Book Reviews

Scott W. SUNQUIST. *The Shape of Christian History: Continuity and Diversity in the Global Church*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2022. 200 pp. $22.00.

Sunquist offers this slim volume to convey what he has learned after forty years of teaching Christian history and writing numerous books, including one of the best surveys of world Christian history (with Dale T. Irvin, *History of the World Christian Movement*, 2 vols.). The unique product here comprises Sunquist's biblical, theological, and missiological understanding of Christian history, all of which inform his proposal for how we should read and write that history. He unpacks this proposal in an introduction and five chapters.

The volume can be seen in part as Sunquist's response to new realities brought on by the explosive growth of Christianity in the southern hemisphere (1-10, 22, 51). Study of world Christian communities demonstrates, Sunquist argues, that Western theories and theologies are insufficient for understanding and telling the world Christian story. Southern communities in the world Christian movement "have different histories, different contexts, and different trajectories than Western Christianity. They cannot be studied as if they are younger versions of us" (10). The volume is partly an introduction to a new way of understanding the world Christian movement.

The first chapter, "A Brief History of History," takes stock of what recent historiography offers historians today, drawing especially from postmodern and postcolonial insights. The diversity created by recent southern growth has led some historians to use the terminology of world "Christianities" when they write about non-Western forms of Christianity, but Sunquist argues we can refer to a singular "Christianity" if we identify common threads of "Christian" identity throughout time and geographical space.

Sunquist's thesis is that Christianity has three universal common threads—time (ch. 2), cross (ch. 3), and glory (ch. 4)—that should inform our analysis of Christian history, if we intend to study it on its own terms. In his treatment of time, Sunquist focuses on creation and incarnation. Christians view history as meaningful because its beginning (creation), middle (incarnation), and end (new creation) frame Christian identity and hope. In the beginning, God created time and the cosmos, and this "created order is God's playfield" (82). Further, the incarnation and what follows it "is described as forgiveness, liberation, healing, salvation, and redemption. It comes in many forms. However, in Jesus Christ there is a future that includes a purpose and goal. History as an ongoing and purposeful story is important" (55).

Sunquist's second thread, cross, concentrates on the cruciform and apostolic (missionary) nature of Christianity. "Cruciform apostolicity" encapsulates a "missionary nature to Christianity that is carried out in humility and suffering" (95). Sunquist unpacks various ways to see the missionary and suffering natures of Jesus' life as inextricably related and, therefore, as paradigmatic for Christians: "Cruciform apostolicity is in the very DNA of Christianity. The historian of Christianity should be fitted with glasses that can see these elements in Christian history, or see the opposite: where Christians have collapsed the gospel into a story of success and conquest" rather than of service and suffering (113). Jesus' and his followers' suffering is not a goal but a path pointing toward future glory.

"Glory," the third thread, is shorthand for eschatological hope when all will be made right and glorious. "This hope makes, empowers, and guides the church to live for others, to die to self, and to work to see little glories [i.e., working for shalom] in this world while keeping an eye on the next" (137). As with the prior threads, Sunquist highlights times when Christians exchanged the Christian hope for false hopes (such as early twentieth-century progressivism, Marxism, and dispensational premillennialism).

In chapter five, Sunquist recommends nine ways to focus one's reading of Christian history. He also encourages teachers to use questions, problems, or concepts (such as the three threads) to draw students into a meaningful engagement with the Christian past.

As illustrated above, the volume is not only a guide to read but also to "critique Christian history and the church today" (xi). This creates a tension for historians because we have debated the legitimacy of judging the past since the 1960s, when scholars called into question nineteenth-century's objective historicism that sought a neutral understanding of the past on its own terms. For those interested in using history for ethical and theological exploration, Sunquist provides a resource to consider how well Christians in the past (and today) measured up to Christianity's core commitments. Sunquist notes, "When Christianity is spread through domination, power, coercion, or deceit, we can critique decisions that were made in light of [the] core doctrine of suffering [i.e., cross]. We do not have to defend the *reconquista*, the crusades, the slave trade, or evangelists who promise health or wealth. But if we do *not* have clarity about suffering seen in humiliation and self-emptying, it will be difficult to critique those gospels of power, oppression, or conquest" (97). And in that discernment process, one assumes the learner will become more familiar with core Christian commitments. Of course, not all readers will agree that Sunquist's three threads adequately circumscribe a universal "Christianity," but Sunquist provides a useful starting point that others can adapt or tweak.

This volume is highly recommended for teachers, graduate students, and upper-level undergraduate students.

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Andreas WAGNER. *God's Body: The Anthropomorphic God in the Old Testament.* Translated by Marion Salzmann. London: Bloomsbury, 2019. 187 pp. $39.95.

What do you see in your "mind's eye" when you think of God? This question underpins this project by Andreas Wagner, who contends that what each person sees is impacted by the particular "body concept" (xvi) constructed by the surrounding culture. The work consists of seven chapters along with bibliography and indices arranged by subject and scriptural reference.

In his introductory chapter, Wagner outlines the scope of his project. Its unique contribution is to utilize the "material images" of the ancient Near East (ANE), such as drawings or sculptures, as a means to better imagine the "verbal images" provided in the Old Testament (OT). The author contends that the perception of the body in the ANE, the OT included, differs dramatically from the contemporary world. That said, while anthropology incorporates study of human emotions (anthropopathism) as well as behaviors (anthropopragmatism), the focus on material images requires Wagner to bracket these out of his study, along with internal organs, in favor of descriptions of God's "external form" (2).

Chapters two and three lay out further groundwork. In the first of these two, Wagner addresses Israel's aniconic religious norms. He argues that prohibitions, by nature, both create distinctions and open up new possibilities for expression. In this case, censuring material images not only sets Yhwh apart from the cults of the surrounding nations, it also contributes to the enduring use of verbal images to represent the body of Yhwh. Chapter three, then, offers a brief history of interpretation regarding the OT's proscription of images. The selective portrait offered is one in which past theologians largely dismiss the OT's anthropomorphic descriptions of God as "naïve" or "primitive" (33). Wagner intends to challenge such negative impressions, though as mentioned above, current OT scholarship is much more responsive to OT anthropomorphism. As such, out of everything in this translated volume, this chapter feels the most dated.

The substance of Wagner's argument arrives in chapters four and five. In chapter four, Wagner surveys a number of pictures and statues depicting the human body from ancient Israel, Syria-Palestine, Egypt, and Mesopotamia. In comparing these material images, one finds a relatively static rendering of the human body, one intended to express the conventional depiction of the person. Certain features predominate, such as the head, eye, or hand, while others remain generally absent, such as those which inform about the person's individuality or bodily state. For Wagner, this demonstrates that the "body concept" of the ANE emphasized function over form. While the author reveals a largely stable rendering of the human body in the selection of images considered, one wonders if a more comprehensive survey might reveal any more nuance to the thought patterns of several distinct cultures across a span of centuries.

Wagner takes his findings and applies them in chapter five to the verbal images of God offered in the OT. Such portrayals largely align with details

gleaned from surrounding iconography, emphasizing many of the same body parts. The bulk of the chapter explores the functional symbolism of divine anthropomorphisms in scriptural texts, arguing that such images portray God as a deity who "communicates with mankind and acts in the world" (137). Wagner also notes the lack of images which would refer to God's gender, and theorizes that preserving earlier anthropomorphic representations allowed the monotheistic God of the later Israelite community to remain accessible.

After an additional brief chapter reflecting on the concept of humanity being made in God's image, the volume concludes with a final chapter summarizing Wagner's argument. Wagner wrote the original German edition of this volume, *Gottes Körper,* at the outset of an explosion of interest in anthropomorphism and the divine in the ANE shortly after the turn of the millennium. As he attests at the start of this revised version, that interest has only continued to swell, generating several similar works in the years since the first version was published. Wagner calls special attention to Esther Hamori's *When Gods Were Men* (deGruyter, 2008) and Benjamin Sommer's *The Bodies of God and the World of Ancient Israel* (Cambridge University Press, 2009). To these could now be added Mark Smith's *Where the Gods Are: Spatial Dimensions of Anthropomorphism in the Biblical World* (Yale University Press, 2016). Accordingly, the reflections of the present volume may not be as pioneering as they might have been just a decade ago. Nevertheless, Marion Salzmann has done the English-speaking world a favor by translating this volume, which remains accessible and beneficial for scholars and pastors alike.

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Jože KRAŠOVEC. *God's Righteousness and Justice in the Old Testament.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2022. 457 pp. $50.00.

The author of this volume is "professor of biblical studies at the University of Ljubljana, Slovenia, and a full member of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts. A former president of the International Organization for the Study of the Old Testament, Krašovec is the author of numerous monographic studies and articles published in Slovene, English, German, French, and other languages." As such, he is imminently qualified to write on the subject of divine righteousness, justice, and related topics in the OT. In his own words: "I presented my first study of the topic, in French, in 1986 at the Paris-Sorbonne University as part of my third PhD." After having published a book in French (1988) and a comprehensive book in English (1999), this volume represents the fruit of long study on the subject: "This study deals with the fundamental aspects of the concepts of righteousness and justice from the more profound and holistic perspective of their intertextual relations" (xvii).

Krašovec states: "The purpose of this study is to show how, in the Bible, the dimensions of God's righteousness are not expressed by abstract concepts but by

semantic fields within the literary structures of literary types and genres" (1). Thus, he combines semantic and literary approaches to the subject matter. He analyzes "all the relevant places in the Hebrew Bible where the Hebrew root of צדק appears in relation to the divine subject" (3). Intriguingly, he wrote: "No individual words in Hebrew correspond entirely to the modern concepts of justice, reward, retribution, punishment, and forgiveness as they are generally used. The words derived from the root צדק for instance, only partially cover the range of meaning involved in the modern concept of 'righteousness, justice'" (8). This encouraged me to read this "heavy" volume on a very important topic. Even more involved, Krašovec continued: "This study includes philological analysis, semantics, literary criticism, form criticism, structural analysis, rhetorical criticism, and other methods currently in use: source criticism, redaction criticism, and the historical-critical method" (9). These approaches are primarily for Part One of the volume where he does "word studies" from the Hebrew Bible.

The volume is divided into two parts. Part One includes dimensions of God's righteousness in acts of creation and redemption. Here Krašovec proceeds to cover the concept of justice as found in ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt as well as Greece and Rome. From there he pursues the root צדק in the Hebrew Bible. Its synonyms are related to God's goodness with words such as "covenant love/loyalty," "truth/faithfulness," "justice/judgment," "uprightness," "good," "peace," "glory," and "compassion." The word most associated with צדק (righteousness) is שפט (justice/judgment). Antonyms are also revealed in their ability to give meaning to such words. In meticulous detail the author covers the use of these words for "righteousness" and "justice" in Isaiah (ch. 3), the Psalms (ch. 4), and the other books of the Pentateuch, Historical Books, Prophetic Books, and the "Hagiographa" (ch. 5). In chapter 6 he narrows his exegesis to Ps 51:6 and Rom 3:4 before finishing with a theology of justification (ch. 7). This final chapter in Part One examines the analogy and extensions of the word into metaphor, symbol, and personification.

A summary statement given after his study of Isaiah is insightful: "The fundamental meaning of the Hebrew words always remains essentially the same. It designates *God's redemptive plan and fidelity to a faithful people—God's steadfast love, saving help, and victory against oppressors.* God's righteousness is an expression of a loving God's attitude toward the covenant people, an attitude that is based on God's sovereignty and that is independent of human norms, knowledge, and merit. God's righteousness means the finest fruits of God's self-revelation and actions among God's people. In the final analysis, God's righteousness is the distinctive mark of the creator and the redeemer, who is indisputably the beginning and the end of history" (109, italics by Krašovec). The Psalms study of "righteousness" revealed an even broader field of synonyms, helped by greater numbers of antonyms. An important statement about the Psalms is made by Krašovec: "The more God's righteousness reveals itself as a symbol of a pure grace for the righteous people, the more the shadow of judgment falls upon the wicked—the unfaithful who can never partake in God's faithfulness and righteousness" (147).

Part Two of the volume includes "dimensions of God's righteousness and justice between punishment and forgiveness" (221). Here Krašovec discusses in detail the following chapter topics: "The Place of the Concepts of Justice, Reward, Punishment, and Forgiveness in the Hebrew Bible" (ch. 8); "Dimensions of Justice between Cosmic Order and Personal Relations" (ch. 9); "Theories on Justification of Punishment" (ch. 10); "From a Cosmic and a Judicial Concept of Justice to Actions beyond Justice" (ch. 11); "Ontological and Moral Foundations of Compassion, Mercy, and Forgiveness" (ch. 12).

In this section of the volume Krašovec seems to veer toward universal salvation of God's people, particularly Israel. Even though the author has mentioned many times God's judgment against the wicked and the unbelieving as revealed in Part One of his study, in Part Two he continually seeks to show how God's righteousness and faithfulness prevails over his creation and his people, regardless of their sins or rebellion. However, one may nott quibble over his definition of "righteousness": "The context of 140 passages of the Hebrew Bible containing vocabulary designating God's righteousness and their synonyms show that the words derived from the root צדק mean God's grace, goodness, fidelity, saving acts, beneficial divine activity, and mercy" (226-227). He continues in the same context: "The basic meaning of the concept [righteousness of God] in the sense of the dimensions of God's grace toward humans does not include God's judgment according to strict justice or a principle of retribution by definition." And then this statement: "God avenges himself upon the adversaries of God and his faithful people out of his redemptive design of history" (227).

Craig G. Bartholomew suggested in his "Foreword" to the volume that "Krašovec strains toward salvific universalism as far as I can see" (xiv). In spite of Bartholomew's assessment, Krašovec makes too many statements to the contrary such as: "Here lies the explanation of why God resolutely denies forgiveness for apostasy and obstinacy yet never ceases to manifest the grace of mercy to the faithful and penitent people" (251).

