Book Reviews

RoseAnn BENSON. *Alexander Campbell and Joseph Smith: Nineteenth-Century Restorationists.* Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press and Abilene, TX: Abilene Christian University Press, 2017. 396 pp. $24.99.

In the early to middle nineteenth century, two men saw that the churches of their day had deviated from what was found in the Bible. These two men, Alexander Campbell (1788–1866) and Joseph Smith (1805–1844), both saw a need for restoration in the church. The two approaches to restoration were drastically different.

Benson has undertaken a monumental task. Her approach is similar to the parallel lives approach, but she has not written a lengthy biography of either man. The approach she takes is one of parallel doctrines and ideas. While Benson's PhD is in Community and School Health from Southern Illinois University, she has an MA in Ancient Near Eastern Studies with an emphasis in religious education from BYU. She has written articles on Mormon history and theology, and she has presented at conferences and symposia.

After Forewords by Thomas H. Olbricht, Professor Emeritus at Pepperdine University, and Robert L. Millet, Professor Emeritus at Brigham Young University, Benson begins with a brief history of early American Christianity and the beginnings of the two restoration movements. Next, she has two chapters on the early lives and religious influences on Alexander Campbell and Joseph Smith. She will follow this format for most of the volume: a chapter on Alexander Campbell's views and a chapter on Joseph Smith's views. She compares similarities and contrasts between the two restorationist approaches, with the contrasts outnumbering the similarities.

Section 1 is on "Restorationism, Primitivism, and Millennialism." Benson shows that while Campbell used an Enlightenment, reasoned approach, Smith used an enthusiastic approach, by means of visions, visitations, and other spiritual gifts. Campbell wanted "A Restoration of the Ancient Order of Things" based on the New Testament, while Smith wanted to have a restoration going back to the Old Testament.

Section 2 focuses on "Systems of Belief." Again, alternating chapters deal with Campbell's beliefs and Smith's beliefs. A third chapter in this section deals with Campbell's new translation of the NT and Smith's translation of the Bible.

Section 3 deals with the conflict between Campbell's Disciples of Christ and Smith's Mormons. A chapter is dedicated to the defections from the Disciples to the Mormons, including Sidney Rigdon and Parley Pratt. Another chapter is dedicated to Campbell's review of the Book of Mormon, "Delusions," and the Mormon response.

Section 4 concerns "Unique Contributions to Restorationism." One chapter deals with Campbell's millennialism and views of unity. A second chapter deals with Smith's "expansive eternalism."

The epilogue concerns "Final Thoughts on Two Restorationists." Benson concludes the main text with this thought: ". . .the efforts of Alexander Campbell and Joseph

Smith to reform and restore purity in Christ's message and church continue to impact spirituality in the United States and throughout the world."

The volume includes two appendices. Appendix A is the complete text of "Delusions." Appendix B is, "The Constitution of the Mahoning Baptist Association, 1826."

In her acknowledgements, Benson mentions that her family had attended First Christian Church in her preschool years, but she does not name the location. Even though Benson is herself a Mormon, she does not criticize Campbell's views and only rarely shows favoritism to Smith's views. She has given both men's beliefs and views fair treatment, using their own documents and publications. She received considerable assistance from Stone-Campbell scholars, visited the Campbell Home in Bethany, West Virgina, and had access to Campbell's journals at the Disciples of Christ Historical Society.

The biggest weakness to this volume is in the layout. Each chapter has its own set of endnotes, sometimes in excess of 100 per chapter. Many of the notes are bibliographic, but some are informational. The reader must mark the end of each chapter, then continue to flip between text and notes. Of greater concern is the lack of a bibliography. The reader must either make notes as the text is read or must search through the entire volume to locate the bibliographic material needed. On the whole, this is a very good volume showing the teachings of two American restorationists of the nineteenth century.

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Thomas P. JOHNSON, ed. *A History of Evangelism in North America.* Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2021. 368 pp. $23.99.

Johnson is Senior Professor of Evangelism at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and President of the Southern Baptist Professors of Evangelism Fellowship. This volume is dedicated to his colleagues in the Fellowship. He previously edited *Mobilizing a Great Commission Church Harvest: Voices and Views from the Southern Baptist Professors of Evangelism Fellowship* (2011). Many of the same authors contributed to both volumes.

This volume endeavors "to fill a seventy-year void" created by a lack of texts focusing on a history of evangelism (9). It takes "a biographical approach to evangelism" (9). In addition to the largely, but not exclusively, biographical approach, "when possible, each author" discusses "practical approaches to evangelism methodology" (9). In the first half of the volume, chapters cover "evangelism in early America": Jonathan Edwards, David Brainerd, John Wesley, George Whitefield, Shubal Stearns, Francis Asbury and circuit riders, campus meetings and the Cane Ridge Revival, Bible societies and distribution, the Revival of 1800, J. Wilbur Chapman, and "John Mason Peck and Rock Springs Seminary"(9).The second half "prepares the reader for evangelism in the twenty-first century": Henrietta Mears, Dawson Trotman, S. M. Lockridge, Billy Graham, Bill Bright, D. James Kennedy, "The Jesus Movement and Chuck Smith's Calvary

Chapel," Donald McGavran and C. Peter Wagner (the Church Growth Movement), John Piper, "Southern Baptist Personal Evangelism Methodologies, 1970–2000," and "Twenty-first Century Developments in Evangelism" (9).

In addition to several familiar people, events, and movements, I was pleased that Johnson's volume introduced me to some new or forgotten names (Mears, Peck, and Lockridge). Moreover, Johnson compiled a helpful, diverse selection of characters from various denominations, evangelistic methods (Bible distribution, Sunday school, and personal), and evangelized groups (Native Americans, servicemen, and college students).

This volume has some notable weaknesses. First, Charles Finney, Dwight L. Moody, and Billy Sunday do not receive their own chapters. They are only mentioned in passing, sometimes to highlight direct or indirect influence on an individual (121, 150 n. 35, 153-157, 169, 231, 232, 234, 240, 241, 244). Second, the text did not devote enough attention to women and minorities. It only covers one African American, one missionary to Native Americans, and one woman. Someone like Charles Mason, founder of the largest black Pentecostal group, could have been added to include more African Americans. Samuel Davies of the First Great Awakening and his ministry among enslaved people could have been included to address more ministry among marginalized groups. Despite being controversial, Aimee Semple McPherson should have received a chapter due to her popularity and founding of a denomination. Phoebe Palmer and Evangeline Booth would have strengthened the text, the latter allowing discussion of the Salvation Army's evangelistic methods. Third, even considering the Southern Baptist authors, the chapter on Southern Baptist methodologies seems too narrow for a general history of evangelism, and personal evangelism and Sunday school evangelism are already addressed in other chapters. A biographical chapter on one of the above characters could have been included instead. Fourth, missions to North America are not covered. The text needed a chapter covering research such as Rebecca Y. Kim's *The Spirit Moves West: Korean Missionaries in America*. Fifth, when discussing Whitefield's "pursuit of holiness" as one of the factors related to "evangelistic effectiveness," slavery is not mentioned.

This volume would be a beneficial addition to a college-level evangelism course. Studying a topic from a historical perspective broadens horizons beyond one time, people, and cultural context as Christians consider what methods of evangelism may work in their own setting.

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John C. PECKHAM. *Divine Attributes: Knowing the Covenantal God of Scripture*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2021. 322 pp. $32.00.

Peckham published five books pertaining to divine attributes from 2014–2018. In them he paves a middle way between strict classical theism and process theism. In the current volume, Peckham brings together the best insights of these books into a single volume.

He begins by spelling out his methodology, which may be referred to as "canonical" or "covenantal." It is "canonical" insofar as it privileges Scripture's portrait of God over more philosophically oriented ones. He also prioritizes Scripture over Christian tradition, which he argues does not provide equally reliable answers to all theological questions (257). When confronting various philosophical or traditional positions, Peckham holds fast to Scripture as his norm, repeatedly asking "Is there biblical warrant?" When using the term "covenantal," Peckham means the "committed, back-and-forth relationship" that God has with his people in Scripture (28). In Peckham's view, covenant theism is what one arrives at when one prioritizes the canonical witness.

With this approach, Peckham devotes a chapter each to the relationships between God and change (aseity, immutability, possibility), God and time (omnipresence, eternity), God and knowledge (omniscience, foreknowledge), God and power (omnipotence, providence), and God and goodness (omnibenevolence, faithfulness). Each of these chapters surveys the standard positions, brings forth several biblical passages relevant to each attribute, and then synthesizes them into a canonical or covenantal portrait. The volume closes with one chapter on Trinity, using this same approach, and another on the cumulative depiction of the Triune God of Covenantal Theism that emerges from this volume.

Peckham accomplishes his task quite well. He consistently holds up Scripture as the norm for discerning God's nature without being excessively naïve regarding other approaches. Still, his philosophical analysis is rather thin and reliant upon secondary sources. He is only slightly more conversant with Christian tradition. Like Aquinas, he affirms an analogical approach to language about God and, like Barth, he allows Scripture to redefine the specific character of divine attributes. Yet he makes no effort to compare his approach to theirs. This simply reflects the parameters of his chosen methodology.

Peckham seems to be targeting a more theologically conservative readership. Though his lies somewhere between classical theism and process theism, he self-identifies as a "moderate classical theist," allying himself more closely with the former. Yet arguably his position is much closer to open theists. Apart from his take on divine foreknowledge, his method and conclusions are highly compatible with theirs. Sloughing off that association, Peckham lumps open theists together with process theists, engages them most where he disagrees with them, and fails to acknowledge the numerous places where they agree.

The weakest chapter may be the one on divine foreknowledge. Several of Peckham's prooftexts for exhaustive foreknowledge depend on affirming full Isaianic authorship, an early dating of Daniel, and a flat understanding of Jewish apocalypses (120). This somewhat dated hermeneutic does not play a significant role in the volume as a whole, but it stands out in chapter 4. Also, as much as Peckham critiques Greg Boyd's position on foreknowledge, in chapter 6 he relies on a Boyd-like hyper emphasis on cosmic spiritual warfare to explain the problem of evil. He goes so far as to say that God has bound himself to "cosmic rules of engagement" that he had previously hammered out with the heavenly divine court to subvert the devil's challenges to his own character (207). In other words, God allows certain forms of evil because preventing them would break the rules he agreed to follow in proving himself right and the devil wrong in their heavenly kerfuffle.

A few idiosyncrasies notwithstanding, Peckham offers a solid survey and analysis of divine attributes in Scripture. Those committed to a Bible-centered approach will find his volume helpful and illuminating. It is accessible to scholar and layperson alike and would be ideal for an upper-level college or seminary class on divine attributes.

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Christopher R. J. HOLMES. *A Theology of the Christian Life: Imitating and Participating in God.* Grand Rapids: Baker, 2021. 192 pp. $24.99.

In this volume, Holmes addresses how Christian language describing God's essence has a direct impact on the Christian life. When a person speaks of God's characteristics and qualities, those qualities become a goal for the Christian to live out. Writing in conversation with several luminaries from the Christian past, Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, Augustine of Hippo, Maximus the Confessor, and Thomas Aquinas, to name a few, Holmes suggests that the language with which we speak about God has direct impact on how we ought to live.

The volume is divided into two parts. While not explicit, it appears as though part 1 focuses on the concepts and theoretical foundations for imitation of God, whereas part 2 emphasizes participation in and with God. These two themes, nonetheless, are overlapping and recur throughout the volume. Thus, in part 1 concepts of God's existence, perfection, infinity, and immutability center the discussion on ways in which the Christian life operates, via virtue and ascetical practices, toward a human existence that imitates these divine qualities. Part 2 engages Christ's dual nature of divinity and humanity and how as humans we participate in the divine life through virtue formation and the life of the church. The goal and end of human existence is God, this principle impacts the life of the church, the ways in which humans interact with one another, and how we understand our own humanity.

One of the strengths of this volume is the way in which it engages historical theology as a matter of present-day concern. The theological ideas of the past, more often than not, are rooted in a deep and profound understanding of Scripture. Holmes has done a marvelous job integrating the ideas from the past into a coherent articulation of what it means to live a Christian life. The Christian life is marked by an attempt to imitate and also participate in God's life. This is evident in the ways that Christians speak about who God is. Holmes's treatment of these theological concepts encourages the reader to contemplate the nature of God in a way that enriches the reader's life.

While one can be pleased that the volume engages with theological luminaries from the Christian past, the volume would benefit from some small contextualization of who each of these thinkers were. Especially for a Protestant audience, an appeal to some of these figures can seem suspect. In addition, the volume lacks engagement with many women theologians and could benefit from a perspective like that of Julian of Norwich, or even of Macrina the elder sister of Gregory of Nyssa. This volume might also benefit from engaging ethical concerns in a less theoretical manner. While focusing on the life

of virtue will have implications for ethics, the connections that can be made by Holmes are opaque in this volume.

Despite these setbacks, this volume is a wonderful starting point for theology. It takes seriously what the church says and has said about who God is, in addition to how that language of who God is impacts the everyday life of the individual believer. Holmes has helped the reader engage in theological reflection that is serious about how we speak about who God is. As such, this volume would well serve a theology course or even a Bible study group.

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Cyril ORJI. ***Unmasking the Africa Ghost: Theology, Politics, and the Nightmare of Failed States.*** **Minneapolis, MN: 1517 Media, 2022. 259 pp. $39.00.**

The current volume centers on the problem of African failed states, which is a significant cause of human suffering in that continent. How might Christian theology respond to this problem?

Orji's response is an interdisciplinary analysis of the conditions which have caused, and which maintain, weak and failing states, which he interprets through the guiding metaphor of ghosts (1-27). Africa is haunted by two ghosts. One is European, the ghost of colonial violence and exploitation. The other is African. The latter ghost originates in African understandings of authority, which Orji interprets through the dynamics of masking. Pre-colonial African leaders employed masks as an effective way to render justice. In the post-colonial setting, however, this dynamic of masking has been misappropriated by charismatic and secretive dictators. Orji contends that the African ghost is now outmoded and must be exorcized, just as the European ghost must be.

Orji is a theologian, but his approach is interdisciplinary. This is the glory and the weakness of the volume. For example, chapter two on the problem of "land grab"—in which cash-starved, weak states rent arable land to multinational agricultural corporations to grow food for the west—is quite strong because Orji's analysis depends on an interdisciplinary consensus. Chapter seven on foreign aid is similarly strong. Chapter four—in which Orji postulates that one of the major problems of leadership is the prevalence of narcissistic personality disorder (NPD) among African leaders—is far weaker because Orji's analysis depends on an idiosyncratic synthesis of material which lies outside his field of expertise.

In the final chapter of the volume, Orji sketches a political philosophy rooted in faith, hope, and love, and in the African idea of "ubuntu," which translates to "I am because we are." Orji's suggestion of combining the theological virtues with ubuntu as a basis for political philosophy is intriguing but Orji might have developed this proposal at greater length. Perhaps showing how ubuntu grounds a more contextually appropriate political philosophy than European or African theoretical alternatives would have been beneficial.

This final chapter also reveals a flaw in the concept of the volume. In the introduction, Orji claims that the volume "addresses, from a theological point of view, why the

political and economic systems in African countries have not worked and proposes paths for recovery." (xiii) But the reader will be hard-pressed to discern how Orji's analysis of these problems and proposals for recovery are advanced from a specifically theological point of view. Very little of the volume draws upon Christian scriptures, doctrines, or subsequent theological reflection.

This flaw, however, does not detract from the usefulness of the volume insofar as it clears the ground for future theological work on the problem of failed states. Orji has cast significant light on an issue that should be central to future political theology in Africa and elsewhere. Moreover, Orji has signaled some potentially fruitful paths for development. Critiques notwithstanding, these are important contributions.

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David Bentley HART. *Tradition and Apocalypse: An Essay on the Future of Christian Belief.* Grand Rapids: Baker, 2022. 208 pp. $24.99.

Anyone familiar with this author knows he is an Orthodox theologian, so there is no *sola scriptura* approach to the topic, and he often uses such parlance. This volume grew from a lecture and subsequent article. Further conversations with peers aided Hart in the making of this volume. It is a short read, being only 200 pages, but it is a mentally stimulating read. Hart has a way of making the reader think outside accepted norms, and in this volume, he also challenges Christians to be just that—followers of Christ.

He wants to find where tradition and revelation intersect. He insists that tradition is both preservation and refinement of what is preserved throughout centuries, never leaving the essential elements but further expounding upon them. It can explain what has changed, what has not, and why tradition is a repetitive ritual. Moving from tradition is apocalypse. Hart believes Christianity is as much bound to apocalypse as it is to tradition. He points to the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus as the single event upon which both rest. Hart does not view apocalypse as the distant future, but he believes the future is now. Christ's resurrection was an apocalyptic event that recast both history and the future because it was a disruption. The paradigm for Christian belief is through this singular event.

One of his most stinging assertions is that Christianity has exchanged its identity in Christ with political power. These powers, he argues, were what Christ triumphed over, leading humanity to something greater. Christians, however, have conformed to social, national, and institutional realities, bordering on, if not outright, idolatry. However, he fails to see that his point reads as another option, more so than a call to return to identifying in Christ. Hart has described himself as a Christian socialist and democratic socialist in other venues than this volume. Therefore, he has political points of view, and his remarks on this point can be taken in the spirit of which they are intended or read as political dissension. His goal with this point, it might be suggested, is to move readers back to greater fidelity to the Christian tradition and remove them from the partisanship of American politics.

Off-putting aspects of this volume are that the author often overstates his point. When he makes arguments, he is often transparent and concise but tends to continue

beyond what is necessary. Second, some readers may struggle reading Hart because what can be said in a few words, he states in many words, often using verbiage one might only expect from someone who might wish to make themselves appear intelligent to an uninformed audience. Hart is brilliant, to be sure, but not very modest. His critiques of others and their points of view are often harsh. As a writer who insists on being Christian, he can lack diplomatic graciousness when he offers his critiques. These may be a matter of taste but are some of the weaknesses in this volume.

