Book Reviews

Katharine GERBNER. *Christian Slavery: Conversion and Race in the Protestant Atlantic World.* Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018. 296 pp. $39.95.

Historian of religion, Gerbner draws on rich collections of German, Dutch, Dutch Creole, and English primary sources (diaries, letters, church records, legal documents, government records, and a few rare letters written by enslaved and free Afro-Caribbean converts) to construct a well-textured transatlantic and interdenominational history with important insights about the interconnections of Christian missions, race, and slavery, poignantly summarized at the end of her book: "While planter hostility to slave conversion fueled abolitionist fire in Europe, the legacy of the early Protestant missions lay in the ideology of Christian slavery as well as antislavery thought. The irony is dark and yet unambiguous: the most self-sacrificing, faithful, and zealous missionaries in the Atlantic world formulated and theorized a powerful and lasting religious ideology for a brutal system of plantation labor" (196).

"Protestant Supremacy" and "Christian Slavery" constitute central concepts Gerbner uses to articulate her theses. Most Protestant slave owners in the seventeenth-century transatlantic area so thoroughly associated Protestantism with freedom that they rejected the idea that enslaved people should be converted. Consequently, Protestant slave owners created an exclusivist Christianity based on ethnicity which constructed "Negro" and "Christian" as mutually exclusive identities. By the time Protestant missionaries attempted to convert enslaved people in the late seventeenth century, they encountered sharp anticonversionist resistance from slave owners. Motives for withholding Christianity from slaves were complicated: planters feared losing their property, their profit, and their safety, and these fears contributed to the anticonversionist sentiment undergirding the racially and religiously charged ideology of Protestant Supremacy.

In response to anticonversionism, Protestant missionaries promoted "Christian Slavery," claiming that Christianity and slavery were compatible: they argued that Christian slaves were more docile and harder working than "heathen" slaves. Quaker George Fox was among the first Christian Slavery advocates to reject anticonversionist sentiment among planters and colonists, but many Anglican and Moravian missionaries contributed to the construction of a Christian Slavery that was nearly a century old by the time George Whitefield advocated Christian Slavery in the 1740s. Conflicts between missionaries and anticonversionist planters in the seventeenth and early eighteenth century comprised, therefore, a clash between Protestant Supremacy and Christian Slavery.

Several of Gerbner's insights are worth highlighting. Historians have paid too little attention to the anticonversion sentiment that permeated seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Protestantism in North America and the Caribbean. Gerbner shows anticonversionist ideology saturated Protestant slave societies, often making Christianity a symbol of freedom and power. Furthermore, Quaker, Anglican, and Moravian missionaries not only anticipated the antislavery movement—what historians typically emphasize—but also laid the groundwork for proslavery apologists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. That is, Christian Slavery advocates catalyzed legislation that not only made Protestantism and slavery compatible but also strengthened slavery by encouraging slave conversion and separating any connection between one's conversion and one's physical freedom. Some enslaved people were still attracted to Christianity

for numerous reasons: some missionaries taught them reading and writing, baptism could be a stepping stone to emancipation, and Christian community could be theologically and socially attractive. As a small number of Afro-Caribbeans converted, slave owners adapted by creating the concept of "whiteness" and using it to protect their social power. By the end of the seventeenth century, Gerbner shows how the term "white" started to replace "Christian" as an indicator of freedom and mastery. In other words, Protestant Supremacy eventually morphed into white supremacy, making the origins of white supremacy inextricably bound to Christianity: missions and slave conversion were integral to the creation of these new racial and religious categories. This excellent scholarly monograph will be useful to historians and graduate students focusing on race, religion, missions, and/or slavery in early American history.

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Douglas Carl ABRAMS. *Old-Time Religion Embracing Modernist Culture: American Fundamentalism between the Wars.* Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017. 258 pp. $90.00.

Certain popular notions linger in the public mind regardless of scholars' efforts to enlighten. Among the most resilient is the assumption that fundamentalists, humiliated in the wake of the Scopes' Trial, disengaged from popular culture and became more insular and insignificant. Douglas Carl Abrams proves the fallacy of this longstanding narrative by convincingly arguing that fundamentalists engaged with modernist culture continuously between world wars. Sometimes they resisted; sometimes they accommodated or even absorbed modernism in their efforts to defend a biblical, Christian worldview. Abrams utilizes many sermons, journal articles, pamphlets, and devotional materials from leading fundamentalist scholars and ministers in the 1920s and 1930s, many of which come from the Mack Library at Bob Jones University, where Abrams is a history professor. This volume is Abrams' second book on fundamentalists' complex relationship with modernism adding to his credentials as an expert in this field and to the impressive literature on fundamentalism by George Marsden, Edward Larson, and Matthew Sutton.

Abrams introduces his narrative with the educational journey of J. Oliver Buswell who struggled to earn his Ph.D. amidst liberal graduate school professors before becoming an icon of evangelical education and adopting the secular university model. After this case study of a fundamentalist selectively adopting some modernist principles, Abrams' approach is thematic. He provides seven chapters detailing fundamentalists' engagement with modernism on texts, time, psychology, philosophy, cooperation, pluralism, and higher education.

Interpretations of biblical text and arguments over the earth's age were obvious sources of division between fundamentalists and modernists, but Abrams' first two chapters demonstrate that fundamentalists took up these challenges and at times accepted modernist notions in their battles. They challenged higher criticism in a variety of ways with no monolithic view of Scripture. Some suggested biblical inaccuracies were left to test one's faith; others argued modernists' views were tainted by reading too many secular and scientific texts, themselves prone to corruption. Abrams' fundamentalists also insisted that heart and head were important in experiencing texts. Although reverence for Scripture promoted textual scholarship, Abrams emphasizes that fundamentalists were not strictly bound to biblical literalism. The popularity of premillennial prophetic speculation, allegoric readings, and the inclusion of commentary with inspired text in the Scofield Bible serve as examples. Similarly, fundamentalists were varied in their explanations of time. Some, like Harry Rimmer, suggested a gap between creations

described in Genesis 1 and 2 to account for fossil records, while more embraced William Riley's day-age interpretation. Abrams's explanation of their debate and the rise of creation science demonstrate that fundamentalists sought the authority of science while defending the reliability of the creation narrative.

Perhaps Abrams's most intriguing chapters detail fundamentalists' critique and use of psychology and philosophy. Freud posed an even greater threat to Christianity than Darwin for many of Abrams' subjects because of his moral relativism, emphasis on sexual self-expression, and denial of the need for human redemption. Behaviorists' insistence that mankind was determined by external stimuli was hardly more satisfying. Yet, as Abrams shows, fundamentalists stayed informed about the new social science railing against its nonbiblical concepts while using some of its principles to influence listeners. Much as William James mediated between science and faith, fundamentalists steered a middle course between modernism and traditional Christianity all the while learning much about psychology that would serve them well in the post-war period. Philosophical foes included Nietzsche, Darwin, and pragmatism, all of which fundamentalists engaged and challenged. Although fundamentalists had mixed views on the role of reason, Abrams explains that common sense realism provided the philosophical certainty lacking in other theories.

In his last three chapters, Abrams shows that engagement with modernism shaped fundamentalists' denominational associations and educational institutions. Insistence on doctrinal uniformity gave way to the need for unity on essentials in the creation of interdenominational associations. Opposition to communism even opened the door to some cooperation with Catholics though differences on Prohibition widened the gap. Similarly, relations with the Ku Klux Klan were complicated. Most opposed the Klan; Billy Sunday held integrated services, but politics led to compromise for others. Abrams holds that the most important fundamentalist adaptation of modernism was in higher education. Although secular university professors were the face of modernism, fundamentalists created Bible colleges, seminaries, and liberal arts universities, pillars of their respective denominations, who submitted to secular bodies for academic accreditation.

In a brief epilogue, Abrams projects into the last half of the twentieth century suggesting that the cultural engagement and accommodations of the first half-century paved the way for greater cultural and political significance for evangelicals. This conflation of labels illustrates one of the book's hurdles. It is not always clear who is a fundamentalist, evangelical, or just religious conservative. Some definition of those terms would be helpful. Readers lacking familiarity with the major figures of fundamentalism may wish Abrams provided more biographical background on his characters. His thematic approach also makes it difficult to track changes over time.

However, Abrams work is well written, thoroughly documented, and convincingly argued. Although one gets the sense that Abrams identifies with his fundamentalist subjects, his treatment of all characters, religious and secular, is balanced and professional. For scholars of fundamentalism and modernism, this volume is essential. For people of faith wondering how they should engage secular culture, it could be inspirational.

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Matthew S. STANFORD. *Grace for the Afflicted: A Clinical and Biblical Perspective on Mental Illness.* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2017. 256 pp. $18.00.

Stanford uses his training in psychology, psychiatry, and neuroscience and his experience teaching to approach the issue of mental health and the church in the current volume. He points out how the difficulty of accessing mental health care and the stigma surrounding it causes many people to seek help from members of the clergy before looking for a counselor or psy-

chologist. The author wrote this book in an effort "to equip clergy and faith communities to better minister to and serve those struggling with mental illness" (13). He also aims to help people facing mental illness and their families understand their situations and plan recovery.

The author describes the biblical approach to mental health. He addresses some of the common misunderstandings Christians have, especially regarding whether mental health issues result from demon possession. He explains how Christians' attitudes toward those who have mental health issues can either help them grow and contribute to the life of the Church or cause further pain and damage.

Not only does the author discuss attitudes about mental health, but he also describes the most common psychiatric illnesses, their possible causes, their treatments, and how they affect the loved ones of those people affected. He gives examples of Bible characters who may have suffered from these illnesses, using details and descriptions from the Bible to support his diagnoses. He goes a step further by talking about how God can use people's illnesses to help them grow in ways they would not otherwise and how the Church can facilitate that growth, learning from the experiences of those who are coping with mental health issues. He describes a solid approach to treatment and healthy Christian attitudes toward each illness.

One strength of this book lies in its detailed descriptions of the most common mental illnesses and their effects on families and individuals coping with them. The author writes in an interesting style that is understandable for the layperson or average clergy member. His focus on the spiritual impact of mental illness and how people living with mental illness can add life and empathy to the church strengthens the book, taking it beyond the simple self-help book. He handles common myths surrounding mental illness and its treatment in a frank, informed way that strives to protect those who suffer from it from potential mistreatment by Christians who do not understand where it comes from and how to handle it.

Although this volume presents several solid biblical examples of mental illness and its treatment, it sometimes reaches for examples and uses some that may be less believable. For example, the author's description of King Saul as bipolar does seem accurate and supportable by biblical evidence. However, he uses phrases from Ps 55:4-5, such as "my heart is in anguish within me" and "terrors of death," as evidence that King David suffered from panic attacks. While those verses' descriptions could be interpreted as panic attacks, they also could be understood as descriptive writing since Psalms is poetry.

This volume definitely accomplishes the author's goal of informing the church and providing a comprehensive resource for Christians to use in understanding mental illness and helping those who suffer from it. It would be invaluable for clergy in understanding people who come to them for help. It might also be handy for someone teaching a course in psychology in a Christian setting or in equipping church leaders or members to identify instances of mental illnesses, helping them know when to refer a person to a professional for help. Its author's knowledgeable treatment of the subject and his skill in weaving biblical principles into it make it a solid resource for Christian leaders.

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Anthony C. THISELTON. *Doubt, Faith, and Certainty.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017. 160 pp. $20.00.

The thesis in this book is that the terms *doubt*, *faith*, and *certainty* are multivalent. They do not have just a single meaning but are "polymorphous" concepts that vary "in meaning from context to context" (16). Doubt, for instance, is not always bad (vii, viii, 2, 3, 5). Thiselton says,

"Doubt and questioning may open the door to new insights and to a needed reappraisal of faith or belief" (viii). Citing John Suk in his book *Not Sure: A Pastor's Journey from Faith to Doubt* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 4, Thiselton compares doubt to wearing "a new set of glasses" (1). Doubt can improve our intellectual vision and enable us to see things more clearly.

The book falls into three parts. In Part I, the author devotes two chapters to discussing the various meanings of doubt. He tries to show how entertaining doubts in certain contexts can actually be beneficial. Part II contains two chapters on faith, in which Thiselton delineates between faith, trust, and belief. Beginning with Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth century, he surveys what several theologians have thought on how faith relates to reason. Like Kierkegaard and Tillich, the author does not see faith and doubt as being necessarily incompatible with each other (47). In the third and final part of the book, the author shows how the concept of certainty changes in different contexts (hilosophy, religion, law, science). He insists that there are different kinds of certainty, so that one must distinguish psychological certainty from epistemic or objective certainty (95). The Christian faith entails psychological certainty, which is subjective (96). At the end of the volume, the author provides a good bibliography and three indexes (names, subjects, and Scripture).

I am no philosopher, but I have to question Thiselton's handling of these three terms. In his discussion of doubt, for example, he fails to distinguish between the various objects of one's doubt. Doubting God and his word can never—from a biblical perspective—be a good thing. Doubting God is always bad. It can never lead to something healthy or positive. Doubting human motives and opinions, on the other hand, may be a good thing. So, whether doubt can lead to something good or bad has less to do with its definition, in my opinion, and more to do with its direction.

If doubt is directed at God, it can only be harmful and lead to sin. If doubt is directed at human beings, it may lead to something good or bad, depending on the situation. It would have been better, for instance, if Joshua had doubted the Gibeonites' veracity in Josh 9:9. But whenever our doubt is directed toward God, it is connected with sin, as in Rom 14:23, a passage that Thiselton never addresses: "For he who doubts is damned if he eats, for he eats not from faith. And whatsoever is not from faith is sin." According to Paul in this passage, doubt has as much to do with faith, as darkness has to do with light. Doubt can only lead to sin. Doubt causes hesitation that leads to a lack of action. Doubt, especially self-doubt, stems from a preoccupation with one's self.

Only faith, by contrast, is consonant with obedience. Only faith results from a complete denial of one's self and a complete reliance on God. In Paul's perspective, his competence comes from God (2 Cor 3:4-6). Of course, he still doubts his own abilities apart from God (Rom 7:18; 2 Cor 3:5; 12:5). But whenever he relies on God, his own weaknesses no longer matter. The same was true of David in his confrontation with Goliath (1 Sam 17:26,31-37). I did enjoy reading this volume. It may prove useful in courses on Christian apologetics and epistemology.

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Gerald HIESTAND and Todd WILSON, eds. *Beauty, Order, and Mystery: A Christian Vision of Human Sexuality.* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2017. 226 pp. $22.50.

The chapters in this edited volume result from the 2016 Theology Conference of the Center for Pastor Theologians (pastortheologians.com). The Center "equips pastors to be theologians for today's complex world." This text has several strengths. First, many of the chapters are written by working pastors whose ministerial experiences inform and shape their theological

thinking. As a working pastor myself, it is refreshing and encouraging to see pastoral voices taken seriously. It is also very significant that the authors of this volume, and indeed the Center itself, recognize how crucial it is for pastoral ministry to be theologically informed and for theology to be pastorally informed. Second, several of the contributors write from places of deep vulnerability and honesty about their own experiences of sexuality. The chapters by Wesley Hill ("How Should Gay Christians Love?") and Joel Willitts ("Bent Sexuality and the Pastor") are especially compelling in this regard. Third, the overall tone and thrust of the book is *positive*. *Beauty, Order, and Mystery* is not primarily about critiquing non-Christian sexual attitudes or practices. Neither is it focused on defending "traditional" Christian values. Instead, the varied contributions come together to set forth and affirm a positive theological account of the meaning and role of human sexuality within "God's wise order" (169) for the world.

To this end, the book's final chapter, "What Makes Sex Beautiful?" by Matt O'Reilly is especially important. In this chapter O'Reilly attends to the *inclusio* which frames the entire canon: Genesis 1–2 and Revelation 21–22. He observes that these opening and ending sections of the Bible "share three common features. Both are set in a garden. Both employ the imagery of a temple as the place of divine dwelling. Both tell the story of a marriage" (201). The question which proceeds from these observations and which guides the rest of O'Reilly's work is "How does the use of nuptial imagery both in the scriptural account of cosmological origins and in the vision of eschatological consummation inform our interpretation of everything else Scripture says with regard to marriage and sex?" (201-202). The conclusions O'Reilly reaches by the end of his chapter do indeed "begin constructing a framework for thinking about human sexuality in a way that magnifies the beauty of sex as God intended" (199). Another chapter from *Beauty, Order, and Mystery* which makes a signal theological contribution is "Put Pain Like That beyond My Power" by Gerald Hiestand. In this essay Hiestand takes as his problem the inequality of male power to female power (men are more physically forceful than women). His premise is that "the man's greater power vis-à-vis the woman accounts for" much of the abuse that women have suffered and do suffer at the hands of men (102). As Hiestand says, "The greater levels of male physical power and its frequent misuse against women raises a serious question of theodicy: Why would God create humanity in such a way that there exists an inherent inequality of physical power between men and women, if this inequality has indeed resulted in such pervasive abuse and marginalization of women at the hands of men?" (103). The rest of the chapter is spent tackling this question by developing a 'Christocentric theodicy' to account for the power inequality which is inherent in creation. In my view, Hiestand succeeds in this chapter in laying out a biblically accurate and beautiful explanation for why God has designed men and women as he has.

