and, in turn, place it on a map. His discussion of archaeology gives a short overview of excavation methods, the interpretation of data, and how the archaeological enterprise can help "either to confirm or cast doubt on the proposed identification of that site" (p261).

Rasmussen's approach to the dates for Israel's history is conventional. For archaeological periods and dates for the pharaohs and the kings of Assyria and other foreign powers, Rasmussen follows the standard dates given in the *Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land* (ed. E. Stern et al.; 4 vols; New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993), though when he discusses the Judean and Israelite kings, he relies on the chronology developed by Edwin Thiele in *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings* (3rd ed.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983). Rasmussen states that "the dates for Israel's early history—the patriarchs, the exodus from Egypt, the conquest of Canaan, and the period of the judges—follow a plain reading of the biblical text and in the mind of this author fit quite

well with known extrabiblical chronologies." He does note his own awareness of "alternate chronological schemes," but points out that "an atlas is not the place to discuss all these in detail" (13). Rasmussen does include chronological charts at the beginning of each chapter of the Historical Section (82, 100) in order to aid the reader in the study of that particular period, and he also includes a general chronological chart in the appendices (266-267), though all of these tools, again, follow the conventional evangelical chronology.

Two minor criticisms have to do with chronological and archaeological details. Chronologically, the volume's portrayal of the early date of the exodus-conquest as the "biblical" date for those events is a bit one-sided. Throughout the book, when reference is made to the exodus-conquest, it is consistently to the early date (100-112, 121-130, 243, 244) with no consideration for other views. However, in light of Rasmussen's caveat, noted above, this issue should not deter readers who may hold a different view on this one issue. With regard to archaeological details, I would note that, for books that incorporate such data, it is virtually impossible, even in revised editions, to remain up-to-date for long. For example, in his discussion of Jerusalem, Rasmussen observes that, "From the time of Nehemiah (445 BC) until the beginning of the second century BC, not too much is known about Jerusalem" (248). This revision of the *Zondervan Atlas of the Bible* had probably already gone to press when it was announced that Eilat Mazar had discovered a section of Jerusalem's wall that may date to the time of Nehemiah (E. Mazar, "The Wall that Nehemiah Built," *BAR* 35/2 [2009]: 24-33, 66). In any case, this is not an archaeological handbook, but an atlas, and it is designed to give an overview, a task that it accomplishes with excellence.

Overall, this title is an excellent and accessible volume with an affordable price that will make it a useful tool for professors, students, and lay-readers alike. Its lavish illustrations and detailed maps will make it a reference that readers will pull off their shelves to consult time-and-time again. I highly recommend it.

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Derek WILSON. *The People's Bible: The Remarkable History of the King James Version*. Oxford: Lion Hudson, 2010. 222 pp. $24.95.

My first Bible was a small, King James Version with pictures interspersed throughout the text, given to me as a very young boy by my mother. It had been a gift to her from her parents. The image that comes to mind when I think of the death of Absalom is still that of the picture in that small Bible. I grew up reading, memorizing, studying, and later preaching from the King James Version. Its memorable phrasing is still what I remember in numerous verses of the Bible,

though it has been many years since the King James was the Bible to which I turned for study, preaching, or lecturing. A fellow student once told me, when I was studying at university, that I talked like the King James Bible. I am not sure what he meant, since I did not use "thee" and "thou" in my speech, but I suspect that his remark reflected the deep, lingering influence of that version on many, who like me, grew up reading the KJV. One of the things that Wilson shows in his book is the pervasive impact the KJV has had on Western culture. In his concluding words he asserts that the KJV "is unique in the annals of all books, published in any language, anywhere, at any time. Its influence has been and continues to be incalculable. It has helped to shape the western mind; has influenced what we think and how we think. It has changed the world" (201-202).

While Wilson does not say as much, the occasion for his writing on this subject at this time is that 2011 is the 400th anniversary of the publication of the KJV. Wilson's book is not, however, a panegyric of the KJV. The praise given the KJV in the words I quoted in the preceding paragraph, in fact, are somewhat exceptional. The volume is a clear-eyed historical presentation of the birth, struggles, shortcomings, and successes of the translation. There were numerous mixed motives in the conception and propagation of the KJV involving state politics, ecclesiastical politics, economic ambitions, and denominational prejudices, as well as pure Christian faith. Wilson lays issues of this kind on the table before the reader.

The first three chapters of the volume treat the general history of the translation of the Scriptures into the vernacular languages. The first chapter surveys the situation in the Middle Ages when the Latin Vulgate was the only Bible of the Western Church and the peasantry learned what they knew of the Bible primarily from the images that stood in the Church buildings or decorated their walls. The story of the translation of the Bible into English begins with John Wycliffe, whose work on the Bible led him to criticize the Catholic hierarchy. He became convinced that all Christians should know the Scriptures, but knew that if this was to be the case, the Scriptures must be translated into the vernacular. He began, therefore, late in his life, to work on an English translation of the Bible. The work had to be done in secret, because of the opposition of the Catholic Church and of the government, which was Catholic. Wilson continues the story from the secret translation work of Wycliffe up to the translators of the KJV whose work was sanctioned by the King of England himself, James I. But between these two events there were many translations of the Scriptures into English, done by men who risked their lives, and sometimes, as in the case of William Tyndale, lost them to present God's word in the English language.

Chapters 4–10 are devoted to the translation of the KJV and its reception and spread throughout the English-speaking world. By the time the KJV translation was completed there were several versions of the Scriptures in English, and the threat of danger connected with possessing a copy of Scripture was past, so

there was no novelty related to its appearance. "[T]he era was long passed," Wilson says, "when the Bible had been an exciting novelty. No longer was reading it attended by a frisson of danger and the risk of incurring the wrath of the authorities. It had become a part of the church's antique furniture" (122). There was no state money put into the publication of the new Bible, nor was there any state sponsored advertising campaign to sell it. The publishing firm that had a monopoly on its publication ultimately failed. Given its inauspicious launching, Wilson feels compelled to try to explain how the KJV achieved the extensive influence it wielded for three centuries in Western culture. He provides several reasons for this, but one of the more important certainly has to be British colonialism which took the KJV to other continents and encouraged the use of this one version over multiple versions as a means for promoting political unity in the colonies. Another was the embracing and defending of the KJV as the Word of God by the evangelicals in the early 20th century in reaction to the higher criticism of the Bible that developed in Germany in the mid-19th century and to the conflict over human origins stirred up by Darwin's publications at approximately the same time.

Wilson's writing is clear, interesting, and brings together in rather short compass a mass of material concerning the Bible in the English language as well as the focus on the KJV. It would serve undergraduates well in any course involving a history of the English Bible. It would also be understandable and instructive for any general, educated readership interested in the Bible.

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Jo Ann HACKETT. *A Basic Introduction to Biblical Hebrew*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010. 302 pp. $39.95.

Hackett has written an innovative Hebrew grammar in which she attempts to improve problematic vocabulary and simplify confusing paradigms. She has accomplished this with varying degrees of success, since some of her improvements seem more complicated. At the beginning of the grammar, in a section titled "How to use this book," she offers rationale for some unconventional vocabulary and for the order in which she presents the material. This section is extremely helpful and should be read in full by anyone considering using this grammar.

The most important things mentioned in Hackett's "How to use . . ." introduction include the abandoning of the traditional labels of "perfect" and "imperfect" for the two major verb inflections. Hackett's purpose is to shed the incomplete or misinformation that these terms connote. She uses instead the descriptive terms "suffix conjugation" for the perfect and "prefix conjugation" for the imper-

fect. She also endorses the term "*v^{e}-qatal*," used in some other grammars, to designate the construction called the "converted perfect." And she introduces a new term to describe the "converted imperfect," calling it the "consecutive preterite." Hackett also plays with the traditional order for presenting pronoun and verbal paradigms, arranging the verbal paradigms in the order of 1st, 2nd, 3rd person so that they match the usual order in which the independent pronoun and pronominal suffix paradigms are presented. I have often wondered why someone did not write a grammar doing just this, and I applaud Hackett for doing so.

One of my favorite features of Hackett's grammar is the emphasis she puts on accent marks and their importance in deciphering the syntax of Hebrew sentences. Most books contain the basic marks—*atnakh*, *soph pasuq*, *silluq*, and *munakh*. Hackett also includes the *zaqeph*, *revia*, *tiphkhah*, and *merkhah*. I only wish she had given a little more detail about each mark and its significance in the text.

Despite the many innovative and helpful features included in this grammar, the overall value of the book is diminished by the confusing order in which Hackett presents the material. She introduces the *Qal* strong verb first through all its inflections (chs. 12, 14–18). She then presents the other stems (chs. 19–24), introducing the weak verb forms last (chs. 25–30). Her presentation becomes convoluted, however, by the insertion of a weak verb chapter (ch. 13) into the strong verb material, a chapter she labels only "verbs with variant patterns." In addition, she includes a small section on weak verb form within each of the chapters on the *Qal* strong verb inflections. It seems that this inconsistency would lead to greater student confusion.