Those associated with the Stone-Campbell Movement have many things in common with Orthodoxy, and Hart is one of their best thinkers. This volume is always challenging, but ministers will be stimulated to think and question some previously held suppositions. The scholar will find this a most welcomed addition to their library because it is given by a peer whose reputation and previous works are undoubtedly of the highest quality.

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Catherine KELLER. *Facing Apocalypse: Climate, Democracy, and Other Last Chances.* New York: Orbis, 2021. 176 pp. $26.00.

Anyone familiar with Keller's writings will quickly recognize that her latest volume revisits many topics she has attended to throughout her career. In the current volume, Keller honors her subtitle by addressing such wide-ranging concerns as the climate crisis and social ills like racism, anti-feminism, and corporatism.

As an entry point to these concerns, this volume functions as a sort of commentary on the biblical book of Revelation. But, undoubtedly, Keller's interests in Revelation go beyond commentary as she reimagines—with her characteristic passion and wit—the final biblical book and its role not only in the Christian canon but in Christian life. Keller calls her reading of John's Apocalypse a "dreamreading" (xix, 75, 189) by which she attempts to rouse people from the "sleepily creeping patterns of species suicide, without just waking into despair" (2). Such a prodding is central to Keller's tactics throughout the volume. She seeks to make apparent our world's dire present circumstances while maintaining the possibility of hope and renewal for humanity and the planet as a whole.

This volume takes Revelation and its role in Christian history seriously. Keller does not overlook or condone Revelation's rampant determinism, misogyny, good/evil dualism, and violence. But her reading of Revelation is also not a wholesale critique of the book. Keller believes Revelation possesses a deep wisdom about the world that any reader would do well to consider. She finds that Revelation does not so much predict the ecological and societal degradation of our time but rather anticipates their occurrences (35). She believes the book maintains relevance for modern readers if they "mind" such harmful patterns in the book "without literalizing" them (93). In this way, one can see that ecological and social injustices consistently have resulted in collective crises throughout history—even though such crises and their causes need not match the exactness of John's descriptions.

In holding this tension, Keller masterfully acknowledges previous scholarship that makes clear the problems of utilizing Revelation's directives while also respecting the book and trying to stick close to the text to see what it is John wants his readers to understand. Mainly, as Keller understands it, John wanted to convey how the seductions of empire (power, money, sex, and violence) work against the ethic of the slain lamb (110-111).

As one might suspect, some of Keller's "meatiest" writing on Revelation appears in her reading of the "great whore" in Revelation 17. She argues that one of John's most powerful critiques of the Roman Empire and empires everywhere—past and present—is the allure to provide their citizens access to luxuries. Fine goods and services on the surface might seem innocuous but so often extravagances are possible only through the exploitation of some other place's resources and people. In other words, Keller suggests that the critique of "merchants" and their delivered "merchandise" in Revelation is intimately connected to the ways that consumption of such luxuries are very often made possible through the exploitation of land and people (113). One would be right to connect these ideas to those put forward in recent years by other theologians such as Willie Jennings and David Cloutier.

Keller's final chapter puts forward a vision of the apocalypse that is not an ending of the world as we know it, one in which the chosen few will be raptured away and rescued for another, better world. Rather, it is a renewal of our material world. Reading Revelation 21–22 closely, Keller suggests that the apocalyptic vision of John the Revelator concludes not in destruction of the Earth but in its rejuvenation. Just as Keller reads the Genesis narrative as the world being created from something (Gen 1:2), so the end of the Bible reveals God's new creation fashioning beauty and goodness out of the already existing stuff of our world. What Keller would say is up for debate is whether humans will follow such a creative, healing precedent.

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David H. KELSEY. *Human Anguish and God's Power.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021. 435 pp. $39.99.

Stanley Hauerwas once called Joe R. Jones the best unknown theologian in America. In a similar spirit, I think it fitting to call David H. Kelsey the best *unassuming* theologian in the country. Now 90 years old, Kelsey isn't exactly unknown, having taught at Yale Divinity School for half a century; his 1975 book on the uses of Scripture in modern theology immediately became a touchstone in the field. Yet it wasn't until 2009, with the post-retirement publication of his magnum opus, *Eccentric Existence: A Theological Anthropology,* that his influence expanded beyond those "in the know." Now, very much post-retirement, he has capped his career with a long, searching reflection on the power of God in relation to human suffering.

The result is not an exercise in pastoral theology—it is systematic, theoretical, even abstract to the core—but it arises from pastoral concerns. The impetus for the project, as Kelsey writes, "is the conviction that much talk by Christians who seek to console

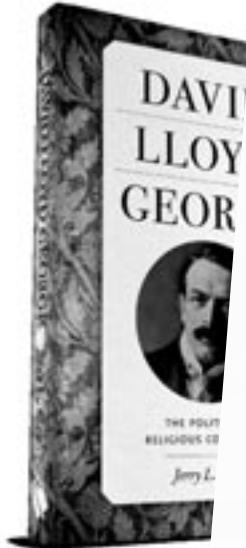
those who anguish about others' horrific suffering is itself problematic from the perspective of central Christian theological beliefs." Such talk both makes the anguish worse and mischaracterizes the God confessed by the church. Kelsey's aim, then, is to set forth "proposals concerning how to talk about the power of God in ways that are faithful to the ways in which God relates to us" (1).

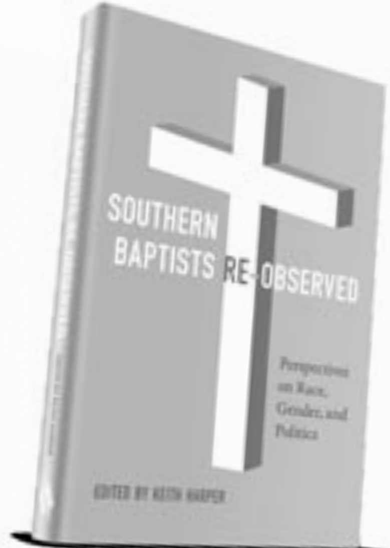
Two basic moves underlie Kelsey's proposals. The first will be familiar to readers of *Eccentric Existence*. It maintains that the Bible is misunderstood when it is read as a single, coherent story. Rather, the many genres and diverse texts that constitute the canon render not one but three fundamental narratives; these in turn contain or manifest distinct narrative *logics*, each of which is defined by a particular mode of relation between the triune God and all that is not God: the relation of creation from nothing; the relation of drawing to eschatological consummation; and the relation of reconciliation. The dogmatic upshot of this exegetical claim, adumbrated comprehensively in Kelsey's anthropology, is an attention to the irreducibly complex and always threefold ways in which God relates to the world and, in turn, we to him. *Every* theological claim is run through this grid; if not, it remains incomplete.

The second move, unique to Kelsey's new volume, concerns his suggested pathway to answering questions about divine power. Following the final clause of the Lord's prayer, he structures his inquiry around "the kingdom, the power, and the glory"—though not in that order. The result is a conceptual nesting doll. The power of God is situated in the wider context of a theological treatment of divine sovereignty, which is itself considered only in the (even wider) context of a theological depiction of triune glory. The utility of this methodological framework lies in the material theological claims generated by it. For Kelsey's part, he believes that a proper understanding of the glory of the Trinity "blocks" certain misconceptions of God's sovereignty; the more faithful accounts of sovereignty that follow then "block" problematic descriptions of divine power. Granting that folks in the pews do not learn their beliefs about omnipotence from academic tomes of systematic theology, they do get them from *somewhere*; inasmuch as that "somewhere" includes Christian scholars and theological education, trickling down from ivory towers into seminaries into local churches, Kelsey hopes to address the problem "at the top"—with a view to practical change eventually making its way to ordinary believers' lives, above all in their pastoral care of one another.

I utterly lack the space to outline the concrete proposals that fill this volume, proposals that radically revise inherited conceptions of divine power. Curious readers would not be far off in thinking of this volume as a kind of philosophical sequel or peer to Kate Bowler's *Everything Happens for a Reason and Other Lies I've Loved*; Kelsey actually uses Bowler's work to frame his arguments in the introduction and conclusion. Like Bowler, Kelsey wants Christians to praise the God of Abraham without deploying him as an all-purpose explanation for "whatever happens," especially when what happens is the "negative mystery" of the inexplicable suffering of people we love. Instead, we should resist the temptation—and recall what Scripture teaches about the source of temptation—to resolve the experience of anguish. We should console those in pain as best we can, but when we speak of God, we ought to find ourselves, according to Kelsey, reduced to "stammering" and ultimately silence.

POLITICS AND FAITH





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Few would argue with that. Many will argue with the proposals that underwrite it. In any case, for stimulating the debate, for attending to a matter of pressing spiritual significance, and for a lifetime of theological scholarship, we owe Kelsey nothing but thanks.

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Roger E. OLSON. ***Against Liberal Theology: Putting the Brakes on Progressive Christianity.*** **New York: HarperCollins, 2022. 180 pp. $18.99.**

The year 2023 marks the one hundredth anniversary of the publication of J. Gresham Machen's *Christianity and Liberalism* in which Machen argued that liberal Christianity was not simply a modern variant of Christianity but another religion altogether. Now a century later comes another volume with the same indictment, this time from respected author, blogger, and theologian Roger Olson. Though Olson operates with a broader definition of orthodoxy than Machen, the volume essentially functions as an updating of Machen for a new generation.

Olson sounds a clarion call to the progressive evangelical left not to go the way of progressive Christianity, which, he says, is no Christianity at all. Olson is upfront about his purpose: "I have seen many conservative Christian young people (and some older people) abandon their orthodox Christian faith in favor of liberal Christianity, most often, in my experience, in reaction against what they perceive as the fundamentalism of their Christian nurture. They grew up in fundamentalist churches, found them stifling, anti-intellectual, legalistic, whatever, and rushed past the middle ground to the opposite end of the Christian spectrum, to liberal Christianity." Thus, "I want to warn Christians against uncritically embracing liberal Christianity, and I want to encourage those who find themselves in liberal churches either to work to change it—back toward warmhearted and biblical, orthodox Christianity—or leave it" (xi). Olson's "middle ground" position finds such able proponents in his view as John Stott, Thomas Oden, Donald Bloesch, N.T. Wright, G.C. Berkouwer, and P.T. Forsyth, the example *par excellence* for progressive evangelicals.

In his introductory chapter Olson claims that liberal Christianity in America really began with the Unitarians. To the extent that liberal Protestants today (and it is with liberal Protestantism in America that Olson is primarily concerned) deny or radically reinterpret such cardinal Christian doctrines as the Trinity, the deity of Christ, miracles, hell, and atonement, they "ought to be honest and proclaim themselves Unitarians rather than Christians" (13), a rather bold declaration typical of Olson's decisive play-calling throughout the volume. He admits that his words may sound harsh, "but so did the pronouncements of the Old Testament prophets about Israel's idolatries" and "the apostles and early church fathers' verbal attacks on false Christians within the primitive and ancient churches" (13). But Olson is not engaging in full-fledged polemic. He does not question the salvation of liberals, only their theology (4), stating in his preface that if one chooses to go in a liberal direction, "that's not something I can or want to prevent" (x). But since liberal Christians proclaim a "counterfeit Christianity, a false gospel,

apostasy" (14), one wonders how Olson can avoid Paul's damning indictment in Gal 1:6-9 as well as the category mistake of attributing salvation to those who would downplay, reinterpret, or eschew eschatology altogether.

The first chapter charts the liberal tradition that began with Schleiermacher and continued with Ritschl and Harnack, whose influence was keenly felt this side of the Atlantic. While Olson recognizes that liberal Christianity is neither monolithic nor homogeneous, he believes certain unifying themes, such as scientific and philosophical naturalism and a tendency to reduce religion to ethics and historical events to mere symbols, characterize a tradition all too willing to sacrifice Christian truth claims on the altar of modernity. From such moderating prototypes as Henry Churchill King and L. Harold DeWolf to social gospel advocates Washington Gladden, Walter Rauschenbusch and Harry Emerson Fosdick, to popularizers Marcus Borg and John Shelby Spong, to academic theologians Delwyn Brown and Douglas Ottati (the former the clearest and the latter the most profound in Olson's estimation), "liberal Christianity is a relatively unified, new religion growing out of orthodox Christianity and, like sects such as Mormonism, Christian Science, and Jehovah's Witnesses, growing away from it." Liberalism, he concludes, "is to contemporary Christianity what Gnosticism was to second century Christianity—an alternative religion to true Christianity" (33).

The second and third chapters interrelate as they deal with the sources and norms of liberal theology and its low view of biblical inspiration. The Bible is "a reservoir of influential symbols and images and a record of the original Christians' experiences" but "not supernaturally inspired or infallible—even in matters of doctrine" (39). Biblical authority collapses under the weight of a higher criticism imbued with naturalistic assumptions. What functions authoritatively is reason and experience that readily accommodates the values and ideals of modern secular thought. Once again Olson pulls no punches: "Liberal Christians elevate temporary, passing intellectual fashions of Western culture to the status of controlling authority for what they believe. It's understandable; educated, sophisticated people do not want to be out of touch with what academic culture considers believable or unbelievable. There comes a point, however, where a line has been crossed from the essence of Christianity into something else" (51-52). That "something else" is something not recognizably Christian: "They don't want to stop calling themselves Christians, so they baptize what they now believe as Christianity while redefining Christianity so radically that it cannot reasonably be recognized as continuous with biblical, historical, classical, orthodox Christianity. It is a new, invented religion with roots in Christianity—exactly like many sects and cults of Christianity whose members call themselves Christians but are not recognized as such by even the World Council of Churches" (41).

So, what doctrines does Olson see as severely compromised if not altogether eclipsed by so-called liberal Christianity? Olson's next four chapters deal with the heart of the matter, treating the doctrines of God, Christ, salvation, and eschatology respectively, showing in each case liberalism's radical departure from historic orthodox Christianity. God, for example, is relational and interdependent (panentheistic) to the exclusion of sovereign and transcendent. Jesus differs from other humans in degree but not in kind as the functional idealization of humanity rather than the ontological Second Person of the Holy Trinity. Since human beings are neither radically sinful nor lost, no need for

atonement exists, much less a bloody one. Jesus' example and teachings are sufficient to transform people into their better selves. The Parousia of Jesus, like the resurrection, is metaphorical, certainly not a literal event to happen in the future (or near future). There is no guarantee of the ultimate triumph of good over evil, and even life after death is a question mark, if not answered in the negative (along with an almost universal rejection of hell.) Ironically, Olson titles this last chapter, "The Future in Liberal Theology." One wonders if liberal theologians can in good conscience even claim there is one. The above theological categories are not *adiaphora*. What Olson says regarding Christology applies to all: "A religion can be revised only so thoroughly before it becomes something else" (119), a trenchant observation from the author of *The Mosaic of Christian Belief*.

Lest one think that Olson writes his critique as an outsider (as is the case with many conservative critiques of liberalism), Olson makes his own social location clear in his final chapter: "My experience of being a member of two liberal Protestant churches, serving on staff of one and on the executive committee of another, convinces me that all these criticisms are still valid" (168). As one who spent nearly twenty years in a liberal Protestant church context myself, I could particularly relate to this chapter and resonate with its conclusions. Olson points to mainline seminaries as the incubators of liberal theology chiefly responsible for the radical numerical decline of liberal Protestant churches, symptomatic of one theologian's wonder at how liberal theologians can "write so much despite believing so little" (168). Liberal theology, says Olson with a nod to a young Karl Barth, just doesn't preach. This chapter is a fitting close to the volume, but one wishes that Olson would say a bit more about his own theological journey out of a liberal church context into the "middle ground" position that he so strongly advocates.

So, what can be learned here, especially for a Stone-Campbell audience that has seen the effects of its own controversy with theological liberalism? For the more conservative segments of our heritage, slogans like "No creed but Christ" and "Call Bible things by Bible names" may prove deficient in the face of radical departures from the faith. Olson notes time and again how liberals employ biblical language but mean something entirely different, often, I might add, unbeknownst to the person sitting in the pew. How does one who can tearfully sing "the blood will never lose its power" commune at the same table with Bishop Spong and others like him who would "choose to loathe rather than to worship a deity who required the sacrifice of his son" (141)? Is this unity or disingenuity? "Community" requires *communis*, holding something in common. For the more liberal segment of our heritage, to the extent that it embraces many if not most of the ideas described in this volume, Olson's challenge is direct and unequivocal: come clean. Call yourselves Unitarians or "progressives" or whatever, but to claim the title "Christian" is simply dishonest (a rather ironic suggestion given the tangential role that Unitarianism plays in Stone-Campbell history). Obviously, the ecclesiological implications of Olson's proposal are significant, begging the question: does doctrine divide or define the church (1 Cor 11:18-19; 2 Cor 13:5)? A related read in this regard is *One Faith No Longer* by George Yancey and Ashlee Quosigk, whose sociological analysis confirms the chasm between conservative and progressive Christians in America to be so wide as to constitute different religions.

It will be interesting to see the reactions to this volume, whether positive or negative. It certainly shows that not much has changed since Machen. My only negative reac-

tion was with the poor binding of the volume itself. The pages literally fell apart before I could finish writing this review. Hopefully, this is not a parable of Christianity in America.

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John KESSLER. ***Between Hearing and Silence: A Study in Old Testament Theology.*** **Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2021. 288 pp. $44.99.**

Since the publication of his 2013 *Old Testament Theology: Divine Call and Human Response* (Baylor UP), John Kessler has been on the forefront of studies in Old Testament theology. In that volume, Kessler carved a path into the difficult field of Old Testament theology in investigating how the various streams of tradition within the Old Testament portray the character of the God of Israel and the divine-human relationship that ensues from encountering this deity. As born out in the title of this 2013 work, as a loquacious and relationship-seeking deity, the God of the Old Testament is actively engaged in the "divine call" of addressing humanity. In this new contribution to the field of Old Testament theology, *Between Hearing and Silence*, Kessler continues the approach of focusing on a certain theological theme, choosing as his focal point the concept of silence that characterizes the divine-human relationship at various times throughout the Hebrew Bible.