By far the weakest chapter in the volume is "The Transgender Test" by Denny Burk. Here the more traditional defensive evangelical tone is on display as Burk situates the Christian response to transgender issues as a "test of biblical authority" (91-94), a "test of biblical message" (94-98), and a test of "biblical relevance" (98-99). Burk is insistent that Scripture is sufficient for "navigating gender identity conflicts" but he *does nothing at all* in his chapter to demonstrate how the truth of the Scriptures can bring hope, help, and healing to people who are dealing with such conflicts. All Burk really accomplishes in his essay is managing a loudly spoken "no" to transgender identity issues without showing how the gospel says "yes" to transgender persons as persons and how the gospel can make a significant difference in their deeply personal struggle.

A later chapter in the book, "The Wounded It Heals" by Matthew Mason, is better in this regard, but its focus is so completely on the *eschaton* that it offers little practical help for the present. Another significant weakness of the volume is the absence of a chapter on singleness.

Why is it that evangelicals are so focused on marriage and the sex-act itself that they cannot manage, in a book such as this, an essay of theological and pastoral reflection on the fact that the Lord Jesus was single, what his singleness means for understanding human sexuality, and how single followers of Christ can and do live as fully human lives as married Christians do? These critiques aside, this volume is overall a well-written and thought-provoking contribution to the ever-growing theological conversation about human sexuality.

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Michael J. GORMAN, ed. *Scripture and Its Interpretation: A Global, Ecumenical Introduction to the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2017. 440 pp. $34.99.

Following a brief introduction, the volume breaks down into three major sections. The first section (chs 1–7) provides an introduction to the (Christian) Bible, providing chapters on literary theory, how archaeology and geography provide contextualization, the OT, the NT, noncanonical writings, how the Bible was formed and how the Bible was translated. The second section (chs 8–19) provides a variety of interpretive lenses for approaching the study of scripture. Of note in this section are Carole Monica C. Burnett's chapter on premodern interpretation (ch 9), Edith M. Humphrey's chapter on Orthodox interpretation (ch 14), and Bungishabaku Katho's chapter on African interpretation (ch 16). The final section (chs 20–24) focuses on integrating interpretation with Christian praxis in such areas as spiritual development, ethics, and mission. Of note in this section is Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove's chapter on the ongoing role of scripture in the Christian community (ch 23). A significant glossary is also provided.

Overall, this is a substantive project, both in quantity and quality. In terms of quantity, this volume serves, in many ways, as a "one-stop-shop" textbook for biblical interpretation. It provides significant discussion of introductory matters, as mentioned in the content review above. The approach is more cultural than academic, focusing on how global cultures read and interpret the Bible rather than on introducing traditional interpretive lenses, such as form or redaction criticism, and walking the reader through how to use those lenses. This book takes a more unapologetic literary approach, which allows the different contributors to provide "a truly comprehensive global and ecumenical" experience.

In terms of quality, this volume brings together some of the finest thinkers in Christian academia, writers such as Michael Gorman, Joel Green, Michael Holmes, Craig Keener, Christopher Skinner, Karen Wenell, and N. T. Wright, while also providing voice to those who may not be as commonly known in Western circles. Each chapter is significantly researched and written well. Each chapter also ends with reflection questions, which can prove useful to a hermeneutics instructor, and with an annotated list of follow-up reading.

If I were to note any concerns, I would note two. First, this is not necessarily a handbook on exegesis, such as Gorman's well-known book *Elements of Biblical Exegesis.* Nowhere in any of the essays in section two is an author going to walk the reader through an exegesis of a passage from her or his lens. They will discuss issues and concerns; however, the practical matters are left for other times. Second, and somewhat connected, there is almost no discussion of communicating the faith. There are passing references to preaching (mostly in terms of it being a historically necessary function of the church), however it lacks a practical chapter on preaching in a "truly comprehensive global and ecumenical" fashion.

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Richard Alan FUHR, Jr. and Andreas J. KÖSTENBERGER. *Inductive Bible Study: Observation, Interpretation, and Application through the Lenses of History, Literature, and Theology.* Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2016. 371 pp. $34.99.

"Why another book on inductive Bible study?" the authors ask the reader in the opening line of this volume. It is a good question. For that matter, why another book on hermeneutics and exegesis at all? The reading list in the back of the book, with 37 suggestions, implies that there is plenty of material already published on the topic. So why one more book that claims to help readers *read* their Bibles?

On the surface, Fuhr and Köstenberger offer a "step-by-step methodical approach to Bible study," but fortunately, they deliver something else entirely (ix). Most pastors will readily recognize names such as Scott Duvall or Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart or even Craig Bartholomew as go-to sources for a methodical approach to studying the Bible. And such books work well to serve in a seminary class, or to bridge the gap that a pastor without such training might understand some of the technical aspects of reading and interpreting the Bible. *Inductive Bible Study* sounds like one more book of the same kind, but it is not. What the authors offer is a wide-ranging, principle-filled guide that "involves growth on the part of the interpreter in developing certain interpretive habits, or virtue" (44).

This is not saying there is no method in the approach of the current volume. But because it is a merging of Köstenberger's tripartite approach and Fuhr's inductive approach, it does not fit normal processes in this way. There are no chapters dedicated to genre, but genre is still covered as the authors explore key principles and habits (153-157, 199-202). The book also includes helpful charts and diagrams, which explain important concepts such as "Literary Features for Observation" (122) or how literature, history, and theology inform hermeneutics (184). In every instance, the structure of *Inductive Bible Study* depends upon an active reader and a spiritual sensitivity that listens when the Holy Spirit speaks (328-331). And this demonstrates how the method is principle based, rather than dependent upon the method itself. When explaining why the Inductive approach is helpful, the authors describe it as flexible (42). Over time, a faithful reader of the Scripture may find the need to revise or refine a previously held point, and this is accomplished through careful study and the guidance of the Spirit. But it is not to be mistaken as an open door to revision of historic Christianity. For if the reader has already habituated in themselves the "Exegetical Principle," reminding students of the Bible that "the meaning of any biblical text must be drawn *from* the text rather than be ascribed *to* the text" and thus the Bible cannot be stretched out over the current cultural ideas to suit one's preferences (30).

A minor point of praise, but one which highlights the amiable nature of this volume, is the chapter on comparing translations. While other authors, such as Fee and Stuart, make clear their personal position regarding older translations such as the King James Version, this volume offers a brief critique and then provides guidance on how to apply its method to reading the King's English (compare Fee and Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, 4th ed., 29-39, with the current volume, 63-67). The KJV, and its modern counterpart the NKJV, are still widely used in many English-speaking congregations and homes. Rather than dismissing it as valuable at one time, but irrelevant now, the authors of this book explain their own stance without denigrating those of a different persuasion. Such a charitable perspective colors the entire work and makes it applicable across a wide range of denominations and theological persuasions. This is just one example, but it is representative of why the authors are so persuasive; they provide guidelines which are not limited to a narrow frame or perspective.

Of course, their work is not a thrilling spy novel, where the "truths" of the Scripture are uncovered through some puzzling hidden codes. It is a straightforward writing, and occasion-

ally wanders into the academic world. These aspects might turn some off. But this book is worth a measure of perseverance, if for no other reason than the habit-forming practice it will provide. For the habitual element is the most important one of this volume. While they treat their topic as if it is a natural, orderly process, it is not always that. In fact, were someone to try to incorporate every element of the "process" from the book every time one sat to read the Bible, a short excursion into Philemon might take hours just to cover Paul's short letter. Instead, this volume offers lots of small helps which are meant to become second nature along the way. Any student of the Bible would profit from engaging with this book and taking its principles to heart when they read.

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Stewart E. KELLY, with James K. DEW, Jr. *Understanding Postmodernism: A Christian Perspective*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2017. 304 pp. $25.50.

Kelly and Dew approach their evaluation of postmodernism as conservative evangelical Protestants who have a modest confidence in human reason (10-11). The bulk of the book is their evaluation of the main strands of postmodernism. Before beginning their critique, the authors first give a ten-point definition of postmodernism (5-9) and their criteria for evaluating postmodernism (18-28). Working with the Haskell principle, the authors contend that objectivity does not require total human neutrality, the latter being impossible. They develop criteria which includes claims such as, "We work with a cautious optimism regarding truth and knowledge" (24).

The authors outline five reasons why Enlightenment modernism fell out of favor (29-43). They review the sociology of knowledge, rejecting the purely rational (Enlightenment) view and the purely nonrational view, the latter often favored by postmodern thinkers, in favor of the modestly rational view (44-69). They evaluate influential postmodern thinkers like Jacques Derrida on the philosophy of language and conclude that the "Bible is not one text among many, with no stable meanings, and containing no objective truths (as Derrida would have us believe). Rather, it is the authoritative . . . revelation of the one true God" (99).

Social constructivist arguments by Goodman, Putnam, Winograd, Rorty, and others are analyzed and rejected, enabling Kelly and Dew to remain committed to realism and the idea that truth exists independently of humans and their use of language (101-115). The traditional understanding of our "self" as being one and the same with the immaterial soul is defended against the postmodern rejection of "human nature" by Claude Lévi-Strauss and Michel Foucault (116-140). On the question of whether or not objectivity and realism rise and fall together, the authors contend that we can still gain a proper knowledge of the outside world despite our situatedness. They believe realism is still the only viable epistemic option available (141-165).

Concerning metanarratives, because some metanarratives are oppressive does not mean all of them are (166-186). After reviewing the three reasons why postmoderns are skeptical of metanarratives, the authors declare that biblical Christianity is a liberating metanarrative (187-202). The correspondence theory of truth is defended against four alternative theories that are deemed to be seriously flawed (203-226), and a modest foundationalism is found to be the most defensible view of human knowledge (227-249). The last two chapters are a brief presentation of the gospel and some suggestions on where we need to go from here (250-268).

One of the most attractive features of the work is the authors' civility and balance. Instead of a take-no-prisoners attack on postmodernism, they attempt to understand alternative views

to the Christian faith. They analyze them with reasonable arguments in order to learn something useful, even as they find fault with modern and postmodern thinking. For example, they chart a path between classical foundationalism's unjustified claims of certainty and postmodernism's uncertainty as they choose a modest foundationalism as their approach, having learned something from the extremes of the two systems they have rejected. The authors present their arguments throughout with great precision, aiding the reader on almost every page with subheadings and lists, in every chapter with a summary and suggested readings, and at the end of the book with an appendix and indexes, making their work ideal as one of the best introductory textbooks available on postmodernism.

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Ephraim RADNER. *Time and the Word: Figural Reading of the Christian Scriptures.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016. 334 pp. $50.00.

This volume is a text both brilliant and maddening, and the latter in the literal sense that following some sections of the text will drive one to madness. The seemingly endless footnotes deployed throughout much of the text are only so frustrating because each holds its own intrinsic interest; each could—and probably *should*—have been an article all on its own. The fourth chapter of the current volume, which traverses William of Ockham's nominalist metaphysics, Francis of Assisi's moralizing cosmology, medieval bestiaries, St. Augustine's linguistic theory, and William of Ockham once again—and all to prove a thesis that can be summed up in one brief sentence—will likely cause an out-of-body experience if one attempts to read the chapter in one sitting. All the same, that chapter has a profound point to make: namely, that belief in the figural power of God's word need not rely on any specific metaphysic (not even a Platonic/participationist one). The fact that such profundity lies amidst the maddening whirl of references means that this text, despite its flaws, is still very much worth reading.

Brilliance is not only occasionally manifest in this volume, however. It resides in the conception of the book as a whole. Figural reading has recently become more and more popular, such that serious biblical scholars like Richard Hays now employ this category to describe what they are doing (see his massive and erudite *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels*). Despite this growing popularity, there is little agreement as to what figural reading actually is. Hays utilizes Erich Auerbach and Hans Frei's notion of the *figura* to describe how the Gospels employ OT texts as threads with which they weave together the character of the person of Christ. Thus, different literary elements are culled from the OT in order to construct the Christ we find in the Gospels. True as this may be at a surface level, it is questionable whether what Hays is doing is actually figural exegesis. Hays himself claims he is practicing the same kind of reading as the early church fathers (especially Irenaeus), but is that actually the case?

Radner's book enables us to answer this last question with a resounding 'no,' and it allows us to do so by providing a philosophy of the *figura* as those early church fathers (and those who followed them, which includes most interpreters up to the 17th century) actually understood it. Within this ancient view, figural correspondence across the Christian Scriptures is not simply textual in nature (as John David Dawson has also reminded us). Instead, scriptural correspondence across different time periods is the result of God's act within the world. In that way, we should understand Scripture in the same way we understand creation: God has arranged all of reality in order to draw us to the divine. The figures we find in Scripture are just a part—though the most concentrated part—of this whole. To interpret Scripture is thus to be open to how God wants to *act* upon us through these words. The fact that the Gospel writers connect rocks,

temples, and the people of Israel to the person of Christ is not the result of literary genius manifesting in complex character construction. It is the simple recognition that each of these worldly realities has meaning within the drama of human salvation (of which Christ is the pinnacle), and that drama of salvation simply *is* reality—all of reality.

This philosophy of interpretation is "thoroughly theological" (261), as the author notes. As such, it simultaneously affirms and transcends the 'ecclesiological turn' that has been so influential in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. The ecclesiological turn is a movement associated with the 'Yale School' of H. Richard Niebuhr, Hans Frei, and George Lindbeck, of whom the 'Duke School' of Stanley Hauerwas and Richard Hays are inheritors. These schools' approach to figural exegesis make the following argument: (1) the Bible is not just any text, but the Scripture of a religious community; (2) its purpose therefore is to sustain that community's life; (3) throughout the history of the ecclesial community, interpreters have seen it as fitting to practice figural exegesis in order to make the Scriptures a living text for the present age; (4) therefore figural exegesis is legitimate as a religious practice of this community. Radner would not contradict any of these claims, but he is saying something "further" (261): namely, that Scripture is the result of God's creative act, an act that is still working on us today, drawing us toward the transformation required of God's children. One can see, then, that the ecclesial turn works on a purely anthropological level ('this is simply what this religious community does'), while Radner's claim is theological to the core.

What then, would be the result if we adopted such a theocentric worldview? Our exegesis and preaching would look much more like what we find in the early church fathers, instead of being haunted or dominated by the two modern questions of authorial intent and historical factuality (262). And it would take this shape not because of some ironic recognition of one's situatedness within a particular religious community and its practices. Instead, the return to figural exegesis would be made because of a coherent and sophisticated philosophy of creation and time. Insofar as modern exegesis and preaching lacks such a philosophy, it can make less sense of what Scripture is supposed to being doing: namely, that for which all created realities including time exist—drawing human beings closer to God. All scriptural words are meant to serve such a purpose, and that is why linear chronological time is not an ultimate arbiter—in other words, that is why figural reading is an accurate reflection of the way things are.

This leads to a further stroke of brilliance. Radner's interpretation of figural exegesis relies on a particular theology of creation, but—as he is careful to note—this view of creation need not exclusively employ one system of metaphysics. Here Radner bucks the trend of someone like Hans Boersma, whose recovery of figural reading is intimately connected to his advocacy of a Platonistic and participatory metaphysic. Beyond Boersma, that modern difficulties could be solved in such a way was also the position of Radical Orthodoxy.

Radner's counterproposal is an interesting one because there is a significant obstacle to the approach of Boersma and Radical Orthodoxy. A metaphysics of participation is more tied to the scientific and social realities of a given time period, and within that period it may be difficult to simply 'choose' to have a different metaphysic. The meaning of creation and time, on the other hand, is more presuppositional: not so much about how things are connected to God (via, for example, a chain of being) as to why anything exists in the first place. For that reason, it is possible that we can choose to have a different understanding of these most basic of matters, and that such a choice will subsequently inform how we view the world. In short, the figural Christian will see the world as a theatre of *ascesis*, a grace-filled order that is drawing us more deeply into the discipline of God. A variety of metaphysics could suit such an affirmation.

This volume successfully moves the debate over interpretation forward, past both the ecclesial turn and the penchant for metaphysics embodied in the thinkers of Radical Orthodoxy

(note that it is a given, within this whole conversation, that the historical-critical view is something we must get beyond). Despite its flaws in presentation, this volume is a crucial text. I know of no book that speaks more cogently of what must change if our Scriptures are to affect us as powerfully as they did the readers, hearers, and thinkers of the early church.

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James K. A. SMITH. *Awaiting the King: Reforming Public Theology*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2017. 250 pp. $22.99.

Smith has proved himself a prolific and culturally engaged voice of Reformed evangelical theology as a teacher at Calvin College and recently as the editor of Cardus' *Comment* magazine. In the current volume, the third volume of his Cultural Liturgies project, he demonstrates a broad ranging cultural and academic scope. This volume is a well-done effort that seeks to reform or temper Reformed theology. Viewing his project as Augustinian, he emphasizes practices in the vein of Stanley Hauerwas and the waiting of eschatology. His argument engages a wide range of contemporary thinkers—John Rawls, Jeffrey Stout, Oliver O'Donovan, Charles Taylor, Rowan Williams, John Milbank, and a host of others.