Krašovec has simply overstated his case, emphasizing God's desire to always save his people and grant them mercy. For instance, he recounts the story of Hosea as unconditional love; yet the story suggests that Israel does not return to God, and they are exiled by the Assyrians. Hosea "tested" Gomer and the open-endedness of Hosea 3 suggests she never lived faithfully afterward being bought and brought back! (See 267-271.)

Krašovec's emphasis is revealed in this statement: "The ultimate question about God's ways toward humans is why God does not deal with sinners according to the law of retribution but according to the inner law of his own mercy—that is, in a way contrasting to the most evident demands of retribution but in accordance with his unconditional love, which aims at reconciliation and restoration" (363). Again, he wrote: "It is, however, a matter of common sense that forgiveness and mercy are not possible if the wrongdoer persists in his evil ways" (377).

Toward the end of Part Two the reader of this volume will be fascinated by Krašovec's interaction with diverse philosophy and selected literature that illustrates his emphases on God's righteousness and justice in terms of mercy, forgiveness, and reconciliation.

I consider his emphasis to be valid even if partially overstated. I do not see "universal salvation" ultimately in this book. His last statement in his last chapter does not suggest such: "Only the supreme being is able to judge righteously and justly, which means that in the final analysis both God's punishment and his forgiveness and mercy are expressions of absolute justice. When God has reasons for forgiveness and mercy, he acts out of the inner compulsion of being loyal to his own essential nature" (409).

I highly recommend this volume to OT scholars who need a jolt on the positive side of God's righteousness. All who are interested in vigorous study, both OT and NT, will benefit from this book's depth in so many ways.

The volume includes a full bibliography, indexes of authors, subjects, and Scripture and other ancient texts. Uncommon for Eerdmans there were about five typos, but that is not bad for a 457-page book.

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Brad EAST. *The Church's Book: Theology of Scripture in Ecclesial Context.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2022. 408 pp. $49.99.

How Christians understand the nature and function of Scripture, especially as it relates to the doctrine of ecclesiology (the doctrine of the church) is of tantamount importance. The conversation around the collection of sacred texts that take up room on our shelves and space on our phones is not the same conversation as how one reads anything else that has ever been published. Conversations about Scripture encompass the areas of personal devotion, corporate practice, and missional strategy. Conversations about Scripture dictate in what direction we head on such long-standing theological topics as the nature and function of God, how one is saved, and what authority Scripture even has among the gathered community of faith and on the individual disciple. Even after nearly two millennia, the work done on the nature of Scripture and how it should be interpreted continues, as such works from Michael Bird, Jeannie Brown, Joseph Gordon, Michael Gorman, and Janette H. Ok attest. As long as the church continues, conversations about Scripture and its place with the congregational context will continue.

It is into this conversation that East, Assistant Professor of Theology at Abilene Christian University, once again steps. In 2021, he published his *The Doctrine of Scripture* (Cascade Books, 2021). In it, East argues that the canon does "attest the good news of Christ, who is the living Word of God incarnate" (4) and that this attestation is demonstrated through the nature and attributes of

Scripture (representative, constructive, exhibitive, and explanatory). In the present volume, East approaches the conversation about Scripture from a different perspective—how Scripture has been used in ecclesial practice, specifically, how ecclesial practice is demonstrated through the discipline of interpretation (hermeneutics). The reality of this conversation, East notes, is that "Intelligible disagreement is to be preferred by far to puzzled consternation" (292). The church, as manifested today, is not comprised of one single theological stream but of multiple major streams that branch out into various tributaries. As such, coming to consensus on Scripture's role in ecclesial practice is a hotly debated topic. Does the church stand under the authority of Scripture, in that Scripture dictates ecclesial practice? Or, does the church, as the entity that canonized Scripture, determine how Scripture is to be understood in each successive generation?

To address these questions, East begins with an analysis of the practice of theological interpretation of Scripture, as articulated by Fowl, arguing that hermeneutics is not only about proper exegesis and contextual accuracy but about how Scripture interpreted within the life of the congregation directs the practice of faith by that congregation (ch. 1). He then offers a thorough analysis of Barth's influence on contemporary theology, especially as it relates to Scripture and church practice (ch. 2). From here, East turns to the actual focus of his volume—those whom East has identified as having inherited Barth's legacy in three of the main streams of Christian practice: John Webster (Reformed tradition, ch. 3), Robert Jenson (Catholic tradition, ch. 4), and John Howard Yoder ("Believers" tradition, ch. 5). Each voice is dealt with in thorough detail, focusing on their views of Scripture and ecclesiology as well as those they have influenced and how that influence continues into the 21st century. In the final part of the book, East pulls all that he has surveyed together and offers a compare-and-contrast of Webster, Jenson, and Yoder in light of how they were influenced by Barth and have reimagined Barth's influence in their individual ecclesial contexts (ch. 6). The final chapter (ch. 7) presents these interpretive positions as functions the church can take in how it practices the interpretation of Scripture for ecclesial practice (church as deputy, beneficiary, and vanguard).

As noted above, engaging in the conversation regarding Scripture and ecclesiology is a difficult and complicated process. There is so much ground to cover, something this book, unfortunately, demonstrates, in that the volume does not come to a satisfactory conclusion. It simply stops. The content incorporated is well-researched and structured, at least from a meta perspective, well. The chapter that articulates Fowl's concept of theological interpretation and the chapter that summarizes Barth's views on Scripture and ecclesiology *are* excellent, as are the chapters that summarize the selected representatives. However, ultimately, it presents the content without providing any direction for moving forward in the conversation or application for the content into ecclesial practice. It serves more as an explanation of the views of Scripture and ecclesiology of Webster, Jenson, and Yoder. This, in and of itself, could be enough, as the compare-and-contrast

approach to chapter 6 articulates. However, the final chapter promises to move the conversation into the realm of the church, yet it never gets there. Additionally, concern should be raised over the inclusion of Yoder for at least two reasons. First, Yoder was hesitant about ever engaging in pastoral ministry and eventually renounced his own ordination, which seems to draw his work on Scripture and ecclesiology into question. Second, Yoder has been revealed as a serial abuser, something that East does discuss. Inclusion of his work is, therefore, problematic at best, especially as the representative of the Believers tradition (those who baptize for initiation into Christianity). In review, if one were seeking to highlight a significant voice for this tradition, one could look to Veli-Matti Karkkainen or perhaps even Everett Ferguson's significant single contribution to this discussion.

Overall, much is good here. However, the parts are better than the sum, as the volume often feels disjointed. That being said, the parts, minus the inclusion of Yoder, are needed. Yet, in the end, something does seem to be missing that warrants a second edition.

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Lamar HARDWICK. *Disability and the Church: A Vision for Diversity and Inclusion*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2021. 199 pp. $18.00.

The disability community in the 1960s stated "nothing about us without us." In most church contexts, the "without us" in regard to disability has always been the standard for church life and practice. Churches have ignored, shamed, and excluded disabled people from being full members of their congregations. Lamar Hardwick's book, *Disability and the Church: A Vision for Diversity and Inclusion,* invites churches and pastors to acknowledge their sin of exclusion, offering Christians a chance to reflect and repent as well as pathways for the creation of welcoming and supportive communities. Hardwick pastors the Tri-Cities Church in Atlanta, has an MDiv from Emory University, a DMin from Liberty University, and is in pursuit of a PhD from Union Institute and University in Cincinnati. His most important qualification is his lived experience with autism. He also draws from his experience as a Black man in America. First person reflections on disability and church inclusion are still rare, and Hardwick's vulnerability makes him an excellent communicator for the disability community within the churches that he loves.

This volume intertwines his personal experiences, theological reflections, stories from the Christian Scriptures, as well as anecdotes from other disabled people. Hardwick also draws out elements of disability theory and theology, providing conversations on ableism, identity, and the diversity of opinions within the disability community. In the first few chapters, Hardwick names the ways churches have

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excluded disabled people, and speaks to the many barriers that disabled people face in churches. Hardwick discusses the unspoken hesitations of many church leaders about inclusion, concerns of cost and financial value. He then reminds readers of the larger value of those God welcomes regardless of their potential monetary return, which is something God has already promised to provide.

Lastly, found in multiple sections of the book, Hardwick offers applications for church communities and leaders, such as mindsets and theologies that need to shift, the physical realities that bar disabled people from welcome, and the learning that is needed for inclusion. Hardwick reminds readers that Jesus gave his broken body for us, a body which is now the centerpiece of worship, practice, and belief for churches. Therefore, fundamental is that disabled people are a part of Christ's body.

As someone who is a part of the disability community similarly to Hardwick, this volume was deeply meaningful for me. I also agree that there is no singular opinion within the disability community. The greatest weakness was a likely unintentional underlying narrative of disabled excellence, emphasizing too strongly the giftedness of disabled people. The volume would have been stronger by acknowledging capitalism's primary value for gifts as potential for financial return and the ways this idea has crept into spiritual thinking. It is true that the church has a responsibility to support disabled people in identifying gifts they have been barred from exploring. However, disabled people benefit church communities not because of undiscovered gifts, but rather because of their presence, and by their presence, the full body of Christ. Without disabled people in churches, the body of Christ is incomplete.

This volume is a strong beginning text for those who do not have much background knowledge. Though focusing on accessible church development, those in parachurch ministries would benefit from reading it. Any church leadership or minister would benefit from this book, as all churches contain disabled people. Coming from a Stone-Campbell perspective, our frontier-born desire that all could gather at God's table is in beautiful harmony with the values of this book. While not a comprehensive text on disability and faith, nor a step-by-step checklist for inclusion, this volume provides essential first steps for those creating churches which include, celebrate, and welcome all people.

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Rory NOLAND. *Transforming Worship: Planning and Leading Sunday Services as if Spiritual Formation Matters.* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2021. 201 pp. $14.59.

Rory Noland's 1999 book, *The Heart of the Artist,* created a revolution in the way worship leaders understood themselves and their role in ministry. He

broached an oft-ignored subject; that worship leaders were artists by temperament and had emotional and spiritual needs unlike others in pastoral ministry. This opened the door for the "guild" of worship leading specialists we see in many larger churches today, men and women of incredible talent focused on providing worship experiences of consequence for the congregations they serve.

Twenty years later, Noland has moved the discussion to a new level. Worship (especially the music) may seem like a live concert experience catering to the whims of a church audience. For Noland, this is not good enough. Rather than merely entertain us or soothe us, Noland maintains that worship should transform us.

Noland defines "transforming worship" as "a communal experience that combines classic spiritual practices with a formative encounter with God in Christ through the Holy Spirit" (11). The premise of Noland's study, then, is that transforming worship must be a spiritually formative approach to worship. In this, transforming worship is part of discipleship. Noland goes so far as to say that "spiritual formation is not an optional pursuit but the very reason the church exists in the first place" (11).

Do not underestimate the depth of research and knowledge found in this book. While engaged in his doctoral research, Noland learned biblical Hebrew so that he would better understand the Psalms and other Hebrew Bible texts. He has read extensively in the literature of church historical practices regarding spiritual formation. Having been involved on the worship staff of two well-known megachurches and having taught worship and spiritual formation at the college level, his credentials for this study are unique and impressive.

As a graduate of the Robert Webber Institute for Worship Studies, it comes as no surprise that Noland is a believer in recovery of some ancient practices as a model for the current church. He identifies five ancient/modern areas that deserve our attention: prayer, preaching, confession, Lord's Supper, and baptism. Stone-Campbell people will notice that Noland appreciates traditional Stone-Campbell Movement teachings on the Lord's Supper and baptism. This is because Noland is no stranger to our movement, having spoken at our conventions and taught worship students at two of our colleges (Nebraska Christian College and Hope International University).

The last chapter, "Living our Baptism," is worth the price of the book. Noland recounts discussing with his spiritual formation class what the students' impressions were of their own baptism. He found that they mostly experienced it as a significant event, but one from the past that had little continuing relevance. He notes, "I've never run across anyone who claimed that their baptism continued to play a significant role in their ongoing spiritual development" (161). Yet, in looking at the early church, Noland finds that it "observed baptism in a way that reflected its essential role in Christian discipleship. . . . [B]aptism was a one-time event whose value and significance lasted for a lifetime" (164). Even further, Noland explores the relationship between baptism and the gift of the Holy Spirit. He warns that "how the Holy Spirit is conveyed cannot be predicted or manipu-

lated," but that "you don't need additional, supernatural experience to be 'baptized in the Holy Spirit.' Christian baptism is in and of the Holy Spirit" (170).

Theological reflection runs throughout this study, combined with nuggets from classic Christian writers. For example, when it comes to baptism, Noland cites the fourth-century master, Cyril of Jerusalem, to show ten theological metaphors tied to baptism: 1) Ransom paid, 2) Remission, 3) Death, 4) Rebirth, 5) Garment put on, 6) Holy Seal, 7) Heaven's Chariot, 8) Entry to Paradise, 9) Procurement of the Kingdom, and 10) Adoption (172).

This is an important book, unlike anything else currently in print. If you teach worship or spiritual formation courses, you should consider using it for your students. If you lead a church staff, consider using it for a small group study. If you are a worship leader, you will want to make use of the resources provided by Noland in the appendices as well as the suggestions throughout the book. And you will not be satisfied with anything less than worship that is transformative in your Sunday services.

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Michelle R. LOYD-PAIGE and Michelle D. WILLIAMS. *Diversity Playbook: Recommendations and Guidance for Christian Organizations.* Abilene, TX: Abilene Christian University Press, 2021. 176 pp. $19.99.

As diversity professionals, the authors approach this volume with a wealth of personal experience that they translate into best practices and pitfalls to avoid for those engaged in diversity-related work. These lessons prove useful for diversity professionals, partners (and potential partners) of diversity professionals, and those organizations who strive to figure out their place in matters of diversity.