As delineated by Kessler, silence is a multifaceted and complex phenomenon that stands at the heart of the divine-human relationship, just as speech does. The hit country song, "You say it best, when you say nothing at all" conveys in a sentence the significance of silence in any relationship. Silence has a powerful affective dimension, as it can communicate a range of expressions such as anger, peace, assent, dissent, acceptance, or rejection (2). Silence within the Hebrew Bible, or any cultural system, presents "its own linguistic, sociological, and ideological world," where silence is not just an absence of sound, but conveys the absence of sound that would be normally expected in various circumstances (4). It is this absence of what would be expected that gives silence its particular theological significance in the Hebrew Bible, and which invites an explanation of the phenomenon as a window into the divine-human relationship where God is usually speaking. The experience of silence thus prompts significant questions that get at the heart of the theology of the Old Testament about the character of God and the divine-human relationship. As catalogued by Kessler, silence thus functions in several ways (6):

> As a bearer of meaning of various sorts, as a means of creating an ambiance within a text; as an active statement; as a phenomenon in the external world, creating space to hear God's voice; and as a reflection of various states of the human spirit, many of which might become truncated if put into words.

Following an introductory orientation to the significance of silence (ch 1), Kessler traces the theme of silence from various perspectives in the Hebrew Bible on the spectrum "between hearing and silence" that the title delineates. Chapter 2 considers how the silence of God is a reflection of the deterioration of relationship with God in the story of Saul and in the prophetic books, showing how repeatedly spurning the voice of God

leads to a diminution of divine speech and loss of relationship, which results in the devastation of humans having to navigate life without divine direction (see the downfall of Saul in 1 Sam 13–28 as a paradigmatic case). On this theme, chapter 3 considers more extensively how silence is a central theme in texts describing the catastrophes of judgment. Silence can also be a fitting response to transition from judgment into repentance (ch 4; Lam 3:19-33) and a way to restore relationship with God. On a positive note, silence is an expression of faithful confidence and trust in God's provision and salvation (ch 5; cf. Isa 30:1-18). Chapter 6 looks at silence at two extremes in the universe: the depths of Sheol, and the sanctuary of Yahweh. In Sheol, the place furthest away from the presence of God, eerie silence calls people to yearn for life and the opportunity to praise in the presence of God, while in God's sanctuary in the presence of the Lord, awe-filled silence is an expression of praise (Ps 65:1).

Chapter 7 considers the challenging aspect of the silence and apparent absence of God in the face of human suffering. The silence or absence of God in these texts is understood to be the lack of God acting in the midst of human suffering in ways that Israel has come to expect of the character of God (113). In discussions of the silence of God in the face of human suffering, Kessler traces a regularly occurring liturgical drama, in which the human petitioner first undergoes an experience of suffering in which God is apparently silent. The petitioner then proceeds to protest the silence of God, before there is an unexpected resolution to the tension that enables the protester to trust again in God and move forward from the situation (115-129). The Old Testament doesn't offer explanations of the divine silence but describes God's initiative to bring personalized resolution to situations of suffering "in that deep, internal place where those in pain encounter the Lord" (129). The details of these encounters are inexplicable and vague and are lacking in explanations of theodicy and the reasons for the silence of God. According to Kessler, this is so because these texts invite the audience to join in the process of protest and trusting God to ultimately break through the silence and meet the individual in his or her place of need (130).

Finally, chapter 8 considers the theme of silence in the story of the binding of Isaac (Gen 22), Elijah at the mountain of God (1 Kings 19), and the book of Job. In each of these texts, there is a delicate interplay between hearing and silence, wherein silence is crucial for laying the foundations for the protagonists to encounter God. As Kessler shows, each of these texts also brings the reader into an experience of silence, using narrative gaps, pauses, and explicit references to silence to leave ambiguity and delayed resolution. These protagonists each learned the discipline of waiting in silence before the Lord and how to be able to live with the tension of unanswerable questions.

Readers will find here many insights into important theological issues in the Hebrew Bible from texts that may not be given as much attention as the grand themes of Scripture usually get in treatments of Old Testament theology. There is also much to think about for those desiring to grow in discernment of what God is doing in the world today, and how understanding the ways that God communicates, and how the silence of God can be understood relationally, are essential for discernment. The section on the silence of God as it relates to human suffering offers crucial perspectives on the biblical treatment of how to practically respond to suffering in a way that enables the individual to cling to God through protest and entrust their life to God in faithful hope in the heal-

ing grace of God to resolve the situation. The volume also opens an avenue to reflect on how the concept of silence in the Hebrew Bible might inform an understanding of a New Testament theology of silence as well that would be worth pursuing. The volume is a valuable resource for the church today in understanding and modeling from the Scriptures how the life of faith is lived out between "hearing and silence."

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Ruben A. BÜHNER. *Messianic High Christology: New Testament Variants of Second Temple Judaism.* Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2021. 244 pp. $54.99.

A central tenet of Christian theology is that Jesus is divine. In contemporary biblical scholarship, however, it has become a subfield of specialization to explore the development of Christology. Without assuming the "high," or "divine" Christologies articulated in later church councils, especially Nicaea (381 CE) and Chalcedon (451 CE), biblical scholars explore what the New Testament writers claim about Jesus.

While there is universal agreement that the later parts of the New Testament portray Jesus as divine (John), it remains an open question whether or not some New Testament authors and the earliest followers of Jesus thought he was divine. If, in fact, the earliest followers considered Jesus divine, biblical scholars wonder when and how they came to such a startling conclusion. Moreover, some refuse to accept the possibility that Jews as devout monotheists could accept any human to be divine, no matter how exalted (J. R. Daniel Kirk, *A Man Attested by God: The Human Jesus of the Synoptic Gospels.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016). A common explanation for the development of a high, divine Christology, then, is that it was late and gentile. According to the late gentile theory, the earliest Christians did not consider Jesus God. Rather, a divine Christology developed only as the ranks of Christians increasingly consisted of gentiles with a pantheon of gods rather than monotheistic Jews. In the last several decades, however, many scholars have rejected the late gentile explanation for the divinity of Jesus. Bühner's volume offers another contribution to the group of scholars who claim an early high Christology. Bühner argues that divine Christology finds parallels in Jewish messianism of Second Temple Literature.

According to this volume early divine Christology emerged from the matrix of Jewish messianism of the Second Temple period. In his view, the language and conceptuality of divine Christology adopted and adapted "earlier messianic traditions" (5). Bühner defines a Messiah as "an eschatological figure of salvation, which may or may not be connected with the terminology of anointing" (6). Bühner recognizes that Messianic expectations were diverse and somewhat common, but not universal (6-8). Many Second Temple Jews were aware of messianic expectations, even though they did not all agree on what to expect. Some Jews, perhaps many, did not expect a Messiah at all. Regardless, Bühner categorizes any "eschatological figure of salvation" as messianic. Bühner's goal is to show that even the divine characteristics attributed to Jesus in the

NT "should be contextualized within the messianic discourse of Second Temple Judaism" (20). Contrary to the assumption that divine Christology is unlikely among monotheistic Jews, Bühner argues that divine Christology is fundamentally a Jewish concept.

The volume unfolds in seven chapters framed by an introduction and conclusion. The first chapter compares the exalted portrait of Jesus in Phil 2:6-11 to exalted messianic figures in the Dead Sea Scrolls (4Q491; 11Q13). After interpreting each text individually, Bühner compares the results of the scroll texts with Philippians (45-48, 61-62). Based on the comparison, Bühner argues that the Christology of Phil 2:6-11 is "a variant of first-century Jewish messianism" and not an "alien or un-Jewish idea" (63). Bühner acknowledges the substantive differences between Philippians and the Qumran texts, but his comparison shows that the exalted portrait of Jesus found in Paul's letter is similar to other messianic figures in Second Temple Jewish literature.

The second chapter compares Mark 14:61-65 with the celestial Messiah of *4 Ezra* and the Greek translation of Psalm 110. Although the Christology of Mark's Gospel is typically considered "low," portraying Jesus as a human, Bühner argues that Mark 14:61-65 cites Dan 7:13 to portray Jesus as a "superhuman messianic figure" (71). The Jewish apocalypse, *4 Ezra*, also employs Dan 7:13 to describe a Messianic figure. Bühner argues that the Messiah of *4 Ezra* is "preexistent" (esp. *4 Ezra* 7:27; 12:52; 13:26; 14:9), meaning that he exists before his arrival on earth (78-79). Also, the arrival of the Messiah (*4 Ezra* 13:1-13) adopts the biblical language for a divine epiphany (79-82). In addition to Dan 7:13, Mark alludes to Ps 110:1 [LXX 109:1] to portray Jesus on the divine throne. Bühner examines the Greek translation of Psalm 110 arguing that the Greek text explicitly portrays the messianic figure as "divinely begotten" (89-90) and preexistent (90-92). The superhuman messianic attributes found in *4 Ezra* and the Greek translation of Psalm 110, suggest to Bühner that Mark 14:61-65 portrays Jesus as a superhuman Messiah in ways similar to *4 Ezra* and other Jewish interpreters of Psalm 110.

In his third chapter, Bühner examines the Lukan birth narrative (Luke 1:26-38) as Messianic discourse. Bühner observes somewhat similar narratives of divine conception in antiquity (102-107), including the story of the Watchers (Gen 6:1-4; *1 En.* 6–16), Greek and Roman myths, and Jewish interpretations of the story of Isaac's birth (Gen 21:1-6; Philo, *QG* 1.3; *Leg.* 3.219; *Jub.* 16:12; cf. *Jub.* 19:12). Although there is no explicit evidence, Bühner thinks Jews interpreted Isaiah 7:14 as a messianic text prior to the early Christian movement (113). Additionally, he finds notable parallel with the Dead Sea Scrolls fragment 4Q246, also known as "4QSon of God" (114-120). The Jewish parallels suggest to Bühner that Luke's virgin birth narrative is most fundamentally a Jewish story about Jesus' divine origins.

The fourth chapter compares the enthroned lamb Christology of Revelation 4–5 with the "Son of Man" figure in the Parables of Enoch (*1 En.* 37–71). Bühner shows the high Christology of Revelation 4–5 places Christ, the lamb, on the divine throne (Rev 5:6), receiving worship alongside God (Rev 5:9-14). Similar enthronement (*1 En.* 45:3; 51:3; 55:4; 61:8; 62:2, 3, 5; 69:27, 29) and veneration (*1 En.* 48:5; 62:9) characterize the "Son of Man" in the Enochic Book of Parables (*1 En.* 37–71). Although the Christology in Revelation 4–5 is more explicit about divine enthronement and ven-

eration, in Bühner's view, "the development from one [Parables] to the other [Revelation] must be assessed as the logical consequence of a Jewish group believing the messiah to have been revealed" (140). The similarities and differences between the Jewish messianism of the Book of Parables and the Christology of Revelation show, for Bühner, that the divine Christology of revelation is "nothing more than a variant of Jewish messianism" (142).

The fifth chapter examines the *Logos* Christology of John 1:1-18 as a form of Messianic discourse. Bühner acknowledges that while John adopts a variety of messianic traditions (143-144), scholars interpret John's explicitly divine Christology as a deviation from messianism. Bühner claims the opposite, "even the admittedly brazen Divine Christology in the Gospel of John can be contextualized within early Jewish messianism" (145). Furthermore, Bühner argues, "John develops his Christology—at least to some degree—within the matrix of contemporary messianism" (145). After exploring the *Logos* Christology of John (145-157), Bühner turns to Jewish parallels (157-170). He observes that the messianic figure Melchizedek is called "God" (11Q13 II 10), like the *Logos* (John 1:1). Bühner also argues that the title "*Logos*" develops not only from Jewish traditions about "wisdom" collaborating with God in creation, but also traditions about messianic superhuman speech (Isa 11:4; Pss. Sol 17:24; 1QSb V 24-25; 4 Ezra 13). Bühner concludes the chapter by claiming that John developed his own Divine Christology using pre-existing messianic traditions.

The sixth and seventh chapters deviate from the established pattern of comparing a passage in the NT with a text or tradition from Second Temple Jewish literature. The sixth chapter, "Paths Not Taken," is about "negative evidence concerning the adoption of superhuman messianism" (173). Some Jewish traditions identify the messiah as an angel (LXX Isa 9:6; Mal 3:1). In addition, the Christologies of Revelation, Hebrews, and the Gospel of John, have notable similarities with portraits of angels elsewhere in Second Temple literature. Yet Bühner thinks it is significant that no NT texts explicitly identify Christ as an "angel" (179). As a result, he concludes, "there is no explicit angel Christology in the New Testament" (180). Although later Christian literature identifies Christ as an angel (Justin Martyr), the fact that the New Testament does not explicitly do so indicates to Bühner that the early Christians did not adopt and develop all known messianic discourse.

The seventh and final substantive chapter engages contemporary scholarly debates about the origin and development of Christology. Bühner reiterates his central claim that Christology originated as a variant of messianism (183-185) and developed within and alongside messianic discourse (186-188). Additionally, Bühner contests the blunt language of "low" (human) and "high" (divine) Christology. He sees this language presupposing a certain kind of development without allowing scholars to see important nuances (188-190). Bühner's conclusions are relevant to rethinking longstanding scholarly narratives about the historical Jesus and the so-called "parting of the ways." As it relates to the historical Jesus, Bühner contests the notions that Jesus could not have been killed for blasphemy and that a Jewish Jesus could not have believed that he was a "superhuman figure" (190-191). Finally, Bühner argues that the parting of the ways between Jews and Christians was not about the possibility of a divine messiah, a possibility that some Jews in the first century would embrace. Rather, the division was

the claim that Jesus was the divine Messiah. Bühner claims that it was only in response to the claim that Jesus was a divine messiah that Jewish messianic discourse rejected divine messianic discourse. Accordingly, it was as a reaction to early Christian proclamation about Jesus that subsequent Jewish literature denied the possibility of a divine messiah.

This volume is an excellent contribution to the ongoing debates about the origin and development of Christology. One of the great strengths of Bühner's volume is his text-centered approach. While scholars have long disputed how to define "divinity" among Jews, creating taxonomies of "divine" and "human" based on characteristics or attributes, Bühner shows that NT Christological texts make claims about Jesus as a superhuman figure. Additionally, he shows that the claims about Jesus parallel Jewish messianic discourse. Indeed, the strongest parts of the volume are the careful comparisons between NT texts and Second Temple Messianic texts (esp. chapters 1, 2, and 4).

While Bühner makes a compelling case that early Christology emerged from and adapted Jewish messianic discourse, the frame of the argument and some interpretive decisions are questionable. As an example of framing, Bühner's category of "messiah" as any eschatological figure of salvation regardless of anointing language is a broad definition, allowing a range of possible comparisons. What makes such a figure "messianic" if disentangled from specific "Messiah" language? How is anointing language relevant, if at all? As a questionable interpretive decision, Bühner privileges some Jewish sources over others. For example, Bühner argues that Philo's *Logos* theology is "clearly different from the Gospel of John" because Philo uses Middle-Platonic philosophy in his exegesis (154) while John, according to Bühner, has "no Platonic dualism" (152). As a result, Bühner finds the Philonic *Logos* an unhelpful parallel for John's Prologue (John 1:1-18). Surely, there are differences between John and Philo, as there are between Philippians and 11Q13, but the similarities are substantial enough to merit close comparison. In fact, one might argue that the similarities between John and Philo are more substantial than John's similarities to Jewish texts that portray the Messiah with powerful speech (161-169). Elsewhere in the volume, Bühner's comparisons do not precisely clarify the relationship between divine messianic figures and the God of Israel, but it becomes a point of crucial difference in the case of Philo and John. Perhaps for Bühner, Philo is less Jewish because he engages Greek philosophy in his exegesis or because he does not portray interest in a Messiah figure.

In general, this volume is a success. If perhaps pushed too far in some examples (John's Logos Christology), Jewish discourse about superhuman agents of salvation prove to be apt parallels to the divine Christology of New Testament authors. Scholars and graduate students will especially benefit from the volume. When I assigned this volume in an upper-division undergraduate course, many students lacked sufficient awareness of the debates about Christology among New Testament scholars to recognize Bühner's significant contribution.

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SCJ 25 (Fall, 2022): 257–315

Joshua COCKAYNE. *Contemporary with Christ: Kierkegaard and Second-Personal Spirituality*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2020. 268pp. $54.99.

It is an exciting time to study the writings of Søren Kierkegaard. As scholars from all over the world write about Kierkegaard from a variety of different perspectives, a thousand flowers are blooming. One of those flowers might be called the 'spiritual' reading of Kierkegaard, which understands the melancholy Dane as a spiritual writer full of wisdom and insight. This spiritual perspective includes works such as Simon Podmore's *Anatomy of the Abyss*, Christopher Barnett's *From Despair to Faith*, C. Stephen Evans's *Kierkegaard and Spirituality*, Frances Maughan-Brown's *The Lily's Tongue*, and Tekoa Robinson's contribution to the 2019 Kierkegaard Studies Yearbook, "Kierkegaard's Authorship as Eucharistic Liturgy."

This volume takes a unique place within this flourishing trend. Thus far, writing on Kierkegaard's spirituality has tended to come from historical or continental perspectives. This volume, by contrast, brings Kierkegaard into dialogue with analytical philosophy, psychology, and theology. Staging this dialogue is not the explicit purpose of the volume, however. The analytical tradition is used in service of the overall goal of this volume, which is to illuminate what it means to develop a "second-personal" relationship with Christ.