The basic point of departure in this volume emphasizes the liturgies, or worship, of politics and religion (or Christian faith more properly), so that the political is a way of life with its liturgies and the Church is a polis and is political. The author claims that these observations "do *not* entail mutual exclusivity or total antithesis, though . . . [he does] think they encourage a kind of holy ambivalence about our relationship to the political, a sort of engaged but healthy distance rooted in our specifically eschatological hope, running counter to progressivist hubris, triumphalistic culture wars, and despairing cynicism." (16)

He does not oppose liberal democracy, but he is significantly critical of it. While he attends to creation (too much in my view) as he is a Kuyperian, yet he also commendably grounds worship in narrative rather than natural law. He works out an approach to pluralism that can be critical of Kuyperian sphere sovereignty (the view of spheres like family and economy as sovereignly separate from the state) as too linked to liberal democracy (140). He moves on to "redeem Christendom" with a reformed rendition of creation and natural law. Though he does chasten his Reformed roots by examining Rwanda's violence and the whiteness of racism as instances of "ecclesial failure" evidencing formation by liturgies that have gone wrong. He is also wary of the dangers of assimilation to culture with the liturgies that we enact. He concludes in good Augustinian fashion with principles of public participation where there is an ecclesial center of gravity guiding the church's participation in the present acts of the kingdom in this dance between the cities of God and Humanity.

This volume brings much that the broader Christian community, whether or not it is Reformed, should applaud. In his sidebars, Smith engages *The Godfather*, Graham Greene, sports and a wide spectrum of cultural meaning in relation to Christian faith. He is large hearted in treating points of view outside of his Reformed evangelical home. The author's appropriation of worship and liturgy for viewing both Church and State is worthwhile as is his emphasis on eschatology and waiting that tempers his creational bent. Still I do not think that he attends sufficiently to the role of economics in the human city. With the grand Reformed narrative of redemption, he runs a risk of limiting the power of the "Jesuology" he disdains (77) rooted in Jesus' ministry from shaping his Reformed salvation narrative. The focus on practices both ecclesial and political makes this book a very profitable read for individual study and for use in

college or seminary classes. But it is definitely a book for the church and, as we await the King, Smith has given us an offering rooted in the spirit of Advent.

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Tawa J. ANDERSON, W. Michael CLARK, and David K. NAUGLE. *An Introduction to Christian Worldview: Pursuing God's Perspective in a Pluralistic World.* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2017. 384 pp. $31.50.

Anderson, Clark, and Naugle have provided readers of their work a veritable feast that is easy to digest. Their collective expertise spans theology, law, and especially philosophy, but I should also add communication skills. Their review of Christian worldview is learned; yet, it is so replete with anecdotes and choice quotations that it is equally entertaining. The authors write "unapologetically from within the orthodox Christian tradition." They confess that they "are persuaded that Christianity is true—not just true for us but true for all people at all times in all places" (3-4).

Anderson defines what is meant by a worldview, in particular a Christian one, using James Sire's influential evangelical approach (13-17). Next, Anderson clarifies what makes up a worldview and how all people have a worldview; yet, worldviews like naturalism and Christianity are very different. A worldview has great importance and impact on us through means such as confirmation bias, experiential accommodation, the pool of live options from which we choose, and life motivation. Anderson concludes, "Once a worldview is in place within the individual's heart, the individual tends (all other things being equal) to preserve that worldview" (42). We tend to accommodate new data and information to our worldview, thus it is imperative that we critically analyze and understand not only our own worldview, but also the worldview of others. Therefore, worldviews need to be tested for internal consistency, external consistency, and existential consistency (78-93).

Naugle asks whether or not we can speak of *a* or *the* Christian worldview, since there is such a diversity of views that are offered by Christians. He responds by examining the "narrative contours" of a Christian worldview, comparing natural and special revelation (97-141). Naugle's focus is on major themes like creation, fall, redemption, glorification, and the kingdom of God. Also, how does a Christian worldview answer four core worldview questions: What is our nature? What is our world? What is our problem? What is our end? (142-180). Naugle admits that a mere confession of a Christian worldview is insufficient, because it has "come under considerable questioning and doubt from those both inside and outside the church" (181). It is essential to test a Christian worldview with an attitude of humility, recognizing that we are analyzing a Christian worldview "from within our own worldview" (182). So, in humility and with procedural caution, Naugle examines the Christian worldview he has already summarized by the tests of internal consistency (logical coherence), external consistency (evidential correspondence), and existential consistency (pragmatic satisfaction) (185-221).

Clark turns the reader's attention to alternative worldviews to understand the worldviews our friends and neighbors profess and embrace and to analyze and evaluate them by the same criteria already used on a Christian worldview (225). Clark studies deism, naturalism, and postmodernism as Western philosophical alternatives (227-266) and Hinduism and Islam as global religious alternatives (267-322).

The authors close their splendid introduction to Christian worldview with a call for Christians to consciously embrace and live a Christian worldview. Throughout the book students, readers, discussion leaders, or professors will be assisted by graphics, scenic view side bars,

reflection questions, stop & pause insights, outcomes, glossaries, possible term paper topics, and core bibliographies, making it an ideal introductory study of worldview for personal study, discussion groups, or the university or seminary classroom.

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William J. ABRAHAM. *Among the Ashes: On Death, Grief, and Hope*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017. 127 pp. $16.00.

This little book grew out of a personal tragedy. The author lost his firstborn son to a dreaded disease. Writing out of intense grief, he wrestles with human suffering. Why does God allow it? The book is comprised of five chapters. The first chapter deals with the paralyzing grip of grief. The author describes the intense grief that he felt over the loss of his son as "fall[ing] precipitously into a deep black hole . . . a hole of darkness, numbness, despair, and waves of excruciating pain" (4, 6, 7-8). His son's death left him too traumatized to think or even speak (14, 22). The second chapter discusses the certainty of life after death. Here the author takes near-death experiences as "empirical confirmation of Christian claims about life after death" (43). Chapter three explains how the certainty of life after death can also be a "hope." In chapter four, the author provides his own analysis of the book of Job and argues that Job had fallen into the same "black hole" as he when he sat in silence for a week (69). In the final chapter, the author shows how the suffering and death of Christ should undergird our faith. In the end, the author finds "no persuasive theological rationale for much of the suffering we have to endure" (105).

I enjoyed reading this book. It caused me to rethink my own position on human suffering. I have to confess, however, that I found myself disagreeing with the author most of the time. For example, the author believes in present-day miracles (10). No wonder he found his son's death so "devastating" (106). He had prayed that God would miraculously heal his son (3), and he could not understand why God had refused (9). When my stepfather was dying of Mesothelioma, I did not ask or expect God to perform a miracle and remove the asbestos glass from his lungs. Yes, I do believe that God is omnipotent and that he could have done so. But then, in order for him to be fair and not show partiality, he would have to do the same for every other person so afflicted whenever a similar prayer is made. In the case of the author's son, his death has a perfectly natural explanation. He died from Hepatitis C (1-2), a viral infection which can lurk silently in the human body for twenty or thirty years before it manifests any symptoms. But once it does, it is often too late for any treatment. Since the author believes that God is willing today to break his natural laws and perform a miraculous healing, I can understand why he found God's denial so devastating. With his convictions and assumptions, he is forced to conclude that God simply wanted his son to die. I find more comfort in believing that God did not really want my stepfather to suffer and die from the asbestos in his lungs, but that his hands were tied. He could not break his natural law and make an exception for me without showing favoritism and partiality, which are against his nature (Eph 6:9; Col 3:25). And furthermore, the railroad executives were to blame, not God, for the unsafe working conditions where employees were forced to breath in the asbestos. And behind the humans who bring about so much suffering there is always the devil. He was actually behind all of Job's suffering, for Satan had targeted Job. But the author never brings out this point.

This little volume could be used in a class to facilitate discussion. While I disagree with the author's approach to the problem of suffering, I like his book, for he made me think. And after all, isn't that what a good book is supposed to do?

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Mary Alice MULLIGAN, ed. *The Living Pulpit: Sermons That Illustrate Preaching in the Stone–Campbell Movement 1968–2018*. St. Louis: Chalice, 2018. 288 pp. $34.99.

For those who love the Stone-Campbell movement and love homiletics, this volume is a welcome addition to an enterprise that goes back to the early days of the movement. This fourth volume of the *Living Pulpit* series, like earlier volumes in 1868, 1918 and 1969, gathers representative sermons from notable preachers in the Stone-Campbell movement. Differences today among the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the Christian Churches and Churches of Christ, and the Churches of Christ are significant enough that few attempt cooperative efforts. So Chalice Press and general editor Mary Alice Mulligan are to be commended for publishing this collection of sermons that provide examples of preaching from all three strands. Mulligan is ably assisted by contributing editors for each branch. Representing the Churches of Christ are Dave Bland, David Fleer, and Tim Sensing. Representing the Christian Churches (independent) are Joe Grana and Bruce Shields. Representing the Disciples of Christ are Ronald Allen, Casey Signon, and Richard Voelz.

The book contains forty sermons in all, thirteen from each branch, along with an overview of the approach to preaching taken by each branch. Also welcome is a tribute to and a sermon by Fred Craddock, probably the movement's most influential and celebrated preacher.

To review a book that contains forty different sermons is a difficult task. So this review will not address individual messages, but several general statements can be made. There is great diversity in style, hermeneutic, and demographics in this book. As would be expected, depending on perspective, the reader will not agree with everything he or she reads, just as the contributors disagree with each other at times. Despite some strong contrasts, these messages are helpful in understanding both the current trends in the churches and the various approaches to preaching.

At the beginning of each section appears an orientation chapter from one of the editors, explaining and analyzing preaching within that camp. In the interest of full disclosure, this reviewer comes from the Christian Churches (independent), and his father is one of the sermon contributors. From that perspective, the messages representing that stream of the movement do seem to reflect typical preaching among those congregations. It is assumed that this is also the case for the other branches. All three branches have, to one extent or another, adapted their styles of preaching to changing times.

Tim Sensing provides an orientation to preaching in Churches of Christ. In his article he describes that Church of Christ preaching in the past centered on the book of Acts and the Epistles, sometimes expository, sometimes topical. As the Church of Christ colleges and seminaries began to introduce a broader view of homiletics that allowed more use of narrative preaching and other forms, the preaching changed in style, but was still governed by the biblical text. The sermons in this collection provide good evidence of that evolution.

Joseph Grana provides the orientation for the Christian Churches (independent). He cites that there have been periods of time where verse-by-verse exposition was the favored method but this has given way to a more topical approach, particularly with sermon series, although the individual sermons could be quite biblical. He also points out that in this fellowship there is very little defense of the movement itself. The principles are taught as they come up in the biblical texts. Grana states that the overriding concern is evangelism. While sermons in this collection often deal with practical Christian living and local church issues, evangelism is rarely far from the preacher's concern.

Casey Signon and Richard Voelz analyze preaching among the Disciples of Christ. The editors identify major themes as being unity among diversity, ecumenicity, current social issues, and denominational emphases. The sermons in this collection support that view. Preaching in these

local congregations is tied to the lectionary. Several sermons in this collection reflect that orientation, while others were preached at conferences and institutions.

This volume can be appreciated by a person interested in the history of the Stone-Campbell Movement, but also by a person interested in the study of homiletics, not to mention those who want to read these messages for their instructional, inspirational, or devotional value. Readers will hope that the movement and preaching itself will remain vital enough to justify another volume for the next generation.

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Jacob D. MYERS. *Preaching Must Die! Troubling Homiletical Theology.* Minneapolis: Fortress, 2017. 200 pp. $24.00.

Myers offers the field of homiletics a celebratory eulogy in this stimulating text. He states at the outset that he believes homiletics exists to help preaching "die a good death" (1). The move toward death, however, is not to be understood as a move toward hopelessness or despair. Instead, preaching into death is predicated on the hope that God may somehow intervene. The book elucidates how preaching is always undergoing deconstruction in four areas. For Myers, deconstruction is not something that one does, but rather something that is always already at work.

Chapter one troubles language. Three perspectives on linguistic meaning are examined: representationalism, linguistic pragmatism, and structuralism. The author finds the guiding principles of structuralism most helpful, concluding that all language functions as arbitrary sign language. Language consists of signs that point to other signs. This understanding of linguistic meaning is used by the author to trouble the prominent understanding of preaching as event. The word *dog* will never be an actual dog. Furthermore, all language works by being repeatable and distinguishable. Thus, any understanding of preaching as a unique, particular speech act in time must be reexamined.

Chapter two discusses selfhood. Identity is not singular. The preacher can never say, "I am a preacher." For the author, the preacher is more like Frankenstein, made up of "a patchwork of parts, identities implanted on us by our respective cultures and traditions" (72). Preachers must die to the notion of singular selfhood. The author looks to the works of Medina and Ricoeur to find a more suitable understanding of the self.

Chapter three discusses Scripture. Myers suggests that all homiletical theologies are economic in that they valuate and regulate the use of Scripture. Several of these economies are discussed, providing the reader with an overview of how various approaches to preaching valuate Scripture. The author labels these as equivocatory economies, ideational economies, figurative economies, cathartic economies, existential economies, mimetic economies, poietic economies, and dialogical economies. Every valuation is found to devalue. In order for one to *give* a sermon, one must first *take* from Scripture. As an answer to the problem, the author proposes what he calls an echognomic homiletic which hosts the text by attending to the Bible's echo.

Chapter four discusses God. The event of preaching is precluded by a writing event, which disqualifies the so-called preaching event as being an "event." However, the author contends that death is needed for life. In order for sound to be heard, dead space is necessary. For the author, preaching is not the Word of God, but rather the death of God. God's presence cannot be conjured up by the right words. The Spirit can be called Holy because the preacher has no

control over the Spirit. The preacher thus functions as a host, realizing that the One who arrives may be hostile.

The final chapter, chapter five, argues that the troubling of God must be embraced. If preaching is to live, then the preacher must welcome the death of preaching. "Preaching is kamikaze discourse" (187). Only when this is embraced can God "resurrect new life out of the dead bones of language, speech, hermeneutics, and theology" (187).

This volume makes an important contribution to the discussion of preaching in postmodernity. Myers insists that all homiletical theology must be understood as philosophy. This being the case, the volume's use of Luce Irigray opens new possibilities in the field of homiletics. The author successfully adds Irigray to the growing list of philosophers who have been used by homileticians.

This volume is certainly not the first text to examine preaching in light of deconstruction. This being the case, the text could have been more open in recognizing the influence of John McClure. It is not until about two-thirds of the way into the book that the reader is explicitly told, "This book would not exist apart from the insights and guidance of Anna Carter Florence's *Preaching as Testimony* and John McClure's *Other-wise Preaching*" (123). Those familiar with McClure's work will notice the points of intersection with the current volume. The book would benefit from a more overt discussion of McClure's oeuvre at the outset.

This critique aside, this volume is a must-read for all serious students of preaching. The author succeeds in troubling many assumptions and asking many questions which often go unasked. The book is not appropriate for introductory-level students of preaching, but it is essential reading for all those who wish to contribute to the discussion of preaching in postmodernity. Myers helps preaching die a good death. By doing so, he breathes new life into the task.

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Sondra WHEELER. *The Minister as Moral Theologian: Ethical Dimensions of Pastoral Leadership*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2017. 160 pp. $22.00.

Why another book on Christian ethics and ministry? As Wheeler admits, we have gone from a dearth of literature on the subject when she was a student in Yale Divinity School to a shelf full of fine works covering the subject. Why? She wanted to call "attention to all the dimensions of pastoral ministry that involve ministers deeply in work we normally assign to the province of Christian ethics" (xii). The nature of ministry requires ministers to be "moral theologians." Wheeler is convinced that ministers

> . . . will be teaching ethics, whether consciously or not, by how they handle (or avoid) biblical passages that are morally challenging or troubling; they will be giving moral lessons by what issue they address or ignore and what they say about those with whom they disagree on those issues. They will be shaping character by what they say or leave unsaid in the counseling session and by how they respond to the behavior, praiseworthy or otherwise, that is displayed in the communities they lead (xiii).

Also, as a teacher and a moral example, there are "distinctive moral risks and demands" associated with the role of ministry that are very complex (xiv).

Chapter 1 evaluates how ministers teach and model Christian ethics. Many practical matters are covered. For example, if a minister is "seen doing something, others may twist this as per-

mission to serve their own agenda, even if the circumstances are not really comparable" (6). Also, in this chapter, Wheeler explains some helpful ethical theory. She reviews a little bit of virtue (character), duty (deontological), and consequential (teleological) ethics.

Chapter 2 discusses preaching on morally difficult texts. This chapter is profound and full of wisdom. I wish I could have read it as a young minister forty-five years ago. It not only explains how one should preach on moral issues but when. One of many fine illustrations in her book, Wheeler relates the sad story of a young minister, new to a congregation, who picks the Sunday nearest to Veteran's Day to unleash a tirade against the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki as the greatest war crime in history (30). So, part of her very wise advice is: "Do not tackle bitterly contested issues in preaching unless your relationship with the congregation is well established and firmly grounded in trust," and "Consider whether the pulpit is the most appropriate place in which to take up the topic" (57).