Hackett's choices concerning when to include more or less instruction are puzzling as well. For example, she spends four chapters presenting the alphabet, interspersing the vowels among blocks of consonants. This seems like an inordinate amount of text space spent on a concept that would be more easily visualized when laid out on two or three pages. In contrast, she jumps right into the first verb chapter without any sort of introduction to verbs. She doesn't introduce the names of the stems or the parts of the verb (parsing is not introduced until chapter 24). She doesn't explain what makes a verb strong or weak, even though she includes weak verb concepts long before she comes to the weak verb chapters.

Overall, Hackett's grammar contains much useful material. It is only through innovative writing such as Hackett's that the teaching of Hebrew will be brought up to speed with recent Hebrew scholarship. Yet, there is enough confusion concerning the order of presentation and details omitted or offered too late, that I would recommend this volume as supplemental material rather than a main textbook.

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Richard S. BRIGGS. *The Virtuous Reader: Old Testament Narrative and Interpretive Virtue*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010. 270 pp. $26.99.

In a recent addition to Baker Academic's *Studies in Theological Interpretation* series, Briggs facilitates an ongoing conversation over how moral and ethical categories do/should influence the reading of Scripture. The tone of Briggs's volume is not introductory. In its pages, the reader is offered an empty chair at the table. The reader is never lost; however, newcomers to theological interpretation circles might need to "catch up." Briggs's point of entry is Kevin Vanhoozer's *Is There a Meaning in This Text?* (Zondervan, 1998). Embracing Vanhoozer's discussion of "interpretive virtue," Briggs sets out to provide a methodological framework for applying Vanhoozer's conclusions, in concert with like-minded conversation partners. Briggs mediates the positions of his influences in an adequate fashion and further conversation on the topic is facilitated through helpful references and a lengthy bibliography.

Briggs opens with a thought provoking comment: "What sort of reader should one be in order to read the Bible?" (9). He acknowledges that the "implied reader" is hard to envision, and even harder to become. For Briggs "text and method" are bound together in the reader. His hope is to find the implied moral character expected of the reader within the OT text itself. The ethics found within the text function ultimately to shape those of the reader, not the other way around.

In his introduction, Briggs develops three foundational aspects of methodology. First, how one interprets is not an entirely separable activity from how one lives the human life. Briggs rejects the notion that one is able to approach the text "objectively." He states, "There has to be some kind of hermeneutical give-and-take, between text and reader, allowing the reader to work on the text at the same time as the text works on the reader" (9).

The denial of true objectivity is complemented by the author's second point: any discussion of interpretive virtues may not be entirely divorced from the more general moral virtues. For Briggs, the hermeneutical discussion of "interpretive virtues" must begin with generally accepted categories of ethical and moral virtues (an admittedly Aristotelian enterprise). Drawing from the writing of Alasdair MacIntyre, Briggs defines general virtues as practices that nourish and sustain human communities (22). These categories should be sought within the text; then once found, the definition presented by the text should be allowed to shape one's individual definition of ethics and morality. The goal of his interpretive method is to "let the Old Testament determine the moral content we ascribe to the various categories of virtue ethics that go to portray the implied reader of its narratives" (138).

How the text defines categories of virtues is the basis of Briggs's third point. He admits that it is not possible to develop a definitive list of interpretive virtues, although it is possible to assess the claims of one or another hermeneutical category as virtuous or not, meaning, a hermeneutic of suspicion or of trust, a topic

specifically addressed in chapter four (26). He states, "We find a rich and thought-provoking portrait (or perhaps series of portraits) of the kind of character most eagerly to be sought after and this in turn is the implied character of one who would read these texts" (17).

Conceding that there is no definitive list of virtues, Briggs proceeds with gathering a few for methodological discussion. Drawing from the writing of L. Gregory Jones, Briggs has chosen five virtues: humility, wisdom, trust, charity (love), and receptivity. He contributes a chapter to each virtue, tying each to a specific OT narrative text. Each chapter follows a similar arrangement of thought. The discussion begins with a fruitful analysis of the current literature on the proposed "virtue." At times this can be a bit overwhelming if the reader is not in the "loop" in current trends and influences within and upon the theological interpretation movement, although, this is Briggs's way of providing the "open chair" at the table. He states, "The more voices at the table the better, as long as one recalls that having more voices at the table is not an end in itself, and that the table was for a meal rather than a seminar" (64).

The literature review on each virtue is complemented by a similar appraisal of research regarding Briggs's associated texts. Readers familiar with the texts in question might challenge his findings; however, the presentation of exegetical material provides an open window into the author's methodology. Instead of quickly stating his own conclusions, Briggs takes readers upon a journey of discovery, presumably their own. As the stated goal of the book is to suggest a "virtuous" methodology for reading OT narrative, the author must model this thought process for us. This modeling is necessary as Briggs continually states that his list of virtues is by no means complete. Upon reading this volume, one might conceivably take Briggs's model and explore how Scripture defines additional virtues.

Briggs concludes by acknowledging present limitations, for instance, his focus on mainly male characters solely in narrative texts. Furthermore, he concedes that there is no real "virtue method" to teach or present. His hope is that the discussions put forward in this book will lead the virtuous reader to "bear 'hermeneutical fruit' in due season" (210). An overarching concern for Briggs, which ties the threads of this work together, is that a reader, specifically a reader of Scripture, learns to read well. This takes a wide range of methodologies. "To be a wise reader is more than attaining to a mastery of critical tools, but it is not less than that" (195). The goal of hermeneutics, assuming virtue is central to the process, is not to seek application of a particular text to a present concern. The goal is transformation. For Biggs the goal of virtuous reading is "that the reader has been shaped, from the inside out, to the kind of person who knows what to do in the present situation" (211).

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Richard S. BRIGGS. *The Virtuous Reader: Old Testament Narrative and Interpretive Virtue*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010. 270 pp. $26.99.

In a series aimed at presenting "competent theological reflection on Christian Scripture" (8), Briggs describes the ethical virtues of the implied reader of the OT from a careful reading of selected narrative texts. Briggs wants to write a book that engages the hermeneutical issues involved in interpreting scripture by delineating "the moral character of the reader" (35). To this end, he discusses five interpretive virtues that he believes characterize the "ideal reader" of the Hebrew Bible.

From the statement that "Moses was very humble, more so than anyone else on the face of the earth" (Num 12:3, NRSV), Briggs contends that humility as an aspect of one's spiritual life is a fundamental characteristic of reading scripture. The story of Solomon and the two prostitutes (1 Kgs 3:16-28) for Briggs implies the interpretive virtue of wisdom, and the Rabshakeh's speech to the Israelites in Jerusalem (2 Kgs 18:19-25) infers the virtue of trust in God, even "in the face of considerable evidence (and even logic) to the contrary" (130).

For the interpretive virtue of charity, Briggs turns to the stories of Ruth and Naaman. Ruth's statement to Naomi that "Where you go, I will go" (1:16-17) means that interpreters should go wherever the text leads them. On the other hand, Elisha's blessing on Naaman that he "Go in peace" (2 Kgs 5:19), even though he would be officiating in idolatrous worship, suggests that the interpreter may at times bless readings that are at odds with "rightly handling the words of Scripture" (162). Finally, from the call of Isaiah (ch. 6) Briggs sees a summons to the virtue of receptivity, which means that interpreters must be open to both the "judgment and restoration" (187) of God.

While Briggs's essays are well informed and often thought provoking, they are defective on a couple of counts. Briggs views what he is doing as theological hermeneutics, but his hermeneutic is inconsistent and flawed. For example, when it appears to be to his advantage, he appeals to context (Num 12:3 for humility), while at other times he ignores context altogether. In the story of Naaman, Briggs focuses on Elisha's response to the Aramean's request about worshiping Rimmon in Aram, overlooking the reversal at the end of the story, where Gehazi receives Naaman's leprosy. In this text, the outsider receives charity, but also the insider receives judgment. To miss this is to misread the story.

Briggs also recontextualizes stories by inappropriately spiritualizing aspects of the narratives. For example, as Solomon displayed wisdom in discerning the truth in competing claims, so also interpreters should be discriminating in accessing the truth of testimony, in navigating the competing claims of the text. To say the least, the move from the testimony of prostitutes to the testimony of scripture is rather a stretch.

In this volume, Briggs resembles a topical preacher who selects texts for themes or word associations that allow him to espouse his views on interpretive

virtues. His choice of Ruth in conversation with the story of Naaman for the virtue of charity, for example, appears to reflect his agreement with Aristotle—more than representing an inference from Hebrew narrative—that love can justify the misreading of a text for a greater good. While most will agree with the virtues Briggs espouses, many will see his approach as, in effect, theological prooftexting inappropriate for a text on hermeneutics.

