

BOOK REVIEWS

Phonology and Morphology of Biblical Hebrew. By Joshua Blau. Linguistic Studies in Ancient West Semitic 2. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2010, xvi + 369 pp., \$59.50.

Joshua Blau has produced studies of Biblical Hebrew grammar and philology for over half a century, and this work on phonology and morphology distills much of what he has written on these subjects over the years. The present volume, begun in 2002 as an English translation of this work (first published in Hebrew), has been somewhat revised through an editorial process that was initiated by Michael O'Connor and, after his untimely death in 2007, completed by Cynthia Miller. Blau's work presumes the reader is somewhat familiar with general linguistic theory. For readers who have not had at least an introductory course in general linguistics, a careful reading of the first section of this book is extremely important. Otherwise, one will not be able to follow the linguistic arguments in the latter sections.

The book is divided into five main sections: introduction, phonetics, phonology, morphology, and a few remarks on various other features of Biblical Hebrew. Each section, subsection, and paragraph is numbered for reference. A number of paragraphs are followed by editorial notes in smaller type.

The introduction treats general linguistic concepts as applied to Biblical Hebrew. It guides the reader into Hebrew linguistics, including Biblical Hebrew's place among other Semitic languages, general historical developments in Hebrew, and the primary ways in which linguistic analysis illuminates the study of Hebrew phonology and morphology.

The short section on phonetics analyzes the phonetic structure of Hebrew and will be familiar to anyone who has taken a basic introductory course in linguistics. It is a good review of the particulars of the way sounds in Biblical Hebrew are realized by human vocal apparatus.

The most substantial section of this book is the discussion of phonology. Much of this discussion will be difficult for readers who have not had any training in linguistics or who have not thoroughly digested the introductory section of Blau's book. After introducing the Hebrew and Proto-Semitic consonants, there are three longer treatments here: one concerning consonants in Hebrew; one about semi-consonants (i.e. *y* and *w*); and a third on vowels. The discussion of consonants largely focuses on the *BGDKPT* consonants, laryngeals and pharyngeals, *aleph*, and *heh*. Blau's interest in phonology is concentrated on historical development, and much of his presentation traces his theories as to how Hebrew phonology developed from proto-Semitic and then changed within Biblical Hebrew itself. Blau does a good job of presenting the various theories about these developments and arguing for his own views. In most cases Blau's contentions are the most convincing reconstructions, though at times the logic behind his position is somewhat obscured because he skips to his conclusion without outlining important intermediate steps along the way. Perhaps the most enlightening discussion in this section is Blau's explanation of the differences in the pronunciation of vowels among various traditions. He especially highlights the differences between Tiberian and Sephardic vocalization.

The morphological section contains major discussions of pronouns, verbs, and nouns. Again Blau's interest is primarily in historical development. It is in Blau's treatment of verbs that I found my strongest disagreement with him. He views the difference

between the Hebrew suffixed conjugation (perfect) and prefixed conjugation (imperfect) as primarily one of tense—past versus future. He discounts the concept that the differences between these two conjugations are primarily aspectual. I find Blau's treatment here quite deficient, and he does not adequately treat instances of suffixed conjugation verbs that clearly convey present or future tense nor of prefixed conjugation verbs that just as clearly convey past or present tense. Such instances convince me that the aspectual understanding of Hebrew prefixed and suffixed conjugations is more persuasive than Blau would lead one to believe.

The fifth section contains a few short comments on prepositions as well as on connective *waw* and conversive *waw* (i.e. *waw* consecutive). Blau appears to view the conversive *waw* as just that—a prefix that converts a prefixed conjugation verb to be understood as a suffixed tense verb and *vice versa*. Once again, I find the treatment here less than convincing. Instead, I think one ought to look in another direction to explain the so-called *waw* conversive—that the prefixed conjugation plus *waw* conversive/consecutive developed from earlier proto-Semitic preterite aspect verbs. Then later the suffixed conjugation plus *waw* conversive/consecutive developed by analogy to the prefixed conjugation plus *waw*. Ironically, Blau's treatment of the development of the conjunction *waw* provides good evidence for this, since he argues that the conjunction was originally *wa-* and later was shortened to *w^c-*.

Two features that run throughout this book should have been explained somewhere in a preface; a brief explanation of these features would have been helpful to the reader. One of these is the words in boldface type in many paragraphs. These may be individual words, phrases, or at times entire clauses. It is not apparent how these words were chosen to be in boldface. Sometimes they appear to be key concepts. At other times they appear to highlight the topic of a particular paragraph. At still other times there seems to be no discernable reason for the words to be in boldface type. A second feature is the editorial notes that accompany some paragraphs. At times these seem to be further comments (akin to explanatory footnotes) that come from Blau himself. At other times these appear to be additions by the editors of the English edition. Since I did not have access to Blau's Hebrew edition of this work, I was unable to determine exactly the origin of these notes.