Chapter 3 considers how to teach about moral issues. It mostly deals with interpretation and creating what Wheeler calls "safe spaces" within the congregation for moral deliberation. Chapter 4 relates to giving moral counsel, which can be a minister's duty in many different situations. Wheeler analyzes several aspects of moral guidance such as listening, inquiry, affirmation, support, discernment, challenge, admonition, repentance, forgiveness, fidelity, and confidentiality. Finally, several strategies are suggested for giving moral guidance.

The concluding chapter tackles the challenges and opportunities of ministry. Ministry is a fishbowl existence, but "the role of minister as moral exemplar also offers unparalleled opportunities for leadership and witness in the community" (113). It is a life of love and a holy calling. Wheeler's book ends with a brief annotated bibliography, which is helpful for further reading.

For ministers in a study group, for young ministers, or as a textbook for a homiletics or a ministry class, this volume is an excellent choice. Every page is full of wisdom and is very practical in application.

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Christopher R. J. HOLMES. *The Lord Is Good: Seeking the God of the Psalter*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2018. 198 pp. $26.99.

This book, in the series "Studies in Christian Doctrine and Scripture," will stretch your notions about God, yourself, goodness, and the connection between the Bible—especially the Psalms—and theology, praise, and contemplation. If you are like me, you will at first be dismayed by your own ignorance, then stimulated, and finally, delighted.

However, it most definitely is not "beach vacation reading." It would be suitable for an interdisciplinary class at the seminary level and perhaps for an upper level university course. But a thoughtful layman, and many pastors, should find it refreshing reading.

Holmes presents the basic purpose of the book on page 1, which begins his introduction, which is subtitled "Why Such a Book?" "This is a book about God, indeed God's goodness. In the pages to come, I unfold something of how God is goodness itself. . . . Indeed, I argue that goodness's priority and range that even the other attribute—love—does not quite have." (Emphasis his.)

The purpose of the book is summed up in the last paragraph of the book.

> If this book has any salience for the pursuit of a scripturally rooted reception of the glories of God, I would hope that it helps revitalize attention to the importance of attending to

> some classical and medieval distinctions in the doctrine of God, indeed how those distinctions encourage us to cry out to God that we may be taught him so as to love him, world without end (187).

Holmes describes the tone of the book as ". . . at once reflective, scholarly, and doxological. . . . The infinite goodness of God cannot be unfolded well if description and praise are isolated from one another. . . . I write within a frame that is at once academic and devotional."

Now, setting himself this task as a writer is to aspire in a mighty way. It is also to ask much of readers—even scholarly readers. Holmes seeks to understand the goodness of God through a theological lens, primarily through the theology of Thomas Aquinas and Augustine. This sort of broad, interdisciplinary approach is much needed in this day of overspecialization, but it made the book difficult to follow at times, at least for this reader. Here is an example of a sentence that I *think* is true, despite the fact that I am still trying to understand: "There are merits, I think, to distinguishing in an architectonic sense prayerful description of God's being from how God is known and expresses himself as God among us" (29). Sentences (indeed, paragraphs) like this abound in the book.

But then, very often, one comes out of a theological thicket into a wonderful clearing, filled with sunlight and flowers. "God, just by being God, is good. For God, being and being good are one and the same thing" (31). Sentences like that are worth the price of the book, and all the work that goes into reading it. Such lapidary sentences *also* abound. Here is another example:

> Yes, we cannot find words, and so on the one hand this study will fail, and that is fine; and yet, nonetheless, the utter delight to be had in the one who is good encourages us to persevere in receiving what the Lord is to himself. This study is an inarticulate expression of joy, something of a belching out on page, to carry on with Augustine's gastronomic metaphor, my happiness in him (53).

I think that the highest praise for any book is that reading it makes one love God slightly more than one did before. This volume did precisely that for me.

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Mark W. HAMILTON. *A Theological Introduction to the Old Testament.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2018. 419 pp. $34.95.

Rich with insight, spiced with dry humor, and filled with relevance, this new theological introduction follows a recipe that entices the reader's appetite from beginning to end. An introduction (ch 1) previews the goals of upcoming chapters: to situate each text within its historical setting or settings, consider how it functions as literature, and what it says about Israel's and Christian theological commitments. Three chapters introduce major genres: Israelite historiography (ch 8), poetic and wisdom texts (ch 17), and prophetic literature (ch 23). Another brief chapter on the Pentateuch (ch 2) presents the problem of Mosaic authorship and solutions provided by the Documentary Hypothesis and Fragmentary Hypothesis. Most chapters, however, feature a single corpus from the OT: Genesis (ch 3), 1-2 Samuel (ch 12), Ezra-Nehemiah (ch 15), Isaiah (ch 24), and the book of the twelve (ch 29). Each of these chapters begins with a key text drawn from the book at hand, a brief introduction, and outline of the text. The author then considers matters such as case studies, plot points, key or core ideas, moral vision—and in every case, the implications of the text for today's readers. Along the way, the author also introduces the reader to critical background information in pullout boxes and special essays. For

example, in ch 3 (Genesis), Hamilton explores gardens in the ancient world and geographical imagination. In Exodus, he presents the names El Shaddai and YHVH, the question of the Red Sea or Reed Sea, law codes in the Bible and the ancient Near East, and the documentary hypothesis. These studies, the chapters introducing major genres, and critical exegesis throughout the text constitute one of the strongest elements of Hamilton's work: the seamless integration of advanced critical study and theological message. Students who wonder how critical study of the OT influences or supports theology need look no further than this volume.

Two chapters conclude Hamilton's work. The first ("The Secondary Canon," ch 30), considers the influential texts in various Jewish and Christian circles that became part of some forms of the Christian canon: narrative texts such as 1-2 Esdras, Tobit, Judith, Additions to Daniel, Additions to Esther, Baruch, the Epistle of Jeremiah, 1-2 Maccabees; and wisdom and liturgical texts such as Sirach and the Wisdom of Solomon. Hamilton briefly summarizes the content of these books in a manner that highlights their theological contribution to readers. The second concluding chapter ("What's It All About?" ch 31), poses the inevitable question of what holds the diverse material of the OT together? Hamilton sidesteps the question with a simple proposal. "The meanings of texts come in part from how they are used" (387). Interpretation is a two-centered process of reader and text, an ellipsis rather than a circle. A survey of the past reveals three basic and intertwined ways these books were used and continue to find life in religious communities: in liturgy, moral formation, and theological reflection.

Assessing the strengths or weaknesses of a book is a relative assignment, dependent on the reader as well as the text. This volume's introduction is no simple meet and greet, but an information dense reading that depends on a prior critical introduction to the OT and exegesis. Though the author attempts to provide scaffolding for readers without such a background, ultimately the reader needs prior contact with matters such as the date and social setting of texts. Thus, it's most likely that this excellent contribution to the field will best serve graduate students and pastors, rather than most undergraduates and lay readers, who may feel somewhat lost with critical ideas they have never considered.

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John H. WALTON and J. Harvey WALTON. *The Lost World of the Israelite Conquest: Covenant, Retribution, and the Fate of the Canaanites.* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2017. 269 pp. $20.00.

In the current volume, John H. Walton has teamed up with his son to tackle one of the most controversial biblical texts. The subject matter at hand is certainly overdue for treatment. The latent ethical and historical problems of the Israelite conquest of Canaan are favorite topics for skeptics, and the responses Christian scholars proffered over the years have been largely unsatisfactory. For this very reason, the authors saw this as a crucial line of inquiry. According to the introduction, the authors believe that the very reason Christian apologists have failed to provide a convincing response is because they themselves have been reading the conquest account (indeed, the whole Bible) all wrong. Therefore, the authors aim to propose a "better reading of the biblical text and better understanding of the ancient world" as the key to a proper understanding of the conquest (3). The foundational and guiding proposition of this study, as with the previous works, is that the Bible is an ancient document, and readers must treat it as such. Based on this simple core assumption, the writers generate a slew of propositions that both highlight the flaws of modern interpretations and guide readers into new, and often counterintuitive, realms of inquiry.

The structure of this volume consists of six parts, each of which contains a handful of propositions totaling twenty-one in all. The first three parts are largely concerned with laying out what a modern reading of the Bible gets wrong. The authors spend considerable space overturning traditional views primarily regarding the goals of the literature, as well as the literary depiction of Canaanites in the biblical account. Within parts three and four, each proposition outlines an essential aspect of Yahweh's relationship with both his people and the physical space of Canaan. Several key components in this section are: the concepts of holiness as an ancient categorical concept; the conquest as a recapitulation of the creation account; the Hebrew term *herem* (which the authors define as, "to remove from use" rather than the traditional "utterly destroy") as a cultic, rather than military, term; the depiction of Canaanites as a common literary trope meant to highlight YHWH's confiscation of the land; the concept of Israel as a vassal state under the rule of its patron deity.

Although their conclusions fit nicely within the authors' own theoretical framework, there are times when they stretch the framework to fit the text. For example, they argue that the desire for order (rather than the modern desire for goodness) was the primary cultural value of ancient cultures. While this is certainly a valid (and well-documented) assertion, it seems to have a suspiciously malleable application to various other texts. In one instance, the authors assert that the reason David was not permitted to build the temple was that Yahweh had not yet fully recapitulated creation by replacing chaos with order (i.e., the land was not fully under *herem*). While this fits nicely within their overall argument, it also assumes that the connotation of *herem* was diachronically stable throughout the turbulent compositional phases of the deuteronomic history.

The nature of the target audience is somewhat obscure. At times there are explanations of simple hermeneutical, cultural, and linguistic concepts geared toward casual readers, while at others the authors take for granted the reader's familiarity with in-depth scholarly issues. Perhaps a concern in this regard is that, for all its significance and insight, this study may jar general readers with its technical inconsistencies. In truth, although Walton, in his previous *Lost World* installments, seems to have targeted general audiences, this volume is more suited for an academic setting.

This volume will shift the direction of conversations about a highly controversial issue. Skeptics now must contend with a new apologetic that seeks to embrace, not explain away, this difficult narrative and its ethical baggage. Perhaps the greatest strength of this study is that it performs a *herem* of its own: it removes from use the skeptic's greatest weapon—a critical reading of the text—and turns it into a tool for proper interpretation. Furthermore, rather than relieving believers of the task of defending the conquest narrative, the authors call us to humbly rethink our hermeneutical assumptions and acknowledge the substantial challenges in interpreting ancient texts.

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William G. DEVER. *Beyond the Texts: An Archaeological Portrait of Ancient Israel and Judah*. Atlanta: SBL Press, 2017. 749 pp. $49.95.

For five decades, Dever has been arguably the most influential American archaeologist specializing in the ancient biblical world. Trained first in biblical studies, he shifted primarily to archaeology and has a command of both disciplines that few can match. Historically, discussions between the two disciplines have vacillated between naively facile to nonexistent. This volume seeks to bridge the chasm.

The author argues that archaeology offers a superior resource from which to reconstruct the histories of Israel and Judah to the Hebrew Bible. He rationalizes that Exodus through Kings as they now exist could not have significantly predated the Exile (5, 15-16, 181). This presupposition raises questions about the historical accuracy of the documents and how seriously to rely upon them for historical reconstruction (181). Furthermore, the canon of the Bible is closed—with no additions forthcoming (18). Furthermore, the Bible is not overtly history in the conventional usage of the term; it is "*theocratic* history—a story combining fact and fancy in a self-conscious attempt to legitimate and enforce the authors' orthodox theological views"—it is not the "real Israel of history" (5). This does not preclude some historical accuracy in the accounts, but any historical events must be corroborated by archaeologically derived data (4). Archaeology, however, preserves data that chronologically are much closer to the events, often even contemporary (15-18). He notes: "text can only refer to the reality; the artifact is the reality" (16) and while artifacts need interpretation, they need no confirmation and remain open to reexamination (16, 633).

Dever's command of the archaeological data and biblical studies deserves attention. Using archaeological data, he believes some of the biblical narrative to be accurate; on other issues he is quite skeptical of the Bible. In an earlier work, he succinctly stated his methodology: he would approach the text with "*no preconceptions.* Single out the 'convergences' of the two lines of evidence, and remain skeptical about the rest," but his next paragraph notes "As for my own biases, they will be clear enough" (Dever, *Who Were the Early Israelites and Where Did They Come From?* Eerdmans, 2006). Thus, his bias refuses to permit the uncorroborated biblical data to serve as even working hypotheses!

He views the Joshua account particularly negatively (184-188). Admittedly, the archaeology of Joshua is problematic (Jericho and Ai). He argues that since most of the thirty-four towns listed in Joshua as taken by Israel (most in Joshua 12) do not show evidence of destruction, the narrative is therefore unhistorical. He reads too much into the texts. Joshua identifies the physical destruction of only three towns—Jericho, Ai, and Hazor. In response, he asserts that to argue this restriction is to be "disingenuous" (189) since the text affirms that Israel smote all the towns (189). Joshua affirmed, however, that Israel lived in towns they had not built and ate from vineyards and orchards that they had not planted (24:13; cf. Deut 6:10-11). For a newly arriving people, it would be more efficient to engage the enemy in the open country than physically to destroy the structures; this largely is the storyline of the southern and northern campaigns!

Dever's affirmation of a rapid and complete conquest of Canaan is too facile with the text (187). Joshua implies that the initial conquest entailed several years (14:7,10). Furthermore, Joshua later concedes that non-Israelite "nations" remained among them (23:4,7,12), setting the stage for the issues in Judges.

The point is that Dever is often *too* restrictive as he reads the texts. Regardless of one's presupposition on the historical character of the Hebrew Bible, major questions remain unresolved.

This criticism, however, does not diminish the value of this volume. It is a *tour de force*—his magnum opus (xii). It is encyclopedic discussing the overwhelming minutiae of archaeological data, along with anthropology, state formation, ethnography, epistemology, and historical philosophy. The bibliography alone is seventy-nine pages! The detailed and conceptual discussion must serve as a start point from which any study of the history of ancient Israel and Judah must commence. Dever deserves our thanks for its production.

The volume best serves graduate students and scholars. Wading through the minutiae asks

too much of the average undergraduate, especially those uninitiated to the complexities of biblical historiography.

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Roy E. GANE. *Old Testament Law for Christians: Original Context and Enduring Application*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2017. 464 pp. $32.99.

Gane is professor of Hebrew Bible & Ancient Near Eastern languages at Andrews University, in Berrien Springs, Michigan. Gane is a graduate of UC Berkeley, where he studied under Jacob Milgrom. Gane's expertise in OT law has been seen over the last decades in a continuous stream of articles and monographs that have contributed to the academic study of OT law, as well as books and articles that are aimed at helping the Church come to an understanding of the meaning and significance of OT law for Christian communities today.

This latest volume is an academic work that draws together the wisdom from Gane's career of teaching and researching OT law for a Christian audience. The purpose of this volume is to show Christians "how OT laws are relevant, interesting, accessible, and useful; how to navigate around them; how to uncover their wise values; and how to arrive at answers to questions regarding their interpretation and application to modern life." (xiv). The volume is structured into four parts: the first part, "Getting into Old Testament Law," introduces how Jesus and Paul interpreted OT law, and describes the nature and understanding of law within the OT itself. The author shows that the function of OT law is to reveal God's character, to specify terms for accepting God's covenant grace, to teach wisdom in response to a fallen life, and to help Israel form a model society as a guiding light to the nations. The second part, "Literature and Background of Old Testament Law," orients the reader into scholarly discussions on law as it was understood and functioned in the ancient Near East and ancient Israel. Part three, "Applying Old Testament Laws," surveys the range of approaches that have been proposed for understanding and applying OT laws for today. This section culminates with the author's proposal towards OT law, which he calls a "Progressive Moral Wisdom" approach. The final part, "Values in Old Testament Law," surveys the range of OT laws, focusing on how the Ten Commandments are foundational principles that are developed in case laws to apply to specific circumstances. The section also contains a discussion of social justice as it relates to law, as well as deals with difficult topics such as slavery, punishments, laws of sexuality, and various strange and controversial laws.

The strengths of this volume are its depth in understanding the historical, social, and literary contexts of biblical law, and how these contexts help us interpret the laws responsibly. The description of how law functioned in ancient Israel and the Bible are insightful, and will give readers a great understanding of how law relates to the rest of the story of Israel, as well as to the NT, as Gane is constantly reading the laws with an eye towards the canonical context of the Bible (seen from the over 700 references to NT texts in the index). The author goes to great lengths to help readers understand the range of underlying motivations and rationales for the laws, and the relationship between the underlying principles and values that the laws promote, and the specific instantiations of the values being applied with wisdom to particular circumstances. Gane's unique contribution to reading OT law as Christians is his model of "Progressive Moral Wisdom." This approach to understanding laws has five steps: first, analyze the law in its context by itself. Second, discern how the law functions within the system of other OT laws. Third, consider the context of the ancient life and social situation of the law. Fourth, interpret the law within the context of the process of redemption. Finally, based on the preced-

ing background work from the first four steps, seek to apply the function of the law to a modern context (202-203). The steps in this volume ensure that the reader takes the ancient context of the laws into consideration in seeking to apply the principles, values, and wisdom of OT law to a modern Christian context. Whether this volume is read as a whole or referenced for information on individual laws or topics, this work will provide an excellent resource for students, pastors, and anyone interested in understanding the significance of OT law for Christians.