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James MCKEOWN. *Genesis.* Two Horizons Old Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008. 408 pp. $25.00.

McKeown's approximately 400-page work on Genesis is like two volumes in one. A well-focused introduction prepares the reader for the first major section: Commentary on Genesis, a 185-page synchronic, narrative commentary focused on three primary themes—descendants, blessing, and land. The author posits that these intertwined themes first appear in the Gen 1:28 command but were adversely affected when human rebellion destroyed the harmony between the Creator and his creation. The commentary then traces God's endeavors to preserve the "seed" (descendants) and restore what was lost in Eden through his covenant with Abraham's (and Isaac's) descendants.

The second section, Theological Horizons of Genesis, is 180-pages that read like a systematic and biblical theology blend, perhaps due mostly to McKeown's continued use of a narrative approach. In the first subsection, Theological Message of the Book, the author expands further on the Main Unifying Themes (Descendants, Blessing, Land) and then treats material he refers to as Key Theological Teaching of Genesis (The Theology of Land, The Doctrine of Creation, *Creatio ex Nihilo*, The Fall, The Character of God, The Image of God, The Life of Faith). The next 80 pages are divided between Genesis and Theology Today (Genesis and Science, Mission, Ecology, Feminist Approaches) and Genesis and Biblical Theology (Genesis in Canonical Context, Genesis in the Historical Books, Wisdom Literature, Thematic Continuity in the Prophets, New Testament, Conclusion). Throughout, McKeown seeks to show the relevance of Genesis for modern readers while routinely touching on the meaning and relevance the text might have had for certain of its earliest (Jewish, pre-NT) readers.

The 225-entry bibliography spans decades (but is weighted toward 1975–2000) and draws from a cross-section of theological and academic viewpoints. The broad Index of Names indicates significant interaction with the work(s) of Walter Brueggemann, Gerhard von Rad, Nahum Sarna, and Gordon J. Wenham, and the Index of Scripture and Other Ancient Writings references 61 OT books, 16 NT books/letters, 1 intertestamental and 7 extrabiblical works.

This synchronic and narrative commentary is a refreshing departure from JEDP and the higher criticism with which OT students have long had to deal, and it is generally easy to read Genesis and McKeown's book side-by-side. McKeown respectfully interacts with other scholarly works, maintaining middle-lane, relaxed evangelical conservatism throughout discussions of authorship, dating and "problem texts." Conclusions are generally left to the reader, which will dissatisfy those seeking decisive answers to Genesis's "tough questions," yet one conclusion, anyway, is demonstrated pragmatically. McKeown allows partial authorship of Genesis by Moses to be possible (8), but regards its final form as coming at a later (unspecified) date such that Jewish exiles or recently repatriated exiles are the early readers of Genesis: "in order to identify with the issues that may have faced early readers of Genesis . . . I have chosen the exilic readers because this avoids most objections about the date of authorship, and it also relates well to the subject matter of Genesis. The concepts of exile and homecoming . . ."(10).

This volume deserves a place in the classroom, minister's study, or on the scholar's bookshelf as a companion to other traditional, in-depth volumes. The general, holistic-yet-thematic treatment used here limits the amount (but not the quality) of work in linguistics, criticism, etc., to essentials while supplying relevance and applicability for students and parishioners alike. Familiar bible study techniques such as noting key words, phrases, and motifs can bridge users' transition from informal to more academic biblical interpretation skills.

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Mark ZIESE. *Joshua*. College Press NIV Commentary. Joplin, MO: College Press, 2008. 402 pp. $32.99.

Commentaries on the book of Joshua have often been assigned to archaeologists, which has sometimes resulted in volumes with a focus on archaeological minutiae to the neglect of exegesis and application. Ziese is an archaeologist, but he is also a Hebraist and an exegete. He approaches the book of Joshua not just with an eye for archaeological matters but also with great sensitivity to its literary artistry.

In the introduction (15-37), Ziese considers the purpose of the book of Joshua, its nature as both historical and prophetical literature, the language and text of the book, its strategy and structure, and its archaeological setting. The introduction emphasizes two key features of the commentary. First, in discussing the strategy and structure of the book, Ziese discusses the focus on "narrative art" that has burgeoned in OT studies since the 1980s. Ziese observes that, "Instead of investing more effort in sorting out theories of editorial layering, more fruitful research may investigate character description, plot development, the play of voices, intertextuality, gapping, and similar dynamics" (25). Robert Alter, Meir Sternberg,

Chanan Brichto, and Adele Berlin have all been pioneers in the study of narrative art, and their approach is exemplified in Joshua studies in Robert Polzin's *Moses and the Deuteronomist: Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges* (A Literary History of the Deuteronomic History; Bloomington: Indiana University, 1980) and L. Daniel Hawk's *Joshua* (Berit Olam. Studies in Hebrew Narrative & Poetry; Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2000). The influence of this approach is evident throughout this commentary, with its focus on the intricacies of literary artistry.

Second, the introduction also emphasizes the importance of the archaeological setting of the book of Joshua, which is also a concern throughout the commentary. In his discussion of the archaeological setting in the introduction, Ziese observes that while 1 Kgs 6:1 and Judg 11:26 may suggest that the Israelites arrived in Canaan in the middle of the Late Bronze Age spiral, the archaeological data do not present a corresponding pattern of widespread destruction during either the 15th or the 13th centuries BC. He suggests that three pieces of evidence may illuminate the general context in which Israel emerges, including the record of Egyptian raids in Canaan, the Amarna tablets, and the appearance of new settlements in the highlands of the central hill country. He brings this section to a close with a review of the three classical models of Israelite settlement (the infiltration model, the peasant revolt model, and the conquest model), and concludes earliest Israel entered Canaan from outside the land. The introduction is followed by a detailed outline of the book of Joshua and a bibliography of resources utilized in the volume.

Throughout the body of the commentary, Ziese maintains a focus on exegesis. This is not, however, to the neglect of archaeological matters, which he takes up both in footnotes and in supplemental studies. This separation of exposition and archaeological detail will make the commentary more appealing for readers whose primary interest is in the exposition of the text, while those who are interested in archaeological details can easily find them in the footnotes and supplemental studies. For example, in reading Joshua 6, the focus is on exegesis, and there is no discussion of the walls of Jericho in the body of the commentary. This is a subject that will be of vital concern to many readers of Joshua, and Ziese devotes an entire supplemental study to the subject of Canaanite fortifications (98-101). Joshua 13–21, which deal with territorial allotments, has always presented a challenge for expositors of the book of Joshua. Ziese, however, with his focus on exegesis, is able to bring them to life, drawing out the meaning of these passages and finding lessons in them for the lives of believers. And yet again, Ziese does not neglect historical and archaeological questions, and virtually every town mentioned in these chapters is discussed in a footnote.

The commentary focuses on two key themes: ethnicity and the incompletion of the conquest. With regard to ethnicity, Ziese notes that "the book of Joshua is keenly interested in the gnawing question of Israelite definition" (214). In times past, archaeologists sought primarily to identify material factors with eth-

nicity, such as the kinds of houses a people built or the kind of pottery they used. These may still be useful in discussions about ethnic identity, but Israelite ethnicity is apparently not limited to such features. Rahab essentially "becomes an Israelite" by faith, and is endorsed in Jas 2:25 and Heb 11:31 (79-96). The Gibeonites, too, are incorporated into Israel and are portrayed as a people in need of Yahweh (195). Ziese follows this issue of who is "in" and who is "out," and its implications for understanding Israelite ethnicity, throughout the remainder of the book. Suffice it to say that what makes one an Israelite is not ones race but one's faith (214).

With regard to the issue of the completion of the conquest, there was a tendency in the study of Joshua in previous generations to see the book as describing a *blitzkrieg* in which the Hebrews entered the land of Canaan and rapidly subjugated its inhabitants. Throughout the commentary, however, Ziese emphasizes the way that the book of Joshua repeatedly stresses the incomplete nature of the conquest. In Joshua 13, he notes that "Israel's success in *entering* this land should not be confused with the effort to *settle* it" (255). Joshua 13:1-7 stress that, when Joshua had become "old and well advanced in years" the conquest was as yet incomplete. Ziese observes that "while the *Heartland* has been overrun and its inhabitants miraculously—but temporarily—put to flight, the task of possessing this land has barely begun" (258). It is not until Josh 18:1-2 that the Israelites finally move away from Gilgal, which has served as their primary camp from the time that they entered the land. And yet, even at the convention of the tribes at Shiloh, they are reprimanded for their "slack-handedness" with regard to possessing the land (317). Even at the end of the book, when Joshua is "about to go the way of all the earth" (23:14), he is still urging the Israelites to take possession of the land of Canaan (371-376). And while the book of Joshua works towards its conclusion with the renewal of the covenant at Shechem (24:1-15), Joshua's remarks on the occasion suggest that he was less than certain about the people's commitment to Yahweh. Ziese suggests that the book of Joshua's lack of a suitable conclusion is in harmony with the general tenor of the OT as a whole, which he characterizes as "a story in search of an ending" (392, n. 32). As such, it anticipates the NT, where many of its themes are developed further (391-402).