Most of the volume considers diversity through ethnic and racial lenses. However, for the purpose of their volume, the authors define *diversity* as "a collection of people with differing social identities (race, age, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, and so on)" (122). It also includes diversity of thought and intersectionality.

Part one of the volume offers advice to diversity professionals, those hired to help an organization seek their diversity blind spots and implement initiatives to improve the organization's relationship to diversity issues. Undertaking this work requires (1) partners and collaborators, (2) physical, mental, and spiritual self-care, and (3) a long-view toward transitioning their organization toward a more diverse-friendly posture. Diversity professionals face daily battles against indifferent, culturally comfortable, and sometimes diversity-averse colleagues.

Part two deals with determining one's own role in matters of diversity and inclusion within their organizational and congregational settings. These are the outliers, allies, and co-conspirators. "You don't have to be somebody with 'diversity,' 'inclusion,' or 'equity' in your job title . . . to do diversity work" (93).

Diversity professionals need partners to help an organization develop significant and enduring change.

In part three, the authors shift their focus to the organizations and what steps they can take to define, share, and implement a culture of diversity. Organizations must take ownership of their identity and must decide and implement their own vision regarding diversity-related efforts. The thrust of this section suggests "reconciliation within the body of Christ is not possible without compositional diversity + inclusion + equity + faith" (127). Organizational commitment to diversity must be overt and sustained with an eye toward long-term organizational transformation.

Loyd-Paige and Williams offer a strong volume for use by those who sincerely seek an understanding of their personal role in the diversity-focused conversation. Organizations of all shapes and sizes are impacted by issues of diversity from both within and outside of the organization. The authors help readers acquire a shared definition of diversity and build upon that foundation to guide individuals and organizations to effectively participate in the broader diversity conversation. We must learn "how *to* have these *diversity* conversations in ways that do not shame, wound, retrigger, humiliate, and ostracize the individuals we are called to serve" (180).

For the authors, an important premise to any conversation on diversity is its significance in God's sight. The authors do well in pointing to Revelation's multitude from every tribe, tongue, and nation as a means of justifying the importance of diversity in God's sight. However, the authors take liberties with some texts in order to draw diversity-related lessons where context and author intent do not clearly point in such directions.

When reading this book, it is important to note that the authors view diversity work as kingdom work (23). They see their roles as *diversity professionals* through the lens of kingdom-focused calling and therefore they bring a prophetic voice of diversity to their readers. They approach the volume with both personal and professional experience as the basis for their collective perspective on issues of diversity. Their perspectives are built on diverse foundations that offer both biased and balanced takes on issues of diversity.

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M. Daniel CARROLL R. *The Lord Roars: Recovering the Prophetic Voice for Today.* Grand Rapids: Baker, 2022. 118 pp. $24.99.

The current volume is a short and accessible study of the prophetic voice that has much to offer the contemporary church. Developed from a series of lectures Carroll offered at Nazarene Theological Seminary in October 2020, the OT scholar seeks to form the prophetic imagination of the reader through a careful canonical reading of Amos, Isaiah, and Micah in tandem with Christian prophetic voices

from over the past five centuries. In a fascinating introductory chapter, Carroll notes how good literature possesses a timeless, mimetic power that draws in the reader and confronts them with different perspectives on reality that then shape the reader's worldview. He describes how the classic novels *Don Quixote* and *A Christmas Carol* create literary worlds that readers throughout the centuries have entered into and then emerged from morally energized to critique evil and better the lives of the vulnerable. This same phenomenon, Carroll argues, is possible for God's people today should they responsibly engage with the OT prophets.

With this literary imaginative lens in mind, Carroll spends the three main chapters exploring how the OT prophets in conversation with Christian voices throughout history can contribute to the essential tasks of "prophetic criticizing" and "prophetic energizing" as described in Brueggemann's *The Prophetic Imagination*. Carroll's deep knowledge of the OT prophets greatly benefits this study. The book's topical word studies, analyses of the literary structures in the text, and reflections on insightful scholarly sources (including Carroll's own excellent 2020 commentary on Amos) help the reader perceive the social evils Yahweh's prophets spoke out against as well as those prophets' rhetorical tools for challenging said social evils. Moreover, Carroll tangibly connects these ancient words to the present in each chapter, naming specific structural sins that the contemporary prophetic voice must challenge. From the economic oppression of the poor in 20th-century Latin America to the Christian nationalism on display on January 6, 2021, Carroll demonstrates that the OT prophetic tradition still gives us the language necessary to speak a criticizing and energizing word. Of particular note is how Carroll's Latin American heritage influences his examples of the ecclesial prophetic word. In addition to classic examples of prophetic figures like Martin Luther King Jr., Carroll also mentions Latin American theologians like Leonardo Boff and Samuel Escobar. Furthermore, he employs Latin American theological concepts like *coyuntura* and *mañana* to help the reader better grasp the nuances of "prophetic criticizing" and "prophetic energizing." Carroll's willingness to combine OT prophetic theology with the Latin American perspective is one of the most unique and enlightening features of the book.

It should be noted that Carroll reads Amos, Isaiah, and Micah canonically, dismissing source critical and redaction critical readings of the prophets as limited to the academy to the exclusion of the church. This occasionally leads Carroll to offer interpretations of the prophetic texts that are questionable at best. For example, Carroll claims that Amos 9:11 was written by the historical 8th-century prophet and that the "fallen shelter of David" in the verse refers to the Judahite kingdom following the division of Israel and Judah in the 10th century. But the more plausible reading, held by OT scholars like Wolff, Andersen, and Freedman, is that this verse concerns a devastated Judah in the wake of the Babylonian exile. Instead of rejecting historical-critical readings as restricted to the academy, perhaps it is the responsibility of Christian scholars and clergy to introduce such possibilities to the church, especially when it makes better sense of the biblical data.

Despite this minor critique, I would highly recommend this volume for Christian professors, clergy, and even elders seeking to encourage those under their tutelage and care to discover and contribute to the prophetic voice today.

Samuel Guy
Emmanuel Christian Seminary

Douglas A. HILL. *Cultural Architecture: A Path to Creating Vitalized Congregations.* Minneapolis, MN: 1517 Media, 2021. 222 pp. $19.99.

That North American congregations are in a state of decline is something of a truism these days. Yet for all the recognition of this decline and the various crises it produces, ministers are no less clear what they should do by way of response. How do they move into situations of decline and languishing and intervene in ways that bring about flourishing and vibrant congregational life? This is the question at the heart of this volume, which seeks to give those engaged in congregational life a vision and strategy for bringing about congregational renewal.

The driving claim behind Hill's project is simple: while ministers often focus their attention and energy on programming their way out of congregational decline, the truth path to flourishing is found in focusing on the people and culture of a congregation. As such, Hill calls for those engaged in the process of congregational renewal to become "Cultural Architects." These are people who have "a clear understanding and assessment of the current culture" and "a clear vision for the new culture to be created" (7). One can read this volume as giving the resources for becoming such a Cultural Architect, with chapters devoted to a reading of our contemporary moment which focuses on our desire for flourishing, strategies for generating vibrant congregational cultures, basics of the organizational intelligence, and concrete examples of congregational renewal.

Without a doubt the strength of this volume is the way Hill gives clear strategies and step-by-step approaches to fostering congregational renewal. For ministers in the thick of congregational life, bringing about cultural change can feel more like performing alchemy or a magic trick; it involves powers to which they do not have access. It is here that Hill performs a vital service by identifying the steps and processes involved in beginning the process of cultural transformation; it is not magic but having a grasp of some key features of organizational intelligence and leadership. Ministers who before might have thrown their hands up in defeat at the notion of shaping culture now have a starting point for beginning transformational change. To that extent they are in Hill's debt.

Yet while this volume will be helpful to those seeking an introduction to concepts from organizational leadership, I found myself questioning Hill on two points throughout. The first question arose from the distinction between thinking and doing that runs throughout the volume. Reading this book, it strikes the reader that Hill struggles with connecting belief and action as they fit within congregational renewal. For example, he begins by noting our religious landscape is one in which we need to emphasize "enculturation over indoctrination," since

experience and existence precedes thinking (39). Yet his instruction on developing a "guiding statement" emphasizes that churches which are "clear and undeterred on their theological and ecclesial grounding tend to have greater success" (86). This tension runs throughout the volume: we live within a cultural context in which congregations should not "indoctrinate" yet congregations need theological, ecclesial, and doctrinal clarity for renewal to be a possibility.

As a practical theologian I do not believe "thinking" and "doing" are opposites, and I wish this volume had been more developed on this point to avoid perpetuating an unhelpful dualism. Secondly, while Hill goes to great lengths to "pull back the curtain" on the steps for congregational renewal, there are still times when his account of a such renewal depends on the presence of specific personalities within the congregation. For example, in his discussion of forming a vision team Hill notes it is important to have people with "a gift for vision and discernment." Yet Hill also admits that "In my experience, there are only a small number of people in the population who possess such gifts" (89). While this is because Hill relies on a popular diffusion of innovation theory, the result is that readers are left wondering if cultural change really is a matter of luck; having the "right personality" or not. Yet even with these questions in mind, Hill's introduction to important concepts from organizational leadership will be a helpful resource for working ministers.

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Gregg R. ALLISON. *40 Questions about Roman Catholicism*. 40 Questions Series. Series Editor, Benjamin L. Merkle. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2021. 336 pp. $23.99.

The "40 Questions Series" published by Kregel provides for the general reader accessible overviews of a wide variety of biblical, theological, and historical topics. The format used is forty questions arranged thematically with extended answers, and the perspective is Protestant evangelical. To date, about twenty-four volumes have been released, and most of the authors, with a few exceptions, are affiliated with Baptist churches or seminaries. Allison, author of this volume, is Professor of Christian Theology at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

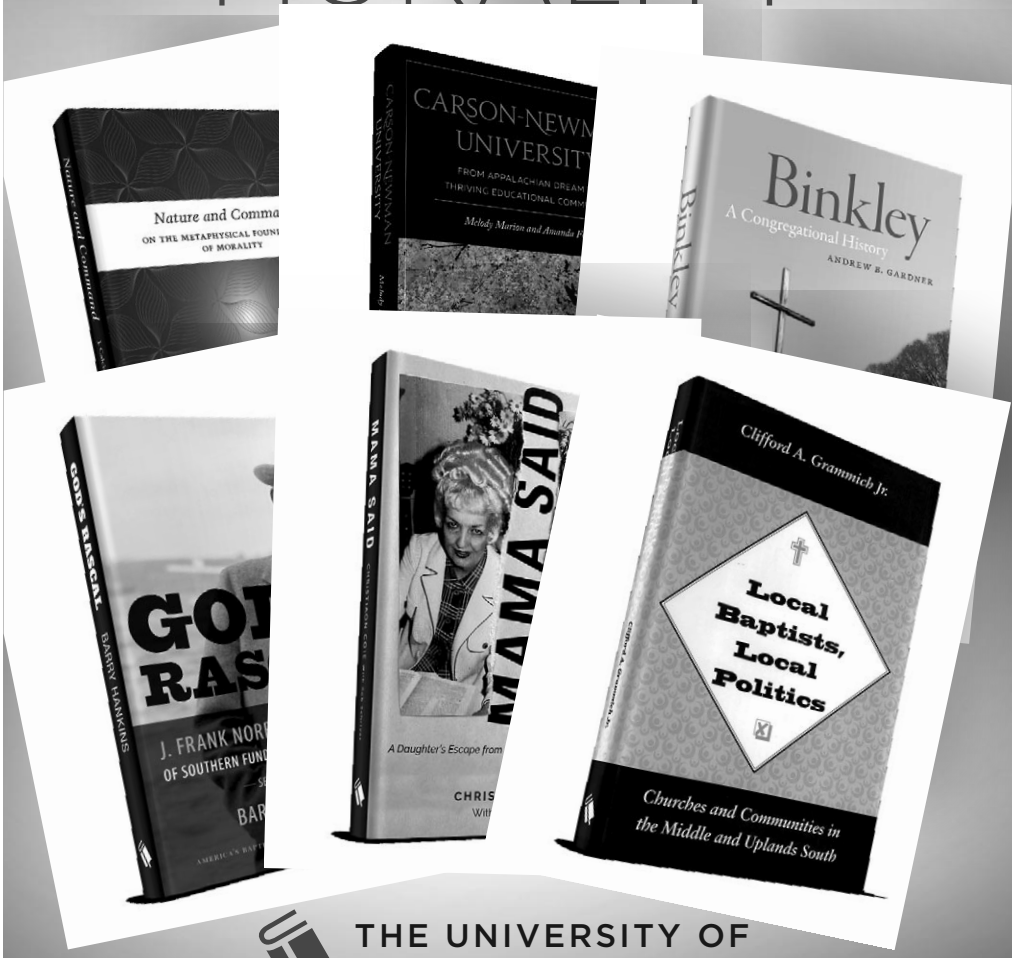
It follows the series format and organizes its content around three broad categories: Historical and Foundational Questions (10), Theological Questions (24), and Contemporary and Personal Questions (6). The heart and its longest part is the section on theology that includes questions about revelation and authority, the church, the seven sacraments, salvation (justification and works), and Mary and the saints (81-275). There is a table of contents, a brief two-page introduction, and a one-page list of abbreviations. The forty chapters are of varying length, as each chapter is the answer to a single question. At the end of every chapter are five questions (some single, some multiple) for reflection. The volume

concludes with a Bibliography, one page and very brief with no Roman Catholic sources cited, and also a Scripture Index. There is no subject index for the book. Page numbers for the volume are inconsistent, as some are at the top left or right, others are in a box at the bottom right (such as the first page of each chapter), and some are omitted altogether (such as the section heading pages).