"Second-personal" might sound a bit strange, but the concept is familiar. Rather than just knowing about God—thus treating God as a third-personal object to be comprehended—human beings are created to know God as an I knows a Thou or as a lover knows a beloved. What is interesting in this volume is not so much this familiar idea as the way in which Cockayne applies it. A good amount of scholarship has been devoted recently to Kierkegaard's understanding of the imitation of Christ. Cockayne takes his notion of second-personal spirituality and uses this concept to explicate Kierkegaardian *imitatio Christi* with rigor and provocation.

What exactly does it mean to imitate Christ? Does it mean to wear sandals and speak Aramaic? Does it mean to live a single life and confront the religious establishment of your age? Does it mean to follow a series of formal rules (practice nonviolence, embrace poverty) which can be gleaned from the life of Christ? In Cockayne's reading of Kierkegaard, all such approaches treat Christ third personally: as an object, a thing to be studied. Cockayne distinguishes Kierkegaard's second-personal approach as follows:

> The central idea of the Kierkegaardian account of imitating Christ, then, is that becoming more Christ-like is achievable neither by focusing on mimicking Christ's historical actions nor by emulating certain goals Christ may have had were he in a twenty-first-century context. Rather true imitation is grounded in a relationship with the living Christ by becoming contemporary with him. Imitating Christ requires one to replicate what Christ is doing, not what he did or what he would do, and this is made possible by experiencing Christ's presence (84).

Christ is not a person who lived and is to be known about from a book. Christ is a living person to be known personally, as one knows a friend or lover. For Cockayne, prayer is something vitally important, especially the practice of listening in silence, for in silence we allow Christ to speak, and thus "it is in the silence that one becomes aware of the reciprocity of relationship with God" (102). Kierkegaard is famous as an advocate of subjectivity; in *Contemporary with Christ*, we see that this accent on subjectivity is at the

same time an emphasis on friendship as the mode through which one knows God; silent prayer is the necessary practice by which one embodies this conviction. Even dedicated reading of Scripture and consistent participation in liturgy can forget that God is alive and active; this volume is a continual reminder that if we do not know Christ as a living person (who can meet us in the night and who can know us and love us and give us direction), we don't really know him at all.

I do not entirely agree with Cockayne's reading of Kierkegaard. *Practice in Christianity* (1850), written by Kierkegaard's pseudonym Anti-Climacus, gives several formal categories that serve as criteria for determining whether we are truly imitating Christ. According to Anti-Climacus, we will necessarily be poor, marginalized, persecuted, and abased if we are truly following Christ, for the world we live in now is still the same world that crucified Christ; the same powers and principalities reign today. Following Christ will have the same results now as it did then.

Despite this fairly major disagreement on the central matter of the book, I heartily commend this volume. It is worth the attention not only of Kierkegaard scholars but of all who seek a more personal relationship with Christ. What Cockayne especially drives home is that it is only when Christ is personally present that the full extent of your own brokenness is revealed (171). Here is this loving presence, a Thou who is undoubtedly evident and ceaselessly beneficent; yet the Christ whom we meet in this encounter gives us directions, and we find that we don't want to follow them. 'Love that person, Lord? Surely not.' Surely this Jesus is someone whom it is safer to keep within the pages of a book. It is to Cockayne's credit that he says: 'No. He is alive! Let him be free.'

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Andrew ROOT. *Churches and the Crisis of Decline: A Hopeful Ecclesiology for a Secular Age*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2022. 304 pp. $27.99.

Church decline presents an urgent issue for those, both within the academy and without, who care about the future of congregational life and religious faith. In the current volume, Root attempts a reframing of the challenges and issues around church decline for the purpose of helping those "in the trenches" of church life and ministry find a new way forward. And he does this by reframing a basic question within this wider conversation: *What if the issue of church decline is not first a loss of resources but the loss of its source of life?* This volume might be read as a working out of the implication of that reframing for Church and ministry.

This volume is the fourth in his *Ministry in a Secular Age* series, and those who have followed Root through it will recognize many of the themes and ideas present in this volume; the immanent frame, authenticity, a marketplace social imaginary, the have/be distinction, and resonance all appear and provide the key vocabulary for Root's description of the situation in which churches find themselves. In many ways this volume could serve as a good summary of Root's larger project for those readers who are joining the conversation at this point. Yet where this volume differs from the others is in Root's

movement from description and analysis to imaginative construction through his narration of the life of the pastor Karl Barth and the "alternative history" of a local congregation. These twin narratives give structure and put flesh to Root's argument, helping the reader imagine what it might look like to enact this proposal. Root is clear that he is writing for pastors, and this aim is evident in the volume's shape and tone. But this is to the volume's benefit, as it serves to address many of the questions raised about Root's project and how a minister might embody or practice Root's vision. Reader's will find in this volume Root at his most specific, concrete, and constructive. This is a significant volume, and any attempt to provide a quick survey would not do it justice. But I will raise one question for Root, which perhaps speaks to a need for the next volume in this series.

Root reframes the "church decline" issue by redefining what "decline" means. Traditionally, "decline" is viewed through the loss of standing and members in whose absence the maintaining of church life becomes difficult. With such a definition, the conversation focuses on decline's reversal; how to bring people back, find new members, and generate the resources to maintain congregational life. Yet for Root "decline" speaks to divine presence and the community's attending to it, and that this attending may lead to a reversal of decline in the traditional sense. Yet it is not promised. This is an important shift with significant implications. It does not offer a "church growth" response, but one that calls for attending to the presence of God in our midst and inviting those within a Secular Age to experience it for themselves. This may lead one to pose a question to Root: *Would it be possible in your vision for my church to do this and still close its doors?* And if Root's answer is "yes," one wonders how this might be received by ministers for whom the loss of numbers is a real issue (with the corresponding loss of salary, resources for ministry, and other matters) they are trying to address. Thus, one wonders how the ministers for whom Root explicitly writes might receive his reframing. Even so, I found Root's re-description of the issue of decline to be hopeful, theologically rich, and energizing.

In this volume Root has given us a significant resource for how we might reimagine the issue of Church decline and respond in ways that are theologically faithful and non-anxious. And Root does this, fundamentally, by reminding us that the Church is first God's business, and therefore our first task is to attend to the presence of God among us.

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Michael P. KNOWLES. *Third Voice: Preaching Resurrection*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2021. 265 pp. $34.00.

Christianity rises or falls due to one singular historical event—Did Jesus of Nazareth, the one called the Christ, rise from the dead on that first Easter morning? If he did, Christianity is all that it claims to be: the way of truth and life that leads to an eternal relationship with God above. If he did not, then the apostle Paul is correct: "we are of all people most to be pitied" (1 Cor 15:19, NRSV). The space between these two real-

ities, one with eternal significance and the other with only temporal existence, is razor-thin. Faith rests upon the answer, an answer that was held so deeply and so tightly within the chest of the earth that weekend that the earth itself burst forth when it finally released the answer. Yet, even when the first witnesses to the resurrection—the women who came to dress Jesus' bruised and broken body for the long slumber of death—heard the glorious news that "He has been raised; he is not here" (Mark 16:6, NRSV), they could do no more than run and hide, saying "nothing to anyone, for they were afraid" (Mark 16:8, NRSV).

It seems that preaching about Christ rising from the dead should be the easiest sermon for a preacher to proclaim. It is, after all, the core of the gospel. It is the good news upon which our entire faith is based. And, yet, when preachers step to the pulpit, lectern, music stand or high-top table and open their Bibles, the weight of what they are about to say bears down on their shoulders so much so that they may release an audible gasp as they announce the Scripture reading. The earth did when the stone rolled back on that Easter morning. Why should any less be expected from those who preach the story?

This is the weight that Knowles feels in his most recent volume on preaching. Knowles, who holds the George F. Hurlburt Chair in Preaching at McMaster Divinity College in Hamilton, Ontario, will tell you that he is not a homiletician. And he is not, at least not by training. He is a NT scholar who happens to hold a deep love for preaching. By his own admission, he has grown into the role that he stumbled into many years ago. As such, he recognizes the weight of the task of preaching about the resurrection. As he states in his opening lines, "Attempting to offer a constructive account of the intersection between preaching and resurrection (whether this refers to preaching on the topic of resurrection, the resurrection of preaching as an activity in itself, or the resurrection of dead preachers) may seem at best implausible, at worst an exercise in futility" (1). As such, resurrection is something that preachers have no control over, as we are called to stand before God and announce God's good work to those who give us ear yet may not understand.

Knowles, however, stands firm in this task. The introduction outlines various ways Christians have interpreted Christ's resurrection, engaging with the various paradigms for understanding the resurrection such as those expressed by Rudolf Bultmann, Peter Carnley, and Brian Blount. Chapter 1 explores what it means to speak for God on the matter of resurrection, exploring how the constructs of missional theology espoused by Lesslie Newbigin and David Bosch provide a needed corrective to the function of preaching—that being communicative rather than evangelistic or apologetic. Chapter 2 explores the theological significance of the divine silence of Holy Saturday, reminding the preacher of the need for meditative silence before engaging in the speech act of preaching. Chapters 3 and 4 turn more to the expository, as the various immediate resurrection appearances are analyzed for their conviction in the reality of the message of Christ's resurrection while still allowing room for doubt and the need to recognize the risen Christ as he now stands before. Chapter 5, possibly the most significant chapter in this treatise, explores Bhabhi's concept of Third Space, a postcolonial and sociolinguistic theory of human identity and community as hybrid. The impact on preaching is what Knowles calls "third space," the cruciform space at the margins "of humanity itself" and

"opens to new creation by means of God's gift of life" (188). Finally, chapter 6 turns more intently to Holy Saturday as a way of inviting the preacher to remember that this is where we reside—in the now but not yet of the resurrection, proclaiming our hope in the risen Christ until Christ returns.

Overall, this volume is a much-needed contribution to the field of homiletical theology. If there is any critique, it is that its approach is complex. Yet, that is the point. There is no one way to understand what happened that Easter morning, as even the Gospel writers cannot agree on what happened—only that it did happen. This volume will provide a deep theological companion to more practical guides for preaching about the resurrection, such as Wes Allen, *Preaching Resurrection* (Chalice, 2000), Brian Blount, *Invasion of the Dead: Preaching Resurrection* (Westminster John Knox, 2014), or Joni S. Sancken, *Stumbling over the Cross: Preaching the Cross and Resurrection Today* (Wipf & Stock, 2016).

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Charles L. AARON, Jr., and Jamie CLARK-SOLES, Eds. *Shouting Above the Noisy Crowd: Biblical Wisdom and the Urgency of Preaching: Essays in Honor of Alyce M. McKenzie*. Lloyd John Ogilvie Institute of Preaching Series. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2021. 125 pp. $18.00.

Preaching today has a bad rap. The combination of thoughtless exegesis, the mishandling of the original language, a lack of awareness of historical and cultural context or the theological misappropriation of application can develop into a sermon that runs an unhealthy gamut of heady lecture to syrupy afterschool special. Those who preach are charged with "rightly explaining the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15, NRSVue), a grace challenge to be sure. Barth was correct in asking who would want to preach, knowing the gravity of ascending the pulpit steps, opening a Bible and speaking a word about that passage?

However, what if preaching could be more? More exciting? More captivating? More accurate? There are some of us who truly believe in preaching, that the vocal proclamation of God's word in sanctuaries and through livestreaming can lead to spiritual transformation and wise living. One such preacher is Alyce McKenzie, the George W. and Nell Ayers Le Van Professor of Preaching and Worship at the Perkins School of Theology. In four decades of preaching and teaching, McKenzie has labored under one directive—the prevalence of ethical living mandates an urgent message from God's word.

McKenzie's influence on preaching and biblical studies is pleasantly surprising. Her list of publications includes numerous homiletics texts as well as studies on parables. Preachers often develop a textual focus—a portion of Scripture that draws us in—and that has been the Hebrew wisdom literature for McKenzie. With five different publications, she is the definitive voice on preaching from the Hebrew wisdom literature and a highly respected voice in the biblical studies community. Her desire to combat "self-

help" maxims with solid, clear biblical and homiletic wisdom has given her something of a John the Baptizer vibe, a voice crying in the wilderness as the celebrity pastor culture continues its toxic corruption of the church.

And, yet, McKenzie's writings compel us to ask for more from preaching. More urgency, more creativity, more wisdom. This is what this volume is about: McKenzie's legacy of and Wisdom's place in preaching. On one hand, it honors a noted scholar for her contribution to her fields of expertise. On the other hand, it sets the table for a long-overdue conversation about the contribution of wisdom literature to the practice of preaching. This volume is not about how to preach from Job or Proverbs. It is about how these sacred texts can and must influence the contemporary pulpit, to bring Lady Wisdom's clarion call to embrace wisdom, justice, and love into the hearts and minds of modern Christians.

Composed of seven essays and five sermons, the goal of this festschrift is clear—to introduce readers to the liberating, soothing, humorous way of wisdom, not as a preaching trope but as a way of genuine discipleship. Of note are Ruthanna B. Hooke's opening chapter on how the role of Woman Wisdom destabilizes and decenters both the metaphor of wisdom and the locus of homiletics to the solely masculine, Wes Allen's chapter on postmodern wisdom homiletics that argues for seeing the wisdom literature as the relevant corpus for today, Carolyn J. Sharp's sermon from Psalm 87 (chapter 8), and Angel J. Gallardo's sermon from Luke 2:41-52 (chapter 11). As David Schnasa Jacobsen notes in his chapter, a chapter that feels rightly incomplete to this reviewer, this collection is merely the beginning of the conversation, as those interested in the wisdom tradition are invited to continue developing the concept of wisdom homiletics.

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Sarah TRAVIS. *Unspeakable: Preaching and Trauma-Informed Theology.* Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2021. 140 pp. $19.00.

All around us, no matter the community or faith-space, are people who have experienced trauma. To recount even the most recent of our collective traumas would take this whole review. Churches have not been exempted but have often enacted or reinforced people's trauma. Ministers of any kind must be mindful of the realities of trauma in our world and act with appropriate care and compassion. Certainly, this volume is exceedingly timely. In fact, this year's gathering of the Festival of Homiletics was titled "After the Storm: Preaching after Trauma." The current volume brings many intersecting pieces together, of trauma, theology, and preaching, and offers a concise knowledge base for readers. Written as a part of the *New Series on Theology and Trauma*, this volume seeks to acknowledge the realities of trauma, and offer mindsets and methods to those who serve in church communities.

The introduction discusses the times when our beautiful words fail. Often, the rush to the joy of Easter fails to sit in the discomfort of Holy Saturday. This is not a new idea, but well laid out in this volume, drawn from the work of Shelly Rambo and others. This

'third-space preaching' allows the experience of all three days of the weekend of Easter to impact our preaching and teaching. In this introduction, Travis also says that there are no experts on trauma, but because trauma speaks in a language that is "unspeakable," ministers must do their best to respond and restore.

Next comes a more technical conversation on trauma, its expressions, effects, and causes. She notes on more than one occasion that she is not a clinician but a preacher attempting to construct a theology that acknowledges these truths in light of what Christianity believes. This chapter also reflects on the positive and negative recovery possibilities from trauma events and the ongoing nature of trauma. For those who are not students of psychology, this chapter is especially important.

Travis then begins to apply the practices of trauma-informed care to theology and preaching. The next two chapters speak first on preaching 'in between,' and then offer the value of imagination when speaking about trauma-informed preaching. By preaching from the middle, the preacher serves as witness to each space of life in trauma. Travis' goal of including imagination as an element of trauma-informed preaching is to create a vision for a future after trauma and to work as a midwife to bring about a community-oriented future.

The author understands very well the limitations of the volume without attempting to pull punches on technical language or the responsibilities of those who lead. This volume is not intended to be a treatise on trauma, nor is it strictly action-points to ensure one could not be held accountable for traumatizing actions. Instead, with compassion and care, Travis builds a hermeneutic that can be adopted in pulpits, classrooms, conversations, and households to inform Christians of their responsibility in the face of trauma. This volume makes the contributions of many in the field of trauma studies—as it intersects with theology and preaching—accessible for almost any reader.

This volume is important for Christian believers. It is readable and easy to apply in a variety of circumstances, such as parenting, writing, non-profit care, and relationships. Although it is theologically and homiletically focused, there is a lot to gain from this volume that can be applied in other contexts. If any minister has a desire to offer better care, this is a great place to start, offering the what, how, and why of trauma-informed preaching and theology.

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Lisa L. THOMPSON. *Preaching the Headlines: Possibilities and Pitfalls.* Minneapolis, MN: 1517 Media, 2021. 143 pp. $19.99.

There are those who believe preaching to be a disconnected affair, more concerned with the details of an ancient text than concerned with the realities of the everyday. Thompson's current volume resists this and exhorts preachers who read her volume to commit deeply to the practical, reflective, communal effort that makes preaching a shaping work. This reflects clearly her Womanist Homiletic, which emphasizes the groundedness of humankind, their experiences, and connecting the things we

profess to believe and the reality of the world we live in. Thompson is an Associate Professor at the Vanderbilt Divinity School and is the Cornelius Vanderbilt Chair of Black Homiletics and Liturgics. She holds both a Ph.D. and an M.A.R. from Vanderbilt, as well as an M.Div. from Fuller Seminary. She has taught at Union Theological Seminary in New York, McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago, and at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary in Pittsburgh before her current work at Vanderbilt and is ordained in her Baptist tradition. This short and manageable read focuses on three key human elements that deserve the attention of the preacher and the community and then proceeds to demonstrate the reality of these principles applied in the pulpit.

The introduction discusses the complexity of a book release in the midst of COVID-19. Then, the first chapter focuses on Thompson's guiding assumptions for the volume. She discusses the idea of *Headlines* as less about the news reports but the grounded reality of the problems of those in your community and beyond. "The *Headlines* are the times at hand (16)." Then, Thompson emphasizes the need to know, acknowledge, and address the underlying frameworks upon which the preaching process is based.