Twenty-one supplemental studies are interspersed throughout the commentary, which provide detailed studies of subjects that emerge in the course of exegesis and warrant a focus that goes beyond the context of the passage under examination. These special studies cover the following subjects: "Amorites" (130-131); "Archaeological Periods" (35-37); "Canaanite Chiefs" (247-250); "Canaanite Fortifications" (98-101); "Counting Israel" (123-127); "Ethnicity" (212-214); "The Family in Ancient Israel" (186-189); "High Expectations for a Low River" (104-108); "Lot-Casting" (298-301); "Mapping the Land" (286-288); "Mission Accomplished" (259-260); "The Nature of *Torah*" (357-359); "Personal Sin, Corporate Results" (160-162); "Playing Monopoly" (235-236);

"Rereading Joshua" (391-402); "Site Identification" (318-320); "The Survey of Manasseh" (307-309); "Swearing" (199-201); "Theophoric Names" (273-276); "Three Days" (72-74); and "Yahweh War" (151-154).

The strengths of Ziese's commentary lie in its exegesis, its attention to literary artistry, and its focus on theological matters. I recommend it for use as a textbook in courses on Joshua, and as a resource for pastors.

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Robin A. PARRY. *Lamentations.* Two Horizons Old Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010. 260 pp. $22.00.

The Two Horizons Old Testament Commentary series aims at theological exegesis and reflection. In this general aim, Parry's commentary on Lamentations succeeds admirably. His thirty-four-page introduction does an excellent job of orientating the reader of the book, whether that reader is an interested novice, a student, or a biblical scholar. Literary terms that are important to an understanding of Lamentations—for example, "enjambment" (10-11), "acrostic" (13-15)—are clearly explained. Major scholarly approaches to Lamentations are briefly discussed in a sympathetic manner, which directs the interested reader to other sources, while leaving the reader free to take what is best in the various approaches. Weaknesses of some of the approaches are pointed out, but not in a vitriolic way. Discussions of rather speculative matters (such as date and authorship) receive very brief treatment. The book is treated as a unity, although the author recognizes that the final author may well have used other materials.

The lion's share of the commentary (35-157) is taken up with a translation of the text, and with a general introduction to the chapter, followed by a verse-by-verse theological commentary. The acrostic nature of these chapters is indicated (in the translation at the beginning of each chapter, as well before the discussion of each verse), by the presence of the Hebrew letters, as well as by the English transliteration of those letters. Thus, an interested student of the book of Lamentations can make good use of Parry's insights, even if they are not familiar with Hebrew.

The various dialogical "voices" in the book (11-12) are helpfully teased out and discussed, although Parry acknowledges that there is much disagreement on the number of voices and precisely who those voices represent (12). Parry helpfully divides each chapter into logical subsections, based on appropriate literary bases—for example, by a change in one of the "speakers" in Lamentations.

Ancient Near Eastern literature and customs are introduced when these are helpful. However, Parry also uses appropriate caution when using these materi-

als, seeking to understand Lamentations as Judah's unique reaction to her exile. As an example, see Parry's perceptive comments (78) on the use of language related to the destroying and rebuilding of ancient Mesopotamian temples.

In the final major section of the commentary (159-236), Parry reflects in a sustained manner on the book as a whole. Parry strives to take Lamentations seriously in its own form, but also to read it intertextually with the rest of the OT and NT, as well as with later Jewish and Christian interpretations. This is a delicate and difficult balancing act, which Parry does well. For example, he addresses the question, "Does Christian interpretation neutralize Lamentations?" (191-193). Of course, taking these varied (and, at times, contradictory) ways of reading Lamentations seriously is not an easy task, and Parry's attempts do not always seem to me to succeed. What we Christians believe about the cross and the empty tomb does, it seems to me, tend to blunt the sharp edges of the despair that Lamentations seeks to express. However, Parry makes a strong case for the propriety of varied readings of Lamentations which seek to take seriously present pain, as well as future hope.

An excellent, up-to-date bibliography (11 pages) rounds out the commentary. There is a helpful scriptural index, as well as an index of scholars' names at the end of the volume.

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Craig L. BLOMBERG with Jennifer Foutz MARKLEY. *A Handbook of New Testament Exegesis*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010. 298 pp. $22.99.

According to Blomberg and Markley, the process of NT exegesis is tenfold, and if performed well, this process will help interpreters properly apprehend the NT's meaning (xi, xiv–xvii). Proceeding in logical order, this process's first stage is textual criticism; by which interpreters should seek to discern the reading of a given text that best explains all that text's variants (1-35). Second, producing or consulting a reliable translation(s) helps determine and communicate a text's nuances and possible ambiguities (37-61). Third, historical-cultural analysis, particularly in the form of descriptive, social-scientific criticism, aids interpreters in making sense of the text as part of a conversation between its author and its original audience (63-92). Fourth, readers should attend to a text's literary context, emphasizing the contextual circles closest to the particular text they are interpreting but not neglecting the wider circles that extend outward even to the NT as a whole (93-115). Fifth, provided that students avoid the problems often associated with word studies, such studies can significantly illumine a text's terminological nuances (117-142). Sixth, carefully examining a text's grammar should clarify how a text's terms relate to each other (143-165). Seventh, despite a read-

er's best efforts in these first stages of the exegetical process, some interpretive problems may still remain, only to be clarified, with varying degrees of success, by combining further study in more than one of the areas already described (167-194). Eighth, outlining may further clarify a text's connections and suggest feasible ways of coherently communicating the text's meaning (195-218). Ninth, theological reflection helps exegetes draw together the assertions of various texts and transition into the final phase of interpretation—namely, application (219-237). This tenth and final phase involves identifying a text's transcultural principles and using them as a bridge to identify the text's significance for a contemporary audience (239-268).

Generally, Blomberg and Markley's work is helpful and well written. It copiously uses extended examples and should provide a very good text for an introductory, NT exegesis course. The chapter on textual criticism omits discussing the more scholarly arguments for preferring the Majority Text (Wilbur Pickering, William Pierpont, Maurice Robinson), and professors and students associated within the Stone-Campbell Movement will find unpersuasive the text's offhand comments about baptism's relationship to soteriology (xvii, 172-173). Nevertheless, instructors can easily supplement these discussions for their students. More difficult, however, but certainly not unique to this text, is the repeated characterization of the book's chapters as describing exegetical "steps" (xiii-xvi, 23, 26, 68, 141, 167-168, 174, 269-276). Much better is the briefly mentioned metaphor of the "tool box" (xvi, 115). Certainly, *some* logical consecution exists among several of the book's chapters, but the authors themselves recognize that this consecution does not strictly apply to each interpretive situation (167-194). Rather than exegetical "steps," properly speaking, Blomberg and Markley's chapters chiefly identify *topoi* (topics) of exegetical rhetoric. For exegesis is a type of deliberative rhetoric, and areas like textual criticism and lexicography are loci for rhetorical invention—that is, places where interpreters can profitably seek arguments about a text's meaning (Aristotle, *Rhet.* 1.2–1.8).

Because the process metaphor ("step" language) occurs throughout the work with greater frequency and prominence than the craft metaphor ("tool" language), instructors may repeatedly need to stress each chapter's fundamental character as a *topos*. Otherwise, beginning students may well conceive of interpretation as a sequence of discrete tasks rather than as a holistic leading of oneself and one's audience into understanding a given text's meaning. Still, instructors could certainly add this emphasis for their students and, in so doing, make this work an even more helpful introduction to the field of NT interpretation than they will already find it to be.

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Constantine R. CAMPBELL. *Keep Your Greek: Strategies for Busy People.* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010. 96 pp. $9.99.

For many pastors, as well as students, keeping up with one's Greek language studies is a daunting task without the classroom environment which, too often than not, results in the pastor or student giving up completely on their Greek. This is a serious issue if we believe that anyone who teaches the Bible should be well versed in the original languages in which it was written. Constantine Campbell published this volume for those who spent, at minimum, three years in the academy learning and studying the language, only to find themselves several years out of college and not being able to find the time to read or study their Greek NT, thereby losing the skills that they worked so hard to develop.