While the attempt to produce for the non-Catholic reader a summary of Roman Catholic doctrine, teaching, and practice is laudable, the approach used by Allison leaves one wondering why the attempt was made in the first place. This "primer" on Roman Catholicism, with its adherence to an arbitrary forty questions, is as much an apologetic for evangelical Protestantism as it is an explanation of Roman Catholic faith (see Question 40, "How Can I Talk with My Catholic Loved Ones about the Gospel?" 321). The unaware reader might come to the volume for elucidation but instead will find much by the way of argumentation. One learns as much about Protestant responses to Roman Catholicism as about the Roman Catholic Church itself (some chapters are titled, "How Does Protestantism . . ."; see especially Questions 6-10, Foundational Questions; 45-80). Perhaps, though, the surprise is unwarranted, since Allison introduces his work by saying, "The answers [to questions about Roman Catholicism] are not given from a Roman Catholic viewpoint. I answer these questions as a Protestant. . . . If you are a Catholic reading this book, you will hear how a Protestant views your Church. If you are a Protestant reading this book, you will listen in as I answer forty common questions that we as Protestants have about Roman Catholicism" (9-10).

Since we understand from the outset that the book is not strictly representative of what Roman Catholics think about themselves, the main question about this work on Roman Catholicism seems to be whether or not it is representative, in an accurate and unbiased way, of what the Church says about itself. This might be hard to judge without some expertise in Roman Catholic history, theology, and tradition (Canon Law). Allison takes readers into this world at an introductory level but not in any thorough way. This lack of depth makes the author at times susceptible to the classic "straw man" fallacy. For example, the explanation of "interdependence between nature and grace" (47), a foundational matter on which Allison hinges other important issues (the doctrine of the sacraments, the doctrine of sin and salvation) and his short critique, that he supposedly bases on Scripture in order to label Roman Catholic teaching on grace as errant, is not at all helpful. Allison has left out of his caricature some important nuances about nature and grace from the teachings of the Church as he reflects a common misconception that salvation in the Catholic system is based on works (although Allison would probably deny this). Simply put, Catholic teaching about grace, nature, and works is not strapped to Reformation thinking like Protestantism, as it has been derived from Scripture itself as well as the historic church councils, the church fathers, medieval theology, and the like. It seems that Allison has described in a simplified "straightjacket" way these teachings by the Church which he critiques with easy and simple answers.

FAITH AND MORALITY



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Another problem comes from Allison's caricature of Protestantism as "not grounded on the principle of the nature-grace interdependence" (52). Many churches in the Protestant tradition do dissociate the tangible means (water, bread and wine, oil, the laying on of hands, the written Word of God) of the sacraments or ordinances from their spiritual effect. This viewpoint belies Allison's Baptist heritage and portrays, in my mind, a subtle and often unrecognized gnostic leaning that holds to a strict dichotomy between matter and spirit. To the contrary, those of us in the Stone-Campbell tradition, which is Protestant, do see practices such as baptism and the Lord's Supper as true and visible means of grace. On this issue, we tend to be much more comfortable with our Roman Catholic than with our Baptist brothers and sisters. None of us, however, would think that these symbolic and real means of grace can have any effect on the human heart and body without the ever-present power of God's Holy Spirit.

Perhaps a more substantial caricature by Allison is seen in his sections about the bases of divine revelation and religious authority in Roman Catholic doctrine and practice. Allison is correct in seeing a layered or tiered structure in Roman Catholicism that includes Holy Scripture, Tradition, and the Magisterium (83). He also notes points of agreement (inspiration, truthfulness, importance; 85-87) and points of disagreement (canon, sufficiency, necessity; 88-92) between Protestants and Catholics on biblical authority. But his chiding of Roman Catholicism's approach—"the inherent instability of any multiple-source authority" (92)—is not convincing, especially when he confesses, and rightly so, that "even Protestant churches have multiple authorities" (91). Much of his criticism, however, stems from the Reformation's extreme emphasis on *sola scriptura*, which he modifies, "Scripture alone does not mean there is *only* one authority. Rather, it means that Scripture is the *ultimate* authority" (91). So, the real question on divine revelation and religious authority is why should one church's tradition and college of leaders and teachers be followed and another not? Or, what makes one church's tradition and college of leaders and teachers right and another not? Yes, Allison identifies the problem, but he does little to help sift through the matter toward any sort of resolve.

Many other issues, discussed by Allison in his *40 Questions*, on which Catholics and Protestants agree or disagree could be noted, but one more will suffice. Allison sees as a critical foundational principle, along with the "nature-grace interdependence" mentioned above, what he calls the "interconnection of Christ and the Church" (57). Allison calls these the "two key principles of Roman Catholicism" (67). But as with the "nature-grace" discussion, his overview of how the Catholics view the relation between Christ and the Church seems shallow. Concerning his take on the "Law of Incarnation," the Church as mediator of nature and grace, and his concerns about Augustine's *totus Christus*, many Protestants would, on a deeper level of examination, not disagree as strongly with what the Catholics say about this significant role of the universal church (as the incarnation, the mystical body, or the sign and instrument of Christ in the world). We just disagree, like

Allison, that this portrayal of Christ to the world is restricted to the Catholic Church alone.

In my opinion, the fundamental problem is what Baptists wrestle with when they assume that spiritual effects cannot occur as a result of God's actions through material means (through people and things that are real, tangible, and visible). This basic aversion to such connections, by those in the Protestant tradition who have adopted a strict dichotomy between spirit and matter, seems to taint a lot of what Allison is saying about the Roman Catholics.

To his credit, Allison covers a lot of ground, and it had to be challenging to boil it down to just forty inquiries. He highlights those gnawing issues that have given Protestants angst about the Catholic Church, both historically and currently. Some of these include the Apocrypha as canonical, the Mass as sacrifice, seven sacraments versus two sacraments, the role of penance, confession, and absolution, papal infallibility, purgatory, the role of Mary, her perpetual virginity and assumption, the communion and treasury of the saints, and so forth. While his foundational discussions seem skewed due to lack of depth as noted, he does provide much detail about what Catholics believe on many theological topics (justification and sanctification which he addresses from a Reformed or Calvinistic perspective).

All in all, though, Allison is up to date on his assessment of Roman Catholicism. He notes the changes in Roman Catholic teaching as a result of Vatican II at appropriate points (see ch. 4; 37), and he devotes an entire chapter (27; 215) to the "Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification" by the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation (October 1999, Augsburg, Germany). He concludes with an informative section about the major challenges facing the Catholic Church today: the sexual abuse scandal, clerical homosexuality, the implications of the apostolic exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* by Pope Francis in March 2016, and the crisis of priestly vocations and episcopal acceptance (279). He even has chapters about "Why Are Some Leaving Protestant Churches and Joining Catholic Churches?" (297) and "What Are Some Common Misconceptions That Catholics Have of Protestants?" (313).

For the "un-Protestant" view of the Roman Catholic Church, the proper starting place would be *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (2nd ed.; Libreria Editrice Vaticana and USCCB; 2019; online at: <www.usccb.org/sites/default/files/flipbooks/catechism/>, or *The Didache Bible with Commentaries Based on the Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Ignatius Bible Edition; Ignatius Press; 2015). For a take on Roman Catholicism by a Reformed Baptist that is engaging and easy to read, Allison's book would be a good starting place.

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Kate OTT. *Sex, Tech & Faith.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2022. 193 pp. $22.99.

Ott serves as the Jerre L. and Mary Joy Stead Professor of Christian Social Ethics at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary in Evanston, Illinois. Writing as a college professor, Sunday school teacher, and Christian sexuality educator, she aims to better understand the way digital technology has changed the way we "initiate, engage, and sustain sexual relationships" (18). She hopes to update the way current and future church leaders address the topic.

Ott lays her foundation by introducing a crucial term coined by Cristina Traina: erotic attunement. Ott explains that the term refers to reclaiming the pleasure of touch and renouncing the idea that sexual desire and pleasure should be reserved only for marriage or procreation (10). She bases each of the following chapters regarding digital pornography, hookups, exploitation, virtual reality, and sex robots on this premise. Each chapter engages Christian values, such as honesty, mutuality, and commitment, as they pertain to various digital technologies. Ott stresses that one's sexual experimentation must not cause harm or objectify anyone. She argues that sexual digital technologies are amoral. One must reserve moral judgment for individual *use* of such technology. And she suggests scenarios in which the use of technologies such as digital pornography, sexting, VR sexual experiences, and sex robots might be both moral and enriching for a Christian.

At the end of every chapter, Ott provides a bullet-point list of the primary objectives covered in that chapter. She follows each point with several questions the reader can use for reflection or to facilitate discussion for a group study. And at the end of the book, Ott provides a youth study guide that one could use to lead a senior high group through the basic concepts of her book.

If Ott had solidly supported her primary assumptions with Scripture, she would have a volume that might equip Christians with an updated sexual ethic that could lead them confidently into the digital age. However, Ott left many of her bold, counter-traditional statements unsupported. For example, she claims that sexual behaviors are not detrimental to young people without providing evidence to the contrary (37). And she calls "the Western Christian assumption that couples will wait until marriage to engage in sex" a myth that has existed for only a few hundred years without providing evidence for her claim (55). As Scriptural support of her understanding of *imago Dei*, Ott cites 1 Cor 3:16-17 and 6:19-20, in which Paul calls our bodies temples of the Holy Spirit. She argues that, in certain situations, an unmarried couple might honor the temple by engaging in "multiple forms of consensual sexual behaviors" from holding hands to mutual masturbation "and so on" (4). Yet she neglects to comment on Paul's teachings on sexual immorality in the same letter (5:1, 7:2, and 10:8). She does not address Paul's instruction to "shun fornication" in 6:18 or Paul's solution to avoid sexual immorality in chapter 7: "each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband." Ott also claims that the Song of Songs represents a biblical text that supports sex outside of marriage. She states that, although wedding

imagery is used, no evidence conclusively proves the couple is married. Therefore, she asserts, the volume "presents an unusual view of premarital sexuality" (59).

I admire Ott's tenacity in tackling a difficult subject that has clearly been affected by recent advances in digital technology, but her lack of engagement with Scripture leaves many questions for those who want a Scriptural foundation for any new ethic that allows for sexual activity outside of marriage. Though I disagree with her fundamental claims, her volume could be useful to someone collecting a sampling of different ways Christian authors are currently approaching sexuality.

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John D. MEADE and Peter J. GURRY. *Scribes and Scripture: The Amazing Story of How We Got the Bible*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2022. 270 pp. $19.99.

I recommend this outstanding volume for readers at all levels, college and above. For church groups, undergraduates, and graduate students, it can serve as an introduction to the history of writing, textual criticism, canon development, and the story of the Bible in English. For individuals in these groups who want to learn more, it can prepare them for more specialized studies. Among such works are some by the authors themselves, including *The Biblical Canon Lists from Early Christianity*, coauthored by Meade and Edmon Gallagher (OUP, 2019), *Myths and Mistakes in New Testament Textual Criticism*, coauthored by Gurry and Elijah Hixson (InterVarsity, 2019), and Gurry's *A Critical Examination of the Coherence-Based Genealogical Method in New Testament Textual Criticism* (Brill, 2017). For Bible scholars and others already well versed in these topics, the volume is valuable both for its contents (a ready reference with a large amount of information) and for its perspectives (the opinions and approaches of two quality scholars).

The volume came into being in tandem with the Text and Canon Institute, of which the authors are co-directors, an institute of Phoenix Seminary where Meade teaches OT and Gurry teaches NT. The Text and Canon Institute has several initiatives, including an event for churches that has a title similar to the book's, Scribes & Scripture: A Conference on the History of the Bible. I attended one of these conferences early in 2022 and was impressed by its content and presentation.

The volume is in three Parts: Text (scribal practice and textual criticism), Canon (canon development), and Translation (the nature of translation, early translations, and the history of English translations). Rather than summarize each of these sections, I will make four observations on the volume as a whole.

First, the volume is not academic. I mean this primarily in two ways: It is not aimed at an academic audience, and it does not debate certain unresolved matters. Evidence of the former is that it includes a glossary and a relatively small number of

footnotes (approximately one for every two pages). Further evidence that the volume is aimed at a popular audience is that it begins and ends with illustrative and powerful stories. An example of the latter, not entering the fray on certain unresolved matters, is how the authors treat the Muratorian Fragment. Its disputed date is unresolved, and that debate is covered in one footnote (150); contrast this with the lengthy discussion in Meade and Gallagher's *Biblical Canon Lists* (175-183), mentioned above. By saying the volume is not academic, I do *not* mean it is light in content. It is, in fact, surprisingly detailed. It reminds me of the writing style of Bruce Metzger, who seemed to efficiently pack a paragraph into each sentence.

Second, the authors do not simply parrot information available elsewhere or accept the standard narrative on a topic as the final word on the matter. There is, of course, considerable overlap with other books on these topics, but the authors' own research and conclusions are on display. Two examples will illustrate what I mean: First, the so-called "Council of Yavneh/Jamnia" is absent. Elsewhere, in *Biblical Canon Lists*, Meade and Gallagher conclude that speaking in terms of such an event "greatly oversimplifies a complex historical development" (18, n. 90; 14, n. 69). In *Scribes and Scripture*, however, it goes unmentioned, for addressing it would be an inconclusive and highly academic adventure. Second, the text-critical principle *lectio brevior potior* ("prefer the shorter reading") is also not mentioned—which is unique among summaries of NT textual criticism. Gurry has argued elsewhere that "it is time to put to rest all terms of variant length in our [text-critical] canons" (see his chapter, "On Not Preferring the Shorter Reading: Matthew as a Test Case," in Gregory R. Lanier and J. Nicholas Reid, ed., *Studies on the Intersection of Text, Paratext, and Reception: A Festschrift in Honor of Charles E. Hill*, Brill, 2021, 138). These two examples illustrate both points made so far—that the volume does not dive deep into academic debate and that it does not simply repeat the popular status quo.