Chapter 2 discusses our human bodies and the social realities of them, addressing the reality that we all experience life in human form, and to disregard the repercussions of that is negligent to our communities. At the end of the next three chapters, Thompson lists questions that help preachers identify and reflect on their beliefs, realities, and priorities. Chapter 3 discusses taboos, like money, politics, and religion, and asks: what is at the core of these? How can a faithful community leave no stone unturned in the pursuit of a consistent life? Widening the conversation, chapter 4 asks about the whole of creation and their rights and responsibilities to life flourishing. Subsequently, chapter 5 finishes the body of the volume with three applied sermons, drawn from the three chapter topics. The conclusion returns to the questions of the first chapter and implores the reader to determine what matters most and why it matters, so that we may proclaim and live out those convictions. Assume less, Thompson says, and interrogate more.

Though this volume focuses on preaching, the theological base of this volume is useful for any who lead in a faith community because of the emphasis on connecting belief and action. Some from the Stone-Campbell tradition may bristle at the idea of bringing headlines into the pulpit, seeing it as partisan commentaries rather than God's word. However, Thompson implores that preachers push past surface-level language that causes division to ask the questions underlying them. She emphasizes that to live convicted lives, we must know and acknowledge what we believe and the ways it affects our lives before we can live in God's way.

This volume is especially compelling to those who see the gap between what their church and their own faith say and what they do in their world. For all who wish to live lives of consistency, this volume empowers us to "pursue what matters most."

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Veronice MILES. *Embodied Hope: A Homiletical Theology Reflection*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2021. 260 pp. $33.98.

In the grand scheme of things, preaching is a fascinating discipline, both academically and professionally. Academically, the discipline of preaching (aka, homiletics) crosses paths with biblical, theological, communicative, sociological, and philosophical studies, just to name the more usual suspects in a homiletics conversation. In a world that is emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic, new conversation partners, such as technology and digital media studies, are now finding a spot at the table. Those of us who find our way into this discipline, whether by choice or by accident, spend our lives teaching students and ministers how to preach well: how to preach a singular sermon well and how to preach well through a lifetime of ministry. Professionally, the discipline of preaching crosses paths with many of the same conversation partners—including the newer partners in the congregation or parish—in the weekly preparation of the sermon, homily, or message. Preachers toil away, listening to and feeling vibes from those that surround them: those in the books on the desk, those in the sermons stored up in their hearts, and those watching over them from beyond the eternal shore. It may be a stretch to compare the sermon to a Balrog, however any preacher or preaching professor will quickly note that it can feel that way at times.

Another aspect to preaching that makes it a fascinating discipline is the personal focus one brings to the study. Again, this can be both academic and professional. Academically, one can focus on the structure or function of a sermon, spending their time crafting models for sermon development. Professionally, one can focus on a particular book of the Bible or theological theme through which to read Scripture. Preachers, as they preach through the Bible, find passages, books and themes that resonate with them. Occasionally, this intersection of the academic study and the professional study of preaching intersects, culminating in a lifetime project. Such is what is at hand in the current volume. A scholar with years of dedicated service in both the pulpit and classroom, Miles brings together her love of communicating scripture with her love for teaching homiletics under the lens of hope theology and offers a reflection on preaching within the vein of the emerging Homiletical Theology method, a process that focuses on "doing theology" through preaching.

The focus of her reflection is how preaching through the vein of hope which brings about the kin(g)dom of God. The construction of this central term is intentional, as it articulates both the embodied and anticipatory nature of hope. Hope is embodied in our kin-dom (the church) and anticipates the coming of the kingdom of God. Preaching hope, Miles argues, counters the "culturally induced despair" (12) that leads to apathy, division, exhaustion, irresponsibility, and lack of engagement in God's mission. Preaching hope is not simply charting our course on a whim; it is "anticipatory in nature" (110). Preaching hope feels the groans of the earth's expectation and resonates with humanity's desire to experience the fullness of the *imago Dei*. Preaching hope, in Miles's final estimation, will expose the problem being addressed in the text, analyze the impact the continuation of the problem has on the congregation, and invite a faithful response from the congregation through hope in God's good work. Overall, this is a

beautiful meditation on what preaching can be in a time when preaching often communicates more despair than hope.

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Noel A. SNYDER. *Sermons That Sing: Music and the Practice of Preaching.* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2021. 180 pp. $18.49.

This volume is part of the Dynamics of Christian Worship series which seeks to help Christians grow in their understanding of various aspects of Christian worship. The volume includes a foreword by Jeremy Begbie as well as a brief introduction written by the author. The volume uses footnotes, and the back matter includes a bibliography as well as general and scriptural indexes. The body of the volume comprises five chapters, the first of which is primarily introductory, and the last of which is brief and more practically focused. The center three chapters contain the heart of the volume.

Snyder draws on his background in music as well as his expertise in preaching to present an informed and thoughtful integration of these two fields. His aim in the volume is to offer "a sustained analysis of *the musicality of preaching* by bringing the art of music into deep theoretical and practical conversation with the art of preaching" (3). His primary conversation partners are Jeremy Begbie (who has done significant work integrating theology and music) and Jana Childers (who has done significant work with the performative dimensions of preaching).

Snyder claims that music and preaching share at least three features, namely, synchrony, repetition, and teleology. Synchrony relates to unity. It has to do with the way music occurs in time. It can be "loosely defined as the bringing together of disparate individual temporalities into a single, coordinated temporal whole in the making and hearing of music" (42). In preaching, this relates to a preacher's ability to create an experience in her or his preaching which unites the congregation around the sermon, whether by features such as call and response or the inductive organization of materials. Repetition relates to patience in that both music and preaching work within conventions created historically and by individual musicians and preachers in her or his own work. Repetition forms listeners' patience, creating familiar conventions and new expectations while also embedding in listeners' minds what is most important. Teleology relates to hope. It has to do with the direction of the piece of music or the sermon; the fact that each is "going somewhere." For the preacher, "where the sermon is going" is beyond a moment of resolution within the sermon itself. It reaches to eschatology, to the final *telos* to which God's cosmos is aimed.

One of the great strengths of this volume is the artistic interplay between the fields of musicology and homiletics, which is an interplay that has not been sufficiently developed. The three points Snyder makes concerning synchrony, repetition, and teleology are also stimulating, and preachers who keep these three points in mind can only strengthen their preaching. Nevertheless, the volume also has some weaknesses, one of which is that it errs on the side of technicality. A preacher who does not have Snyder's

background or interest in music may wonder why so much attention is given to music, since the volume is primarily for preachers and not musicians. Some of the content has the feel of a dissertation-turned-book, which includes thick, footnoted discussions, albeit with very interesting ideas around the practice of music. But the (largely) front-loaded, musicological content of whichever chapter does not always appear to be entirely essential to the homiletical points Snyder makes in the second half of the chapter. The volume may be strengthened by abbreviating the musicology aspects, broadening and deepening the homiletical points, and leaning even more into the "so what" for preachers. Or it may be strengthened by simply weaving together the musical and homiletical parts of the chapters more seamlessly.

The volume might best be appreciated by those preachers who share a deep love and knowledge of music with the author. Also, preachers and students of preaching with good theological imaginations may also thoroughly enjoy this volume. Snyder helps readers step back from preaching and see their field anew through the lens of music. The relationship between music and preaching will certainly linger in the thinking of any preacher who reads this volume. This relationship will prove to have a positive impact on the theory and practice of all those who engage this volume.

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Rob DIXON. *Together in Ministry: Women and Men in Flourishing Partnerships.* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2021. 155 pp. $22.00.

Given the ministry of Jesus, it is strange that there is such aversion today to men and women working together in the ministry of the Gospel. Looking over a crowd of disciples and having "compassion on them because they were confused and helpless," Jesus said, "The harvest is great, but the workers are few. So pray to the Lord who is in charge of the harvest; ask him to send more workers into his fields." (Matt 9:36-38 NLT) It's impossible to say how many of those disciples were women, but there were many, to be sure. Jesus had a number of women who traveled with him (Luke 8:1-3). Like their male counterparts, they sat at his feet and learned (Luke 10:38-42), they were commissioned to take his Gospel into a "confused and helpless world" (Luke 24:44-49), they were filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2), and they were willing to risk everything for the sake of the Gospel (Acts 8:3, Rom 16:4). Our world today remains "confused and helpless." About three-quarters of the world's population is outside the church. With such a dire situation, it's easy to understand Jesus' lament; the harvest is great, but the workers are few. Thankfully, with a Bible full of women leaders blazing the way, churches have begun to pray for God to send both men and women alike. This noble effort has not come without friction. With such a long history of confusion surrounding gender roles, churches have often found it difficult to cultivate healthy ministry partnerships between men and women.

In this volume, Dixon offers the *Together in Ministry Model*, a practical tool designed to foster healthy mixed-gender ministry partnerships. Based on more than twenty-seven

years of ministry experience serving with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, Dixon presents "a prophetic roadmap for individuals and communities as they discern ways to live out flourishing mixed-gender ministry partnerships in their context" (12). Through his own qualitative research, Dixon identifies ten attributes which are the hallmarks of flourishing mixed-gender ministry partnerships. These attributes are categorized into three larger "domains of flourishing" which form the basis for this volume. Each domain represents a crucial area of concern for churches and organizations who wish to ensure that their mixed-gendered ministry partnerships are "personally satisfying and missionally effective" (24). Using this threefold model as his framework, Dixon presents a helpful mix of theological wisdom, personal anecdotes, and practical advice which heartens ministry leaders to find the courage to intentionally work toward flourishing mixed-gendered partnerships.

Dixon envisions that the model presented in this volume can be used as a "discipleship agenda," "report card," "evaluative guide," and "systematized organizational training program." (149) While considerable adaptation from the manuscript's current form would likely be required for such uses, Dixon has provided an important guide to the crucial first steps down the road to healthy ministry partnerships between men and women. The road ahead is not an easy one; the road of ministry seldom is. As Dixon reminds us, "Flourishing mixed-gendered ministry partnerships will not happen by accident. On the contrary, they will take focused effort and courageous intentionality" (24). The *Together in Ministry Model* is an indispensable tool for the journey.

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R. B. JAMIESON and Tyler R. WITTMANN. *Biblical Reasoning: Christological and Trinitarian Rules for Exegesis.* Grand Rapids: Baker, 2022. 289 pp. $29.99.

The rationale (on the back cover) for this volume is to show "how Christology and the doctrine of the Trinity are grounded in Scripture and how knowledge of these topics is critical for exegesis." To that end, after a ten-page Introduction Jamieson and Wittman divide their volume into two major sections. Part One, "Biblical Reasoning," contains three chapters: "Seek His Face Always: The End of Biblical Reasoning." "The School of Christ: The Pedagogical Context of Biblical Reasoning," and "The Curriculum of Christ: The Source and Practice of Biblical Reasoning." Part Two, "Christological and Trinitarian Rules for Exegesis," contains seven chapters: "Worthy Are You: Understanding Scripture as Honoring God," "The Lord Is One: The Trinity's Unity and Equality in Scripture's Twofold Discourse," "Varieties of Activities but the Same God: The Trinity's Inseparable Operations and Scripture's Appropriation," "One and the Same: The Unity of Christ and Scripture's Communication of Idioms,"

"Greater Than Himself and Less Than Himself: Christ's Two Natures and Scripture's Partitive Discourse," "God from God: From Missions to Processions," and "Putting the Rule-Kit to Work: Reading John 5:17-30." Following this is a four-page "Conclusion: From Glory to Glory," a three-page "Appendix: Table of Principles and Rules," a twenty-three-page Bibliography, and an Index (twenty-two pages, divided into Subject, Author, and Scripture and Other Ancient Sources).

At the beginning of the volume the authors state, "Our goal in this book is to assemble a toolkit for biblical reasoning. The toolkit's goal is to enable better exegesis. The goal of that exegesis is, ultimately, to see God" (xvii). This is admirable. They continue: "Scripture is thus systematic theology's origin and goal. When rightly pursued, theology comes from and returns to Scripture in order to hear and confess ever more faithfully God's gospel address, which has fellowship with God in Christ as its end" (xviii). To that end, they wish to "rightly relate what should not be kept separate: exegesis and systematic theology" (xviii). Again, admirable; yet, they then equate systematic theology with dogmatic theology: "there is a crucial sense in which exegetical and dogmatic reasoning say the same thing in different words" (xix).

Setting aside for the moment the issue of what theology is (biblical or systematic?), systematic theology and dogmatic theology are not necessarily the same thing. Systematic theology, at best, is presenting what Scripture itself teaches on the major themes of the Bible. Dogmatic theology, on the other hand, seeks to uphold the dogmas received by particular faith groups. To be sure, there are those who see no difference between the two; thus, it is that the authors use the terms interchangeably. Indeed, they affirm "the symbiotic relationship between exegetical and dogmatic reasoning that this work will develop and defend" (xix). They reason that "classical doctrines about Christ and the Trinity constitute a well-stocked keychain that can open exegetical doors that would otherwise remain shut in the face of modern exegetical conventions" (xxii). The authors appear to give undue weight to dogmatic reasoning: "Further, rather than treating dogmatics as an intellectual development that, at least implicitly, improves upon the raw material of Scripture, we will treat theology as the grammar of Scripture" (xx). From a Restorationist perspective, this is one small step away from creeds and catechisms—which the authors seem to acknowledge by quoting favorably from Zacharias Ursinus: "For as the doctrine of the catechism and Common Places are taken out of the Scriptures, and are directed by them as their rule, so they again lead us, as it were, by the hand to the Scriptures" (xix-xx).

The volume itself develops the authors' seven Principles of exegesis (culminating in applying the rule-kit to John 5:17-30), which contains ten rules within—all deriving from the Christological and Trinitarian emphases stated at the beginning. And to be certain, the volume has a well-developed Christology from start to finish. One is hard pressed, though, to perceive how their approach would fit with the traditional exegetical process in many passages of Scripture which have nothing to do directly with the Godhead or Christology. At the end of the day, the Bible is a piece of literature—fully inspired of God and inerrant—which must be understood (as much as possible) from every perspective. This includes grammatical-historical principles of exegesis, as well as logic and reasoning. This also involves one in examining passages (such as the lists in the book of Numbers) and books (such as Song of Solomon and Esther) which seem to have

no explicit connection with Christology and the Godhead. One's hermeneutical approach must be flexible in such cases. That being said, the authors interestingly affirm a part of the traditional Restoration hermeneutic that has come under much criticism from some quarters. In commenting on John 5:17-18, they write: "(T)here is a sense in which the principle of God-fittingness is a *necessary inference* from the theological grammar of this passage, specifically the logic of the dispute between Jesus and his opponents" (217, emphasis added). This is familiar hermeneutical territory indeed.

All in all, the authors have made an intriguing contribution to the ongoing discussion concerning hermeneutics and exegesis. While it may not serve as a primary textbook in undergraduate courses, it would provide a fresh perspective in supplemental reading—especially in graduate work. Perhaps there could be a Restorationist approach that could build off of this volume and improve upon it. Jamieson and Wittman have challenged us to embark upon the task.

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Eric A. SEIBERT. *Enjoying the Old Testament: A Creative Guide to Encountering Scripture*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2021. 234 pp. $26.00.

In a volume intended for the unfamiliar, the unimpressed, and the uninspired, Seibert makes the case for not only reading the OT but enjoying it. He supports his thesis in three parts. In Part One: Preparing to Read the Neglected Testament, Seibert begins by addressing common hurdles and misconceptions that keep people from engaging the OT. In Part Two: Having Fun with the Old Testament, the author focuses on background material, literary features, and unique contributions of various genres. Part Three: Encountering the Old Testament in New Ways offers various approaches to studying the OT that most will not have engaged in or even thought of. The volume serves as part introduction, part apologetic, and part study guide to the OT.

Three strengths come through in the writing. First, the author tackles big issues head on. In particular, he considers why some believe the OT is boring, irrelevant, and offensive. Certainly, these three hurdles are among the most prevalent for folks today. In addressing these, the author offers practical examples and clear advice to overcome them. A second strength lies in the approach and language. The author avoids technical or overly theological language, which makes the books accessible to those without formal theological training. A final strength is evident in the practical and useable tips, suggestions, and encouragements to experience the OT in new ways. These range from the simple (keep a journal) to the artistic (finish stories in your own words.)

The primary weakness of the volume is revealed in the approach the author takes to working through difficult and offensive sections of the OT. The traditional conservative approach to these parts of the OT that appear out of alignment with the teachings of Jesus (in particular) is to lean into the unity of the Bible while conceding that God's expectations of his followers has changed from the OT to the NT. The theological position that the Bible is internally consistent and unified sets the parameters for understand-

ing these difficult sections of the OT (holy war, polygamy, genocide) Seibert, however, advocates seeing the Bible as representing many theological perspectives, some of which are inaccurate and even contradictory to the fully developed picture of God given by Jesus. He states, "We know an Old Testament depiction of God accurately reflects God's character when it aligns with the life and teachings of Jesus. Portrayals that do not align well with the God Jesus reveals are likely to say more about the cultural context in which they emerged than they do about the God of whom they speak," (143). God's call for Abraham to sacrifice Isaac in Genesis 22 is an example given for this principle (147). In short, Seibert sees much of the Old Testament representing primitive cultural expressions that conflict with Jesus' representation of God. Rather than working to understand how both can accurately represent God's character, the author avoids the issue by simply dismissing many of the challenging parts of the OT as theologically outdated and underdeveloped.

The author encourages readers to engage the OT in new and exciting ways. The volume may arrive in the hands of that reader via a chance encounter, a recommendation from a pastor, or perhaps as a textbook for a Bible course. Pastors from the Christian Church and Churches of Christ will most likely want to recommend it with caution and a strong caveat regarding the issues raised above relating to the author's foundational approach to the unity and inspiration of Scripture.