In the matter of ten short chapters and merely 90 pages, Campbell provides the motivation and means for pastors and students who do not have the luxury of being a student, to not only keep up with their Greek but also, if it is desired, go beyond and hone the skills that they have acquired. Campbell focuses on one point per chapter which range from the (mis)use of an interlinear Bible to more bland practices such as memorizing vocabulary and parsing verb forms. Campbell is forthright in noting that learning, and possibly relearning, Greek is not an easy task, and it can be very difficult at times, but he encourages his audience that "it will be worth it" (72). "Greek gives us certain insights into the text of the NT that are impossible to achieve any other way" (9). This quote should motivate every pastor to put his best effort into understanding the language of the Bible not just for himself, but for those that he teaches and preaches to, whether it be in a Sunday morning sermon or a small group lesson.

Another strength of Campbell's book is that his advice is not concrete or commanding whatsoever; Campbell is realistic and flexible. He understands that pastors only get 10-15 hours per week, at most, to spend on a sermon and that does not leave a lot of time for studying the grammar or vocabulary. He also understands that most people will not follow all of his advice and will, mostly, stick with what has worked for them in the past. This comes out most in chapter five when discussing parsing and memorizing verb paradigms. Campbell notes that the paradigm chart is big, but not infinite, and that it is possible to master. Even if you cannot master it, "most people can achieve a good knowledge of the paradigms" (50). Campbell is the perfect motivational speaker for people who have lost some of their Greek and desire to obtain it again. He provides the perfect amount of hope and flexibility for pastor and student alike while on their odyssey that is learning NT Greek.

The only drawback of this volume is the sections at the end of each chapter where Campbell includes some of the threads from his blog to illustrate how others are putting the information he posted to use. In the end, this seems to be more friendly banter than useful communal discussion, which was Campbell's reasoning behind including them. This is a small issue, but the space used for

these sections could have either saved Zondervan money through their omission or been put to better use by Campbell.

This volume is a must-have for any pastor and/or former student who wants to keep his Greek and not have wasted three years of his life and energy in college. Campbell's advice is direct and encouraging, and I have no doubt that this volume will be put to great use by many pastors and possibly improve many churches as a direct result of better, biblically sound, preaching.

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William D. MOUNCE. *Biblical Greek: A Compact Guide*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011. 208 pp. $15.99.

In the vast array of resources for Greek students, second year and beyond, one would think that another guide to help keep your Greek fresh would be one too many. Already questions like "What's the best introductory grammar?" or "What resource tool should I pick?" are met with the mention of ten to fifteen books with different pros and cons for each of them. This volume sets itself apart from all other Greek study tools by both its depth and the breadth of material it covers.

The volume is split into nine sections. First is a basics section that details foundational issues such as the alphabet, accents, and Greek numbers. The second section goes through the different parts of speech from the article to adjectives and pronouns. The third and fourth sections begin the more intricate parts of the grammar by delving into the case system of Greek nouns and then into the verbal system, including mood, tense, and voice. The fifth and sixth sections are what separate this Greek guide from any other by its discussion of syntax (i.e., word order, Greek questions, conditional sentences, and direct and indirect discourse) and sentence structure (i.e., Greek constructions, such as anacolouthon and asyndeton, and Greek idioms). Mounce's work ends with two sections of paradigms, one concentrating on noun morphology and the other on verbal morphology, for the Greek student to easily reference, and it finishes with a helpful, but short, lexicon that includes all Greek words that occur 10 times or more in the NT.

While this guide is very short and its breadth of material is very wide, whenever an issue arises that needs more room for discussion than is available, Mounce will note his advanced grammar with a page number for the student to consult for more discussion on important issues that they may want to research more (discussion of the Granville Sharp rule, 15). Another important point to note is the shorter, more compact explanations of the uses of the Genitive and Dative cases; rather than noting 20-25 uses for each, as is his normal procedure, he details the

most important uses, nine Genitive and three Dative, that Greek students *must* know for studies beyond the first year. In Mounce's discussion of participles, he emphasizes the relative time of participles and how that might affect their translation. This is a point that can be terribly difficult for first year students who have English as their first language to wrap their heads around, but Mounce does a fantastic job of noting the issue, emphasizing its importance, and indicating its consequences for translation.

The only issue that I have with this volume is that Mounce has not included any reference to current research on issues such as Bernard Taylor's understanding of the middle voice, nor does he even mention the issue of verbal aspect in the Greek verbal system. While these two points are not accepted by much of the scholarly community, they have questioned the traditional understanding of these subjects enough to warrant their mention in any discussion of NT Greek.

This volume has many significant positives, a few drawbacks, but should be considered one of the top study tools for any student of NT Greek. The price might detract some from purchasing the study guide, especially when there are cheaper options available, but this volume sets itself apart from all the rest and is worth the expense. While this is a great tool, it should not be taken as a replacement for anything else, like introductory or advanced grammars but merely as an important addition to the library of any Greek student.

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Stanley E. PORTER, Jeffrey T. REED, and Matthew Brook O'DONNELL. *Fundamentals of New Testament Greek.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010. 466 pp. $39.99; and Stanley E. PORTER and Jeffrey T. REED. *Fundamentals of New Testament Greek: Workbook.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010. 260 pp. $20.00.

Porter is the President and Dean of Theology for McMaster Divinity College. He has taught in several universities in the UK, the USA, and Canada. He teaches courses on the NT, Hermeneutics, and the Greek language. Porter is a prolific author who has authored books which cover the topics of Greek language, NT, Hermeneutics, Historical Jesus, Pauline studies, and the *Gospel of Judas.* Most of his authored works have been reviewed widely in scholarly journals. He has written many articles which have been published by both peer-reviewed journals and popular magazines. He has also written a number of chapters for edited works as well as encyclopedia articles.

Reed has taught Greek language at several universities. He has coauthored *Discourse Analysis and the New Testament: Approaches and Results* (Sheffield

Academic, 1999) and written *Discourse Analysis of Philippians: Method and Rhetoric in the Debate over Literary Integrity* (Sheffield Academic, 1997).

O'Donnell is adjunct professor of NT at McMaster Divinity College. He has written *Corpus Linguistics and the Greek of the New Testament* (Sheffield Phoenix, 2005). He has also edited several volumes of *Journal of Greco-Roman Christianity and Judaism* (Sheffield Phoenix, 2004–2010). O'Donnell is also involved in the OpenText.org project.

This grammar and workbook are designed to be the first-year component text for a Greek language course, for which the intermediate level grammar is forthcoming. This grammar interlaces elements of current discussion in linguistics as well as integrates a model for Greek verbal aspect developed by Porter. This grammar also points out discourse function periodically. This grammar combines several elements that set it apart from other grammars. It uses a larger vocabulary than most first-year grammars as well as it uses real Greek texts for translation. These elements combined serve to better introduce the student to the real Greek language as opposed to an artificially constructed Greek language.

This grammar is laid out with 30 chapters, which works nicely with a standard academic year. The grammar tends to alternate between noun and verb throughout the 30 chapters so that the student will be rapidly introduced to both elements and thus the sentence. The grammar contains a parsing guide at the beginning as well as extensive paradigms and indices in the back to provide references for students. The vocabulary uses over 950 words, compared to around 360 words in many grammars. Throughout the chapters, new words are introduced in paradigm format where each piece of the word is presented in broken form whether that piece ends up in the actual form occurring in the text or not. This allows the student to be aware of how the actual form is derived from the pieces, and keep track of what changed or fell out as the word was declined or conjugated. This is most helpful to the student where the student can view the same verb in every tense-form in all of its possible inflected forms. This grammar contains numerous footnotes which indicate connection with current linguistics and enhance the use of this volume as a reference grammar. The workbook is also laid out according to the 30 chapters of the grammar, but includes a review after every five chapters which can be used to assess the comprehension of the preceding five chapters. This could be used either as a component of a sectional test, or as a self-test by the student. The student will be able to integrate the material covered in the chapters by appropriating the workbook chapter corresponding to the same chapter in the grammar.

Several things help this grammar stand out from the others. First is the inclusion of the Future Perfect in the section on periphrastic constructions (350). Usually this is not treated in introductory grammars and often not by intermediate grammars either. Secondly, the use by some verbs of only middle or passive forms is clarified. Deponency is defined as middle Greek verbs which we only

translate as active in English (125). This is an improvement over the idea which a student finds in many grammars that deponents are middle in form with an active meaning. Thirdly, the pronunciation guide is careful to note historical pronunciations along with the changes through time (3, 9). This grammar also compares Erasmian pronunciation with Neo-Hellenic pronunciation (4). The authors do not appear to make a decision regarding the actual pronunciation during the time of the writing of the NT.

Several things within the grammar leave the student with questions. In the section on principal parts, the verbs οἶδα and ὁράω are listed separately and both are given forms of the obsolete εἴδω in their principal parts (437). The Aorist for εἴδω is given under ὁράω, and the Perfect and Future are given under οἶδα. Perhaps some explanation for this could be given. Another item that is troubling is that the sections on participles are scattered far apart within the text (chapters 10, 17, 22, and 27). This is due to the layout which covers the verbs in a particular order. The active voices of all the forms other than Perfect and Pluperfect are treated together, then the middle voices of the same, and then the passive voice of the Aorist and Future. The Perfect and Pluperfect are treated together near the end of the grammar. This division separates the participles into four sections, which might not permit students to spend enough consolidated time on participles.