Third, the volume has a unifying tone. Though the authors are Protestant, they speak fairly and tactfully on issues that have tended to divide Protestants from Roman Catholics, such as the content of the OT canon and the vernacular translations sparked by the Protestant Reformation. The authors are also evangelical, and their high view of Scripture is apparent. This is not, however, the place to look for a rant against liberalism. Beyond these vast categories (Protestant and evangelical), any other labels the authors may claim or reject (Reformed, Baptist, Pentecostal, complementarian, etc.) are not part of this book.

Fourth, the volume does not address a significant aspect of its subtitle, *The Amazing Story of How We Got the Bible*, which is authorship. This is a clarification, not a criticism; no book can do everything, and it is common to consider text and canon together. The back cover, however, says the volume offers an account "from writing and copying, to canonizing and translation," and the description at Amazon.com twice mentions the "writing" part of this spectrum. But these descriptions (presumably not written by the authors themselves) seem to misunderstand what the authors mean by "writing." The first chapter is indeed titled,

"Writing the Bible," but it is about writing itself (the early alphabet, papyrus and parchment, scrolls and codices, and scribes), not about authoring the Bible. A better title for chapter 1 would be "Writing *and* the Bible." Comments about authorship are not entirely absent: Moses is mentioned as an author (39), and "scribes eventually augmented the ending of Deuteronomy with the narrative about Moses's death" (42). But these are passing comments; date and authorship of Bible books are not a concern of this book. Nor do we read much about the composition history of any Bible books, such as the gathering process behind Psalms and Proverbs or the source and redaction criticism commonly discussed when tackling the Synoptic Problem. Similarly, turning to Paul's letters, coauthors such as Timothy and Sosthenes, amanuenses such as Tertius, and letter deliverers such as Epaphroditus and Phoebe are not mentioned.

As noted at the start, I recommend this book. I also recommend the Text and Canon Institute's website (www.TextAndCanon.org), especially its several essays. The website is available in both English and Spanish, and Portuguese and Chinese versions are being prepared.

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Richard E. AVERBECK. *The Old Testament Law for the Life of the Church: Reading the Torah in the Light of Christ.* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2022. 382 pp. $40.00.

This volume has three major sections of unequal length, a conclusion which summarizes Averbeck's main contentions, and an appendix discussing messianic Jews and OT Law. The volume concludes with a bibliography, a subject index, and a scriptural index. Part 1 sets OT Law within the context of covenant. Part 2 discusses the major collections of laws—particularly the Ten Commandments, the Book of the Covenant, the Deuteronomic Regulations, and holiness and priestly regulations. Part 3 deals with major NT texts which reveal how Jesus, Paul, and the early church regarded OT Law.

Averbeck acknowledges that "THE OLD TESTAMENT LAW is one of the major biblical and theological 'problems' the church has had to deal with since it began" (page 1, emphasis, his). To solve this problem, Averbeck seeks to understand OT law in its Jewish context, rather than simply dealing with how the NT uses OT law. Thus, roughly two-thirds of the volume deals primarily with the law/s in the OT. However, the author does not strictly follow this worthy goal. There are many references to the NT, even in his section on law in its OT setting.

This volume seeks to establish three basic things about OT law: 1) The Law is good; 2) The Law is weak, because of the weakness of the sinners who try to obey it; 3) The Law is a unified whole. Averbeck insists that we cannot—or at least should not—divide the law into such categories as moral law, civil law, and ceremonial law.

Averbeck also sets the law within the context of God's covenants, both the Sinai covenant and others. God's covenants are gracious and the laws are Israel's ways of responding to God's grace. In particular, Israel is a worshiping community in the light of God's grace. Averbeck's in-depth discussion of the laws is insightful and intriguing. Of course, he admits that he could not discuss all the laws, or *any* of them in the depth he would have liked. In his discussion of the NT's attitude toward the OT Law, Averbeck focuses primarily on Jesus and the Law, the early church's response to law, and Paul and the Law. Here is where he discusses in more depth the goodness, weakness, and unity of the Law.

The volume has some weaknesses. One is that the author repeats himself, sometimes verbatim. On the other hand, in a volume that casts such a wide net, repetition may be inevitable and a good aid to memory. Also, the author makes some assumptions which he should have acknowledged at the beginning. For example, he seems to assume that Moses wrote the book of Deuteronomy. This may be a defensible position, but it would have been helpful for him to spell this out, giving a few supporting arguments. This volume will challenge some in the Stone-Campbell tradition, with its very positive approach to OT law. However, we all need to be challenged frequently.

Averbeck's work contains many wonderful and useful insights for pastors and thoughtful laypeople, many of whom struggle with the relevance of the OT law for a believer's belief and practice. The volume would also be a very helpful resource for both undergraduate and graduate courses on OT Law and the Pentateuch in general.

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Gordon P. HUGENBERGER, with Nancy L. ERICKSON. *Basics of Akkadian: A Grammar, Workbook, and Glossary.* New York: HarperCollins, 2022. 351 pp. $74.99.

Zondervan Academic's language textbook lineup, long known for its widely used Greek and Hebrew introductory textbooks, has expanded in surprising and impressive ways in recent years. In addition to Biblical Aramaic, it now includes introductory language textbooks for Latin, Ethiopic, Ugaritic, Arabic, Syriac, and, with the addition of this most recent volume, Akkadian. For those seeking a user-friendly (not always a description associated with Assyriological publications) and comparatively concise introduction to the study of Akkadian language, especially within a context of biblical studies, this grammar is a compelling new option worth considering alongside existing Akkadian textbooks.

Like several of its recent predecessors in this series, this volume is an integrated grammar and workbook in one volume (compared to the separate workbooks of the Hebrew and Greek introductory textbooks). The grammar is primarily the

work of Hugenberger, with significant contributions and editorial work from Erickson as described in the Acknowledgements (xi). The grammar presents twenty chapters designed for a single semester introductory Akkadian course, with material in the final three chapters of the grammar oriented especially toward continuation of study beyond a single semester. As in other Akkadian didactic grammars, Old Babylonian is used for the primary form of Akkadian language studied, and excerpts from the Code of Hammurabi are used as the primary pool of source readings. Like Caplice's *Introduction to Akkadian*, but in contrast to Huehnergard's *A Grammar of Akkadian*, *Basics of Akkadian* uses Neo-Assyrian sign forms exclusively for the first 16 chapters. Old Babylonian signs are introduced beginning with Chapter 17, and translation sections are presented thereafter with both script forms in parallel. This is a good compromise for one semester (plus) of Akkadian introductory study. According to Hugenberger, 161 vocabulary words and 126 cuneiform signs, both closely tied to the content of the primary source readings in the Code of Hammurabi, are presented to the student for memorization over the course of the grammar.

Hugenberger describes the grammatical method of the grammar as "inductive-deductive," balancing early and constant exposure to primary text readings with detailed grammatical explanation, and excluding both "artificially composed or simplified Akkadian sentences" and Akkadian composition from exercises. Students are asked to both transliterate from cuneiform and normalize as soon as they begin reading from the Code of Hammurabi. Answers to select exercises through the first seven chapters are provided in an Appendix, but this is discontinued for the rest of the grammar. Two distinctive features of the volume are: (1) accessible and helpfully *illustrated* (in contrast to other existing Akkadian didactic grammars) introductory essays and topic overviews (1-18, 213-215), and (2) contributed essays by a range of scholars of the Ancient Near East on key topics (genres, linguistic cognates, Akkadian loanwords and the Hebrew Bible, and the Mari corpus). Useful appendices at the back of the volume include paradigms, a glossary, bibliography, subject and textual index, and sign lists in both standard graphic ordering and an alphabetic listing of signs by syllabic values.

This is a serious introductory Akkadian grammar that also takes seriously the task of making an accessible entry for students into this vast field of study. It is especially designed for graduate students in biblical studies who have already completed substantial study of Hebrew. Considering the great value of the broader study of ancient Near Eastern languages and texts for deeper study of the biblical texts, Zondervan's investment in student-focused grammars like this one and other recent additions to this series is laudable. One wonders if, but hopes that, there will continue to be demand for such resources in the present and future realities of biblical and religious higher education.

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Gregg DAVIDSON and Kenneth J. TURNER. *The Manifold Beauty of Genesis One: A Multi-Layered Approach.* Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2021. 224 pp. $22.99.

Two professors, each with theological and scientific backgrounds, teamed up to write this introduction to the many various, yet complimentary, meanings in the first chapter of Genesis. This volume treats the opening creation narrative of Gen 1:1–2:3 like it is a mineral that shows off a different color when you change the lighting. Davidson and Turner's primary thesis is that Genesis 1 has multiple, simultaneous meanings; they also claim that these layers don't "exhaust all possibilities" (7). The scope of this work is limited on purpose because the authors have published other works on Scripture and science. Yet the volume is also intended to bring unity to the church by getting past the arguments that pit science against the biblical account.

Layer 1: Song, defines the genre of the text. It is a text that defies all Hebrew genres: it is neither straightforward prose nor poetry. The parallel structure of three days of forming then three days of filling is explained in detail. Layer 2: Analogy, demonstrates how this text is an example for humans to model our lives and is an explanation of God's character and how He relates to creation. This chapter's discussion on work, order, creativity, refreshment, rest, and Sabbath contains many excellent points valuable for the life of every Christian.

Layer 3: Polemic, corrects the Ancient Near East (ANE) worldview of creation by using the ANE vocabulary to reshape one's thinking about how creation really happened. Layer 4: Covenant, shows that God made a covenant with nature and still maintains that covenant even today. This chapter corrects the oft-mistaken view that human sin disrupted creation; instead, "it is not the physical objects that became twisted, but the way in which Israel began to interact with them. . . . humanity's experience with nature changed" (90).

Layer 5: Temple, teaches that God had a presence in Eden with humans as priests. These parallels find themselves in several other passages of Scripture. Layer 6: Calendar, explains how the seven days are a microcosm of Israel's annual calendar. The entire Pentateuch was intended as instruction for the Hebrew people; much liturgy is incorporated in the creation narrative. Layer 7: Land, prefigures the opening account of Genesis as foreshadowing the entire narrative of Israel's history. There is a significant amount of theology embedded in the ideas of land and exile.

Each of the chapters on the seven layers includes common objections and responses to those objections. These are helpful to those who are new to these topics, but readers who have very detailed questions will want to study further. Each of the layers relates to one or more of the other layers, further enhancing their meanings, but the authors intentionally omitted details from other scholars that would have the layers contradict each other. This fulfills the purpose of the book, to show that there are multiple complimentary views of this text; however, it also obscures the scholarly challenges that arise, and the discerning reader will

want to consult the bibliography to determine what those potential contradictions are.

Given the way the authors presented their thesis, they accomplished their objective for this book. It is recommended for courses on the Pentateuch, OT theology, and creation. Even though the authors want this volume to be read by general Christian audiences, this reviewer would hesitate to put this volume in the hands of lay readers. It is a volume for people who have at least an intermediate-level grasp of theology and are spiritually mature.

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William A. TOOMAN with Marian KELSEY. *(Re)reading Ruth.* Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2022. 200 pp. $27.00.

This volume is a delightful little exposition of the book of Ruth. Tooman, Senior Lecturer in Old Testament, St. Andrews University, along with Kelsey, who teaches Hebrew Bible, Nottingham University, have produced an imminently accessible introduction and paragraph-by-paragraph commentary on the book of Ruth. The volume focuses on structural analysis, features of Hebrew narrative like wordplay and ambiguities, understanding the cultural and historical backgrounds of the book in its ancient Near Eastern context, as well as on the vibrant intertextuality that pulsates through the book, placing Ruth in conversation with various traditions of the Hebrew Scriptures.

As an organizational approach, Tooman and Kelsey structure the book of Ruth according to a series of four "acts" of a play, which allows the reader to trace the developing plot and character formation. As shown by Tooman and Kelsey, keeping an eye on the structure enables the reader to discern crucial intentions of the author through comparisons that facilitate discerning important contrasts between characters and the developing plotline. This structure highlights the value and status of the foreigner Ruth—contrasted with Naomi—as a legitimate member of the Israelite community, and elevates Boaz—contrasted with a nameless "nobody" kinsman—as an ideal representative of communal faithfulness.

Discerning the presence and significance of the dense web of intertextual echoes and allusions woven throughout the book is crucial to understanding the meaning of Ruth, and in this regard, Tooman and Kelsey are incredible guides. By alluding to type-scenes like the "meeting at the well" (Gen 24) and echoes of the allurement of Lot from Genesis 19 and the ruse of Tamar in Genesis 38, Ruth the Moabitess is shown to be on-par with Hebrew matriarchs in her character and theological understanding of the God of Israel. Contrasts with the deterioration and deception involved in the family life of the patriarchs and tribes of Israel show how Ruth's faithfulness contributes to establishing and building the community of Israel in ways superior to the ancestors, as she builds the house of Israel through truth and faithfulness.

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Verbal allusions to Ruth's character portray her as an ideal Proverbs 31 "woman of strength," who as a poor non-Israelite undermines the importance of wealth and ethnicity as requirements for being a revered woman in the community. Allusions to the customs of Levirate marriage and inheritance customs from the laws of Moses that take on subtle distinctions and changes model how the seemingly black-and-white prohibitions of foreigners participating in the life of the Israelite community (Deut 23) are to be nuanced in order to integrate non-Israelites who are willing to commit their lives in faithfulness to the community of Israel.

Tooman and Kelsey's frequent discussions of the significance and interpretation of Hebrew terminology will be of interest to those who are cutting their teeth in learning Hebrew by reading Ruth, as well as those who are unfamiliar with the Hebrew language. Detailed discussions of the grammatical ambiguities of key terms like *ḥesed* and the concept of conversion, as well as the perplexing scene of Ruth entering the bedroom of a sleeping Boaz, will delight readers with the beauty and subtlety of Hebrew narrative.