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Moshe HALBERTAL and Stephen HOLMES. *The Beginning of Politics: Power in the Biblical Book of Samuel*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017. 211 pp. $27.95.

What has Jerusalem to do with Washington? According to Halbertal and Holmes, a lot. In the current volume, two law professors with exegetical acumen team up to present a compelling interdisciplinary reading of 1-2 Samuel (hereafter Samuel). Their aim is to demonstrate that this work is uninterested in advocating a specific partisan agenda and thus able to offer incisive analysis of the nature of political power in general. In order to make this case, Halbertal and Holmes recount the founding of Israelite kingship, beginning with the violent and chaotic state of Israelite society in Judges and concluding with the transfer of power from David to Solomon in 1 Kings. Though their account is not exhaustive, it hits the most relevant highlights in mostly chronological order.

The introduction focuses on the background to Israelite kingship. After briefly locating their work within the history of scholarship, they discuss Israel's unique political constitution prior to the monarchy: their king is not a god; God is their king. Yet this was unsustainable. The people desired greater unity and continuity than they experienced under the judges. This led to the creation of a de-divinized, semiautonomous sphere of human politics.

The anonymous author of Samuel presents this development as ultimately necessary, but nonetheless fraught with ambivalence. He then proceeds to recount the early legacy of this political novum with uncommon distance and impartiality. Chapter 1 focuses on the rise and fall of Saul, including David's accession to the throne. These first two kings teach different but equally valuable lessons about political power, like the paradox of political ambition and the inescapable ambiguity of political action. Chapter 2 uses Saul's slaughter of the priests of Nob and David's execution of Uriah to portray two faces of political violence—one growing from insecurity and the other from overconfidence.

Chapter 3 focuses on the complexities of dynastic succession. It analyzes how David's sons jockeyed for position and took advantage of their father's unwillingness to deal sternly with his potential legacy bearers. Though political communities demand continuity, Samuel exposes how the dynastic approach is beset by inescapably self-defeating dynamics. Chapter 4 focuses on David's last words, which confirm many of the political points the authors have been making throughout the book, including but not limited to the double reversal of means and ends, the shedding of morals to pursue political ends, and half-crazed kingly obsession with political rivals. The concluding chapter reprises the authors' praise for the literary and political brilliance of the anonymous author of Samuel. It also recaps their position concerning the neutrality of Samuel and the abundant harvest this approach yields for our understanding of politics in general.

The strength of this volume is how its authors bring the narrative of Samuel to life in fresh ways by focusing on the abiding political truths it conveys. Most readers should have no trouble

seeing how they speak into our own political experiences, whether on a national, local, or even institutional level. There is plenty here for seasoned teachers of Samuel as well as preachers, students, and other avid Bible readers. It is both accessible and thought provoking. Its weakness is, perhaps, the assumption that the author of Samuel is as disinterested as contemporary political theorists claim to be. While I truly appreciate how the authors use the grand narrative of Samuel to inform politics as if in a disinterested way, it strains credulity to posit that the ancient author had no normative agenda—no politics of his own to advance. When one reads Samuel as part of the wider Deuteronomistic project (from Joshua to 2 Kings), this claim is more difficult to sustain. Nonetheless, the agenda of this volume need not dovetail directly with that of the author of Samuel for it to be stimulating and instructive in our day.

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Edward M. CURTIS. *Interpreting the Wisdom Books: An Exegetical Handbook.* Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2017. 204 pp. $21.99.

As the third volume within Kregel's Handbooks for Old Testament Exegesis, this book maintains the required six-chapter format. The first chapter introduces major aspects of wisdom. Here, Curtis argues that indirect revelation was an inspired process for the wisdom texts within the Protestant canon, and thus, these books exist in a complementary relationship to the OT. Alone, Curtis claims, "Human discovery has little power to understand what God is like or his purpose for creation" (28). A claim that Israel's sages, in my opinion, would reject. The author recognizes that wisdom deals with aspects of life not mentioned in the Law or Prophets. However, his conclusion that wisdom is "generally non-theological" (29) is only valid if Israel's redemptive story is the only theological thread in the OT. Finally, this chapter introduces the genres and literary features of wisdom literature and the nature of a proverb.

In chapter two, Curtis identifies primary themes within each wisdom book. Job explores the relationship between God and humanity, humanity's limited understanding of God, God's reception of honest lament, and how people should respond to suffering. It also teaches people to serve God for who he is rather than for the benefits they receive. Proverbs emphasizes that wisdom begins with the fear of the Lord and the concept of two paths (wisdom and folly). It recognizes general and special revelation, cause and effect, the complexities of life, and teaches important values and their application. Ecclesiastes declares that everything is ephemeral and emphasizes perplexing realities and tensions. It affirms human limitations, the fear of God, obedience, wisdom, enjoying life, and God's sovereignty. Curtis mentions interpretive alternatives for the Song of Songs before identifying its primary themes: love and sexuality as part of God's design, significant attitudes and behaviors in relationships, and the embodiment of "one-flesh" that only comes as God's gift.

The third chapter prepares the reader for interpretation. Curtis discusses the significance of ancient Near Eastern (ANE) culture and the difference between ANE and biblical wisdom literature. He provides a list of resources for accessing ANE culture and parallels to each biblical text. The author briefly introduces textual criticism and translation and again, provides a list of resources. Finally, Curtis recommends introductions to wisdom literature and conservative commentaries (e.g., volumes from Interpretation and the OTL are noticeably absent).

Chapter four supplies guidelines for interpretation, preceded by a brief description of shared principles. He stresses reading Job both within the broader cultural context and the context of the book itself. For Proverbs, he emphasizes context, genre, and the book's complete teaching on any given topic. Curtis navigates the interpretative challenges of Ecclesiastes by

reading the book as a unified whole while recognizing its tensions and lack of structural coherence. He maintains a balanced view of Qoheleth's affirmations and questions, while looking to the NT for ultimate conclusions.

Curtis begins chapter five with an apology for preaching wisdom literature. He then exemplifies basic sermon preparation with Proverbs 2 and Job 28. As for individual books, sermons from Job should acknowledge his struggle and his faith, use relevant examples, and stay aware of present suffering. Sermons from Proverbs should remember dominant themes in the book, reflect the books genre (Curtis does not explain how this might work), and make practical applications. Sermons from Ecclesiastes should maintain the writer's tensions, point to answers in the NT while ironically (to me), helping people live with unresolved questions. Sermons from the Song of Songs should proclaim the text as love poetry, celebrate marriage within God's design and again, emphasize application.

Chapter six puts "it all together" (167). To begin, Curtis provides an insightful contrast of friendship in Proverbs to friendship in Job 4–6. Four steps follow this example. 1) Focus on the topic: study friendship throughout Proverbs and read the text from Job. 2) Recognize the genre and exegetical details of each text. 3) Organize the material for a topical sermon from Proverbs and a contrasting outline of friendship from Job 4–6. 4) Apply both texts to life.

The appendix, by John Dutton, provides an especially good introduction to computer resources for biblical study (without specific mention of Wisdom Literature) with examples of how one might use software for word searches. Dutton contrasts online resources to those installed on a computer and reviews several major software developers and Internet sites, with a brief glimpse to future promising projects.

As this summary of contents suggests, Curtis frequently repeats the same ideas due to the required format of the series. And while this feature may be helpful to the novice or beginner, it will prove tedious and frustrating for a reader with experience in exegesis. This repetition also causes the author to omit discussion of other important features, e.g., the personification of wisdom and the role of women in Proverbs 1–9. Curtis also confesses what has been suggested above: "The guidelines here are meant to focus on issues and teachings of the book about which most evangelicals would agree" (161). In other words, the author provides guidelines for exegesis, resources, and a basic understanding of wisdom that derive from evangelical commitments, though many evangelicals may disagree with a number of the author's conclusions. For nonevangelicals, I suspect this handbook will prove more frustrating than helpful. However, as a primer for (evangelical) beginners, Curtis provides a volume that achieves its purpose and thus, should find its rightful place in the series and classrooms.

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Göran EIDEVALL. *Amos.* AB 24G. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2017. 312 pp. $65.00.

Eidevall authored the most recent volume of the Anchor Bible Commentary with his 2017 commentary on the book of Amos. The structure of the commentary is fairly standard. The introduction (32 pp.) is followed by a bibliography (39 pp.) and then by a mostly verse-by-verse examination of the text. Large or significant blocks of text are often preceded by a very short introduction.

In his introduction, the author first addresses the figure of Amos, and argues against searching for the historical figure since all evidence of this character is too speculative to form a foundation for interpretation. Eidevall opts instead for viewing Amos as a literary character, though

without denying the existence of such a historical person. After a short summary of genres found in the book of Amos, the volume of which are suggested to be the result of a long process of editing, Eidevall summarizes the general scholarly consensus on the concentric structure of Amos 3–6 and then proposes nine thematic threads that run through the entire book of Amos, all of which occur first in Amos 1:1-5. He concludes this discussion by proposing the book of Amos can be read as "a drama of sorts," which essentially involves reading the book in three "acts," each of which correspond to one of the three main sections of the book (chs 1–2, 3–6, and 7–9). In dialogue with his comments on the structure and coherence of the book of Amos, Eidevall devotes the largest section of the introduction to the history of composition and redaction of the book of Amos. After critiquing traditional scholarly attempts to date the book or its events based on Amos 1:1, the author surveys a number of historical contexts which he proposes gave rise to portions of the book we now have, and then offers a brief defense of the redaction critical method he uses. Eidevall proposes that there were three main stages of development in the growth of the book, the first occurring somewhere between the fall of Samaria and the fall of Judah, the second sometime after the fall of Jerusalem, and the third sometime during the Persian period. Eidevall concludes his introduction by surveying how the book of Amos was used in different periods of history, helpfully pointing out the relatively recent focus on social justice in interpretations of Amos.

Eidevall writes in a friendly, first-person style. His commentary on the text of Amos is brief when compared to the longer commentaries of Shalom Paul, Hans Walter Wolff, or Francis I. Andersen and David Noel Freedman, and may not provide everything one wants when looking for a standalone commentary on the book of Amos. However, for the reader familiar with Amos studies, Eidevall's commentary is best seen as written on top of or alongside the rest of Amos scholarship.

While not a content related comment, in recent years the Anchor Bible series has become inconsistent in the citation style used in individual volumes. Of the seven Anchor Bible commentaries on the OT published in the last ten years, four use in-text, parenthetical notation, one uses footnotes, and this volume is one of two that feature endnotes, an unfortunate decision for this type of volume.

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Mignon R. JACOBS. *The Books of Haggai and Malachi*. NICOT. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017. 377 pp. $48.00.

Unmentioned by editor or author, this volume is an update or replacement of Verhoef's 1987 volume on Haggai and Malachi in the NICOT series. Jacobs begins each commentary with a basic introduction that has no concern for issues outside a historical-critical approach. Thus, for both books she examines the historical context of the oracles, briefly assesses intertextual indicators, mentions the Hebrew text (transliterated throughout), and reviews in detail the structure and message of each book. In addition, she includes a section regarding the prophet Haggai and the time of his activity. The body of the commentary then presents a careful exegesis or explanation of the text, methodically identifying and working through each primary structural unit and subunit with grammatical study of phrases and exhaustive examination of key words as they appear elsewhere in the OT. In matters of textual ambiguity (text criticism), Jacobs consistently and conservatively favors the MT. And when faced with interpretive options, she summarizes alternative positions before identifying her preferred path. NICOT

fans (of which I am one) will not be disappointed by the commentary's familiar design, reader-friendly prose, and text-savvy exegesis.

Within these strengths, I make two further observations. First, Jacobs overlooks the role and benefit of redaction criticism, a traditional aspect of historical criticism. She explains the significance of each date and its associated message in Haggai as well as the meaning of the oracles in Malachi at the time they were originally (orally) proclaimed. She does not, however, consider who brought these oracles together in their present form, when this occurred, what might have prompted the collection, or the intent of either book beyond each prophet's original activity. Instead, Jacobs seems to assume that explaining the oracles in their original oral context is the same as explaining the message of the book. I recognize that the author works within the constraints of the NICOT and that no commentary can include every critical method. However, given Jacobs' and the series' high regard for Scripture, overlooking redaction as well as canonical form and function creates a significant lacuna for reading the books of Haggai and, especially Malachi. While Jacobs identifies Malachi as the final book of "most English versions" (129) and mentions that it does not occupy that position in the Hebrew Bible, she does not explain or take into consideration the influence this position exerts over interpretations of Malachi, especially Malachi 4.

Second, the reader will do well to notice the author's favored sources. In the commentary on Haggai, for example, the first one hundred footnotes contain seventeen notes that do not refer to secondary material. Of the remaining eighty-three notes, forty-two mention one or more of the same four studies or commentaries: Kessler, VTSup 91 (28 notes, 34%), Meyers and Meyers, AB (23 notes, 28%), Verhoef, NICOT (18 notes, 22%), or Wolff, CC (16 notes, 19%). The same is generally true for Malachi. Here, twenty-two of the first one hundred footnotes do not refer to secondary resources. Of the remaining seventy-eight notes, fifty-five (66%) mention one or more of same three commentaries: Hill, AB (36 notes, 46%), Verhoef, NICOT (22 notes, 28%), and Petersen, OTL (18 notes, 23%). While a bit out of balance at times, the footnotes confirm what one would expect from a volume in the NICOT: use of the best historical-critical sources to produce a robust commentary paying particular attention to the text's literary features and theological themes (xii) that is accessible for students, teachers, and preachers.

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Dale B. MARTIN. ***Biblical Truths: The Meaning of Scripture in the Twenty-first Century.*** **New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2017. 408 pp. $40.00.**

This volume can be characterized in a number of ways. Many will probably view it first and foremost as a defense of "believing" Scripture in the face of competing narratives (modernity, historical study), but the book is perhaps most fruitfully considered as another installment in the turn toward the "Theological Interpretation of Scripture." The book steers clear of that explicit terminology, but it pursues all the same goals as the movement that goes by that name. Its principal goal, if I read it correctly, is to unseat a purportedly Enlightenment-based privileging of *experts*, in favor of finding the meaning of Scripture within the community's engagement with it. It is ironic that this volume should be published in the same year as Tom Nichols's *The Death of Expertise*! (2017) Reading Scripture properly, in Martin's view, is not a matter of consulting credentialed opinion, but of reading in concert with tradition.

Unfortunately, things do not go at all well with this author's argument. For one thing, his command of the facts is frequently slipshod, sometimes getting things so wrong as to get them

backwards. Things go south already on page 1, where we read that "premodern Christians . . . read the [biblical] texts not for what some author 'behind' the text might have 'meant.'" Martin specifically names Augustine as a stalwart of this supposedly premodern approach, but those who paid attention as they read Augustine will be moved to ask: if he didn't define reading success as the retrieval of the author's meaning, how are we to understand what he wrote in *De doctrina Christiana* 3.27.38: "[H]e who examines the divine eloquence, desiring to discover the intention of the author through whom the Holy Spirit created the Scripture, whether he attains this end or finds another meaning in the words not contrary to right faith, is free from blame if he has evidence from some other place in the divine books"? (See 2.5.6; 2.13.19) If factual accuracy means anything for Martin, he could not have started his book on worse footing than this.

I realize, of course, that Martin *is* a trained expert in the Bible (specifically, in the NT). That's why I am surprised at how little space is given in this book to going beyond the amateur's viewpoint. Perhaps Martin would say that that's part of his point, but it's really disconcerting how often the amateur manifests himself/herself in the misstating of basic facts. It is unbelievable that an instructor at Yale Divinity School—and one who was educated there—can refer to Brevard Childs as a proponent of "canonical criticism" (78 n 11)—a label that Childs fought for decades to disown. Martin's book is replete with all the stock caricatures and howlers of the Theological Interpretation movement: we learn there (predictably) that everything associated with the Enlightenment is bad (necessarily so!), that there is something unnatural or illegitimate about going "behind" the text (fretting about the referent), that Emmanuel Hirsch's arguments are representative of intentionalism in general, and so on.

This brings me to the problems attending Martin's frequent appeals to philosophical hermeneutics. According to him, reading for the author's intention has been "almost universally rejected by philosophers and theorists of textual interpretation since around 1980" (3 n 5). Given the sort of selective reading program typically adopted in Anglo-American theology today, a statement like this is perhaps not so surprising, but a deeper grasp of philosophy would have alerted Martin to the nearsightedness of this assessment. Martin's assertion that "[t]exts do not 'mean'; people 'mean' with texts" (96) would be true enough—and very happily expressed—if allowed to hold for the text's *authorial* aspect. Unfortunately, Martin turns this otherwise insightful comment into "an empirical observation of how human beings actually do read texts and 'get meaning' from them." This exhibits a fallacy that is widespread in recent hermeneutical theorizing—that of mistaking the multi*definition*ality of the word "meaning" for the multi*dimension*ality of some singular thing out there called "meaning." Martin ends up at the view that "[r]eaders make meaning when they read texts," but he fails to recognize that this meaning of "meaning" is *genetically unrelated* to the one with which the hermeneutic task is necessarily front-loaded: that of the sort of "meaning" with which texts have been imbued by dint of *their communicative nature*. Readers of Scripture deserve a better guide to basic hermeneutical issues than this.