Although hefty for the first year, this grammar will provide the first-year Greek student with a resource that combines current thought with a good learning method. This grammar and workbook challenges the student to look beyond the memorization of paradigms and vocabulary by incorporating linguistics and interpretation along with providing the student with real Greek text from the start. This grammar and workbook may be used by first-year Greek programs at both the undergraduate and graduate level. This grammar has much to contribute to the construction of Greek grammars and is useful to Greek professors whether or not they choose to adopt the particular view it contains on Greek verbal aspect.

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James D.G. DUNN. *Did the First Christians Worship Jesus? The New Testament Evidence*. John Knox, 2010. 176 pp. $20.00.

Historically, many within the Stone-Campbell Restoration Movement have been uneasy with trinitarian formulations precisely because such are not expressed clearly within the pages of the Bible. For this reason, Dunn's new title ought to be of particular interest to those for whom "no book but the Bible" remains axiomatic. In this volume, Dunn dialogues with Richard Bauckham and Larry Hurtado, examining evidence Dunn feels receives scant attention in their

work, despite his substantial agreement with them. Dunn argues that the evidence suggests the answer to the titular question should be a qualified yet emphatic "no."

Chapter one examines the "language of worship," the various terms employed as well as doxology and benediction formulae. He concludes that in no case is the language used with reference to Jesus in such a manner as to express his divinity. God is worshiped and praised for the Christ event, but these terms are not offered to Christ himself. A second chapter covers the "practice of worship," including prayer, hymns, and sacred spaces, times, and meals. Dunn concludes that although Jesus figures centrally in the liturgical practices of early Christians, Jesus does not appear as the object of worship. Rather, Jesus figures as the one through whom worship is offered and as the one who makes worship of God possible.

Chapter three looks at the role heavenly mediators and divine agents played in second temple monotheism. Dunn shows that the title "god" was in not a few cases applied to human and intermediary figures. He contends that the "angel of Yahweh" displays a concern to describe God's immanence without undermining God's transcendence, based on certain passages that speak of Yahweh and the angel of Yahweh interchangeably, but his conclusion here suffers from inattention to source criticism. He discusses the Wisdom and Logos traditions, rightly contending that the personified Wisdom motif was metaphorical, and that the preexistence of the Logos was understood to be ideal, not ontic. Finally, Dunn examines the exalted human traditions. Dunn concludes that despite the parallels, there was no precedent for the worship of a human or angelic figure in these texts, but here he essentially ignores the relevance of the Similitudes of Enoch, which describe the eschatological "Son of Man" as one who will be worshiped in the last days.

Among other things in the fourth chapter, Dunn discusses the significance of the application of the term "*kyrios*" to Jesus—the application of Yahweh (=LXX *kyrios*) passages to Jesus need mean nothing more than that Jesus is Yahweh's agent. His discussion of the relevance of 1 Cor 15:24-28 is much needed in light of its notable absence from the work of Bauckham and Hurtado. His treatment of the Christ hymn in Philippians 2 and its antecedent in Isaiah 45 is useful, but Dunn does not mention Cyrus or the role he plays in Isaiah 45, namely as one who is "surnamed" by Yahweh and, significantly, worshiped by the nations as Yahweh's "messiah." Dunn argues that the ascription of the title *theos* to Jesus does not constitute a claim to deity. He concludes that the earliest text to identify Jesus as the object of worship is the Apocalypse of John, but here again Dunn does not discuss the relevance of the Similitudes of Enoch. Dunn's conclusion that the answer to the titular question should be given in the negative makes little sense of his early statement that the data fit within a "Trinitarian framework" (6), a cryptic remark upon which he does not elaborate.

I highly recommend this volume. It is concise and, with very few exceptions, its language is accessible to the nonspecialist. It will be useful to scholars, providing significant criticisms of the work of Bauckham and Hurtado. Pastors and churches will find it an invaluable resource as they construct their liturgies.

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James R. EDWARDS. *The Hebrew Gospel and the Development of the Synoptic Tradition*. Eerdmans, 2009. 360 pp. $36.00.

Edwards is the Bruner-Welch Professor of Theology at Whitworth University and an ordained minister of the PCUSA. He is a specialist in both OT and NT and teaches both Hebrew and Greek. He has authored several commentaries on various NT books along with monographs on the Gospels and apologetics. His concentration appears to be on Mark, Luke-Acts, Romans and Hebrews. His commentaries and his other volumes have been reviewed by peers in several scholarly journals. He has also written articles for both academic and popular periodicals on a wide variety of topics including the Gospels, the use of Greek language, and apologetics. He is also a contributing editor for *Christianity Today*. His current volume culminates about ten years of research and writing.

This volume presents an older idea concerning the formation of the Synoptic Gospels, while connecting the data in a new way. The current volume resurrects an older idea concerning the formation of the Synoptic Gospels, which had been laid aside in favor of theories that relied either on Markan priority and "Q," or Markan posterity. This older theory held that Matthew was the first Gospel and written originally in Hebrew and not Greek. This theory was discounted by most NT scholars in the earlier days of Gospel criticism partly due to a preference for Greek originals and partly due to the lack of an extant copy of the Hebrew Gospel. The idea of a Hebrew Gospel received much criticism by later NT scholars because the canonical Greek Matthew was shown to be a composition originally in Greek and not to be a Greek translation of an earlier Hebrew document. Combine these factors with anti-Semitism in Germany in the 1800s and 1900s, and one can appreciate why Hebrew Gospel theories did not receive much scholarly attention. Edwards reexamines the data and connects the data differently to illustrate how the Hebrew Gospel is a source for Luke and not Matthew.

This volume is laid out in eight chapters and includes an introduction, an epilogue, and three appendices. Edwards begins by citing and discussing various references to the Hebrew Gospel in the first nine centuries. Full text citations for these references are found in the first appendix (263-291). Next, he treats actual quotations from the Hebrew Gospel. The full text of these citations is found in the footnotes of the second chapter (44-96). Then he defines the Hebrew Gospel

in the third chapter. In the fourth chapter, Edwards directs the reader to the Gospel of Luke, where he treats the Semitisms in that gospel. The full text of these citations is found in the second and third appendices (292-335). He decides that Luke's source must be a Hebrew source and not an Aramaic source in the fifth chapter. Edwards's list of nine classifications of Hebraisms in Luke's gospel will convince students of the Hebrew language that Luke's source is not Aramaic (185). The last three chapters explain why this theory has been neglected by most NT scholars, discuss sources for "double tradition" material, and relate the Hebrew Gospel to the canonical Matthew.

Edwards proposes a view that gives credence to the Patristic witness, while also giving the modern critical scholars a fair treatment. This view allows the Early Church Fathers to be taken at face value stating that Matthew came first, while illustrating how Mark is the most prior Greek document, based on modern studies. Canonical Greek Matthew came later, and its date of production is not treated by the Early Church Fathers by and large. This volume illustrates the benefit of having a NT scholar who is adept in both Hebrew and Greek.

The strength of this volume lies in the collation of quotations from and about the Hebrew Gospel and relating those to the Hebraisms of Luke. This volume "bids adieu" to "Q" (240-242), but the typical scholar will be unconvinced of the need to do this. Using the diagram provided in this volume, one might conclude that the "double tradition" is equivalent to "Q" (262), while the Hebrew Gospel might also be labeled "L." The appendices in this volume enable the student quick access to the data. While it would be nice to have another appendix of the actual citations from the Hebrew Gospel, these are still accessible in the footnotes of the second chapter. Interestingly, this volume does not treat Shem Tov's Matthew, which is in Hebrew, or other Hebrew versions of Matthew. This volume is likely to spark discussion or even controversy regarding the Synoptic Gospels. No student of the formation of the Gospels should be without this up-to-date treatment of the Hebrew Gospel as a source for special Luke.

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Paul N. ANDERSON, Felix JUST, and Tom THATCHER, eds. *John, Jesus, and History, Volume 2: Aspects of Historicity in the Fourth Gospel.* Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009. 455 pp. $49.95.

This impressive compilation of essays is phase two of the John, Jesus, and History Project, launched in 2002 by group members of the Society of Biblical Literature. The first volume, subtitled *Critical Appraisals of Critical Views*, consisted of methodological papers from the Group's meetings in 2002–2004. The

current volume, focused on *Aspects of Historicity in the Fourth Gospel*, features papers from the 2005–2007 meetings. (A third volume is scheduled based on the 2008–2010 meetings.) The project was founded to offer a platform for reconsidering the historical character of the Johannine tradition and its role in quests for the historical Jesus. The greatest strength of both the project and this volume is the refusal to accept *a priori* either the Fourth Gospel's once assumed "eyewitness" origins or its more lately disparaged "unhistorical" character. Rather, the contributors take a variety of positions on the historical value of the Fourth Gospel, with the result that some aspects of the Gospel are newly opened to Jesus questers, while others remain predictably closed.