As shown by this volume, the book of Ruth is an artistically crafted and incredibly complex story about the Moabite woman Ruth, wherein the intertextual echoes of the book resonate across the canon of the Hebrew Bible to establish a context of meaning that touches on many of the perennially challenging themes of the Hebrew Bible. These themes have significant value for people of faith today, as they include discerning the workings and providence of Yahweh in the world, the obstacles and possibilities in formation of a community of faithfulness (*ḥesed*), and the relationship between "insiders" of the people of God and "outsiders" like Ruth. This volume will be appreciated by pastors, teachers, laypeople, and students who have an interest in the book of Ruth and its contributions to biblical theology.

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Gary HOLLOWAY. *Psalms: Hymns of God's People*. Abilene, TX: Abilene Christian University Press, 2022. 141 pp. $12.99.

Gary Holloway has produced several meditative commentaries on NT books. With this volume, he turns his insights and writing skills to a meditative commentary on the Psalms. Holloway assists readers through a process on reading the psalms for the purpose of spiritual transformation. He uses the *lectio divina* meditative process which moves through four phases of reflecting on a text by listening, meditating, praying, and contemplating the psalm. The process enables Scripture to ask probing questions of the reader rather than the reader questioning Scripture (13).

The volume is divided into two meditation sections. The first section includes psalms of lament, thanksgiving, and praise. The second section includes psalms

dealing with special occasions. Such psalms consist of affirmation and celebration (enthronement and royal psalms, covenant renewal, and songs of Zion), salvation history psalms, wisdom, and trust psalms, etc.

Each week usually two or three psalms are chosen from the same genre. Those psalms are then divided into four sections. Each section is read each day for the first four days of the week. Three provocative questions follow the reading of the day. For example, for the first day of the meditation week on "Laments When Forsaken," the first eighteen verses of Psalm 22 are read. One of the three questions that follow is: "1. Have you ever felt forsaken by God? . . . What did you do in that situation?" Holloway alternates the readings between two English versions; one psalm from the *New International Version* and the other from the *New Living Bible*. Participants then spend time in reading, meditating, praying, and contemplating each part of the psalm. On the 5th day participants are to read again all four previous sections and meditate on the reflective thoughts Holloway provides at the end.

Participants can read sequentially through the book. However, Holloway suggests another way of reading and meditating on these psalms is to ask, "How am I feeling today? Do I need to hear lament, praise, trust, thanksgiving?" (20). It serves as a way to "express your feelings in biblical words" (back cover). He does raise a concern that some participants might have: How do we keep from reading our own desires back into Scripture? He offers two sources that provide constraints. First, through prayer asking for guidance and openness to hearing God's voice. Second, through reading in community and listening to others' perspectives.

Holloway has organized the psalms in this volume in a most thoughtful way. Thirty-seven psalms in all are included. Six psalms are from the genre of lament, thirteen from thanksgiving and praise, and eighteen special occasion psalms. Surprisingly, what is not included is the most well-known psalm, Psalm 23. A fresh reflection on this psalm could provide valuable meditative possibilities. Also, the most quoted psalm by NT writers, Psalm 118 (the last of the *Hallel* psalms), was not included. Because it was likely the last psalm sung at the Passover meal before Jesus was crucified, its significance for meditative thought carries strong potential.

This volume is intended as a resource for personal, family, and small group devotionals on the Psalms. Holloway writes this meditative commentary in such a way that the words of Scripture are accessible to everyone. Participants do not have to depend on scholars or other resources to explain to them what the Bible says. While participants do gain information from the readings and meditations, the more important purpose is for spiritual renewal of one's life. This volume is designed to enable readers to think more deeply about their relationships and responsibilities to God, to others, and to themselves. Once again, Holloway has given us a rich resource for a deep encounter with God's word.

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James K. HOFFMEIER. *The Prophets of Israel: Walking the Ancient Paths.* Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2021. 400 pp. $47.99.

Hoffmeier, Professor Emeritus of Old Testament and Ancient Near Eastern History and Archaeology, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, writes this volume about the Hebrew prophets from an extensive career of teaching the biblical texts and fieldwork in the eastern Mediterranean region. He has worked on archaeological projects in northern Africa that include the Karnak Temple Complex in Egypt, the Tel el-Borg site in northern Sinai, and the Cushite Cemetery in Nuri, Sudan. For the last two decades, he has focused his research on exegesis of the Hebrew prophets.

This volume introduces the reader to the seers of Israel with an engaging text, numerous maps, a few charts, and photos of historic sites, archaeological ruins, and many artifacts. All of the illustrations are in full color, and there are two, sometimes three or four, illustrations at most openings of the book. Hoffmeier begins his survey with an "Introduction to the Hebrew Prophets" (ch. 1) and then looks at the often-neglected non-literary prophets or "Prophets in the Old Testament Who Left No Writings" (ch. 2). Chapters 3 through 7 detail the message of each of the writing prophets who are treated chronologically in their appropriate context based on the recipients of their message (Israel, Judah) and on the world ruling power (Assyria, Babylon, Persia). Hoffmeier concludes his work with discussion of "Prophets and Prophecy in the New Testament" (ch. 8). Special studies throughout are presented attractively with light gray background, and there are discussion questions at the end of each chapter in the same format. Helps include a table of contents and abbreviations of reference sources at the front of the volume and a bibliography at the back, but there is no index of subjects or Scripture references. All in all, this volume is a beautiful and well-written overview of the Hebrew prophets, who spoke their message in the name of the LORD from the days of Moses and Samuel to the time of exile and return and beyond.

With his extensive background in Near Eastern archaeology, Hoffmeier places emphasis "on the prophets, their contexts, and the historical circumstances that provided the impetus for their messages." Not neglecting the greater personalities among the prophets, he introduces those that are less well known, including women prophets of Israel such as Miriam, Deborah, Huldah, and Noadiah. And, with the inclusion of a chapter on "the role of prophets and prophecy in the NT and early church," he gives the reader a "comprehensive perspective" about prophets from the whole biblical corpus. His use of archaeological data elucidates the context of Israel's seers but also helps the student of the Bible better understand words and idioms that were "familiar to the prophets and their audience but lost to the modern reader" (13). In addition, Hoffmeier highlights spatial and geopolitical information when needed to assist in making "informed theological applications of the text" (14).

At only four hundred pages and with over three hundred illustrations, including maps, this volume provides students as well as scholars with an attractive,

compact, and accessible window into the world of those who "were engaged in a host of activities, played various roles, used a range of methods of communicating their messages, and functioned in different social and religious settings" (23). For an overview, the amount of detail in the discussion is generous, a tribute to Hoffmeier's precise writing style, and he does not neglect to comment on many of the important issues. While not dogmatic and open to various viewpoints, Hoffmeier certainly has respect for the message of the prophets, written and unwritten, as Word of God. The volume is filled with information that illuminates the life and the work of each of these prophets of Israel. The concluding chapter, in its focus on prophets in the NT—those in the life of Jesus (John the Baptist, Simeon, Anna), Jesus himself, and in the early church—brings full circle the chief role of the prophet in Israel, namely, to speak for God. Fittingly, Hoffmeier ends by quoting the apostle Paul: "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 Tim 3:16-17)" (390). The book, recently published by Kregel Academic, is a delightful read and will be useful as an undergraduate college textbook, a special occasion gift, or for personal or small group instruction about this important biblical topic.

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Alice MATHEWS. *Gender Roles and the People of God: Rethinking What We Were Taught about Men and Women in the Church.* New York: HarperCollins, 2017. 238 pp. $14.00.

In the vast collection of writings about whether women are fit to lead in the church, Mathews provides a clear and compelling argument for reconsidering long-held beliefs about the topic. She begins with an introductory chapter on hermeneutics and includes a summary of complementarian beliefs (26). Part one provides an overview of some "stand-out women" (33) from both the OT and NT and various stages of history. In part two, Mathews unpacks the two most challenging (and most argued) texts in the conversation (1 Tim 2 and 1 Cor 14), and then discusses theology around headship, the eternal subordination of the Son, and questions of authority and leadership. Finally, in part three (159) she addresses "historical realities" that have influenced worldviews regarding women over the last 2000 years.

One strength of Mathews' book, along with a satisfactory overview of the topic, is that she asks good questions to challenge the reader to reconsider what they have always presumed to be true. Surely any serious student of the Bible would admit that they can still learn anew on any scriptural theme. Another strength is that her analysis includes historical and theological tenets in addition to biblical exegesis. She responds to specific presuppositions of complementarianism and her footnotes indicate a balanced reading of both complementarians and egal-

itarians. From a structural standpoint, reders may appreciate the introductory summary for each section as well as the thoughtful questions included after each chapter. Finally, though I didn't spot it till the end of the book, adding a bit of her own story (234) lent credibility—she has personally lived through the past 50 years of debate on this issue and that experience provides depth of understanding.

One weakness of this volume overall is the ordering of the topics. This may be because of my own learning style, but I think the volume would benefit by being organized by "big picture ideas" before "individual texts." The historical realities (chapters 10–12) could seamlessly follow the section on biblical women and would then provide important context to why we often understand the texts the way we do. In a related way, the message in "Women, Leadership, and the Nature of Ministry" (ch. 9) would have been a compelling *introduction* to part two and its theology and biblical exegesis.

While less a weakness and more of a comment on its best audience, this is not a seminary level, in-depth bible commentary. There is no bibliography or Scripture index and because of the brevity of the book, Mathews only scratches the surface of the many controversies imbedded in the texts in question. Stone-Campbell scholars who want a bit more meat (written by one of our own) may prefer John Mark Hicks' volume *Women Serving God*. Still, Mathews provides an adequate introduction to the topic for those students or ministers who are beginning to rethink the question of what women can do in the church. I hope, along with Mathews, that more Christ-followers will continue to dialogue on this topic so that all women *and* men can lean into their God-given gifts for the benefit of the church and for the glory of God.

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Richard A. WRIGHT. *A Reader in Biblical Greek*. Eerdmans Language Resources. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2022. 215 pp. $24.99.

Designed for anyone who has completed one year of Koine Greek, this work offers help in improving the student's reading skills (Introduction, xi). Used as a companion text in second- or third-year classes, or used by an individual to bring back earlier skills, the volume will work very well.

The readings appear in three levels: "elementary," "more challenging," and "more sophisticated Greek" and come from the literature "that at least some Christians in the fourth century of the Common Era were reading" (Introduction, xi). The elementary section includes eleven readings from Genesis, Deuteronomy, the Psalms, the Gospel of Mark, the Didache, and the Shepherd of Hermas. In the intermediate section another eleven readings appear, this time from the Psalms, Isaiah, the Gospel of Matthew, the Acts, the Revelation, the Epistle of Barnabas, and 1 Clement. The seven readings in the advanced section come from Luke, Paul, James, and Peter.

Each reading appears with heavy annotations: an introduction, the text with lexical and grammatical footnotes, and a list of vocabulary used 50 times or fewer in the NT. Throughout the volume Wright makes use of Daniel Wallace's intermediate grammar, the Liddell-Scott-Jones lexicon, Muraoka's Septuagint lexicon, the NT lexicon by Bauer et al., and other tools.

Beyond helping students improve their Greek, the author "wanted to . . . also provide content that would introduce them to some of the ideas that were important to the early church," choosing each section primarily for its "content, not its grammar" (Introduction, xii). In this way the work functions as a theological reader to a limited extent.

This review covers the print version of the book, but it also appears in electronic format. Based on the short sample available free from Amazon, the Kindle version looks quite usable. Its internal links make navigation easy, and it reads well enough on a small screen.

Every Greek teacher has their own preferences, but for anyone who likes to introduce students to a wide range of literature, this reader will work. Also, a student who has not worked with the language for some years ought to find the work helpful as a refresher.

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Mair E. LLOYD & Steven HUNT. *Communicative Approaches for Ancient Languages.* London: Bloomsbury, 2021. 223 pp. $34.95.

Both authors have a background in teacher training and the assessment of the teaching of classical languages. Lloyd is a research associate at the Open University in the UK and writes curriculum for the Cambridge School Classics Project. Her PhD thesis was *Living Latin: Exploring Communicative Approaches to Latin Teaching* (Open University 2017). She has also co-authored an article with James Robson, "A Survey of Beginner's Language Teaching in UK Classics Departments: Latin" (Council of University Classical Departments Bulletin: 47, 2018). Hunt is the Subject Lecturer of the PGCE in Classics at the University of Cambridge. He has authored *Starting to Teach Latin* (Bloomsbury, 2016), and co-edited *Forward with Classics* (Bloomsbury, 2017), and *Teaching Classics with Technology* (Bloomsbury, 2019). This volume builds on the experiences of both authors in the education field looking to improve overall comprehension in the Classics.

This volume is the result of two Classical Association conferences, the first at Edinburgh in 2016 and the second at Leicester in 2017, where communicative approaches to teaching ancient languages were a major section. This volume is a first-of-its-kind in the field of pedagogy of the ancient languages. It provides both the theoretical basis for communicative approaches and implementation of the

same in teaching the Classics. This volume covers situations involving the instruction of both Latin and Greek, and has several sections devoted to the teaching of Greek. This volume brings together contributions from Classicists from several countries, including a few from the Biblical Studies perspective.

The introduction contains the rationale for the volume, the meaning of "communicative approaches," and the arrangement of the essays. The essays are grouped into four main groups. The first group covers introducing these approaches in school settings. Hunt has an essay in this section. The second group covers the same idea in university settings. Lloyd has an essay in this section. The third section covers immersion methods and informal approaches. Most of the essays dealing with Greek are in this section. The fourth section details some unusual settings and some variety not included in the first three groups. No general conclusion or epilogue finishes the book. References, abbreviations, and keyword index are at the back.