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Tremper LONGMAN, III. ***Confronting Old Testament Controversies: Pressing Questions about Evolution, Sexuality, History, and Violence.*** **Grand Rapids: Baker, 2019. 316 pp. $21.00.**

In this volume, Longman evaluates "attempts from within the evangelical church to reinterpret texts in a way that is more culturally acceptable" (xvi). The topics addressed are what he considers to be the most controversial issues of the Old Testament. Longman writes to those in the church who "take the Bible as the Word of God," though he notes that these issues do not determine whether one is a Christian or believes the Bible is God's Word.

While the nature of Scripture is not a topic of the volume, the first twenty percent of his chapter on creation and evolution is devoted to the nature of scripture and appropriate reading practices, which he refers back to in subsequent chapters. Beginning with the assertion that the church does not define the canon, it is the canon (through which the Holy Spirit works) that defines the church. Longman affirms the inerrancy, perspicuity, and *sensus plenior* nature of Scripture. At the same time, he does offer some concessions to these claims. The inerrancy of Scripture is defined as "true in all that they intend to teach or affirm." While Scripture is inerrant, not everything in Scripture is clear, nor is our interpretation of it inerrant. Similarly, Longman offers helpful comments around issues of cognitive environment, what readers bring to the text, and the importance of reading in community.

Longman's closing comments on the nature of Scripture segue neatly into his discussion on creation and evolution. He states, "God is the ultimate author of both Scripture and nature. When both are correctly interpreted, they will not conflict" (22). While Longman also states that it is more important to remain faithful to God and Scripture than to scientific theories, he also notes that Scripture does not trump nature and that science can help us read the Bible better.

Longman states that Genesis 1–3 does make historical claims, but it does so using "highly figurative language" (he does not use the term myth for the biblical account as he does for comparative creation accounts). Thus, the Bible is clear that God created, but it shows almost no interest in how God created, and we may disregard elements of the text that are often pointed to as describing the "how" of creation. Instead, science should be used to supplement the "how" of creation that is missing in Scripture, and there is little doubt "among research biologists" that creation took place "through a long process involving a primate past that eventually traces back to very simple organisms" (58). Longman is an evolutionary creationist and suggests that after evolution provided *Homo sapiens*, God conferred his image on them before humanity willingly rebelled.

Moving on to the topic of the historicity of the OT, Longman began the chapter with an illustration of how he became a Christian after finally hearing a minister affirm the importance of the historicity of Jesus' death, crucifixion, and resurrection. At various points in the chapter, he briefly comments on the historicity of some elements of the Jesus narratives in a way that appears to connect denying the historicity of the exodus or conquest to denying the historicity of Jesus' resurrection.

While Longman addresses history broadly, most of his comments are restricted to the exodus and conquest events. After surveying works by several believing scholars that question biblical historicity, Longman concedes that evangelicals often "overhistoricize" the Bible. Longman's primary motivation for upholding the historicity of the biblical account is theological; if the exodus did not happen, then there is no theological value to the story because the power of the story is that it establishes a track record for God (93).

Longman begins his chapter on divine violence with a survey of texts portraying God violently, noting its prevalence in virtually every OT book, before engaging several works by scholars who attempt to "silence" the Bible's depiction of God's judgment. Longman's view is that the entirety of Scripture presents no contradiction between testaments or texts. Thus, God's nature is seen as a warrior against Israel's enemies, against Israel itself, against Israel's oppressors, against spiritual powers and authorities, and finally, in the last battle.

While Longman often (in this chapter and others) acknowledges the cognitive environment from which the OT arose, he rarely allows for questioning the perspectives that arose therein (cosmology and polygamy being notable exceptions). He asserts that "There is no ethical basis outside of the Bible by which we should evaluate the Bible" (145), and "We must understand God in the way he reveals himself to us in his Word" (205). His reason for rejecting some elements of that environment and not others is not entirely clear.

Longman opens his chapter on homosexuality with a brief survey of his picture of a biblical theology of sexuality—male and female genders are equal, and each is part of the

image of God; marriage is between a man and woman, and sexuality, like all aspects of humanity and creation, is tainted by the fall, though in Jesus we can find redemption. He then surveys Old Testament texts, concluding that homosexual acts were always wrong and viewed as violations of the seventh commandment. The three New Testament texts that address homosexuality all uphold the stance of the Mosaic law.

Regarding homosexuality and Christian faith, Longman considers same-sex attraction a sexual struggle and homosexual acts sinful, though he is clear that everyone struggles with sexual sin. He acknowledges that same-sex attraction most often is not a choice, the church should embrace same-sex attracted individuals, and same-sex attracted individuals should be free to seek ordination. However, he denies this option for practicing homosexuals.

Longman has co-written books on each topic addressed here, as well as numerous journal and magazine articles. The value of this volume is the presentation of these views in a single volume and centered around his view of inerrancy. Longman writes in a clear, engaging fashion that is easily accessible by students and lay Christians alike. For readers that share Longman's view of Scripture, this volume is a helpful introduction to the topics considered.

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Amy C. COTTRILL. ***Uncovering Violence: Reading Biblical Narratives as an Ethical Project.*** **Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2021. 188 pp. $33.00.**

Violence continues to be an important subject for readers of the OT. In this volume, Cottrill thoughtfully engages the complex topic of violence by focusing on key narrative texts and utilizing an ethical reading strategy. From over a decade of teaching, interacting with students, and researching difficult narratives, Cottrill brings forth an interdisciplinary work that moves the conversation of violence within Scripture into constructive directions. This dialogic perspective takes to task the seriousness of the reader's encounter with violent texts, offering a valuable hermeneutical lens. The primary contributions of this volume, according to Cottrill, are to (1) expand the ways violence is witnessed in the text (subtle and explicit) and (2) offer an ethical reading strategy that addresses the ethical implications of the reading process (reader formation).

Cottrill organizes this volume into an introduction that sets forth her methodological task. Four chapters follow that set forth narrative examples of this ethical reading strategy: key figures such as Sisera's mother (Judg 5), Samson (Judg 13–16), Ruth, and Abigail (1 Sam 25), and a conclusion which offers a final reflection. This text thoughtfully engages an interdisciplinary approach that employs key thinkers (Martha Nussbaum and Wayne Booth) with a focus on narrative ethics (Newton). Through identifying and expanding definitions of violence a reader encounters, along with its effects (direct or immediate violence, textual or symbolic violence, structural and cultural violence, slow violence, interpretive violence, complicity as violence, trauma and moral injury, constructive violence), Cottrill reveals the complex nature of violence in the OT. This is particularly helpful for the reader to engage the complexities encountered in the story and their potential embodied response through the reading encounter.

Chapters 1 and 2 employ Cottrill's interpretive lens through stories in Judges. Chapter 1 focuses in on Sisera's mother and the humanization of the enemy, opening up a multifaceted interpretation of the poetry (Judg 5:28-30). Rather than a reading centered on mockery, Cottrill demonstrates that a lens of humanization reveals essential connections with the damaging effects of moral injury (psychological, moral, and ethical). Chapter 2 focuses on the character of Samson and the negotiation of masculine identity and its impact through acts of violence. Chapter 3 explores the definition of slow violence in the book of Ruth. This violence encapsulates environmental crisis, immigration, poverty, and social vulnerability. Chapter 4 is a close reading of the character of Abigail and her encounter with David in 1 Samuel 25. Violence is not as obvious in this narrative. Cottrill effectively unlocks key themes and subtleties that reveal a figure immersed in a violent system, its effects, and Abigail's formation within it. This close reading connects to stories of individuals placed in violent structures that develop critical tools for survival and agency despite disparaging odds.

This volume is a valuable contribution for professors and students of the Bible. Cottrill charts a constructive pathway forward through this challenging terrain. I highly recommend this volume for the classroom and for learning communities who view the texts as sacred scriptures, are looking for an ethical reading strategy, and desire to engage these problematic stories of violence with new insights.

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Adam J. HOWELL. *Ruth: A Guide to Reading Biblical Hebrew*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2022. 320 pp. $32.99.

The title indicates very well the approach of this volume. In it, the reader will find detailed morphological, grammatical and syntactical analyses of Hebrew words, clauses, and phrases. Howell discusses each word that is used in each verse, including vocalization and how to recognize the forms of the Hebrew words. Although this is not a volume of word studies, crucial words are sometimes discussed briefly, but in a helpful manner.

Copious footnotes not only demonstrate Howell's command of the secondary literature, but also give the reader further resources that can help in the study of Hebrew. A helpful glossary of some grammatical terms and a short bibliography round out the volume. The bibliography lists primarily grammatical works, but also contains some excellent exegetical commentaries on Ruth.

One of the many things I liked about this volume was its unique repetitiousness. (No irony or sarcasm is intended here!) Howell acknowledges that this repetition is one of the things that makes his volume unique. He gives two good reasons for this repetitive quality. First, he recognizes that some readers may pick up his volume to check on the Hebrew for a particular word, verse, or passage. He wants the morphological and syntactic information to be available to those who use the volume as a reference volume. Second, for those who are seeking to broaden and deepen their understanding of Hebrew, he knows that "repetition is the handmaiden of learning."

Another unique approach of this guide is the use of Hebrew accents to aid in the identification of phrases and clauses in Hebrew. Howell prints each verse in Hebrew as

is usually done in such volumes. He then follows this up with the same verse broken down into discrete phrases, based on the accents. Even though Howell does not think of the accents as inspired (8), he thinks that they are usually helpful. I agree.

The volume has some aspects that I found a bit confusing. This may indicate the ignorance of this reviewer rather than any real fault in the volume. Howell uses terminology from Fuller and Choi, which departs in significant ways from what are fairly widely used ways of describing Hebrew clauses. For example, "nominal clauses" are not necessarily lacking a verb, as many grammarians would define such clauses. For Howell, "nominal clauses" simply begin with a noun. Once I had wrapped my mind around his approach, I saw the point. However, it still might be better to keep the more common terminology.

Another quibble—albeit minor—is that Howell sometimes becomes so granular that it may be dividing tresses longitudinally. For example, when commenting on Ruth 2:14 (160), Howell raises the question as to whether the grammar suggests that Ruth's eating is a matter of temporal or logical success. This is, perhaps, a bit too fine.

However, Howell also occasionally makes observations that are worth the price of the volume in and of themselves. (See 124 for Howell's perceptive comments about how the book of Ruth highlights the fact that Ruth is a Moabitess.)

This volume is an excellent guide to the Hebrew, which should be useful primarily to intermediate students. However, it also may prove useful to pastors and others with even a rudimentary knowledge of Hebrew.

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Holger GZELLA. *Aramaic: A History of the First World Language*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2021. 359 pp. $70.00.

I confess that I was not initially impressed with this volume. The reason for my skeptical attitude was a portion of a sentence in the preface: "The purpose [of both the original Dutch book and the English translation] remains unchanged: *to free Aramaic from an ancillary role in the shadow of the Hebrew Bible* and to unveil its contribution to the formation and exchange of ideas, customs, and traditions in the entire Near East." (Emphatic italics mine.) I love Hebrew, and I admit that I have always thought of Aramaic as ancillary to Hebrew. Furthermore, Aramaic is used extensively only in Ezra and Daniel, two books that are not my favorites. However, the more I read, the more I appreciated what Gzella was doing.

In 340 pages, Gzella covers 3,000 years of the history of Aramaic—about 9 pages per 1,000 years. At the end of the volume, a brief "essential bibliography" and short glossary of linguistic terms will help the novice. A detailed index rounds out the volume.

The strengths of this volume are many. Its overview of the entire history of Aramaic helps scholars and others to avoid myopia. While the volume is not an easy read, it is an enjoyable read. A good book, in my opinion, is one that often brings you to a thoughtful halt. This volume frequently did that for me. Sometimes, I stopped because I thought, "Now wait a minute! That is a very sweeping statement based on a very ten-

tative interpretation of a very few facts." Gzella is honest, however, and acknowledges the paucity of information and vagaries of interpreting it.

One helpful aspect of the volume was Gzella's humor. In the name of objectivity, 'scholars' sometimes avoid anything that could possibly be construed as funny. Gzella does not share this allergy to humor. Thus, he opines (48), concerning the writing of Aramaic and other semitic languages from right to left, that "maybe one of those clever and creative left-handed types was responsible!"

This volume will be required reading for those who want to do more than learn some basic Aramaic grammar and vocabulary. It will also be of interest to anyone who is more generally interested in the development of languages.

I allow Gzella himself to have the last word in this review. He pleads for a good, solid scholarship in Aramaic, but also for an interdisciplinary approach to languages. His words (pages 139-140) are also applicable to life in general.

> Whoever learns Aramaic and passes it on preserves the memory of great cultural achievements of the past, furthers its understanding through personal reflection, and gains purpose from the orienting, intellectual deepening of their own existence.
>
> This also shows the lasting, broad importance of Aramaic for the humanities. A strong, monodisciplinary grounding with a high level of craftsmanship, in this case the thorough familiarity with different languages and often difficult texts, is the only meaningful basis for interdisciplinary research. Every discussion concerning bigger questions after all must be fed by solid knowledge, or it will yield nothing but hot air. With this kind of specialist expertise, which in the case of Aramaic studies can only be based on an optimal command of the philological craft, one then gains access to indispensable sources for far reaching linguistic and cultural historic problems: the political, social, and intellectual history of Syria-Palestine and Mesopotamia over the millennia, the rise and fall of literary traditions, the interaction between imperial administrations and local autonomy, the shared heritage of Jews, Christians, and others, and the long term evolution of language in complex societies. And perhaps the most important point: it's all just incredibly interesting!

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Anthony MILNER. *A Theology of Genocide? Reading Deuteronomy 20.* Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2021. 329 pp. $95.00.

This volume is an updated version of Milner's 2015 dissertation at the Gregorian University in Rome on the moral problem of God's command to wipe out the Canaanites in Deut 20:16-18.

Milner's approach begins with the history of application of Deut 20:16-18 by the Crusaders, the Conquistadors, and the Colonizing of America. He argues that the use of "holy war" language by Christians to justify forms of genocide, while not nonexistent, was surprisingly sparse (20). Specifically calling on putting people under the "ban" is absent from the record of the Crusades. Part of this goes back to Medieval Theology that concentrated on a figurative/spiritual application of *Herem* texts rather than as a

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model for war for Christians. Milner asserts that the Conquistadors' slaughter of natives was based on greed rather than religion, while the Dominican Francisco de Victoria at the time protested the slaughter and stealing of land from the natives as morally unjustified. For him the ban of Deut 20:16-18 was a special grant not generally applicable.

In Chapter 2 Milner shows how Church Fathers like Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, and John Cassian emphasized the allegorical, symbolic sense of the Conquest passages over the literal. Augustine argued that if God commanded the destruction of the Canaanites, it must be just, though he employs no theodicy to support that conclusion; though in his "just war" theory, Deut 20:16-18 plays no role.

Chapter 3 looks at various ways Christians have tried to justify the command of Deut 20:16-18. Some say holy war is just simply because God commands it (Matthew Henry, K. Barth), or that the Canaanites deserved it (J. Walton, P. Copan), or that it applied to fortresses with few women and children (Copan), or that it was necessary for moral progress (S. Niditch, Lohfink), or that while the violence was evil, God as a concession used the evil providentially for good (L. J. Hoppe, S. Williams). Another possibility is that the historical reality was somehow less problematic than it seems *prima facie*. In conjunction with the latter idea Milner goes into a complicated hermeneutical discussion on how different ways of reading of texts affect the reader ethically trying to find a Catholic way reading "dark passages" such as these.

Chapter 4 looks at Deuteronomy 20 in the light of critical scholarship, including a word study of חרם and a broad acceptance of de Wette's theory of the origins of Deuteronomy. Chapter 5 turns to narrative analysis where Milner accepts R. Polzin's view that certain harsh statements must be ceaselessly softened by other statements. For example, the statement that God himself (not Israel) would drive out the Canaanites and that Israel was not to intermarry with Canaanites (Deut 7:1, 3) along with exceptions made for Rahab and Gibeonites, all arguably softens the command for Israel to annihilate Canaanites, which if applied literally leaves no one to drive out or intermarry with. Milner argues that for the audience for which Deuteronomy was produced, Deut 20:16-18 was never intended to be carried out literally.

Some will reject Milner's Catholic and critical perspectives, but all can appreciate his history of interpretation. Having addressed this topic myself ("'Just War' in Deuteronomy 20 and 2 Kgs 3," 171-187, in *Biblical Law and Its Relevance* [University Press of America, 2006]), I would have liked to have seen more emphasis on how remarkably humane the rules for war with non-Canaanites were in Deuteronomy 20 before addressing the more difficult topic of war against the Canaanites.

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Mark S. SMITH, and Elizabeth M. BLOCH-SMITH. *Judges 1: A Commentary on Judges 1:1–10:5.* Hermeneia. Minneapolis, MN: 1517 Media, 2021. 875 pp. $85.00.

This volume is a new 2021 release in the *Hermeneia* series with Fortress Press. This historical and critical commentary series seeks to carry on the tradition of "detailed, sys-

tematic exposition of scriptural work (xiii)." This volume introduces a new translation of Judg 1:1–10:5 and pays special attention to synchronic and diachronic analysis, offering a robust treatment of past and present Judges scholarship.

The authors begin this commentary with a substantial introduction to the book of Judges. The introduction includes discussions on key areas in the book of Judges, including names of the book, meaning of "Judges," roles of judges and canonical placement. Attention to Judges' placement within Jewish and Christian canon lists enables the reader to imagine how it might function for specific communities. While noting some complex issues that arise within these discussions, such as its possible "prophetic" character, they admit there is "little explicitly prophetic in the book apart from the figure of Deborah and the unnamed prophet of 6:7-10" (8). Other contributions in the introduction examine text critical issues, structure and unity, date(s), historiography, and a detailed breakdown on the format for the commentary. The structure and unity of the entirety of Judges is given ample attention, especially with the previously differing points of prologue and epilogue of Judges. The attention to the polyphonic nature of Judges is a strength in this volume as it reveals the complex artistry of the text, not only in structure but also as framing devices. "[D]isharmony in a single work may be part of its meaning and method, in effect one dimension of the unity imposed by editors" (17).