This volume is most valuable for its treatment of phonology. The explanation of the origin of many of the phonological features of Biblical Hebrew is informative. I can even see myself using some of Blau's explanations in my beginning Hebrew class when a student inquires about perceived anomalies in the way Biblical Hebrew is written and vocalized by the Masoretes. Certainly, this book should become a major English-language reference for questions on Biblical Hebrew historical linguistics and phonology. The section on morphology is also helpful, but I think will prove to be less useful because of Blau's treatment of the Hebrew tenses, which I critiqued earlier. Nevertheless, this book should be part of any institutional library where Biblical Hebrew is taught. Those who instruct others in Biblical Hebrew, especially beyond the beginning level, may also want to add this volume to their collection for the discussion of various aspects of phonology and of the historical development of Biblical Hebrew.

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A Basic Introduction to Biblical Hebrew. By Jo Ann Hackett. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010, 302 pp. + CD-ROM, \$39.95.

With this volume, Jo Ann Hackett joins a growing list of contributors who have recently published introductory grammars for Biblical Hebrew (BH). Her high level of

scholarship in the field and extensive experience at both the college and graduate levels are clearly evident here. The text of the book is logical and clear; its layout is clean with a moderate amount of white space and very readable fonts. There are no illustrations but most verbal paradigms at the end use some color to emphasize features helpful to remember (see Appendix H). The CD contains an extensive number of PDF files with embedded audio clips of Hackett and John Huehnergard pronouncing Hebrew words and also some longer items. David Levenson reads Genesis 22:1–19. The inclusion of both a male and female voice is most welcome. The files are easy to use and the audio quality is clear. They should be of great help to beginning students, though some teachers will find the readings unnaturally slow and over-pronounced. The audio-enhanced PDFs cover exercises for about half the book, vocabulary words, paradigms, and the main reading from Genesis. The others files on the CD contain printable material from the appendices and a full answer key to the exercises (wisely separated from the bound volume).

Hackett structures her introduction to the basics of BH into thirty lessons intended for 15-week semesters and 10-week terms, though she does not describe or delineate what the word “basic” includes. Neither does she state her general aim for the book or enumerate learning objectives in terms such as vocabulary acquisition, mastery of paradigms and parsing, vocal reading ability, reading comprehension, aural recognition, familiarity with Masoretic features, or the application of knowing BH to exegesis, translation, or use of scholarly literature. Lessons with vocabulary lists tend to have about 15 words each, totaling just under 400 in the book. Exercises usually consist of asking for translations from Hebrew to English, a few English to Hebrew phrases or sentences, and short Bible readings from Genesis 22:1–19 (the only whole passage of substantial length). Most lessons call for translation of a few isolated Bible verses or verse-portions, nearly always narrative in genre. Coupled with the book’s heavy interest in morphological explanation and analysis, I conclude the aim of the book is to enable one to comprehend standard prose sentences with special focus on verbal *binyanim* and root letters, especially verbs that are considered “weak.” Given the extent of exposure to vocabulary in the book, an appendix appropriately notes the necessity of having a reliable lexicon, though the book provides no instruction in how to use one.

The book deals heavily with phonology and morphology. The alphabet and vowels are the focus of the first six lessons. The next five cover elements one would find in phrases and verbless clauses, namely independent personal pronouns, adjectives, prepositions, nouns (gender, number, construct chains, and pronominal suffixes). The first verbal paradigms appear in Lesson 12; they are the Qal prefix conjugation and imperative. At this point the exercises become more realistic and interesting. Concern with the Qal stem extends through Lesson 18 and includes some attention to how guttural letters may cause the prefix conjugation to vary in spelling. Lessons 19–24 cover the so-called “derived stems.” To this point, Hackett has focused on the formation of the strong verb. The extensive work of handling the morphological intricacies involving weak verbs is reserved for the last six lessons, concluding with geminate verbs that she claims are “fairly rare” in spite of the fact that most of the verbs she provides (הלל, ארר, קלל, סבב, חלל, and רעע) occur well over one hundred times each.

Thankfully, throughout the grammar Hackett prefers the descriptive expressions “suffix conjugation,” “prefix conjugation,” and “*va-qatal*” over problematic terms such as “perfect,” “imperfect,” and “converted imperfect.” In an introductory section she explains her choice of the label “consecutive preterite,” claiming that in spite of her hesitation to use a new term for such a common form, it “fits so perfectly” (p. xx). Lesson 15 deals with this form (mostly in terms of morphology and its history) and acknowledges that the English translator may handle the *vav* as “and,” “then,” or perhaps not translate it at all. But what of its other functions beyond temporal and logical succession? Surely the expression וַיַּעַן וַיֹּאמֶר (roughly, “and he answered and said” as in Num 23:12) cannot be properly construed in terms of consecutive action. Furthermore, the *wayyqtl*

form may communicate pluperfect action and is fairly common after circumstantial clauses and phrases (Waltke and O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 33.2.3–4). Neither of these uses is “consecutive.” Hence, following Waltke and O'Connor, I see no good reason for avoiding the term *waw-relative* when labeling this form.