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Hans BOERSMA. *Scripture as Real Presence: Sacramental Exegesis in the Early Church.* Grand Rapids: Baker, 2017. 316 pp. $35.33.

Following increasing interest in and attention to the theological interpretation of Scripture among contemporary theologians and biblical scholars, Boersma argues in this volume for the retrieval of the sacramental sensibility that undergirds patristic exegesis. Generally speaking, such a sacramentality entails treating Scripture as Scripture, but it more precisely entails treating

Scripture (especially the OT) as a sacrament, whereby "the invisible things of God are understood by means of things that are visible and beheld through their relationship and likeness to things seen" (3). On this score, the OT's historical surface level not only points to Christ but even participates in the very reality of the Christ event, drawing believers to participate more fully in that event as well. Behind such a hermeneutic lies a certain Christian/Platonic metaphysic of participation that conceives all created reality as a reflection of and participant in eternal reality. Such a metaphysic and the sacramental hermeneutic it grounds fills the spiritual and pastoral gap left by exclusively historical approaches to Scripture that attempt to be objective by separating exegesis from metaphysical and theological assumptions, an endeavor that is not without its own metaphysical presuppositions as Boersma shows. The book defends not only the participatory framework for sacramental exegesis but also this very exegetical method itself through actual examples of sacramental exegesis in the Church Fathers, answering common objections to their approach to various OT and NT texts.

This volume is structured both according to the movement of salvation history found in Scripture itself and according to the order of sacramental exegesis from the literal interpretation of Scripture to the manifold allegorical and spiritual methods. Along the lines of this structure, each chapter provides a different example of how patristic exegetes treated a particular text, showing how their approach demonstrates a similar sacramental sensibility that understands the text as manifesting the salvific work of Christ. After showing that even the literal interpretation of Genesis 1 was ultimately theological and sacramental for the church fathers, Boersma engages sacramental interpretation of the theophany of Genesis 18, the Passover in Exodus 12, the christological interpretations of Joshua, the Psalms, and the Servant Songs of Isaiah, the spiritual interpretations of Proverbs 8 and the Song of Songs, and the anagogical reading of the beatitudes of Matthew 5. Throughout the book, Boersma's purpose is primarily not to defend any particular readings that patristic exegetes gave to the biblical text, but rather to argue for the contemporary retrieval of the sacramental approach itself and its following characteristics, namely 1) its forward-looking openness to the infinite depth of meaning behind biblical texts rather than an exclusive focus on the meaning of Scripture as some historical artifact, 2) its interest in how Scripture can transform its readers, 3) its progressive understanding that the different levels of depth of interpretation depend on the spiritual maturity of the reader, and 4) its grounding in divine providence, God's guidance of human beings towards their proper end. According to Boersma, these characteristics stand in stark relief to exclusively historical approaches to Scripture that relegate the interpretation of Scripture to a scholarly elite rather than the whole Church, coming to Scripture to meet Christ who is sacramentally present throughout the text.

Although the author claims that he is not defending any particular readings of the Church Fathers, his engagement with the particularities of patristic exegesis is where his argument has the most force, as important as his discussions about Christian/Platonic metaphysics and the metaphysical presuppositions of the historical critical method of exegesis are. It is in explaining these particular interpretations that he demonstrates the spiritual, theological, and pastoral depth of this sacramental approach since the focus at every level is the believer's experience of the mystery of Christ through the letter of Scripture. Naturally, since this volume is defending the sacramental method itself and not any particular interpretations, there are of course areas of exegetical and theological inquiry left undeveloped, not least of which is the *totus Christus* (whole Christ) theological presupposition that undergirds much of Augustine's exegesis (briefly discussed in chapter 6 on the Psalms). Even so, it must be kept in mind that this book is as much an invitation as it is a precisely argued monograph. It is an invitation to ministers and scholars alike to do theology in and through the same sacramental reading of Scripture that informed

much of the fundamental developments in the history of patristic theology. I wholeheartedly recommend this book to all those who are hungry and thirsty to bring Scripture back into the practice of theology and to find Christ throughout the text of Scripture. As cogent in its metaphysical arguments as it is inspiring in its Scriptural explorations, this book should be required reading in university and seminary classes both in theology and Scripture, so that the next generation of ministers and Christian educators will be formed by its contents.

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Christopher A. HALL. *Living Wisely with the Church Fathers.* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2017. 276 pp. $ 22.50.

Those familiar or unfamiliar with Hall's work in patristics will find this work a pleasant read and serving either as a gateway or compliment to his other works. His other volumes along this same vein find this one a complimentary addition to Hall's focus on the church fathers and their views especially as it here relates to daily living. One considers that living coincides with beliefs held, and Hall unpacks the beliefs relative to several aspects of social engagement and how early Christians differed in their ethos from the populace.

This volume begins with the Christian acceptance of martyrdom as viewed as one of the highest expressions of faith in Christ. Because eternal life was promised through Jesus, the lusts of the flesh and covetousness of a secular life meant one might embrace materialism and lose their soul while to give away one's wealth was to store up treasures in heaven. Students of Stone-Campbell Movement history will find Hall's material on war and military service interesting, especially if they have studied the views of David Lipscomb. As Origen is shown to have opposed serving in the military for the favor of Christian prayer, so one might find him a rather familiar companion to the views of Lipscomb. Next, Hall details sex and marriage, and for those so interested they will not find that the church fathers were endorsing of the myriads of perspectives circulating today. Closing out his tome, Hall looks at early Christian views concerning life and death and then concludes with entertainment in the Roman Empire. Hall's final notes summarize all that he had previously said and extrapolate according to his interpretation of how the church fathers might inform Christians to live today. Parts of this work will not be agreeable to those who hold to progressive or liberal views of sexual fluidity and pro-choice narratives. However, one might expect that they find the pro-life stance of the church fathers consistent especially when they read the section on military service.

One criticism that might be levied is that at various points, though they are few, the author offers his theological insights into the material he covers. Rather than reading the church fathers and stating their views, he seems at times to read his views into what they say, which is common of anyone but one should seek not to fall victim to this. Objectivity should rule as much as one can allow such, but Hall's subjectivity is not overbearing or very common throughout his work. Another criticism might be that Hall is selective in the church fathers he highlights. The Desert Fathers are not mentioned, which may lead to the author's subjectivity at times, since his fellowship may not deal so much with them, but that is only conjecture. Third, the material occasionally mentions Roman custom, but giving a greater explanation of Roman social culture at times might have better illuminated the views of the fathers against the backdrop of their context.

This volume is an edifying read for any who would take it up. The term edifying is used on purpose because there are moments of sheer joy at reading what Hall presents. Scholars and ministers alike would glean from it, though in their respective stations. Even lay Christians inter-

ested in deeper connection with Christianity's past would find this volume a welcome addition to their reading list. Overall, the author does again what he has previously done, and it must be said that if a reader is unfamiliar with him, this volume can be read alone and may even whet one's appetite to pick up more of his works.

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John A. L. Lee. *Basics of Greek Accents: Eight Lessons with Exercises.* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018. 110 pp. $14.99.

Many advanced students in biblical studies eventually reach a point where they wish that they had learned the intricacies of how to accent an ancient Greek word properly. And teachers of ancient Greek are often faced with a dilemma when some of the students in their advanced courses already possess this knowledge while others, especially those who come from another school, do not. Lee has sought to remedy this problem by providing a little manual that can be used in a short course. Instead of holding up the whole class in order to bring a few students up to speed, those deficient in Greek accentuation can simply take a short course on Greek accents from this volume.

As his subtitle announces, Lee has organized these "basics" into eight lessons. Lesson One explains the difference between long and short vowels and introduces the three accent marks and how they are to be written. Then Lee explains how the length of the last syllable determines the accent in most cases in accordance with four basic rules. Lesson Two covers the recessive rule for verbs, while Lesson Three explains what Lee calls the "home base" rule for nouns and adjectives. Lesson Four focuses on accenting "function words" like the article, demonstratives, pronouns, prepositions, numerals, and adverbs, as well as some common nouns and adjectives. Lesson Five deals with participles, and Lesson Six with contract vowels. Lesson Seven tackles enclitics, while Lesson Eight enumerates what appear to be anomalies and exceptions. Each of the eight lessons is supplied with exercises to be done in class as well as for homework, followed by an appendix that gives additional exercises for "Further Practice" (65-67). Another appendix provides the correct answers to all of these exercises (73-85). Other appendixes provide a bibliography of additional works with advice on where to find a "comprehensive coverage of accents" (69) plus a chart on "Traditional Accent Terminology" (71-72). A fifth and final appendix contains photographs of pages from three ancient manuscripts and one fifteenth-century printed book showing how Greek letters and accents were written. Lee provides two sets of indexes (Greek words and subjects).

Lee's little book is a good introduction to acquaint students with the basic rules of Greek accentuation. As Lee himself acknowledges (7), students will need another book for the many exceptions that do not seem to follow these basic rules, and he has provided them with a selection of such works to consult (69-70). I like his use of "home base" in the rule for accenting nouns and adjectives (23), but I question his choice for designating the last three syllables of a Greek word. I fear that his "second-last" and "third-last" could be easily confused when students are memorizing rules (13, 19, 57). I prefer the single-word designations *ultima*, *penult*, and *antepenult*, and I would use them consistently and never switch to using "the first syllable" for the penult (61). I would also combine his second and third basic rules into one so that students really only have to memorize two rules: *If the ultima is long*, the antepenult cannot be accented, and the penult, if it is accented at all, must have the acute. *If the ultima is short*, a long penult, if it is accented at all, must have the circumflex. These two rules are crucial and so

should be memorized. The other rules can easily be remembered. But if students will memorize these two basic rules and then apply the recessive rule for verbs, and the "home base" rule for nouns and adjectives, they should be able to accent ninety to ninety-five per cent of the words that they encounter. With these reservations, I recommend this volume as a good text for a short course on Greek accentuation.

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Loren T. STUCKENBRUCK. *The Myth of Rebellious Angels: Studies in Second Temple Judaism and New Testament Texts.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017. 447 pp. $50.00.

This volume is a very enjoyable and informative book. It was originally published by Mohr-Siebeck, but Eerdmans has now made it available at a lower price. Most of the chapters were published elsewhere, but some are presented here for the first time, and all the previously published material had been updated for the Mohr-Siebeck edition. As a collection of originally separate pieces, there is an aspect of disunity to the book, but the narrow focus of the discussion prevents this from getting in the way. Stuckenbruck has found a way of weaving a thread through all the chapters.

The book as a whole will be of interest to students of hellenistic and apocalyptic streams of Judaism, but chapters 8 through 14 focus on aspects of how the "rebellious angel" myth impacts our understanding of the NT—including the story of Jesus' birth, the "evil one" in the Fourth Gospel, the apostolic decree on the cleansing of the Gentiles, apocalyptic thought in Pauline theology, and the requirement for women to wear veils in 1 Cor 11:10. Stuckenbruck's treatment of problematic passages is always expertly informed, but never derivative. He convinces with his ability to read these texts through a sophisticated understanding of their contexts. In this, he presents a model for teachers and students alike to emulate.

Those who are strongly allergic to lengthy footnotes and exacting detail will want to steer clear of this volume, but the rest of us can learn a great deal from it. I highly recommend this book for all students of NT and/or ancient Judaism.

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Graham TWELFTREE, ed. *The Nature Miracles of Jesus: Problems, Perspectives, and Prospects.* Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2017. 285 pp. $36.00.

Graham Twelftree, well known for his studies of miracles in the Bible, has gathered a team of academics from American, Australian, British, and German institutions for a wide-ranging study of Jesus' nature miracles as recorded in the canonical Gospels. These miracles include Jesus' turning water into wine, causing a miraculous catch of fish, stilling a storm, feeding large groups with little food, walking on water, predicting a coin in a fish's mouth, and withering a fig tree (Scot McKnight's list, 174).

Why study nature miracles? In part because they sharpen the historical question. In contrast to healings and exorcisms, nature miracles are "not amenable to psychosomatic explanations" (Craig Keener, 63) and demand assent or dissent to the proposition that God sometimes works beyond or outside (but never against, *pace* Hume) the laws of nature. Put bluntly, if one can believe the nature miracles, the healing miracles pose little problem.

The editor provides an introductory chapter and epilogue, and each of the authors has 20+ pages to make his case. Craig Keener (41-65) argues for the historicity of Jesus' nature miracles, along the way citing many examples of credible modern miracle accounts to counter the

assumption that miracle reports come only from uneducated foreigners. At the other extreme James Crossley calls the nature miracles "pure myth" (86-106) and insists that "miracles cannot happen in this game" (88), "this game" referring to historical study.

Eric Eve (66-85) splits the difference when he concludes that marvelous things happened in Jesus' ministry—maybe objectively miraculous, maybe not—and the stories "have grown in the telling" (Twelftree's summary, 35). Splitting the difference in another way, Ruben Zimmermann in his "literary-hermeneutical" essay (107-127) argues against treating nature miracles differently from other miracles and does not resolve the tension between the "factual" narrative and its "fictive" referent.

Two essays deal with the philosophical question of miracles, each charting the demise of David Hume's classic antimiracle argument in a different way. Understanding Michael Levine's essay (128-151) requires more than a basic education in philosophy, but nonphilosophers should have no trouble understanding Timothy McGrew's contribution (152-173).

Scot McKnight (174-191) does not call the quest for the historical Jesus illegitimate, but he does call it irrelevant for faith. He proposes a "radical separationism . . . that allows historical Jesus scholars [to] go about their business" (190) but leaves the church to follow the Jesus of the canon and the creeds.

After the main contributions a chapter appears that allows each author a few pages to respond to the others. This, the weakest part of the book in my opinion, provides little new information and barely advances the discussion. Then in his epilog, Twelftree muses on the future prospects of the discussion:

"So different are the views represented and expressed in this project that I am not confident that there will soon be any resolution to the philosophical and historical or even theological problems connected with the nature miracle stories associated with Jesus" (235). Still he hopes for increased mutual respect and greater knowledge of the issues.

As a whole the book provokes thought and sharpens the issues. The contributors for the most part talk past each other, but this fault comes neither from the book and its editor nor from the contributors themselves. The historical quest will find a Jesus—actually several Jesuses. The church will follow the Jesus of canon and creed and will not listen to the voice of another.

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Oliver D. CRISP. *The Word Enfleshed: Exploring the Person and Work of Christ.* Grand Rapids: Baker, 2016. 208 pp. $27.00.

This volume continues Crisp's scholarship on foundational orthodox Christology begun in *Divinity and Humanity* (2007) and continued in *God Incarnate* (2009), *Revisioning Christology* (2011), and chapter contributions in various books since 2012, which he references in the acknowledgements. His latest work examines the metaphysics of the incarnation, from the Preincarnate Christ (Son of God) in relation to his eternal generation and to the identity of the Incarnate Christ, to models of the hypostatic union. Crisp concludes the book with his own unique application of one of the models of the hypostatic union to the atonement and union with Christ. Readers of Crisp's earlier works will be glad to see the same lucid prose, helpful examples and analogies, and generous approach to laying forth all the arguments in the field of discussion.

Nine short chapters comprise this volume: The Eternal Generation of the Son, Christ without Flesh, Incorporeality and Incarnation, The Christological Doctrine of the Image of God, Desiderata for Models of the Hypostatic Union, Compositional Christology, The Union

Account of Atonement, The Spirit's Role in Union with Christ, and The Nature and Scope of Union with Christ. Throughout, Crisp's aim remains to articulate and defend Creedal Orthodoxy by articulating the exact breadth of doctrinal space afforded by the ecumenical creeds while offering his own arguments for which model best suits both the Biblical and Creedal statements.

In chapter one Crisp defends the traditional doctrine of the eternal generation of the son over and against some modern objections to it, namely, Paul Helm's. Helm sees eternal generation as expressing only the economic function of the Son, and not His ontological relation to the Father (11). Bruce Wayne is identical with Batman, yet Bruce Wayne would still be Bruce Wayne even if the circumstances leading to his becoming Batman were different, such that Batman never came to be—while Bruce Wayne is independent of Batman, Batman is contingent upon Bruce Wayne (assuming there are no possible worlds in which Batman exists as someone not Bruce Wayne) (11-12). Analogously, if God had chosen not to create the world, maintains Helm, the Son would still be the Son, but not the eternally begotten. Crisp identifies three problems with Helm's view, which he proceeds to defend in support of the ecumenical council's original statement.