Each commentary portion includes a new translation and an analysis of each scriptural unit (1:1–2:10; 3:1-31; 4:1-24; 5:1-31; 6:1-40; 7:1-25; 8:1-35; 9:1-57; 10:1-5), including text-critical and translation issues. After the translation, each section comprises a synchronic discussion of that unit's "Narrative Context." This section focuses on key literary structural matters and features (*Leitwort*, characterization, speech). Following is the "Detailed Commentary" which brings into dialogue research from previous commentaries, Jewish and Christian works, and detailed exegesis. Attention is given to the background and setting with an eye to key lexical terms and phrases. With a specific focus of Judges in its ancient context, this commentary highlights significant iconographic and archaeological materials, along with discussions pertaining to historical geography that best illuminate the text in its ancient context.

It is evident from the first pages of this commentary that this volume involves over a decade of attentive work, detailing the archaeological, iconographic, and textual research that will be valuable for any serious student of Judges. Therefore, I highly recommend this volume to all serious students, pastors, and scholars desiring a deep dive into the detailed textual (inner-textual and postbiblical connections), critical, and canonical questions of Judg 1:1–10:5.

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Johnson THOMASKUTTY, ed. ***An Asian Introduction to the New Testament.*** **Minneapolis, MN: 1517 Media, 2022. 584 pp. $39.00.**

In keeping with the burgeoning trend of reception histories in biblical studies, this new Introduction, in the words of its own endorsements, seeks to find a space for Asian voices, Asian interpretation, and Asian experiences with Bible. Containing twenty-three

chapters, with an introduction, every book of the NT is discussed, often compressing multiple biblical books, like the Letters to the Corinthians, into a single chapter. Most chapters read like standard fare, discussing aspects of historical, literary, form, and source criticism.

Its uniqueness derives from every chapter juxtaposing the material from its respective NT book with customs and experiences in at least one Asian context. In doing so, most contributors are gracious, obviously concerned with advancing the message of the New Testament, and its ethical requirements, in their contexts. The volume lacks color charts, photos, or diagrams, missing a creative opportunity to display the confluence of the New Testament with Asian cultural issues and environments heretofore unknown to most readers. For instance, a well-placed photo of a *Gurukula*, or teacher's home, illustrating the discipleship process in ancient India, could have enhanced the chapter on the Letters to Timothy.

Unfortunately, in a crowded field of New Testament Introductions, this one is quite bland. Its greatest strength lies in its potential, both to open doors to hearing diverse voices in biblical studies, and to exploring the convergence of the New Testament with Asian contexts. However, one can find more extensive, creatively presented New Testament Introductions, and one can find more incisive analysis of the New Testament and Asian contexts within the fields of theology and missiology. Its effort to discern the intersectionality of Asian and New Testament contexts is admirable, but often superficial, with comparisons like Hindu society, as the Jewish community, emphasizes law, or the oral nature of Mark is more relevant to the Asian context because they are well-connected to folk traditions. The chapter on the Book of Revelation needs to explore more fully the honor discourse of apocalyptic hymns and the importance of christological hymns in the worship of the early church and Asian contexts. That said, the volumes' chapters are prolusions not dissertations.

While laudable in intention, the volume is discordant, often addressing Western concerns and scholarly ideas, rather than being truly Asian in orientation, perhaps a consequence of the Western education of most contributors. While not doubting the importance of diverse voices in biblical studies, one questions the underlying principles used to draft this volume. The role of a Western publisher and Western concepts of scholarly biblical studies lay heavy over the volume. Additionally, one questions the use of the attributive "Asian," with ten of the twenty-six authors from or working in India, coupled with a smattering of voices from South Korea, the Philippines, Malaysia, and the United States. The continent, countries, cultures, languages, and peoples of Asia are so vast and diverse that the title is suspect. It needs a clarifying definition. Perhaps most egregious are attempts at writing from post-colonial or decolonizing perspectives, popular in contemporary Western biblical scholarship. Though not aggressive in aiming arrows at the West, it is ironic that a volume decrying the lack of space for Asian voices finds itself mimicking Western voices instead.

As one acquainted with teaching the Bible and ministering in various Asian cultures, countries, languages, and contexts, one hoped to read a more self-aware analysis, addressing not only historical intersectionality of the New Testament and Asian contexts, but contemporary engagement as well. Asian Christianity must address the colonizing actions and wars in which some Asian countries have themselves engaged, not to

mention racism, casteism, anti-immigration laws, discrimination, and the extraordinary sexual and religious violence occurring in some Asian contexts.

The volume could be useful to college and university students seeking basic information about the New Testament, and to ministers and missionaries seeking anecdotal ideas regarding the New Testament and Asian contexts.

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Stanley E. PORTER and Benjamin P. LAIRD, eds. *Five Views on the New Testament Canon*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2022. 304 pp. $24.99.

Porter is President, Dean, and Professor of New Testament at McMaster Divinity College. He is a renowned NT author and editor and is famous for connecting discussion between linguistics and biblical studies. Laird is Associate Professor of Biblical Studies at John W. Rawlings School of Divinity, at Liberty University. He authors the forthcoming volume, *The Formation, Publication, and Circulation of the Pauline Corpus in Early Christianity*, by Hendrickson. The contributors to the volume provide Conservative Evangelical perspective, Progressive Evangelical perspective, Liberal Protestant perspective, Roman Catholic perspective, and Orthodox perspective.

The volume is laid out with an introduction by the editors followed by five main essays and five response chapters, where each presenter then responds to all other views in the chapter. A conclusion is also provided from the editors and then two indices; the first covers names in the volume, and the other covers ancient and biblical sources referenced in the volume.

The introduction raises the typical questions and issues around the concept of an NT canon (16, 24). These issues include: a) the biblical author's self-understanding, b) major factors prompting the canon formation, c) processes involved in the canon formation, and d) questions of authorship and apostolic authority. The volume aims to assist first-time students of the NT, as well as NT scholars (17). It also aims to provide five different views on the canon from representative perspectives that cover: a) the historical factors leading to canon formation, b) basis of the canon's authority, c) hermeneutical implications of the canon (37). The introduction provides a short sketch of the development of the issues and highlights three prominent waves of investigation into the canon, beginning at mid-nineteenth century, then moving on to the end of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, and finally to 1960s to 1980s. Figures such as Westcott and Holtzmann are key in the first wave (19), and figures such as Zahn and Harnack are key in the second (20), and finally figures such as Campenhausen, Metzger, and Bruce are key in the third (21-22). The first two waves tried to overturn every piece of evidence through to the modern period, while the third wave focuses on material up to the time of Origen (21-22). Since those waves, McDonald and Bokedal are key figures who worked on the whole canon (23).

Darian Lockett, Professor of New Testament at Talbot Theological Seminary, presents the conservative evangelical view. He treats John Poirier's disagreement with Stephen B. Chapman's specific objection to a closed canon in an approving manner (49-

50). He handles four specific NT collections separately and shows how individual books were included in those collections (53-55). He sees Scripture's authority over the church as the main reason for it becoming canonical rather than outside pressures (56). He understands providence, rather than inspiration, being the main vehicle God used to superintend the canon process (60). Hermeneutically, the canon reveals the meaning of the text rather than obscuring it (70).

David Nienhuis, Professor of New Testament and Associate Dean of Academic Programs at Seattle Pacific University, presents the progressive evangelical view. He first critiques the order of the three aims of the volume, suggesting a different approach (75). He suggests that beginning with historical matters creates a forced contrast between the biblical scholar and the lay person (75). He sees a theological relation between human and divine agency as a missing element in typical historical approaches and calls for keeping a theological focus and a historical focus balanced (76-77). He understands that Scripture was not written as individual scriptures, but instead became Scripture as they were gathered into fruitful relationships with other texts (91). The canonical shape of the texts provides interpretive helps, especially the sequence (95).

Jason BeDuhn, Professor of Comparative Study of Religions at Northern Arizona University, presents the liberal protestant view. He links canon criticism to the legacy of the Protestant Reformation where Martin Luther desired to remove some books from the OT to combat the Catholics by appealing to Jewish canons (101). This later led to his temptation to do the same for James and Hebrews. He understands the rise of Constantine the Christian Emperor as the main force driving canonization (102). The need to decide which texts should be used in public gatherings was more important to canon process than deciding which were inspired (103). He views the selection of twenty-seven books as a product of the Catholic Church which deserves to be challenged (111-112). He points out that none of the NT authors mention their works are divinely inspired (112). The NT books are not wholly inspired nor wholly authoritative (113). The essential task of the liberal Christian is to identify a meaning that transcends time and culture rather than focus on the part that is only understandable by its first readers (123-124). The NT is a resource to be mined for the modern reader (128-129).

Ian Boxall, Associate Professor of New Testament at Catholic University of America, presents the Roman Catholic view. He bases the pivotal moment on the Council of Trent in 1546, where its purpose was to achieve unity with the Coptic Church (131-132). He views the historical, theological, and hermeneutical strands of discussion intertwined, rather than separate (133).He views the idea of the NT canon as authoritative, inspired books to be established by the second century and then the expanded canon as an authoritative list established by the fourth century (134). The twenty-seven books are authoritative, but other books may be beneficial and valuable to some Christians (141-142). The part of the Christian calendar in which particular NT books are read influences the hermeneutics of these books, for example Revelation is read at Easter (151). Revelation positively provides a provocative counter to empire within the canon and needs its lack of love toward God and neighbor balanced by the rest of the canon (153-154). The canon reflects Spirit-led discernment of these books having authority (156). Having a canon is the beginning of interpretation of the NT not its end (157).

George L. Parsenios, Academic Dean and Professor of New Testament at Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology, presents the Orthodox position. The uniformity of position across the Greek Orthodox Church regarding twenty-seven books is not a product of an ecumenical decision in a church council, but of church practice instead (159). Four factors are involved in the canonization process, a) apostolicity, b) catholicity, c) orthodoxy, and d) traditional use (160). Both the correct books and reading them with the correct presuppositions are necessary to properly understand apostolic teaching (161). Scripture is distinct from extra-canonical Christian writings in that Scripture is an authentic record of the revelation of Christ, and other writings merely commentary on that record (177). Since Scripture is a record of the Incarnation, which is God adapting to humanity, then the written record needs interpreted adaptably to its readers (184-187). The goal is to see that God is greater than our circumstances (187).

All five viewpoints agree that the NT canon consists of twenty-seven books, all twenty-seven have human involvement, and the canon has a normative function within the church (254-255). Within the five viewpoints, the Roman Catholic and Orthodox views had a greater number of similarities. The Conservative Evangelical Protestant and Liberal Protestant had several similarities concerning the value of historical analysis, and the Progressive Evangelical Protestant had several similarities with the Roman Catholic and Orthodox views concerning the value of tradition (255). Disagreements among the five viewpoints include the dating of the canon, how recognition of the canon occurred, and implication of the canon (261).

On one hand, this volume is a useful supplement for any NT introduction course, on the other, the details in the points of disagreement are useful for anyone grappling with the issues of the canon. This volume presents five representative views and includes some interaction between the contributors, at least in the form of responses. This volume probably is best suited for NT criticism courses at the graduate level but may be used in undergraduate courses as well. This volume is a welcome addition to the NT scholar's library.

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Ryan S. SCHELLENBERG and Heidi WENDT, eds. *T&T Clark Handbook to the Historical Paul.* London: Bloomsbury, 2022. 490 pp. $175.00.

The T&T Clark Handbooks series sets out to offer single-volume works of specially commissioned essays that "provide researchers and graduate students with both cutting-edge perspectives on perennial questions and authoritative overviews of the history of research" (https://www.bloomsbury.com/us/series/tt-clark-handbooks/). In this vein, the present volume on the historical Paul is at once a state-of-the-question of scholarship on Paul as a historical figure as well as diverse and variegated proposals for the future of such scholarship. This is not a volume on "Paulinism," or Pauline theology. It is an attempt to map Paul onto the first-century Roman world, to describe him as an embodied human being who is both shaped by and shapes his sociocultural environment. After a brief Intro-

duction (1-5), the essays comprising this volume are presented in three parts: Sources and Methodology (five chapters), Biographical Problems (twelve chapters), and Epistolary Micro-Biographies (seven chapters). The twenty-four essays included here come from a wide range of—even contradictory—historiographical perspectives, though the discussions are consistently of very high quality. The volume ends with a Bibliography, Notes on Contributors, a Subject Index, and an Index of Ancient Sources.

The essays in part one ("Sources and Methodology") reflect the diversity and disagreement among its contributors. Most of the authors of these five essays are skeptical of the historical value of Acts and its portrayal of Paul. One even begins his historiographical proposal: "Forget . . . the Acts of the Apostles" (Vaage; 13). For Vaage, knowledge of the historical Paul first becomes possible in the oldest extant, "more original" (or, more often, "less inauthentic") expression of the *corpus paulinum*: 𝔓 46, which contains Romans, Hebrews, 1-2 Corinthians, Ephesians, Galatians, Philippians, Colossians, and 1 Thessalonians (15). Vaage's proposal reflects a common concern to mitigate the distorting effects of Luke's agenda and also of our own theological traditions. Nevertheless, it is strange that a historian would urge other historians to ignore a source as early as Acts, which was written sometime in the second half of the first century or the first half of the second. Unlike Vaage, however, another author *expands* the evidentiary base for historical work on Paul to include other early receptions of Paul; not just Acts or even the disputed Pauline letters (including the Pastorals) but also extracanonical receptions like the *Acts of Paul*, *3 Corinthians*, and so on. He says, "I suggest flipping the dominant method on its head by *beginning* with the broad and diverse memorializations of Paul that we find in the century or so after his death—the very streams of early Pauline tradition that have been seen as so disfiguring of the 'real' Paul in the regnant paradigm" (White, 46; italics in the original). Readers will have to choose which of these two approaches seems more promising.

The essays in part two ("Biographical Problems") provide a broad range of topical discussions relevant to Paul as a historical figure. These include chapters on perennial topics ("Travel and Homelessness," "Manual Labor and Sustenance," Paul's identity as a "*Ioudaios*, Pharisee, [and] Zealot," "Chronology," and others) as well as some less frequently encountered subjects ("Divination and Miracles," "Religious Experience," and so on). Some readers of *SCJ* will find themselves in disagreement with the nearly universal bracketing of material from the disputed Pauline epistles (2 Thessalonians, Ephesians, Colossians, 1-2 Timothy, Titus) and from Acts, or with the intentional treatment of biblical material as similar to other ancient texts. This is truly an *historical* rather than a *theological* handbook on Paul. Even so, those of us who would blur any sharp distinction between the historical and the theological Pauls, who believe "the apostle of faith" is the same man as "the Paul of history" (to echo the title of N. T. Wright's 1978 essay), will find these historical analyses provocative, even fertile, for considering theological questions.

The essays in part three ("Epistolary Micro-Biographies") explore what we can know about the historical Paul—his biography, his travels, his relationships and interactions with others, etc.—on the basis of all thirteen canonical Pauline epistles. Information about Paul in the disputed letters is considered not as direct evidence from Paul but either as preservation of historical traditions about Paul or as receptions of Paul. The

inclusion of discussions of the disputed Pauline letters makes all the more striking the omission of any survey of Paul in Acts—whether this is construed as historical reminiscence or creative reception. The volume would have been strengthened by considering Acts as well as other early Christian traditions (such as *3 Corinthians* and *Martyrdom of Paul* [though see Eastman's chapter, "Death"]). A synthetic discussion of the historical Paul—if not a "biography of Paul" then perhaps a "putting together the pieces thus far"—would also have helped to fill out the present volume.

As a "handbook," this volume lives up to the designs of this series, providing both "cutting-edge perspectives on perennial questions and authoritative overviews of the history of research." The editors have not only assembled an excellent cadre of contributors; they have peppered numerous helpful cross-references throughout the essays. Anyone who does not read this volume front-to-back will still be able to see how the various topics covered herein relate to one another. One only hopes that T&T Clark will issue an affordable version of this resource in the very near future.

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Georgios K. GIANNAKIS, Luz CONTI, Jesús de la VILLA, and Raquel FORNIELES, eds. *Synchrony and Diachrony of Ancient Greek: Language: Linguistics and Philology.* Trends in Classics—Supplementary Volumes: 112. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2021. 528 pp. $154.99.

This volume contains thirty-six essays honoring Emilio Crespo for his retirement in 2020. Crespo is an accomplished linguist and philologist, with over 200 publications (xv), who has contributed widely to the understanding of the Greek language. His life work includes the diachronic spectrum for the Greek language from Indo-European through to Modern Greek. He made contributions to phonology, discourse, the lexicon, syntax and clause semantics, and pragmatics. He led pioneering work in the area of discourse and particles. He followed the footsteps of Martín Ruipérez. Many of Crespo's translations of Greek works into Spanish are the reference version for those works (v).

The editors are from Thessaloniki and Madrid. Giannakis is Professor of Historical Linguistics with an emphasis on Indo-European Linguistics at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. He is Executive Editor of *Encyclopedia of Ancient Greek Language and Linguistics*, 3 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 2014), and coeditor of *Studies in Ancient Greek Dialects: From Central Greece to the Black Sea* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018), and *Studies in Greek Lexicography* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019). He has over sixty articles on various issues in Greek linguistics. Conti is both teaching and research Professor of Greek Philology at Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, whose works involve syntax and discourse particles. De la Villa is Professor of Classical Philology at Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, whose works include topics such as particular Greek verbs, tense, aspect, philosophers, and cases. Fornieles is a contracted Professor Doctor of Classical Philology at Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, whose published works include *The Concept of News in Ancient Greek Literature, TCSV: 141* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2023), and Δῶρα τά οἱ δίδομεν φιλέοντες: *Homenaje al profesor Emilio Crespo* (Madrid: UAM editions, 2020).