At this point in the review it should be clear that Hackett's *Basic Introduction* is a respectable and substantive addition to the field of introductory grammars. It is a good example of a common North American academic approach to learning BH and is neither sectarian nor idiosyncratic. I have found Hebrew instructors as a whole to be an innovative and resourceful lot. For them, this grammar provides a solid and flexible core with which to work. Suitable for use in a wide range of undergraduate and graduate classes, it should fit well in the curricula of mainstream Hebrew instruction.

Considering the general approach of the book, it seems that Hackett may be relatively comfortable with the *status quo* in BH pedagogy, for she nowhere states how this particular book addresses unmet needs in the field. There is, however, in the guild of biblical language instructors a growing interest in the judicious application of principles and best practices from Second Language Acquisition (SLA) to teaching BH and NT Greek. Unlike others, Hackett does reveal some of her thinking behind various aspects of this grammar and I commend her for it. But most of this explanation is at a relatively minor level—namely, concerning issues of terminology, graphical layout of elements in paradigms, and the order in which verbal forms and weak verbs are best presented. When placed into the larger historical context of teaching language, this book is a clear example of the “Grammar-Translation Method” that prevailed from the sixteenth through the nineteenth centuries, traces of which still exist in courses for graduate students who need to pass reading proficiency exams (W. Wong, *Input Enhancement: From Theory and Research to the Classroom* [New York: McGraw-Hill, 2005], p. 2). Stephen Krashen has explained, reviewed, and evaluated this method, concluding that in relative terms it results in very low amounts of acquired competence in the language, tends to generate anxiety among some learners, and raises barriers to making sense of comprehensible input (*Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition* [New York: Phoenix, 1987], p. 129). These are red flags worth noticing.

Granted, the field of SLA is almost entirely interested in modern languages, but it has much to offer to developers and practitioners of ancient language pedagogies. In BH instruction, our concerns rightly center on reading and exegesis. That said, this reviewer is still looking for introductory grammars that self-consciously take advantage of documented gains in our understanding of what linguistic competence is and how we may promote it. To this end, the approaches known as “Total Physical Response” and “Communicative Language Teaching” in particular deserve greater attention.

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Zondervan Atlas of the Bible. By Carl G. Rasmussen. Rev. ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010, 303 pp., \$39.99.

The first edition of this text, the *Zondervan NIV Atlas of the Bible* (1989), has been a stellar resource for students and teachers of historical geography. This revision only improves on that well-established excellent publication. In fact, much of the prose remains the same and where it has changed, the general tenor is either to streamline somewhat unwieldy sections or to add new and salient information. One small indication of the streamlining is the omission of metric equivalents for distances. Likewise, in the

overview sections on Mesopotamia and Egypt, descriptions of extra-biblical texts have been curtailed considerably. Cosmetically, the type-face is easier on the eye, long paragraphs have been broken up, and the maps are much clearer as colors convey the contours.

After a general introduction to the Middle East, the first section of the book addresses the geography of Israel and Jordan at length, with additional overviews of Egypt, Syria and Lebanon, and Mesopotamia. This initial material helps the reader understand how the climate, weather, agriculture, and travel routes “work” in each of Israel’s regional contexts. These regional studies start with Bashan in the northeast, work south through the Negev and then cross back over into Transjordan. The second portion of the book focuses on biblical history, starting with the Table of Nations (Genesis 10) and carrying through to the seven churches of Revelation. This last is an addition to the first edition, which is not surprising given the author’s expansion of his own field instruction into Turkey. Rasmussen presents a brief history of each city in Western Asia Minor along with historical contexts, routes, temples, and characteristics of these cities in conjunction with their descriptions in the letters.

Each unit in the historical sections has a chronological bar chart at the top that correlates events across the major power centers during that particular period. For example, the section on the Divided Kingdom commences with corresponding parallel bar charts for Syria/Mesopotamia, Israel, Judah, and Egypt. While this is a carry-over from the first edition, the bars for each geo-political entity are more clearly delineated. Finally, special units devoted to Jerusalem and to the sub-disciplines within historical geography are a plus.

Excellent tools close the atlas: an updated bibliography; an expanded glossary; indices for persons and Scripture passages; and the “Geographical Dictionary and Index” (a friendly title change from the somewhat erudite “Gazeteer” of the first edition). The footnotes are gone, which also contributes to the streamlining process. Finally, the book includes a free NT Jerusalem map!