The organization of the title parallels the structure of the yearly meetings. The volume is divided into three main parts focusing on John 1–4 (2005), 5–12 (2006), and 13–21 (2007). Each part begins and ends with a helpful introduction and response that summarizes and comments on the major points of the seven to eight intervening essays. Including the editors, the volume boasts over twenty-five contributors, including such leading scholars as Richard Bauckham, James H. Charlesworth, R. Alan Culpepper, Craig A. Evans, Craig S. Keener, Craig R. Koester, Gail R. O'Day, and Ben Witherington III, among others.

Since the essays are too numerous to summarize adequately, I will mention two of those that stand out, although many excellent studies will necessarily go unmentioned. James McGath presents a provocative study on the temple-clearing episode and its associated saying (John 2:13-22). Generally, the Johannine placement of this event at the beginning of Jesus' ministry is considered secondary and theologically motivated, but McGath points out that Mark's placement of all Jerusalem events in one week at the end of Jesus' life is equally suspect. Furthermore, the extra detail in John that the temple has been under construction for 46 years would place the event in 27/28 CE, precisely when Jesus' public work is thought to have begun. Combined with the independent nature of the Johannine saying, McGath concludes that this Johannine tradition retains at least some historical elements, and that what we have are two equally plausible versions of an event in Jesus' life.

On the other side of the spectrum, Peter Judge concludes that although the Johannine healing of the royal official's son (John 4:46b-54) is probably the same event as the Synoptic healing of the centurion's boy (Matt 8:5-13 // Luke 7:1-10), John's account adds little of historical value. In fact, it may well be influenced by the Synoptic redaction of Q. Nonetheless, Judge argues that what John presents is a *perceptively* accurate interpretation of Jesus, regardless of *factual* accuracy. John presents the real and lasting meaning of the story, which shifts from an issue of race to an issue of faith.

The consensus of this admirable compilation is that the Fourth Gospel is clearly both historical and theological. Or, to borrow an argument from the first volume, theological narration is *how* the Fourth Evangelist does history.

Although the work may be a little dense for beginning students unfamiliar with the territory, it is an excellent resource for educators or experienced readers seeking extra fodder to feed their unending appetites for the Jesus quest.

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Michael F. BIRD and Preston M. SPRINKLE, eds. *The Faith of Jesus Christ: Exegetical, Biblical, and Theological Studies.* Milton Keynes, UK and Peabody, MA: Paternoster/Hendrickson, 2009. 350 pp. $19.95.

James D.G. Dunn, a proponent of the "objective genitive" in this debate, offers a balanced "Foreword" to the volume as a whole. Dunn remains in the "objective genitive" camp while applauding the "new insights and a fresh grasp of the profundity and richness of the gospel" afforded by this debate. Bird and Sprinkle's purpose for these collected essays is to show how the "faith in Christ" (objective genitive) or the "faithfulness of Christ" (subjective genitive) is related to the wider NT and "what does it matter theologically?" Bird gives an overview of the debate and shows how the volume is organized into five sections.

Section I gives a background to the debate with a brief review by Debbie Hunn showing how it has raged over lexical word studies, grammatical and syntactical arguments, and theological models. Yet Hunn protests that studies on grammar and language have failed to bring a turning point to the debate. She questions whether or not the debate should separate the two sides as much as it does. Hunn asks the right questions and sets the stage for further essays.

In the next essay Stanley E. Porter and Andrew W. Pitts argue from lexical, semantic, and syntactic considerations and conclude: "The use of πίστις as a head term with a prepositional specifier, without an intervening article and followed by an element in the genitive, provides further evidence that, at least from a linguistic standpoint, when Paul used the phrase πιστις χριστού he was indicating that Christ was the proper object of faith" (53). This linguistic analysis must be refuted if one wishes to argue for the "subjective genitive."

Section II is perhaps the most exciting of the essays. The editors have placed, back to back, four scholars evenly divided on the debate dealing with specific Pauline texts in contention. Douglas A. Campbell does his usual effective arguments for the "subjective genitive," and I have yet to find anyone able to adequately answer his logic, approach, and conclusions. Yet, many try. R. Barry Matlock argues for the "objective genitive" in Phil 3:9; Rom 3:22; Gal 3:22, and 2:16. His strongest argument is the lack of a "subjective genitive" reading found in the early Greek Fathers of the church. However, Paul Foster's next essay supports Campbell's strong arguments for the "subjective genitive" by concentrating on Philippians and Ephesians. Foster is more cautious with his conclusions

than Campbell, but he still offers thoughts and arguments that make better sense of the texts of Phil 3:9 and Eph 3:12 among others as "subjective genitives." Richard H. Bell tackles these same texts and advocates the "objective genitive" position. He is strongly in the traditional Protestant camp of "faith alone" saving a person. He relies upon the "objective genitive" position of the great John Chrysostom for Phil 3:7-9. Bell's arguments seem weak and unsubstantiated in spite of the early Greek Fathers' views.

Section III deals with Pauline exegesis, hermeneutics, and theology with fresh approaches by various scholars. Mark A. Seifrid is the very opposite of Campbell's work. Seifrid's objections to the "subjective genitive" is easily answered by referring back to Campbell's essay. Seifrid takes the Protestant view that our "faith" is the "work of another," "given to us in the apostolic proclamation of the gospel" (146). Francis Watson in the next essay is Matlock on steroids! He argues strongly against the "subjective genitive" position that Hab 2:4b is used by Paul messianically. Concerning this text in Romans (Rom 1:17) Watson avers "the entire exegetical debate about the faith-of-Christ formulations is encapsulated in this question" (160). Needless to say, I disagree with his conclusions. See my article: "The Messianic Use of Habakkuk 2:41 in Romans," in *SCJ* 1.2 (Fall 1998). Preston M. Sprinkle, one of the editors of this volume, presses for a "third view"—a "Christic-faith." This was advocated early in the debate but Sprinkle tries to push it front and center for the debate, since both "subjective" and "objective" genitive advocates give it scarce attention. I think he only muddies the waters. Thus far, this section is tilted to the "objective genitive" reading, but Ardel B. Caneday's essay on Galatians brings the argument more in favor of the "subjective genitive" reading. By comparing Torah with Christ in Galatians Caneday concludes: "Christ's faithfulness ends Torah's curse incurred by Israel's unfaithfulness and brings the blessing of Abraham—namely, life, the Spirit, and justification" (203). His essay is a strong offset to the three previous essays.

Section IV considers the witness of the wider NT. Peter G. Bolt surveys the Gospels concentrating on Mark 11:22, 9:23, and Matt 27:43. Jesus as Servant of the Lord and the Christology of the Gospels and Acts suggest a picture of the faithfulness of Jesus Christ. Hence, he supports the "subjective genitive" reading of the NT. Willis H. Salier presents a brilliant essay on "the obedient Son: The 'Faithfulness' of Christ in the Fourth Gospel." His argument is that "the Fourth Gospel presents a classic dynamic of faith being engendered in response to the faithful work of the Son" (235). This thought coheres with Paul's statement in Rom 3:22 that God's righteousness is made manifest through Christ's faithfulness for all who believe. Salier's essay is a welcome addition to the "subjective genitive" arguments. Bruce A. Lowe uses rhetorical criticism in his discussion of James 2:1. He carefully analyzes the context of the *pistis Christou* phrase in James 2:1. He concludes that it "should be seen as a subjective genitive—albeit with primary reference to *trust* in God" (256). With this I agree! David A. Desilva sur-

veys the use of *pistis* in Revelation and concludes that it "never uses the language of πίστις or πιστεύω to speak about believing in Jesus or even trusting in Jesus" (273). Yet, curiously he advocates an "objective genitive" reading of Rev 2:13 and 14:12 in the sense of loyalty toward Christ. I would advocate both references to be "subjective genitives."

The final *Section V* gives some historical and theological reflections. Mark W. Elliott gives an interesting historical review of the basic two interpretations through the Patristic period, Medieval developments, and to modern theology. He claims that "history" is on the side of the "objective genitive." Benjamin Myters's essay on Karl Barth and his concept of the "faith of Jesus" supports a nuanced version of the "subjective genitive" understanding. It stems from the concept of "God's faithfulness" and from this Barth considered that the divine act of faithfulness is identified with the human act of Jesus' own faithfulness. In total obedience, Jesus descends into the "deepest darkness of human ambiguity." This obedient act is "*the* faithfulness," the perfect human correspondence to "the will of the faithful God" (294). Myters reveals how Barth differs from other "subjective genitive" advocates such as Williams, Campbell, and Wright. Rather Barth is close to Alain Badiou's philosophical reading of Paul—"an ontological participation" in Christ.