In chapter two Crisp defends the idea that Christ does not exist eternally as the Son of God but has an identity that comes to be in distinction from the eternal Son of God. Crisp's main interlocutor in chapter two is Robert Jenson, who maintains that Christ exists eternally as the Son of God. The issue is what sort of composition is the God-man? Crisp defends the doctrine he calls *christological compositionalism*, which maintains that, "God the Son is only one component part of that whole [Christ], so God the Son is not identical to Christ, just as I am not identical to my hand, though my hand is a part of the mereological whole that is me" (25). He does this to protect the traditional doctrine of *impassability*—that, being Eternal Deity, the Son of God is not subject to change, the sort of which Christ, in his human nature, undergoes as a man (particularly in his suffering on the Cross). Crisp articulates in chapter 3 how it is that Christ and the Son of God could be a nonidentical composite, yet one whole.

Crisp surveys the history of the problems faced by the doctrine of the Incarnation and the Incorporeality of the Son of God in chapter three before moving into a positive statement. When he gets there, Crisp uses the metaphor of clothing to highlight the relation of the incorporeal Son of God to the human nature of Christ: "Christ's human nature is rather like a garment, which the Word puts on at the first moment of incarnation. Just as the garment is not identical to the person wearing it, so the Word is not identical to the human nature he assumes" (45). Of course, he fleshes out this analogy with further argument.

Chapter four covers the Image of God. It is here where Crisp begins to lay the foundational points for his later treatment of union with Christ. Christ, he says, is the prototypical human (52). This means that when God made man in His own image, He made him in the image of the Christ who was to come (61). To many this claim seems counterintuitive, since Christ follows Adam temporally. However, Crisp maintains a teleological view of God's decrees, such that what is first in intention is last in application (153). "God has ordained from before the foundation of the world that Christ would be the archetype of true humanity, and that his human nature (in hypostatic union with God the Son) would be the blueprint for all other human natures" (63). He then defends this position against various objections, such as how those who are not united to Christ (unbelievers) can be made in the image of Christ.

Chapter five canvases the models of the hypostatic union and Crisp defends the Chalcedonian definition of one person in two natures. He offers a minimal axiom for any models seeking to maintain fidelity to the creed: "Christ has one of whatever goes with the person and two of whatever goes with the natures" (94). He then proceeds in chapter six to provide

his own model of the hypostatic union, a three-part compositional model. Crisp maintains that, "God the Son is not identical to Christ, though God the Son and Christ's human nature together compose Christ. Christ's human nature bears an accidental or contingent relation to God the son" (99).

The last three chapters examine atonement in light of compositional Christology. Crisp argues that the union account of atonement takes the best part of the penal substitutionary atonement model (that incorporates aspects of the ransom, satisfaction, and moral exemplar models), while avoiding the legal fictions required by imputation. It is a complicated argument, too intricate to reproduce here (and depending too much on previous chapters, too generically summarized in this review), but the upshot is that Christ actually receives the penal consequences of sin for humanity, though he is not the one who sinned; yet it is because he is a member of the larger entity of Redeemed Humanity that he may pay the consequences for the sin of other members (137). The Holy Spirit's role in union with Christ is to publish the reality of Christ's atonement to the members of Redeemed Humanity, and maintain the everlasting progress of uniting humanity to divinity in each member: "It is as if the Spirit acts as a kind of adhesive, preparing and enabling the human subject to be joined to the body of Christ. . . . We might say that just as the Holy Spirit generates and prepares Christ's human body at the incarnation, so he generates and prepares Christ's bride, his ecclesiastical body, which in one sense will be complete at the inauguration of the eschaton" (161).

Despite the author's clarity, the difficulty of the ideas undertaken in this volume require a patient and diligent reader who is willing to chew on meat where so many other books offer milk. Yet for this kind of reader, the rewards will open the eye of the mind to sustain a deeper gaze at the Lord Jesus Christ.

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Richard B. HAYS. *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2016. 524 pp. $34.95.

Hays made a significant contribution to scholarship with his 1993 release, *Echoes of Scripture in Paul*, and continues this trajectory with the Gospels in the current volume. This volume emerged out of many years of thinking, but the impetus to finish came from Hays sudden cancer diagnosis. Indeed, his conclusion is starkly kerygmatic (see pages 364-365, especially). When questioned about this during a 2016 SBL review panel session Hays became emotional and said, "I thought it would be the last thing I wrote." This intensity of purpose is woven into every page of the work.

As usual, Hayes work is clear and thought-provoking. His thesis is that we must read the Gospels *figurally*, at the very least because that is how the Gospel authors understood Israel's scriptures. To read Scripture figurally is to understand that many, if not most, of the events of the OT were not directly predictive. Rather, there is a discernable correspondence between the ancient texts and Jesus that creates a new and deeper meaning for both. Indeed, Hayes argues, a figural reading stands at the heart of the NT message, which claims that "the events of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection took place according to the Scriptures" (3). This act "reading backwards" opens new vistas of understanding for the text and reveals all sorts of scriptural fingerprints on the Gospel texts.

Each Gospel is given a chapter in which Hays looks through the Evangelist back toward allusions and influences out of the OT. He looks specifically to ask/answer three questions (lightly edited for space):

1. How does each Evangelist carry forward and renarrate the story of Israel?
2. How does the Evangelist draw on OT stories and images to interpret Jesus?
3. How does the Evangelist shape the story of the church through evoking Israel's texts? (14)

This draws more tightly the connection between the Gospels and the story of Israel, something that can be incredibly helpful for the parish which frequently draws hard lines between them.

One of the moments I found fascinating and paradigmatic of the book was his figural reading of the "Fishers of Men" story (Mark 1:16-20). The Synoptics each tell some version of this story and I, like many, grew up hearing it as an exhortation toward evangelism. Under this reading, the purpose of the text is the calling the disciples to go make new disciples, with the "Sunday School" application that we should do the same. Hayes, however, argues this is actually connecting and renarrating Israel's apocalyptic judgment texts. He connects the work of the "fisherman" to the prophetic texts of Jer 16:16-18 and Amos 4:1-2. In these texts the role of the fisherman is not an act of merciful conversion, but an eschatological act of judgment to "repay their iniquity and sin." This radically changes the tone of the story. But Hays' interpretation also plugs it more directly into the story of Israel while drawing it forward as fulfilment in Jesus.

Hays' figural hermeneutic, in this pericope and throughout the book, provides the grounding of critique. How far could or should such a figural reading go? Could one not see some prophetic text hiding behind every word or story? Hayes acknowledges this critique (7). In some circles, perhaps especially scholarly studies, it is common to treat the OT as completely silent about Jesus. In refuting this criticism, Hays argues that from the perspective of the NT, particularly the Evangelists, the revelation of Jesus is the climactic moment that reshapes Israel's story in such a way that Jesus himself provides the hermeneutical clue to "Israel's entire system." Put another way, the issue is not Hayes overreaching, but rather too many are underreaching.

I found this volume a helpful addition to teaching on the Gospel of Mark in my own church setting. It is highly accessible and could be easily adapted toward pastoral usage. Yet I anticipate that because of its rigor it can and should be utilized for more academic purposes, as well. Hayes has provided a model of Christian biblical scholarship and an excellent resource for the church.

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Dorothy Jean WEAVER. *The Irony of Power: The Politics of God within Matthew's Narrative*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2017. 360 pp. $42.00.

This volume focusses on select scenes from Matthew's Gospel that are subtly ironic, where narrative elements such as character and plot are contrasted to speak a counterintuitive message of nonviolence and suffering. Rather than providing a detailed theological exploration of irony or power, Weaver focuses on Matthew's critique of Roman civic and Jewish religious power. Drawing on the contemporary responses of Palestinian Christians to violence, Weaver shows how Matthew's ironic take on power encourages and emboldens Christians to live by a redemptive word of life, even as they assume the immensely difficult call *not to resist the evildoer*.

The author borrows her definition of irony from Douglas Muecke's two-tiered approach in *The Compass of Irony* (1969). Weaver suggests that contrasts written into the literary portrait open new perspectives for the reader/hearer who perceives irony in such juxtaposition. Matthew

presents a 'lower-level portrait' of civic and military power in the story of Herod and the massacre of the innocents; this is juxtaposed with the presentation of the vulnerable baby Jesus as King of the Jews. The plot subsequently unfolds to show Herod as ultimately powerless, terrified of Jesus, and duped by the wise men. The 'lower-level portrait'—Herod's visible power and brute force—is subverted by an 'upper-level portrait' which sees powerlessness transformed by God. This ironic message is engaged through an interpretive 'leap' beyond the world of appearances (43).

Following this method, the author shows Matthew's narrative to be pervasively ironic, in the contrasts between varying social and religious roles of different characters. Jesus' pointed ironic sayings and aphorisms against the Pharisees and others do not receive any attention, except for an insightful chapter on the 'law of retaliation' (*You have heard it said . . . but I say to you . . .*). Here, irony is shown to entail expansive possibilities beyond the standard interpretations and traditions of law. Because the book reads as a series of discrete commentaries on selected texts, Weaver does not emphasize the importance of this methodological insight for her entire project, or for an understanding of irony as more than a critical negation.

Weaver's writing style heavily references the smallest of details in Matthew's text to indicate a subtle interweaving of threads of hope in the portrayal of an overbearing Roman military presence. This is transposed to the contemporary experiences of powerlessness of Palestinian Christians, whose responses to violence are documented, showing Jesus call *not to resist the evildoer* as a radical and continually challenging aspect of Christian faith. Although this is intensely interesting, important theological issues are left unengaged. In deferring the final amelioration of suffering powerlessness to God's 'cosmic and salvific reign' (283), questions as to the present and possible use of power ironically—in both its necessities and compromises—are not addressed.

As a contribution to literature on irony, the author shows the doubled, contrastive function of irony within Matthew's narrative to be integral to Matthew's portrait of the *kingdom of heaven*, hope-filled, dignifying vision within present experience. We are left in no doubt that her basic argument, that 'the violence of the powerful serves only to reveal the limits of their power and to make a mockery of their trust in the use of violent force' (245), is a central concern of Matthew's Gospel, presented with rhetorical impetus and narrative imagination. This volume is an excellent resource for studying narrative contrast and the depiction of characters in Matthew. It is readily useable for preaching and teaching.

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Gabriele BOCCACCINI, Carlos A. SEGOVIA, and Cameron J. DOODY, eds. *Paul the Jew: Rereading the Apostle as a Figure of Second Temple Judaism.* Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2016. 386 pp. $79.00.

This volume's papers mostly derive from the Third Nangeroni Meeting of the Enoch Seminar in 2014 (xi). Not surprisingly given this background, several essays focus on Enochic literature in their reflecting on Paul. The volume seeks to suggest promising post-New Perspective approaches to Paul that emerge from bringing into conversation scholars of both Second Temple Judaism and Paul (ix-x). In particular, the volume aims "fully to embrace the paradigm of the Radical New Perspective [which stresses Paul's Jewish background] not as the conclusion, but as the starting point of our conversation about Paul" (2-3).

Gabriele Boccaccini's introductory essay seeks to demonstrate that Paul advocated three distinct paths toward salvation: (a) Torah observance by Jews, (b) conscience-directed living by gentiles, and (c) forgiveness through the Messiah for Jews and gentiles who fail to observe their

respective special path appropriately (19). This essay was "Boccaccini's opening lecture" at the seminar (1). Printed with it are two responses from the seminar by Albert Baumgarten and Daniel Boyarin (1). Baumgarten's response is appreciative but questions how Boccaccini translates the Enochic explanation for evil (the fall of the Watchers) to Paul (who stresses the fall of Adam; 24). Boyarin's evaluation is more enthusiastic but suggests Boccaccini does not press his argument as strongly as possible (26-27).

Shayna Sheinfeld discusses the righteous remnant in Romans 9–11 in the context of other early Jewish sources (Damascus Document, 4 Ezra). According to Sheinfeld, Paul leverages the remnant theme as a strategy for persuading his audience that he has correctly interpreted Israel's history (34).

Isaac Oliver analyzes Paul's portrayal in Acts. Oliver concludes that "the Paul of Acts . . . is just as Jewish as the Paul of Romans, if not more so" (69).

James Charlesworth surveys "Paul, the Jewish Apocalypses, and Apocalyptic Eschatology." Charlesworth affirms the centrality of apocalyptic to Paul (84). But, this recognition means that Pauline scholars need to immerse themselves in Second Temple apocalyptic literature much more than many have done (84-85). Charlesworth further provides a taxonomy of Second Temple apocalypses, discusses the Qumranites as an apocalyptic community, and connects these discussions with Paul's writings (88-100).

Larry Hurtado addresses "Paul's Messianic Christology." Hurtado notes the diversity of Second Temple Jewish messianic hopes and finds Paul's views of Jesus to fit squarely within this diverse field (107, 110). Subsequently, Hurtado treats the distinctive features of Paul's messianic beliefs (111-120).

Matthew Goff reviews the Corinthian correspondence for reflections on "Heavenly Mysteries and Otherworldly Journeys" and works to understand these features in terms of Jewish apocalypticism. By doing so, Goff argues that Paul largely stands in continuity with Jewish apocalypticism (134, 140, 144).

David Rudolph reassesses Paul's comments about food in Romans 14. Rudolph asserts that Paul's view of food laws does not fall outside the bounds of Judaism (151-152, 171). Instead, it "draws his predominantly Gentile audience more deeply into Judaism" by clarifying halakhic principles (152). Primary among these principles is the halakhic observation that a thing's cleanness or uncleanness for a specific person is determined by that person's decision about whether to regard the thing as clean or unclean (156-167).

Kathy Ehrensperger considers the characteristics of the ideal eschatological community in some Enochic traditions and the extent to which these characteristics resonate with Paul's descriptions of communities he addresses (183). Ehrensperger particularly focuses on designations for community members and the tropes of cleanness and uncleanness (184-192). She argues that both the Enochic literature and Paul see their communities in light of the eschaton, although they locate their communities at different points in the eschatological narrative (192-193). By and large, Ehrensperger finds close affinity in how the two groups of literature portray their communities (201).

Joshua Garroway considers circumcision and gender. Classically, "circumcision was the transformative final step in a male gentile's becoming a Jew," but there was no corresponding rite for female proselytes (220). Garroway represents baptism as Paul's answer to this question, as a transition rite in which both males and females can equally participate (221-223).

Jeremy Punt and Anders Petersen discuss different angles on identify formation. Punt concentrates on the overlapping identities applied to Paul by Judaism and the Roman Empire. Petersen focusses on the overlap between Judaism and Hellenism. In both cases, the authors eschew simplistic binaries (Judaism or empire, Judaism or Hellenism) and urge readers of Paul

to be more sensitive to the variegated and interpenetrating elements from each context that interact with each other.

William Campbell and Carlos Segovia address Paul's reception history. Campbell discusses how Paul has been read in an antisemitic way in the history of interpretation (307, 315). Campbell distinguishes "ancient" antisemitism from a "modern" type that continues to cast its dark shadow from Nazi Germany and elsewhere (305). The "ancient" variety still had its problems—in particular, applying a largely "negative" definition to Jews from those outside their group (304, 306). But Campbell sees this "ancient" variety as largely a regrettable byproduct of early Christians' trying to work out their own self-identity (304-305). Segovia suggests that the Apocalypse of Abraham represents an alternative Jewish perspective that directly reacts against Paul's arguments about Abraham in Romans 4 and Galatians 3 (345-346). Segovia then considers how both Justin Martyr and the Qur'an appear to work out their own distinctive supersessionist accounts in relation to Abraham (347-355).

Several of this volume's essays are exploratory, sometimes self-confessedly so. As such, rather than demonstrating definitive conclusions, some of the arguments mainly open new ways of thinking about Paul. Some of the individual essays' programs appear to hold more promise for bearing out than do others. But, the opening of new questions to ask or of new ways of asking familiar questions is no small service. Only by approaching Paul with questions attuned to his own context can one hope to progress in understanding the answers Paul might wish to supply to those questions.

The various questions that emerge from considering Paul in his first-century Jewish context continue to prove fruitful. But of course, as particularly Punt and Petersen are keen to reinforce, Paul's first-century Jewish context does not exclude Greco-Roman elements. And as the whole project stresses, neither does Paul's commitment to a particular first-century messianic claimant mean that he finds himself outside Judaism.

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Michael J. GORMAN. *Apostle of the Crucified Lord: A Theological Introduction to Paul and His Letters.* 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017. 731 pp. $34.48.

A lot has happened since Michael J. Gorman's first publication (2006) of *Apostle of the Crucified Lord*. Important contributions like NT Wright's *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, Douglas Campbell's *The Deliverance of God*, and John Barclay's *Paul and the Gift* bring challenging new insights into Pauline studies. One of the new features is his introduction where he briefly outlines these new developments and other "ways of reading Paul." This gives the reader a short primer that, especially as he employs his own methodology, is very helpful.