Among the essays involving Greek, Stephen Hill writes regarding the Lexington Συνοδος Ἑλληνικη. This is a one-week immersion event held at University of Kentucky where attendees will communicate with each other only in Ancient Greek at the conference. Some texts to read are provided in advance, but discussion about those texts and other items in the conference must be conducted while speaking Ancient Greek. Typically, three passages are provided to first-time attendees which vary in difficulty, where they must read and provide an understanding without aids in the admission process. His essay relates the format of the Synod to theory from Second-Language Acquisition studies. He further describes the exercises during the event which involves reading a passage and answering some questions about the passage. Some of the answers to these questions force the attendee to interpret. Other task-based exercises involve performing a written task based on prompts. Together these exercises force creative thinking in Greek to compose an answer. Using the Greek language to speak together in community helps to learn Greek in a way beyond what can be done with two to four terms of grammar and syntax.

The next essay by Christophe Rico and Micael Kopf detail what occurs at the Polis Institute at Jerusalem. All communication in the classroom is in Greek, and often students who attend that share no common language. The teacher begins by having students learn greetings and names. The course proceeds to using phrases and sentences for common situations in life. Reporting on what happened occurs next. After 120 hours of instruction, students are given a narrative text to read, where they will see imperatives, participles, and indicatives of the aorist and present indicatives. As the second year begins, students have already read either a Gospel, Ruth in the LXX, or Epictetus' *Enchiridion*. To answer the question that students might not learn grammar or morphology as well this way, the authors point out that recognizing common items as common enables the reader to focus more on the rarer forms when they occur. To learn in a Grammar-Translation model, all forms look equally unfamiliar. This impedes the learning process.

Students in the Polis method recognize synonyms faster and semantic networks because they have approached the language this way.

A third essay by Daniel Street from Houston Baptist University outlines what the goals and methods should be for biblical languages and exegesis for the Seminary. The goal of learning a modern language is generally to become fluent in reading, speaking, and thinking in the target language, while often the goal in biblical languages is typically reading the NT or LXX, and neither speaking nor thinking in Greek. Students in a typical seminary setting become more proficient in metalanguage than they do in the Greek language. Street also points out that "reading" doesn't mean "reading" in the same sense as in the modern language classroom either as reading with immediate comprehension is missing.

He next compares programs showing the vast difference in assignment structure between the modern language expectation and biblical language expectations. The class for modern language instruction had much greater amount of reading and writing in the target language, while the class for biblical languages had much greater amount of translation and linguistic explanation expected. He then states a case for a three-year track in biblical languages for seminaries on the MDiv program, where a larger drive could be made toward fluency. The practical challenges for this change include adding approximately 800 hours in guided immersive training to the program and staff levels or infrastructure at seminaries to support such experiences. His level of blame to the professors for this seems a bit imprecise since this applies perhaps to some more than others. The typical professor may be able to do only what the institution or department has outlined. More helpfully, he indicates that reform is needed for pedagogy, which implies at least a wider change including seminary vision, degree program structure, institutional infrastructure, and program accreditation. One other element not discussed in the chapter is whether or not the comparison of university and seminary programs were comparing courses that were expected of students in that major or with other majors. For example, most seminary students are not Greek majors (or Hebrew), they are Bible majors (NT/OT), while the typical person in a third-year course of a modern language is a language major.

While this review focused on the three essays specifically addressing Greek, much of the remaining essays focused on Latin provide insights for better learning of the Ancient Languages. These insights include achieving open-mindedness, learning through multiple pathways, heavier concentration on hearing and composing, immersion, and case studies. The volume is a foray into the theory and practice of teaching ancient languages the same way as modern languages. It fills a gap in the literature by providing assessment of a variety of approaches and connecting it to language learning in general.

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Francis WATSON. *What Is a Gospel?* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2022. 335 pp. $49.00.

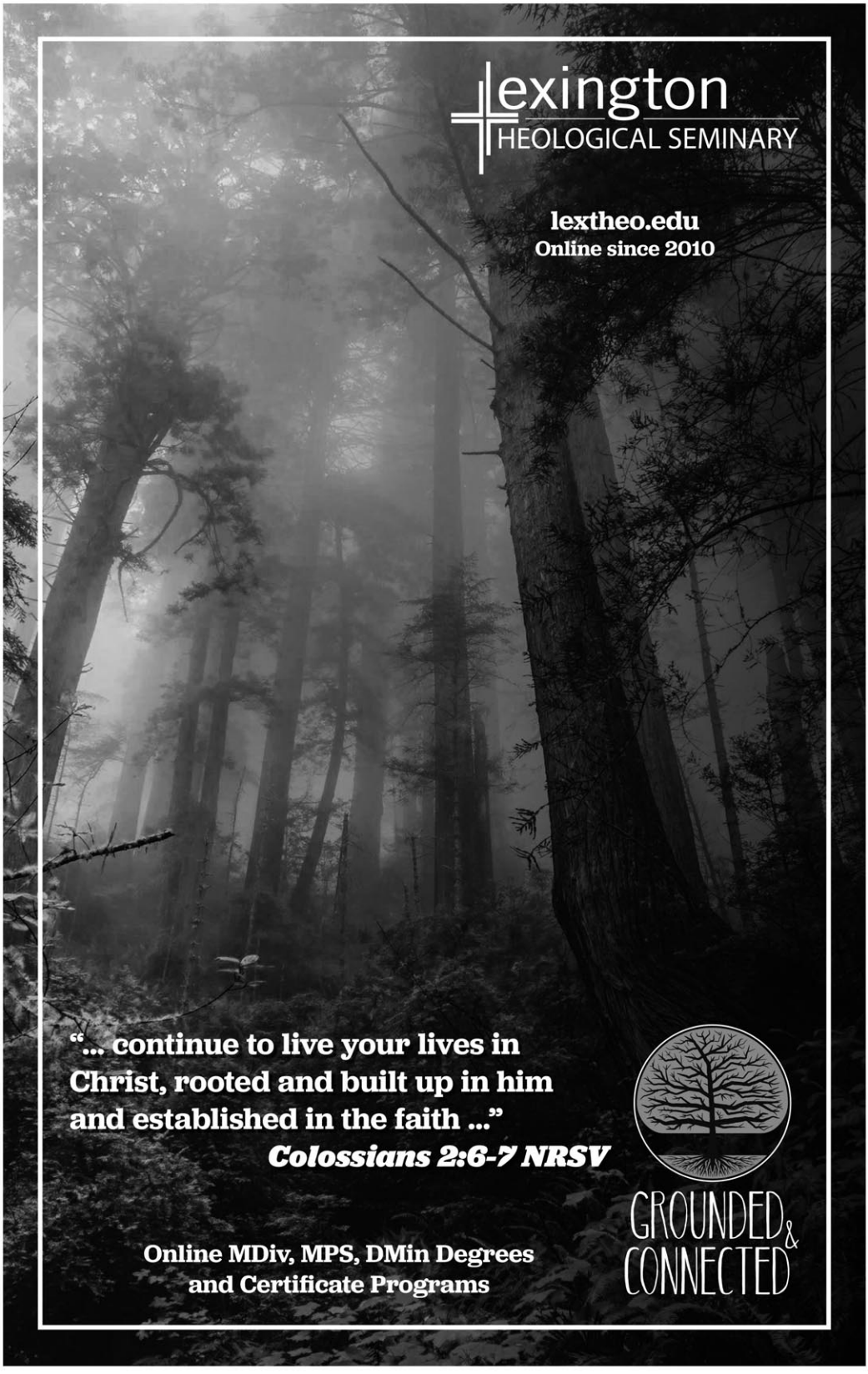
This volume is Watson's latest contribution to the ongoing conversation resulting from his earlier works, *Gospel Writing* (2013) and *The Four-Fold Gospel* (2016), as well as a collection of responses entitled *Writing the Gospels: A Dialogue with Francis Watson* (2019). Eleven of the fourteen chapters in the current volume are updated versions of essays and articles that have been published elsewhere.

This volume covers a lot of ground in Watson's typical erudite style. Chapter one is Watson's summary of the features of the Gospel genre: a focus on the human Jesus, his unsurpassed authority, and the attribution to or association with an apostolic author. The second chapter traces the development of seven traditions concerning Judas Iscariot's demise and how each of the writers (canonical and non-canonical) shape a narrative of God's vindication of Jesus that includes Judas' death. In chapter three, Watson shows that Mark and Matthew are two pre-canonical data points in the expansion of Gospel plurality. He argues that just as Matthew subsumes Mark and expands it, so Mark has subsumed earlier text forms and expands them. Later Gospels will do likewise.

Watson joins an increasing number of Gospels scholars in chapters four and five where he argues that the hypothetical *Q* is not necessary to explain the origins of the Gospels. Chapters six and seven are related to the argument of chapter three in that Watson demonstrates the interconnectedness of Gospel writing in the period before the formation of the canon. He begins by showing that Luke was the basis for additional Gospel writing (*Protoevangelium of James,* Marcion). He also examines *Epistula Apostolorum* as a gospel that is dependent on earlier gospel texts. These case studies show that "neither the individual gospel nor an agreed selection of them ever finally achieves the definitive status to which they may aspire" (102).

Chapter eight contrasts the canonical coordination of four Gospels with the Scriptures of Israel and four other early Gospel texts (which certainly served as Scripture for believers in certain locales) that distance Christianity from its Jewish roots. In chapter nine, Watson returns to Judas, setting the ascription of a Gospel to the betrayer over against Irenaeus' ascription of the four canonical Gospels to other apostolic and associated figures. Apostolic ascriptions serve to explain the differences between the accounts despite each document sharing generic conventions and subject matter.

In the tenth chapter, Watson exposes the numerous assumptions and poor argumentation employed by Tertullian in the church father's writings against Marcion. Watson's point in doing so is to challenge the modern scholarly assumption many share with Tertullian—that earlier is better and later is worse when it comes to Gospel composition. Historians must not read post-canonical beliefs into a pre-canonical situation. Tatian's *Diatessaron* is the subject of chapter eleven. Here Watson argues that *Diatessaron* was not intended to be a Gospel har-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mony, but a Gospel text in its own right. He makes this argument by examining Tatian's redactional techniques and showing them to be similar to those employed by other Gospel writers. Chapter twelve continues the theme of the reception of the Gospels in the Lindisfarne Gospel book. Watson views the artwork and paratextual features of the Lindisfarne Gospels as an attempt to resolve the tensions created by putting four differing accounts of Jesus' life together in a single codex. Chapter thirteen moves to the modern period, specifically the limitations of differentiating sacred text from historical source in the quests for the historical Jesus. Chapter fourteen is Watson's response to various criticisms leveled against him in *Writing the Gospels.*

The space allotted for this review does no justice to the depth and breadth of each essay in this volume. Watson's writing is cogent. I can imagine this volume being used in a graduate seminar on the Gospels in order to introduce students to a wide range of critical issues concerning the production, canonization, and reception of the Gospels. Those who will benefit most from this volume are Gospels scholars engaged in the debates surrounding Watson's work over the last decade. Watson is one of the premier NT scholars of our day. His work must always be reckoned with and these essays are no exception.

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Stanley E. PORTER and Ron C. FAY, eds. *Luke-Acts in Modern Interpretation*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2021. 392 pp. $31.99.

This volume is the second installment in a new series edited by Stanley E. Porter and Ron C. Fay entitled "Milestones in New Testament Scholarship." Porter is president, dean, and professor of NT at McMaster Divinity College in Hamilton, Ontario, and Fay is assistant professor of biblical studies at Liberty University. Each volume in the series is expected to survey major figures who shaped critical discussion and popular thinking about discrete NT literature or topics during the last two centuries.

Luke-Acts is the largest corpus in the NT, and only a representative sample of scholars can be included in a work of this sort. Porter and Fay selected scholars who worked in English since the late-nineteenth century. This volume includes individual chapters devoted to ten noteworthy scholars who substantially influenced modern studies: Adolf Harnack, Martin Debelius, Henry Joel Cadbury, Ernst Haenchen, F. F. Bruce, Hans Conzelmann, Charles Kingsley Barrett, Jacob Jervell, Richard I. Pervo, and Loveday C. A. Alexander. All except Alexander were deceased at the time of publication.

Porter and Fay author chapters on Bruce and Pervo, respectively, but they also co-author the volume's Introduction and Conclusion. The Introduction is vital because it helps to fill the gaps that inevitably exist in a selective work of this sort. The editors explain the four major periods of Luke-Acts study and dis-

cuss, at some length, the contributions of scholars who are not featured individually. The Conclusion ties together the work of the scholars who are highlighted in a way that emphasizes the diversity of their approaches, contributions, and conclusions.

Each chapter between the Introduction and Conclusion is a hybrid between biography and dictionary entry, beginning with a sketch of the subject scholar's life and featuring an overview of his or her contribution to the study of Lukan literature. Because the average chapter is slightly more than 30 pages, the biographical materials are necessarily brief. Some, like the chapter on Jervell offer little more than educational data, but most offer a helpful picture of the subject's background or, at least, the environment in which the subject worked. A few chapters, like John Byron's chapter on C. K. Barrett, provide unique personal insights about the subject scholars.

The bulk of each chapter overviews one subject's unique contributions to Luke-Acts studies. Each author introduces and surveys a scholars' work, describes how his or her scholarship influenced the course of critical discussion, and evaluates the scholarship's continued impact. The analyses are generally quite balanced, highlighting the innovations and strengths reflected in each subject's work while critiquing its weaknesses and limitations.

This volume is unique because it outlines more than 150 years of Luke-Acts studies in less than 400 pages. It likely has limited utility for seminarians, undergraduates, ministers, and general audiences because it offers few exegetical and practical helps. However, because the volume distills years of study into a taut, time-saving orientation, it will be uniquely valuable to graduate students and others seeking an introduction to key scholars, their seminal works, and major critical developments in Lukan literature scholarship.

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Stephen WESTERHOLM. *Romans: Text, Readers, and the History of Interpretation*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2022. 429 pp. $49.99.