These thirty-six essays are preceded by Giannakis's assessment of Crespo's life work, which is a modified version of what was presented as *laudatio* in 2017 when the Doctorate Honoris Causa was conferred upon Crespo by the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki in honor of his life work. The rest of the volume is divided into five parts, which contain the thirty-six essays, written by former students, colleagues, and friends of Crespo. The five parts contain topics such as epigraphy and dialectology; the lexicon, onomastics, morphology and morphophonology; syntax and clause structure; pragmatics and discourse; and interstices of linguistics-philology. The essays are followed by a list of contributors and a general index.

Within the parts of this volume, several essays are valuable for NT scholars. In part 2, Kölligan's "Getting There? Greek δύναμαι, 'be able,'" Meier-Brügger's "μνημονεύω," and Papanastassiou's "Main Phonetic Changes in Ancient Greek Obscuring the PIE Ablaut," are useful. The first two inform the lexical meaning, while the third deals with the reasons for morphological changes. Kölligan argues that δύναμαι originally meant "reach" or "arrive at," before taking on the meaning of "be able to" in the Classical Period. He bases his analysis on prior work by Heine and Kuteva (2004), where many verbs of extent evolve into verbs of ability (159-160). Meier-Brügger points out the denominative nature of all verbs ending in -εύω (183). The participle is used as early as Homer, and the first use of the verb μνημονεύω is in the Cretan Spensisthios inscription, given as μνημονεύϝην, in reference to someone who was an official recorder of notes during government meetings (183). The meaning of this verb commonly means "remember," but its usage includes someone who officially remembers something. Based on this analysis it is possible to understand this verb as meaning either "I remember," or "I memorialize," perhaps even by writing something down. Papanastassiou begins by highlighting the PIE vowel grades "e, o, null, é, and ó (193)." Sanskrit altered the PIE situation by making both short vowels "a" and both long vowels "á," reducing the overall structure to three, "a, null, and á (194)." We find all five vowel grades in Greek, although "e, null, and o" are the most common (195). Greek's way of altering the PIE situation is more subtle than Sanskrit. The tendency is to have more morphemes with less emphasis on the ablaut (197). He further divides the areas impacted into laryngeals, liquids and nasals, compensatory lengthening, development of "u" vowels, and development of diphthongs (199-206). The value of his essay, which seems to be a launching point for a much larger project, is its ability to explain many of the morphological oddities of the Greek verbs and nouns. This should supplement any work on Greek morphology.

In part 3, Luraghi's "A Construction Grammar Approach to Ancient Greek Argument Structure Constrictions," analyzes verbs that take two arguments and gives reasons why certain verbs take genitive and dative objects instead of accusative (276). Also, Yamuza's "Past Tenses of Modal Verbs" shows how the past tenses of these verbs express either ideas contrary-to-fact, or polite orders, recommendations, and advice (288).

In part 4, Cuzzolini searches for a linguistic explanation for περί with the genitive when it is in reverse order in "A Note on the Anastrophe of περί with the Genitive in Classical Greek." He compared some situations where both are found and concluded that the normal order is assertive or a focal point, while the inverted order is either background material or topicalized material (344). Martínez explains the use of ὡς in Matt

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6:10 as a discourse marker rather than an adverb in “Discourse Markers, Interpretation, and Translation in the Lord’s Prayer (358).” It is used with καὶ to mark the first item as a “given” and the second as the one asked for (358). In Matt 6:12 both particles are in reverse order so the second clause with ὡς provides the justification for the first clause (360). Thus, the one praying is justified in asking for his own forgiveness due to having forgiven others. This is further supported by Luke’s use of γάρ in the same position in the same line of the prayer (360-361). He analyzes translations and theological documents to see how they handled this distinction (365).

In part 5, Giannakis provides an overview of how Greek creates emphasis in “The Concept of ‘Emphasis’ in Ancient Greek and Indo-European (413).” He includes the use of the Present tense-form, numerals, lexical items meaning “all,” temporal expressions, alliteration or rhyming, and certain emphatic particles. He discusses how the use of post-positive clause particles place emphasis on the immediately preceding word or expression (419). Morphological means of creating emphasis include reduplication, especially total reduplication or nearly total reduplication (421). This contrasts with the type of the reduplication found on Perfect tense-forms. Repetition of syllables also emphasizes elements (429). His essay will help NT exegetes spot emphasis in the GNT.

This volume provides many elements to supplement Greek grammars and lexicons, all based on or developed from the life work of Emilio Crespo. Aside from a few typographical errors and the lack of an epilogue, this volume is a welcome addition for anyone to Greek grammar or Greek linguistics. This volume is a useful reference for the NT exegete, and Greek scholar. It might be used as a supplement for certain advanced graduate or post-graduate courses.

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Mathieu de BAKKER and Irene J.F. de JONG. *Speech in Ancient Greek Literature: Studies in Ancient Greek Narrative, Volume Five.* Mnemosyne Supp.: 448. Leiden: Brill, 2022. 762 pp. $209.00.

Both of the editors are contributors to the volume. The Professor of Ancient Greek at the University of Amsterdam, de Jong, has previously published *Homer Iliad Book XXII*, Cambridge University Press (2012), and *Narratology and Classics. A Practical Guide*, Oxford University Press (2014). She has co-edited *Textual Strategies in Ancient War Narrative. Thermopylae, Cannae and Beyond*, Brill (2019). She has a number of articles on Homer and Greek narrative literature. The University Lecturer of Ancient Greek at the University of Amsterdam, de Bakker, is co-author of the *Cambridge Grammar of Classical Greek,* Cambridge University Press (2019). He has a number of articles on Greek historiography, rhetoric, and epigraphs, as well.

This series focuses upon both the development of devices within narrative over time and the differences between how they are used in each time period and throughout several genres. The volume continues this pattern while engaging with speech imbedded within narrative. It maintains the themes of diachronicity and differences based on context, both literary and social. The introduction to the volume provides an overview of

narratological theory, which was built over previous volumes in the series, and how speech inside narratives relates to narratology. Contributors to the current volume show how various Greek authors used the narrative devices when relating speech to narrative. Each chapter can be read as a stand-alone piece or read together providing a diachronic and multi-genre view. The introduction claims that the index can be used to create a comprehensive view, but the index is limited in scope. Nearly every Greek author of narrative works is addressed in this volume. This volume uses the definition of speech as any time an author indicates that a character addresses another character in the story through either speech or written word. A (→) symbol is used throughout the volume to indicate whenever an author of one of the essays refers to content by another author.

The volume is divided into nine parts based on narrative genres: Epic and Elegiac Poetry, Historiography, Choral lyric, Drama, Oratory, Philosophy, Biography, Christian Narrative, and the Novel. A diachronic spread is evident in several of these sections, especially historiography going from Herodotus to Josephus. The part on Christian Narrative is probably of highest interest for NT scholars, and a bulk of this review is devoted to that section, but the analysis and methodology of the other sections are informative as well. This part has only one chapter, "The Gospels," by Michal Beth Dinkler, who is an Associate Professor of New Testament at Yale Divinity School.

The four Gospels not only vary in the way they utilize the Greek language generally but also in their use of typical Greek narrative devices (609). In the compilation of passages that contain speech, Dinkler leaves out the ones in sections of the Gospels where the debate exists regarding them as later interpolations (610). Where one Gospel presents material as direct discourse, another Gospel might present the same material as either indirect discourse or as summary (609). These differences do not appear to be due to redaction processes (611). Both Matthew and Luke frequently tend to have direct discourse in places where Mark uses indirect discourse, but there are exceptions (611-612). Silence of the characters in narrative is often accompanied by θαῦμα in Classical Greek, but the verb θαυμάζω is used in the Gospels (621). Luke imitates Greek tragedy at points in its handling of speech (613). John contains longer stretches of direct discourse than the other Gospels (614). The Synoptics use more speech within speech than John. These are often used to make an ethical point, to give a warning, or to provide options within debates (615-616). Matthew closes with the direct speech of its main character, Jesus, much in the same manner as do the Homeric Hymns (620). The Gospels use speech more often than other Greek narratives but are quite sophisticated in their usage of speech and silence (630). Silence is used during trials in the Gospels similar to Xenophon's *Ephesiaca* (621). Silence is also used to highlight fear during the post-resurrection accounts in Mark and used for sublimity in the Synoptics during the Transfiguration (622). One way Luke is different than the others is that Luke tends to narrate an event before having characters discuss it in direct discourse (625). Another way Luke is different is that Luke often provides space for the speech of women, yet at the same time minimizes it by not putting it into direct discourse (630). John often aligns Jesus' speech with God's word (630).

The epilogue to the volume also suggests that the voices of men are mainly heard in the Greek narratives as a whole, but the voices of women are heard less obviously, and examples such as heroines, historical characters, or protagonists are evident (730).

Speech within speech tends to be much shorter than the direct discourse segment in the text for all the Greek narratives. The volume as a whole provides a number of analyses of speech within narrative and showcases the methodology developed in the earlier volumes. This volume shows the NT exegete how to interpret several facets regarding speech within the biblical narrative. Some other areas of the NT not investigated in this volume are the narratives within letters, the narrative of Acts, and those in Revelation. This volume establishes the methodology for such future endeavors.

This volume, along with other members of its series, is useful for the NT exegete, or anyone analyzing Greek narratives. This volume might be used as supplemental reading for advanced courses dealing with linguistics and narrative, but more likely to be a reference volume for those performing special studies. The rather small index (2 pages) presupposes that the reader is more-or-less familiar with the contents. As the fifth volume in its series, this volume capably adds speech within Greek narrative as a component to an already fine series on Greek narrative.

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Scot MCKNIGHT. *Reading Romans Backwards: The Gospel of Peace in the Midst of Empire*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2021. 236 pp. $24.99.

In this volume McKnight, Professor of New Testament at Northern Seminary, offers an innovative way to underscore what he understands to be the overriding theme of Romans. This theme he labels “lived theology” (xiv) and is not best initiated from the early, so-called “theological” chapters of Romans. Rather, he looks to the end, chapters 12–16, to be the key to grasping a true understanding. Here he sees the peace of Christ being shown how to be lived out, especially among those in Christian communities. This peace is not obtained — contra to the “Pax Romana” of the Roman Empire wrought by force — through the conquering of the nations of the Mediterranean world. Peace is implemented by those of “Privilege and Power” (iv) relinquishing that power to the benefit of the poor. As McKnight says it in his introduction, “Paul’s lived theology turns power upside down and denies privilege” (xiii).

McKnight starts commenting from this perspective beginning with Romans 16 and continues to proceed from the back of Romans to the front. His key early chapter is chapter three where he covers 14:1–15:13. After surveying the varying number of divided groups scholars offer, he settles on two basic groups in the Roman church who are in strife with one another: the so-called “Strong” and “Weak.” The language in 14:2-3 of the Strong holding the Weak in “disdain” and the Weak in “judgment” on the Strong, Knight concludes, means that this is a huge rift that is extremely harmful to both sides. Further, he identifies the Strong as Gentile Christians who understand that the gospel eliminates the reality of any real gods being represented by idols. Thus, the meat sold in conjunction with sacrifice to them is not sacramentally tainted. Further, the Weak can be identified primarily with Jewish Christians who continue to practice the Torah and the Strong can be associated with Gentile Christians who do not know or live by the Torah (21).

Paul further recognizes that only the Strong can do anything to rectify the strain between the two. With privilege and power on their side they are to be "welcoming the Weak" and determine to "not broker our Power to divide the faith community, but . . . disempower ourselves to empower each sibling at the table and so live out the gospel of Christ" (21). By focusing in Chapter five on 14:7-9 and 15:3, 5, 7 and lived theology being necessarily Christoformity, Knight signals that the lives of Christians should be patterned on that of Christ who is himself the image of God. This means self-sacrifice for the sake of others finding redemption and meaning in their lives from the gospel.

McKnight continues to the end of the first section, titled "A Community Needing Peace" with a few more chapters helping readers to understand what can be learned about the Weak and the Strong, Privilege and Power. Chapters 10-12 comprise the second section, covering Romans 9–11, titled "A Narrative Leading to Peace," where he sees 9:1–11:10 aimed at the Weak (Chapter 11) and 11:11-36 aimed at the Strong. Finally, the third section, titled "A Torah That Disrupts the Peace" leaps forward to Romans 1 and explains McKnight's theme through to Romans 7 in chapters 12–21.

In this volume once again, McKnight shows his knack for taking a valid theological or hermeneutical observation and featuring it in a cleverly titled and highly accessible, manageable package. With footnotes and indexes at the back of the volume, the pages of the volume proper number only 181 and this covering what all would consider the most theologically involved of any book in the New Testament. The chapters are short too, sometimes only two pages and rarely over six. This, plus his casual writing style, makes this volume almost readable as a daily devotion on Romans. Of course, McKnight does not cover everything in Romans in a brief volume like this; he most definitely picks and chooses and groups to make the chapter concepts work and still be streamlined. But in this way, he keeps himself and his readers focused and not distracted from the goal of reading Romans in this distinctive way, from back to front.

Readers should understand that reading Romans as a tract about power and privilege is certainly bringing to bear the major social-spiritual issue of our day onto an impactful NT book that does not necessarily self-suggest the issue. However, whether we are talking about continuing issues concerning the treatment of Black Americans, female Americans, or LBGTQ Americans and how those with these primary identities function in the church, the effort to find how a NT book like Romans might speak to this is important and helpful.

Although we don't always see it, all Christians are set in communities with at least someone in a social status lower than they are. All need to learn that being Christian means to let go of our social standing that gives superiority over someone else in order to enable us together to find the peace and harmony that Christ came to bring.

This volume from McKnight will help any believer grasp and act on how to be Christian, especially in relationship to others who are co-redeemed with us by the power of Christ found in his giving up power to complete his mission.

William Baker
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Stone-Campbell Journal

Herbert W. BATEMAN IV and William C. VARNER. *James: An Exegetical Guide for Preaching and Teaching.* The Big Greek Idea. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2022. 336 pp. $33.99.

Bateman, now retired from many years of teaching New Testament, and Varner, Professor of New Testament at The Master's University, have produced a commentary in the Big Greek Idea series that carves out a niche in the commentary landscape of the Epistle of James. The purpose of the series is to be an aid to preachers, professors, and students, who have learned New Testament Greek and have been exposed to syntactical Greek analysis but whose lifestyles do not lend them the time to do the basic study of the Greek text they are capable of doing themselves.

So, the commentary does three things for each section of the text, in this instance James. First, it provides the grammatical, syntactical, and semantic identification of key words like verbs and participles. Second, it provides a grammatical outline of the passage based on clues the Greek provides. So, independent clauses go entirely to the left while dependent clauses are indented and placed under the word or phrase they modify. Each one is also appropriately identified in the discussion. Third, it provides brief word studies in highlighted paragraphs labelled "Lexical Nuggets." However, as needed the commentary provides other "nuggets" like "Semantical Nuggets." Since very little interpretation discussion occurs in the main comments, these Semantical Nuggets plus other types of "Nuggets" are where key interpretive issues are discussed and resolved.

The commentary does not interact at all with other commentaries or articles on James by name, not even in the Semantic Nuggets. It does, however, include a fairly extensive bibliography at the end of the volume. Also, an index is provided of the grammatical, syntactical, semantical, lexical, theological nuggets plus other less employed nugget types.

Each nugget is opened by a question that frames the information as a response. Thus, a Syntactical Nugget example is "How should the syntax be understood in Jas 4:13-15?"; a Semantical Nugget example is "What is meant by the Greek word μακάριος?" a Lexical Nugget example is "What is the meaning of πορνή?"; a Theological Nugget example is "What is the best summary conclusion about James and Paul on faith?" Obviously, some overlap occurs in dealing with semantical versus lexical explanations, though the semantical take more the form of word studies and the lexical are more focused on the meaning of the word in the context of their placement in James. On the whole, though, the matters dealt with in these nuggets are useful and well done but are kept as brief as possible.

The introduction in this volume, and I suspect also other volumes in the series, does not focus at all on the traditional concerns of author, date, place, audience as expected. Rather, detailed effort is made to introduce readers to what exactly the commentary is going to provide them to understand the structure and language of James. Some of this is very enlightening, including a chart on the number of words in James, another on the Conjunctions Introducing Independent Clauses in James ranked by type. Still others are on the Four Types of Dependent Clauses, Ratio of Imperatives to Total Words in Each NT Book (Spoiler alert: James has the highest ratio!), and 53-word long list of *Hapex Legomena* in James.

This type of commentary no doubt will have its usefulness for the audience it targets. It nicely takes care of the nitty-gritty aspects of studying a book like James from the Greek. Very much like the Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, but this volume and series exposes all the Greek language and structure much more for the reader's analysis. Plus, its great efforts to explain grammatical structure is much more instructional than either ZECNT or other series. It is more of a combination of the ZECNT and the Baylor Handbook on New Testament Greek.

This commentary mostly supplies what pastors might need to begin study of a passage on James for preaching. But they will need to know Greek or could get lost in the information provided. But in terms of deep study, this is not the Eerdmans New International Greek Testament Commentary, the Baker Exegetical New Testament Commentary, nor the Anchor Bible. Pastors or anyone will need to consult more thorough exegetical commentaries than the Greek Big Idea series to be fully prepared to preach or teach. What might help this series at least is to have a footnoting system that connects to the sources in the bibliography to help students follow up on information and ideas. As it is now, the bibliography sits as a treasure island that has no dock.

This specific volume from Bateman and Varner on James is a worthy effort within this series. They do a fine job of providing helpful information to understand James, including when they encounter various tough spots here and there. While the commentary information is reliable, it is also rudimentary, more a summary of opinion. The goal they satisfy, though, is not to furrow new ground exegetically or theologically but to build a sturdy foundation for further study of James with more resources. Any tool like this to get pastors to start with the Greek in their approach to sermon preparation deserves to be highly recommended as I do this one in this series on James.

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