The first section of the book (163 pages) focuses on introducing Paul's setting and theology. Gorman takes the New Perspective on Paul (NPP) in a different direction calling his own methodology "participationist perspective," and it shows up frequently throughout the book. He defines participationist as "stress[ing] transformative participation in the death and resurrection of Christ as the central dimension of Pauline theology" (4). Since, his perspective privileges practice much of the book is helpful for application in lay settings. Each chapter reflects this priority through a list of discussion questions, as well as recommended general and technical reading lists. The chapters in this section focus on (here I will summarize more than give the chapter title):

1. Introducing the Greco-Roman context.

2. Paul's dates and activities. Gorman shows his participationist reading as he highlights Paul also as a "suffering servant."
3. Ancient letter writing, rhetoric, and authorship issues.
4. Paul's *kerygma* and the gospel. He notes the "theo-political" elements, which may be helpfully new to the average congregant.
5. Paul's "spirituality." Gorman especially focuses on cruciformity, his own major contribution to Pauline studies. (See Gorman, *Cruciformity: Paul's Narrative Spirituality of the Cross*)
6. "A dozen theological convictions." This is a helpful section that highlights the various themes in Paul's letters, along with a good Paul in a nutshell section. (183)

Despite some technical language and themes these chapters are very readable.

Gorman then turns his attention toward the letters, each receiving a chapter. These chapters follow the familiar pattern for many "introduction to the Bible" books: setting, author, outline, exposition. In this way the second edition does not offer a lot of surprises, but it is solid. In another helpful move, he breaks up the chapters with short summaries, which keeps the larger story of the letter in view. The size of the book limits the amount of critical details that can be addressed. I was somewhat disappointed with his short engagement with the difficult gender texts in 1 Timothy.

Philippians is one chapter especially worth noting because it reflects some of Gorman's original work. He reflects upon participation of the Philippian church (and Paul himself) in the Christ hymn. He argues that Paul patterns participation in the cross through a renunciation of power in a pattern: "though X, not Y but Z." So, though Jesus is divine he does not assume power, but serves. Paul lives like this, and the Philippians should as well. This reflects in short what he developed more fully in his book *Inhabiting the Cruciform God: Kenosis, Justification, and Theosis in Paul's Narrative Soteriology.*

I found this volume to be a valuable resource. I personally used it this past fall as required reading for our church Bible study. Our group—all lay people—found it challenging but accessible. After reading through the first edition as well, I believe there is enough new material here to justify purchasing the new one. Gorman's participationist reading makes it feel unique, while still engaging the most recent scholarly developments. So, while I was familiar with much of the scholarship and issues, it still felt like a fresh and interesting read. It is, in short, a great volume.

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Emma WASSERMAN. *Apocalypse as Holy War: Divine Politics and Polemics in the Letters of Paul.* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018. 352 pp. $65.00.

In this volume, Wasserman examines the shared assumptions about divine polity in texts as diverse as the Enuma Elish, Jewish apocalypses, and the writings of Paul. In the Introduction (1-17), Wasserman argues that Jewish apocalyptic texts should be "understood as myths about political relationships in the divine world" (2). In these myths the cosmos is envisioned "as a single, unified political hierarchy" presided over by one supreme deity (3). Moreover, these texts "show a distinctive tendency to imagine [these] political relationships in ways that suppress the possibility of conflict or competition" (3) by asserting the absolute supremacy of the heavenly king, avoiding the suggestion of rivalry or rebellion in the heavenly realm, and relegating those beings that do rebel to the bottom tiers of the political hierarchy.

In chapter 1 (18-58), Wasserman analyzes the Enuma Elish, the Epic of Anzu, the Baal

Cycle, and Hesiod's *Theogony*. She redirects attention from the motif of *Chaoskampf* to the vision of heavenly power dynamics shared across this literature. Wasserman compares these texts to various passages in the Hebrew Bible that describe the God of Israel as a warrior. According to Wasserman, the authors of these texts "omit or edit out other gods" and "demote or reclassify other gods and potential competitors" (57-58). In chapter 2 (59-107), Wasserman looks at *1 Enoch*, *Jubilees*, Daniel 7–12, the Community Rule, and the War Scroll. Like the non-Jewish (and non-apocalyptic) texts studied in chapter 1, these texts imagine the heavenly realm in terms of a cosmic hierarchy, but "strategically suppress the possibility of rivalry in the divine world" (13).

In chapter 3 (108-140) and chapter 4 (141-172), Wasserman addresses similar themes in Pauline literature. She investigates Paul's portrayal of Christ as a divine warrior (1 Cor 15:23-28) and shows that despite his status Christ yields to God (Phil 2) and is rewarded for his "heroic submission" (109). Wasserman also reframes Paul's "principalities and powers" as Gentile gods who have been "polemically reclassified as subordinates and operatives of the God of Israel" (14) and discusses Paul's treatment of foreign deities (Gal 4, 1 Cor 8–11) against the backdrop of Jewish polemics about idolatry.

The second half of chapter 4 and chapter 5 (173-202) are only tangentially related to divine politics. Engaging various Greek philosophical and ethical ideals, Wasserman moves the external imagery of an ordered, cosmic hierarchy inward to the human individual's "inner political hierarchy" (186). She writes, "Paul's letters adapt certain Greek traditions to imagine inner selves and communities as potentially unstable sites of threat, conflict, and victory" (173). The book culminates with a Conclusion (203-210), Notes (211-264), an expansive Bibliography (265-302), and Indices (303-339).

Wasserman suggests that her thesis requires the dismantling of two features generally regarded as structural elements of apocalyptic thought and literature: dualism and conflict. She writes, "Many scholars hold that the idea of conflict or struggle between so-called dualistic forces or opponents is right at the core of apocalyptic thought" (4). Wasserman protests that the texts analyzed here are not strongly dualistic and do not emphasize conflict. While this assessment is accurate in some cases, it is not in others. Wasserman minimizes the starkly dualistic themes in the Qumran writings, for instance, and interprets such elements as "simplistic overstatement or as rhetorical generalizations" (94). Similarly, Wasserman rejects "an especially resilient tradition of interpretation [that] has sought to frame this literature, and apocalypticism generally, as concerned with cosmic rebellion, a battle to defeat evil . . ." (60). Wasserman asserts, "Many of the texts considered here . . . work to locate conflict and struggle on the periphery rather than at the center of the world stage" (60). Here again Wasserman diminishes certain obvious exceptions, such as the significant rebellion of divine powers in *1 Enoch* 6–16. The question remains as to whether Wasserman must succeed in jettisoning dualism and legitimate conflict as a feature of apocalypticism for her assertion that these diverse texts share a common vision of an orderly, divine political hierarchy to succeed. Her claim that these texts share premises about divine politics, and that some minimize the possibility of rebellion, is valid and useful, even if some of these texts also incorporate the motif of real divine conflict.

This volume is a re-examination of many well-known texts from a new perspective and a clear articulation of the ways in which heavenly power dynamics are conceptualized in them. The crux of the book is not about Paul, apocalypse, or holy war, but on the topic of divine politics Wasserman's study is a significant contribution and an illuminating read.

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George H. GUTHRIE. *2 Corinthians*. BECNT. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2015. 710 pp. $49.99.

Guthrie was the Benjamin W. Perry Professor of Bible at Union University (Jackson, Tennessee), but now serves as Professor of New Testament at Regent College (Vancouver, British Columbia). Guthrie is known in the scholarly world for his work on the Epistle to the Hebrews and various Bible translation projects, as well as within the church for his efforts to strengthen biblical literacy and faithfulness to the Christian life. The latter comes in the form of published works and a dedicated website that guides church leaders and members through the process of reading the Bible better. Thus, Guthrie is a pastor-theologian—a description easily confirmed in his commentary on 2 Corinthians.

After an imaginative portrayal of the historical setting—not only for Paul's ministry in Corinth but also his subsequent correspondence—Guthrie offers an introductory analysis that unpacks the details surrounding Paul's life, calling, relationship with the Corinthians, and the need for writing multiple letters (4-50). Of interest in this section are Guthrie's conclusions about the integrity of the entire letter (especially 2 Cor 10–13) and his rejection of the usual source theories used against that integrity: the specificity of Paul's opponents in Corinth relating to the Jewish-Christian leaders who betray their influence from or even loyalties to Sophist traditions/ideas, and the "relational network" (38) shared not just between Paul and the Corinthians—illustrated by what Paul writes and how—but also Paul and other ministers of the gospel, both in Corinth and beyond. After a few other essential, but expected introductory details, Guthrie offers a fitting summary of the entire letter (50). This then is followed by his working outline, which adheres to the usual topics and divisions of the letter.

Upon entering the commentary proper, we discover its true value and strengths, ranging from the minor to the more meaningful. While he keeps the style and layout of the BECNT series, Guthrie expands the 'grey areas' (the introductory and "reflection" boxes for each section) and does so in ways that are beneficial and repay patient reading. This is especially the case with the "reflection" boxes, which provide not only feet-on-the-ground applications of the text for contemporary questions or issues but also insightful helps for spiritual development—both personally and in the church. Another useful feature is Guthrie's occasional inclusion of charts, tables, and diagrams, which offer both the Greek and non-Greek reader an opportunity to trace the contours of Paul's argument in key places, and to see where the necessary emphases appear or what Paul is doing with the argument.

On the more meaningful side, Guthrie's treatment of Paul's argument as a whole is one that reflects his awareness of and sensitivity toward the challenges of a commentary on this letter. Accordingly, Guthrie offers an account of Paul's argument that does justice to its complexity, depth, and richness—both theologically and ministerially speaking. Such an approach noticeably influences and even tempers what he presents. Thus, he comes at the text of the letter carefully, humbly, and yet critically. We see this at work partly in his attention to the details (all of the "Additional Note" sections throughout, which tend to focus on textual variants), but primarily in his discussions on the more debated portions of the letter, where he offers intriguing cases for more nuanced readings. Again, these contributions range from treatments on a handful of verses up to entire sections of the letter.

For example: in 2.14-16a, Guthrie sees God as the victorious king, and the believers are the incense-bearers. In 3.7-18, he argues that it is the glory on Moses' face that was made inoperative, not the Mosaic Law. Or in 12.7-9, after he admits that it's best not to do so, he contends for Pauline opposition ("the incessant persecution" [592] from the Judaizers) as the more likely meaning of the notorious thorn. For the more involved texts, Guthrie offers a solid case for the cohesion of 2 Corinthians 8–9 (with its "three main movements" [388]) not only for the pro-

gression of its own argument but also to the rest of the letter. The same is true for the discussion of 2 Corinthians 10–13, where Guthrie stresses the necessary continuity these chapters have with the preceding argument of the letter. Specifically, Guthrie sides against the view that these chapters were an isolated or disconnected letter from Paul, and favors the view that, while writing 2 Corinthians 1–9, Paul "held in reserve a very direct and confrontive word to the opponents until the very end of the letter and did so for the rhetorical impact" (464). When chapters 1–9 are read in that way, the so-called sudden or abrupt intrusion of chapters 10–13 is seen as being more natural or even expected. While not everyone will agree with Guthrie's conclusions, these two portions of the commentary alone deserve patient consideration.

With regard to weakness, I struggled to find any of real substance. (The occasional typos don't really fall into that category). Sure, there will be the occasional finger pointing at certain (rather minor) aspects of the commentary. "Its audience orientation is too 'Christian' or 'evangelical.'" True, but that's the stated orientation for the entire BECNT series. Page 1. (Well, ix, to be exact). Or, "He doesn't fully cover 'A,' 'B,' or 'C,'" or "he doesn't give more consideration to alternative viewpoints about 'X,' 'Y,' or 'Z.'" Agreed, but this is a one-volume commentary (space is limited), and Guthrie himself says that was never his intention, not only because of space constraints but also because he knows he's not the final authority on all things 2 Corinthians. His arguments are not meant to close the book on "all that could be said" (xii). Or even, "Guthrie's descriptor 'false teachers' is unnecessarily rude and does not reflect the diversity of early Christianity." Okay, but that reflects more of our cultural (over-)sensitivities and impressions than it does Paul's thinking about and approach toward his opponents. He had no qualms with calling out false teachers for what they are and taught. Guthrie is simply a messenger of Paul's claims. Again, such weaknesses are inconsequential.

So, would I recommend this commentary? Absolutely. Would I recommend it to a reading audience beyond the primary focus of the series? Without question. It's a commentary worth consideration by all who are interested in this theologically and pastorally rich Pauline letter, written by a commentator who is deeply committed to serving the needs of the church and the academy.

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Colleen M. CONWAY. *John and the Johannine Letters.* Core Biblical Studies. Nashville: Abington, 2017. 188 pp. $29.99.

This volume meets the goal of the Core Biblical Studies series to provide a starting point for NT studies. It was not designed to provide an in-depth study of the Gospel and epistles but rather, as the chapter titles suggest, a familiarity with Johannine thought, as well as the ways in which scholars have probed the meaning and function of the Johannine literature: *Getting to Know Johannine Literature; Exploring Historical Puzzles in the Gospel of John; Exploring Literary Design in the Gospel of John; Exploring the Theology of the Gospel of John; Exploring Ideology in the Gospel of John; Exploring the Johannine Epistles.* Conway's goal was to give readers a sense of the whole of John's writings before looking at the individual parts of the books.

In the first chapter the author suggests that the reader dive into the texts of both Gospel and epistles to get a feel for the content, but she insists that the reader do so with the eye of a critic. The author explores exploratory questions to draw the reader into the main themes, questions like: What does it mean when Jesus is proclaimed to be the Word? Who are the main

characters and how do they function? What does the phrase "the Jews" mean? What is the connection of the Gospel to the three Johannine epistles?

In the next five chapters Conway introduces the Gospel of John. She spends little time discussing the options regarding authorship, the community, and historicity of the Gospel. She spends considerable time discussing characterization and the author's use of drama. In the fifth chapter, Conway spends nearly 23 pages discussing the gender and the role of women. This is not surprising since Conway has focused much of her research on the function of gender categories in biblical texts from literary, cultural, and historical perspectives.

The final chapter looks more directly at the three epistles of John and their connections to the Gospel. Conway explores three hypotheses regarding the connection of the Gospel of John and the epistles. She includes a short section regarding rhetorical criticism and the epistles. This volume has 16 pages of endnotes and 7 pages of bibliography. Clearly the author knows the work. In the text, she lays out the predictable scholarly arguments about origins, authorship, and ideology. Even if one does not agree with all of Conway's final conclusions, her work provides a good summary of scholarly positions.

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C. Marvin PATE. *Interpreting Revelation and Other Apocalyptic Literature: An Exegetical Handbook*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2016. 240 pp. $23.99.

This volume is the fourth in a four-volume handbook series that focuses on "interpreting and communicating the message of the NT in the context of the various literary genres." The book emphasizes interpreting the genres of Revelation but includes shorter discussions of apocalyptic throughout the Bible. The author favors tables as he includes them in each chapter except the last, to compare ideas, texts, and biblical-historical events. Chapters open and close with sections entitled, "The Chapter at a Glance," and "Chapter in Review." He sets each of these sections against a darkened background to draw the reader's eye.

As a handbook dealing primarily with the literary features of Revelation, the opening chapter begins by discussing genre and identifies Revelation as apocalyptic literature. Pate accepts the 1979 Society of Biblical Literature definition of the apocalyptic genre, rightly noting that the older definition lacks analysis of apocalyptic function. Since form, content, and communicative function contribute to genre, Pate discusses each in turn.

Chapter two includes his views on the historical background of apocalyptic as set against the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians in 586 BC, and he believes Revelation is a response to the fall of Jerusalem to the Romans in AD 70. Chapter three argues that the function of apocalyptic is to place Israel's story of covenant blessings and curses in an apocalyptic setting. Chapter four is an introduction to textual criticism and translation theories encouraging translation of Revelation in comparison with English versions, while chapter five is a guide to interpretation, which includes a summary of the major views on interpreting Revelation, such as Futurism (Dispensationalism/Historical Premillennialism), Idealism (Amillennialism) and Preterism (Postmillennialism). Pate states his own approach is eclectic. Chapters 6–7 attempt to bridge the text and meaning of Revelation from an ancient to modern situation, with chapter 7 containing steps to sermon preparation. Chapter 8 concludes with resources for apocalyptic study. There is also a glossary of terms.

This volume's strengths lie in its recounting of basic exegetical steps for studying Revelation, while the use of tables is helpful in organizing difficult thoughts. The glossary is valuable for students. There are several substantive drawbacks to the volume. Significantly, Pate

does not disclose his dispensationalist bias, unmistakable to the trained eye, casting suspicion on his tone of objectivity. The book is really a dispensational guide to interpreting Revelation rather than an exegetical handbook for everyone. On par with this is Pate's unique view in chapter 5 that Revelation 4–19 is an *ekphrasis* of the Arch of Titus. It is another way of arguing for the absence of the church in these chapters, a tenet of dispensationalism. This also coheres with statements throughout regarding ethnic Israel's place in Revelation as opposed to the church.

From a literary perspective, there is no distinction between genre and text type, leading to several interpretive difficulties, such as viewing prophetic material as a genre rather than a text type or a generic function. Pate further asserts the use of mixed genres and subgenres without considering the disputed existence of such concepts, though in an introduction one can overlook this. The publisher targets pastors, students, and informed laity with this volume and to this end the writing style and content succeed. Dispensationalists will find this helpful, while nondispensationalists will look elsewhere.

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List of Books Reviewed in This Issue