The volume reviewed here arose during Westerholm's preparation for a different, yet-to-be-published commentary on Romans for Eerdmans's Illuminations series. Here he becomes familiar with the centuries-long and -rich tradition of reading and interpreting Paul's longest—and arguably most important—letter. After a brief preface, Westerholm offers a chapter on the text and textual history of Romans, a chapter on the readers of Romans, and four chapters on the history of interpretation, surveying the Patristic period (ch. 3), the Medieval period (ch. 4), the sixteenth century (ch. 5), and the modern period (ch. 6) Philipp Jakob Spener (1635–1705) to Karl Barth (1886–1968). Following a brief conclusion ("History of Interpretation: Conclusion"), the volume ends with an appendix ("The Apostle and the Doctor" [Martyn Lloyd-

Jones]), a bibliography, and indices of authors, names and subjects, and Scripture and other ancient texts.

The first chapter's description of the text and textual history of Romans models helpful, if inevitably somewhat technical, introduction to the application of textual criticism to interpreting Romans. The survey of the history of interpretation of Romans in chapters 3–7 (and the appendix) is similarly helpful for students of Romans, though much of this material will also likely prove informative for scholars more familiar with Romans itself and the discussion of the letter in contemporary scholarship.

The controversial chapter in this book, if there is only one, is the second chapter, on "the first readers of Romans." Westerholm engages recent claims made about Paul's intended readership by scholars of the "Paul within Judaism" perspective, which is significant inasmuch as such claims are beginning to require attention even outside "Paul within Judaism" scholarship. Unfortunately, Westerholm conflates two similar but distinct concepts in this chapter: Paul's *imagined* or *encoded readers* (the readers Paul describes in the rhetoric of the letter and addresses in the letter's dialogic features) and the letter's *actual readers*. We can see this conflation: "[Paul within Judaism scholars] agree: Paul's letters are rightly understood only when it is realized that *their intended audience* was non-Jewish. Both *the first readership of Romans* and, concomitantly, aspects of its message may profitably be explored in dialogue with these scholars" (47, italics added).

The italicized phrases, however, refer to two different concepts, and confusing them creates immediate problems. On the same page Westerholm claims, "most scholars agree: Paul thought of those to whom he wrote as, at least predominantly, gentile. But evidence suggesting that there were *any* Jews among them is disputed by scholars in this school" (47; italics in the original). The question is not whether there *were* any Jews among Paul's readers; the question is whether Paul ever addresses the Jews among them or directs his rhetoric toward them. At the end of the same paragraph we read, "Others simply note that, while there were no doubt Jews in Rome who believed in Christ, Paul directed his letter to gentiles" (48). This is not, however, a debate *within* "Paul within Judaism" scholarship; all such scholars note the presence of Jewish believers in Jesus in Rome. Again, the issue is whether Paul ever addresses them directly in his letter, whether he imagines or encodes Jewish followers of Jesus as his rhetorical audience.

Westerholm's brief description of "the 'Paul within Judaism' school" (48-51) is strikingly fair and responsible, which is not always the case in these kinds of discussions. As Westerholm notes, "Scholars associated with the 'Paul within Judaism' school repeatedly emphasize the difference between interpretations they propose and 'traditional' or 'conventional' views. As the preceding list makes clear, there is, indeed, a point to the contrast" (51). So far so good. But then Westerholm goes on to demonstrate the universal scope of Paul's rhetoric by

reading that rhetoric universally. For example, "since 'all' (gentiles and Jews) are 'under sin' (Gal 3:22), and no one (Jew or gentile) does 'all the things written in the book of the law,' righteousness (for Jew or gentile) is only to be found by the alternative path, that of faith in Jesus Christ ([Gal] 2:14-17; 3:10-12)" (55).

The parenthetical notes push our interpretation of Paul's words in the direction Westerholm wants for them, but this is the question we are trying to adjudicate. Yes, Paul says "all." But can we determine whether that word means "gentiles and Jews," and, if we can, how would we do so? Unfortunately, Westerholm does not address these questions. When he turns to "the ethnicity of Paul's first readers and his reasons for writing them" (71-74), he has already decided to whom he thinks Paul wrote. But, as "Paul within Judaism" scholars have long noted, problems remain. Westerholm claims, "[t]he arguments that his first readers were *predominantly* gentile may stand, but a letter directed to 'all' those 'called to be saints' in Rome must have included Jews among its target audience (Rom 1:6-7)" (71; italics in the original). It is not until *after* Westerholm concludes that Paul writes to both Jewish and gentile readers that he acknowledges, "*as apostle to the gentiles*, Paul felt a responsibility for the believers in Rome and wanted to establish them more firmly in their faith. He himself makes clear that he writes to the Romans 'because of the grace given [him] by God to be *a minister of Christ Jesus to the gentiles*' (15:15-16)" (73; italics added; see also Rom 1:5-6, 13-15). Paul limits the scope of his readers *before* he uses the word "all," a fact which is obscured by the order of Westerholm's discussion, which determines the scope of Paul's rhetoric before determining the scope of his readers.

Despite this fundamental disagreement, this is a lovely, rich volume. The Stone-Campbell tradition prizes a direct encounter between the Christian who reads and the Word of God that is read. And yet, even as we read for ourselves, we cannot—and ought not!—remain ignorant of other, earlier readers. Westerholm urges—almost to the point of chastising—modern interpreters to become familiar with the history of interpretation of this historic letter. Westerholm's first words establish this tenor: "Commentators on the Bible today are latecomers to a conversation that has been ongoing for centuries. We do well not to barge in at once with our own views. Common courtesy, a decent respect for the opinions of others, and the realization that wisdom was not born, and will not die, with us all demand that we inform ourselves of what others have been saying before we enter the conversation" (ix; see also the beginning of Westerholm's "Conclusion," 342).

Perhaps. I am less eager to castigate contemporary commentators than is Westerholm, but his point is a good one: wrestling with this longest Pauline epistle is a venerable tradition, and we who opt to "give it a go" ought to have some awareness of those who have gone before us.

I cannot stress enough: despite the interpretive gulf between my interpretations of Paul and Romans and his, Westerholm has done us a service by putting on display previous generations' creative and careful efforts to understand and

explain this complex letter. Anyone interested in Paul or Romans cannot remain ignorant of this material. Westerholm's survey may not unlock the actual meaning of Paul's letter—whatever we think *that* is—but it will certainly help us to locate our own readings more thoughtfully vis-à-vis those of previous generations.

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William S. CAMPBELL. *Romans: A Social Identity Commentary.* T. & T. Clark Social Identity Commentary on the New Testament. London: Bloomsbury, 2023. 479 pp. $117.00.

In this impressive volume, Campbell gives a reading of Romans that is a thoroughgoing apology for reading Romans as addressed only to Gentiles and from within the "Paul within Judaism" perspective. In addition, Campbell uses Social Identity Theory (SIT) to analyze the various groups of Christ-believers in Rome and their relationships with one another. Here the focus is primarily on the relationship between Gentile believers and Jews. He argues that the situation in Rome does more to shape the argument of the letter than most interpreters allow. Centrally, he asserts that the Gentile church members have adopted elements of Roman imperial ideology that allow them to see themselves as superior to Jews and to identify Jews as a defeated people who have been rejected by God. He sees much of the argument of Romans addressing this misperception and trying to move the Gentile readers to view their relationship with Israel through a lens that rejects competition and encourages them to see themselves in a larger group that includes them and Israel as the people of God. Indeed, the Gentile Christ-believers are an "associate people" with Israel who are brought into the people of God through Israel's messiah.

This is not a verse-by-verse commentary. Rather, Campbell moves chapter-by-chapter and topic-by-topic. The topics that receive the most attention are those of relevance for showing that only Gentiles are being addressed and that contribute to reading with the "Paul within Judaism" perspective. In addition, he provides four Excurses on the following topics: the use of diatribe in Romans, the literary history of the topic of the wrath of God against idolatry, the image of slavery to God, and antisemitism in Rome.

The excursus on diatribe is vital to his reading of the text. He argues that the questions and seeming objections raised to what Paul asserts in Romans are a use of diatribe style that is didactic rather than polemical, even when those questions address what Paul thinks are real misunderstandings of his theology. One result of this reading is that Campbell identifies the one who "calls himself a Jew" in chapter 2 as a speech-in-character who represents Gentiles who claim the name Jew and are either church members associated with a synagogue or Godfearers. He envisions these people as actually present in Rome. Paul uses this diatribe style so that he can address an issue without directly confronting his readers. Campbell

provides little evidence for this specific identification beyond some mirror-reading of a few passages. Others who see Romans addressing only Gentiles read this passage without that hypothesis.

Campbell provides a reading of Romans that is consistent with his understanding of the situation Romans addresses and his view of Paul's understanding of the place of Israel and Gentiles in the purposes of God. Campbell is insistent that all of the letter speaks only to the situation of Gentiles and that it nowhere addresses Jews or their need for the gospel. This reading means that the description of the need for the gospel in chapters 1–3 and 5–7 addresses only the situation of Gentiles and so does not describe the plight of Jews. His reading of these chapters seems to assume that Jews possess the Spirit that the Messiah mediates, even without being believers in him.

Reading Romans through this lens brings insights that are often missed. Campbell consistently transliterates the word *ethne* (Gentiles) in his translation of the text. This move helps readers see just how consistently the subject of the letter is Gentiles. This focus also leads Campbell to note that chapters 9–10 do not redefine Israel, but rather discuss how Israel was created by God and is identified.

This commentary offers significant insights even if readers do not fully agree that the letter addresses only Gentiles or that the discussions of the plight that requires the gospel describe only the condition of Gentiles. In fact, this reader thinks that the discussions of the need for the gospel can describe the plight of all people, even if the only people addressed in the letter are Gentiles. It would be interesting to hear what Campbell thinks that Jews who are not convinced about Christ are missing. Why is Paul so distressed that they are not believers? This question is related to the possession of the Spirit by, seemingly, all Jews. This commentary helpfully challenges many assumed readings of most commentators. Rethinking these matters leads readers to a clearer understanding of Paul and Romans.

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Dean FLEMMING. *Foretaste of the Future: Reading Revelation in Light of God's Mission*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2022. 246 pp. $28.00.

For nearly half a century dispensationalist eschatologies have portrayed unbelievers as unwanted objects of God's wrath and described the earth as detritus to be discarded in preparation for the afterlife. In the wake of the damage, interpreters of Revelation have been working to cast a different vision, providing resources that affirm God's desire to redeem humanity and that respect creation. This volume is one recent addition.

Drawing upon his deep reservoir of missionary experience in global contexts, Flemming attempts to cast a vision for how Revelation unfolds the mission of God—a mission to redeem the entire world and restore creation to its

original wholeness. "In a nutshell, this volume tries to show that *Revelation is not about scripting future events but revealing God's great purpose to redeem and restore the whole creation, including people, through the mission of the slain Lamb"* (3, italics his).

After defining "mission" and clarifying what proper contextualization looks like (Introduction), Flemming provides a brief introduction to the purpose, genre, and symbolism of the Apocalypse (ch. 1). The next two chapters put in parallel the mission of the triune God (to redeem all of creation) and the mission of the slaughtered Lamb (to embody that redemption). The letters to the seven churches of Asia (ch. 4) and the oracle of the two witnesses in Revelation 11 (ch. 5) then call the people of God to imitate the Lamb in the embodiment of that mission, even in non-retaliatory suffering. Chapter 6 tackles the problem of the perceived violence in Revelation and its connection to mission, judgment, and repentance. Chapter 7 notes the tendency in the Apocalypse's worship scenes to confront the prevailing culture's powers (and how modern worship should do the same), which leads to a discussion about missional politics and the uses and abuses of power in both the culture and the church (ch. 8). Chapter 9 turns to the vision of the New Jerusalem in Revelation 21–22 and describes it, not as a place to go when we die, but rather a community of people characterized by the presence and mission of God. The volume concludes (ch. 10) with some points of application of the book's theme to the modern context.

Most commendable about this volume is the approach: reading Revelation *missionally* rather than *eschatologically*. Flemming's background and training are real assets to the formation of his approach. Flemming has spent more than three decades in global Christian communities and has published works in both missiology and Revelation, giving him a keen eye toward the expansion of the gospel and the redemption of humanity as a thread running through the entire canon of Scripture. The dispensational focus of so much of the church's eschatology has led many a commentator to approach Revelation with an antithetical "this, not that" approach. Flemming offers a third way, one that ignores a "this or that" approach in favor of that which connects the purposes of God with the word of God.

While the approach is fresh and the commentary excellent (both exegetically and historically), the one sour taste in this otherwise savory dish is the way that believers and churches in global contexts are praised to the denigration of believers in American and Western contexts. Positive examples of gospel communities in West Africa (43, 183), the Philippines (72-73), Germany (212), Mexico (210), secular Europe (224), Shanghai (213), Asia and the Soviet Union (83) are sprinkled in among negative portrayals of comfortable American (83, 93, 104, 182, 184), Western (182, 216), "White" (179, 182, 216-217), "nationalist" (168-170), "privileged" (225), and "consumerist" (225) churches that are in desperate need of repentance.

While churches in America are certainly in danger of striking a "bargain with the beast" in political power-struggles (184), so are churches in other contexts;

the greatest example being that of the Reich Church in Nazi Germany. Having spent more than three decades in global communities, Flemming is conscious of how Christians in other countries are vulnerable to the same sins as that of the American church but tends to criticize White Americans and churches for the world's prevailing evils. In this area, the methodology doesn't match the vision, "where people of every language group" (including believers in America, however flawed) "join with all creation in perfect worship of God and the Lamb" (226).

As it cuts across the grain of dispensationalist eschatologies, Flemming's volume provides a way of reading Revelation that is fresh, one that focuses on the mission of God's redemption of humanity as an interpretive grid for reading John's Apocalypse. It will work most effectively as an introduction to Revelation in undergraduate courses on Revelation or for church members looking to understand its overall vision and purpose. Readers will have to determine whether its shortcomings are as problematic to its overall purpose as this review has suggested.

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