The volume concludes with a full bibliography related to the debate. Indexes to the Bible and Ancient Writings and modern authors follows.

This was a great read for someone who has an interest in the subject, but it is targeted primarily to scholars and seminary students. One will be challenged by the detailed arguments for both sides. The debate rages on!

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William BAKER. *1 Corinthians*. Ralph P. MARTIN with Carl N. TONEY. *2 Corinthians*. Cornerstone Biblical Commentary. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 2009. 381 pp. $29.99.

Baker writes a very serviceable commentary on 1 Corinthians for those using the New Living Translation (2nd ed.). Very good introductory information sets the stage for the commentary proper. The material is up-to-date, well informed by some of the best evangelical commentaries (Gordon Fee, 1987; Anthony Thieselton, 2000; Alan Johnson, 2004), and masterfully integrated. Other major commentaries are represented throughout and the insights from more specific monographs are evident through discussion, citation, and bibliography. The layout of the commentary is structured with a segment of the 1 Corinthians text, followed by notes using transliterated Greek words, and then commentary on the meaning of the passage in contextual exegetical style. Baker's textual commentary

is insightful, readable, and helpful in making application from the first-century context to proper guidance within the contemporary church. The text is unencumbered by footnotes and overly technical issues.

Baker prepares his readers by summarizing key themes in the introductory material. His attention to the theme of the "Holy Spirit" is commendable. Specifically for 1 Corinthians, one might have expected such themes as "The Cross" or "Worship in the Early Church" to have some prominence. Happily, however, Baker's keen and evenly distributed attention to the entire text throughout the commentary leaves very little, if any, thematic gaps.

Baker outlines his commentary in traditional fashion: the issues within the letter are Paul's responses to (1) oral reports brought to him or (2) a presumed list of questions from written Corinthian correspondence. Paul counters divisions in the community (1 Cor 1–4) and the Corinthians' lack of wisdom in dealing with sinful behavior in the community (1 Cor 5–6). Following these issues of holiness, Paul makes reply to social and religious issues such as: marriage; food offered to idols, and worship behaviors within the community. While a short review can in no way account for the many details of a commentary, let me point to a few areas of excellence exhibited by Baker. First, attention to the role of women in the Corinthian community is done evenhandedly. There is an attempt to respect the larger flow of the argument from chapters 7 through 14: marriage (and singleness); praying and prophesying; and conduct within the worshiping community. Baker is careful to reflect on the situational and cultural circumstances and to extend lessons and cautions to contemporary church settings. Second, Baker is attentive to the role of the Spirit in the community setting and helpfully evaluates the fluidity and flexibility of God's leading believers in purposeful and ordered worship patterns. Finally, I note the fine discussion and defense of the resurrection of bodies of believers. Baker gives good background material to this issue and effectively relates resurrection power to the example of Jesus going before us to find vindication and acceptance before God. The place of the believer is assured by the now known vindication of Jesus over every power antithetical to God.

While one might quibble on a point here and there, this commentary by Baker proves to be very useful, thought-provoking, pastoral, and affordable for the minister's library. It will serve quite well its evangelical and conservative audiences. It provides insight, energy, and discernment for what the gospel can become in God's present future among faithful churches of the twenty-first century.

This volume also presents a commentary on 2 Corinthians by Ralph P. Martin with Carl N. Toney. Martin and Toney are meticulous in the examination of background issues and here, after careful consideration, choose to consider 2 Corinthians as the combination of two letters—with a division occurring between 2 Corinthians 1–9 and 10–13. Toney's expertise and interest in Graeco-Roman rhetoric is apparent in the introductory materials as well as throughout

the commentary proper (a rhetorical outline reflecting the possibility of integrity of the whole letter is included on 277). The style and format of the 2 Corinthians commentary follows that of the 1 Corinthians work, giving the entire volume, as a whole, a seamless feel.

The main text is structured in the traditional way: Paul's apostolic ministry (1–7); the collection for the saints in Jerusalem (8–9); and Paul's defense of himself as an apostle (10–13). The notes are quite insightful, but very short. The commentary section feels quite abbreviated and a bit rushed. It is evident that the length allowed for analysis is a bit restrained. Indeed, the volume allocates only 25% of the total space to 2 Corinthians, despite 1 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians being relatively equal in size. To take an example: Paul's use of the "fool's speech" in chapters 10–13 is now a standard paradigm for interpretation. Yet, while the notes are richly textured with this discussion, the "take-away" commentary section neither describes nor comments on this device and its strategy. There is much excellent material overall, but plenty of room for expansion on particular points.

The preacher's library and the inquiring layperson need a strong, insightful, readable, and not overly complex commentary on the Corinthian Correspondence. This volume by William Baker, Ralph Martin, and Carl Toney provides effectively informed evangelical and conservative scholarship that will benefit the churches. Highly recommended.

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Peter T. O'BRIEN. *The Letter to the Hebrews.* Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010. 630 pp. $50.00.

O'Brien is senior research fellow in NT at Moore Theological Seminary in Sydney, Australia. While most of his research has focused on Paul's letters (his NIGTC commentary on Philippians), he recently shifted his focus to Hebrews (his 2009 article in *BBR* on cosmology and eschatology in Hebrews and his forthcoming book on the theology of Hebrews). This volume on Hebrews is his second commentary in the Pillar New Testament Commentary series; he also authored the Ephesians volume in 1999.

In the introductory section, O'Brien provides a brief history of the authorship debate in the east and the west through the Council of Trent and then discusses three potential authors in some detail (Paul, Barnabas, and Apollos), concluding that the identity of the author is unknown. Against the trend of many Hebrews scholars who reject the idea that the audience of the letter is tempted to return to Judaism (Koester, Johnson, Thompson), O'Brien, quoting D.A. Carson and Douglas Moo, holds the traditional view that the audience is "in danger of

return to a 'reliance on the cultic structures of the old covenant.' This would involve a return to Judaism. . ." (13). He argues that Rome is the most plausible destination for the work, but acknowledges that this is uncertain at best. Though he believes a date between AD 60 and 90 cannot be ruled out, he argues that much of the evidence (the implication of 10:2 that sacrifices were still being offered; the lack of signs of "an elaborate ecclesiastical structure" [19] or of a fading eschatology) supports a date prior to AD 70. After discussing thematic, rhetorical, and literary approaches to the structure of Hebrews, O'Brien follows (with minor variations) George Guthrie's structure which draws upon discourse analysis. For O'Brien, the primary influences on Hebrews were "elevated language and rhetoric from Greco-Roman culture, . . . the interpretation of the Old Testament in Greek, the traditions of Hellenistic Judaism (though not Philonic or Platonic), and apocalyptic Judaism" (40).

O'Brien handles the text on both unit-by-unit and verse-by-verse levels. After providing an English translation of the passage, he offers roughly one to two pages of comments on the unit or subunits, then moves to a verse-by-verse commentary; the latter comprises the bulk of the commentary. This format is particularly helpful for finding information on a difficult phrase or verse, but it makes it difficult to follow the larger argument of Hebrews as the focus is on the micro rather than the macro. O'Brien's analysis is detailed, yet accessible. He aims neither too high nor too low for his target audience. For example, all Greek terms are transliterated, and scholarly jargon is usually relegated to the footnotes. Most text-critical observations are also contained within the footnotes. He provides comprehensive indices of scriptures, authors, and subjects.

Editor D.A. Carson explains that the series is "designed for serious pastors and teachers of the Bible" and "is a blend of rigorous exegesis and exposition, with an eye alert both to biblical theology and the contemporary relevance of the Bible, without confusing the commentary and the sermon" (xi). This explanation left me expecting O'Brien to intimate—even if only on a small scale—ways that Hebrews speaks to Christians today. For example, how does a twenty-first century pastor handle the chilling warning sections of Hebrews? O'Brien does not answer this type of question. Thus, pastors and Bible teachers will find detailed and solid exegesis, but if they are looking for "the contemporary relevance of the Bible," they might be better suited with volumes from the Interpretation series or the newly established Paideia series. In fact, O'Brien's introduction does not even include a section on the theology of Hebrews because of "reasons of space" (xiv). Though he promises an upcoming volume on the theology of Hebrews, this omission is disappointing nonetheless.

In the end, O'Brien's volume is a fine one: it is detailed, accessible, and interacts with the most up-to-date research on Hebrews. While it should not replace any of the standard Hebrews commentaries (Attridge and Koester), it does take those important volumes, synthesize them, and present them in a format that is

both accessible and valuable for today's pastors and Bible teachers. Thus, even though it lacks much original contribution, it is recommended, nevertheless, for its synthesis and accessibility.

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