One of the more refreshing aspects of the atlas is Rasmussen’s unabashed affirmation of the historicity of the narratives, whether they are the pre-patriarchal and patriarchal stories in Genesis or the instances of “twos” in Matthew. The significant gate structures at Gezer, Megiddo, and Hazor are presumed to be Solomonic. A consistent focus of the historical section is retelling of the biblical events with an emphasis on locations.

The author opts for an early date for the Exodus from Egypt, giving credence to the chronological indicator in 1 Kings 6:1. (The explanation of the chronology as it is figured from 1 Kings 6:1 and the matter of relative and absolute dates appear in a box set off from the main text—a change from the first edition.) There is thus a greater focus on Egypt’s 18th dynasty in this section. Since the first edition, the author has revised the dates in Egyptian chronology by about 20 years, which does change identification of the suggested pharaoh of the Exodus. As a result of this revision, a couple of minor inconsistencies appear. For example, the dates given for Ahmose and Thutmose I in the text do not seem to match those in the chronology “bars” at the top of the section (p. 100).

A number of changes indicate the author’s care to follow recent developments in the field. Notable among them are the following items:

- The Jerusalem archaeology section reports the ongoing work there to the extent possible, although the monumental structure Eilat Mazar has uncovered was evidently too late for the publication date. This revision changes the identification of the *šinnor* (2 Sam 5:8) to the diagonal tunnel heading to the pool, not Warren’s shaft (p. 244). The reference to the Essene Quarter has disappeared (p. 252).
- The name of Wadi Faria has been consistently changed to Wadi Farah, which represents more accurately the actual name as it has been preserved locally.

- Based on relatively recent work in Transjordan, references to copper mines at Punon in the Aravah have been added (pp. 25, 57). Likewise, the author notes that the Via Maris probably refers to a road connecting Damascus with Tyre via Upper Galilee (p. 32).
- The reference in the first edition to Ebla (Tell Mardikh) and its importance for understanding the third millennium BC has been omitted (p. 77; see p. 88 for the explanation of its lessened significance).
- The map indicators for Sodom and Gomorrah add the possibility of their being north of the Dead Sea, as well as the usual southern suggestions around the problematic five Early Bronze cities.
- The photo of the Elah Valley is taken from Khirbet Qeiyafa (p. 53), a site that has made archaeological headlines in the past several years. Perhaps in the third edition, Khirbet Qeiyafa will be identified as biblical Shaaraim (1 Sam 17:52).
- A good definition clarifies the meaning of Levant (whole eastern shore of the Mediterranean) and “Southern Levant in the Early Bronze Period” has been substituted for “Palestine” (p. 86).

Minor questions and observations arise as one reads the text. The author employs the significant geological period names (e.g. Eocene, Cenomanian) that are germane for much of Israel proper, and he provides a geological map (p. 26), but these prominent geological labels are referenced without intentional indication as to characteristics of these geological layers. For example, Cenomanian hard limestone means steep V-shaped valleys, abundant springs, terra rosa soil, and terrace farming.

Additional queries: the salt content of the Dead Sea is now considerably more than the 25% noted in the text (p. 50). The author does not appear to deal with the challenge of dating the destruction of Hazor, but simply indicates the Canaanites reoccupied the site until the time of Deborah and Barak. Likewise, the Philistine presence in Genesis is not addressed.

The photos are a feast. There are many more of them than in the first edition and they have been selected and well-positioned to enhance the overall presentation of the atlas. Many are of archaeological remains and sites, including the newly discovered mausoleum at the Herodion and the first century Galilee boat. Of particular note are two photos of Jerusalem, one taken during a hamsin and a second one three days afterwards. Words could never convey that stark difference in atmospheric conditions. An observation: the major photos for the cover and section openers do not appear to be identified, at least not in an easy-to-find place.

In sum, kudos to Carl Rasmussen for an excellent revised work!

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An Unsettling God: The Heart of the Hebrew Bible. By Walter Brueggemann. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009, xvii + 212 pp., \$22.00.

Twelve years after the publication of his *Theology of the Old Testament* (1997), Walter Brueggemann repackages five of those chapters with only minor changes in *An Unsettling God*. The premise that runs through the entire book is that YHWH is “a God in relationship . . . who is impinged upon by a variety of ‘partners’ who make a difference in the life of God” (p. xi).

Chapter 1 introduces the author's understanding of YHWH as a dialogical character. Rejecting a vague (new age) or settled (classical theology) notion of God, Brueggemann presents YHWH as an active agent in a dialogical covenant with his partners. In this interchange, YHWH makes promises and pronounces judgments while his partners respond with praise and thanks along with lament and petition. This results in a continual drama of change in both partners.

In chapter 2, Brueggemann presents five themes central to YHWH's partnership with Israel. First, YHWH loves Israel into existence. Second, in covenant with YHWH, Israel is called to obedience. Third, God rejects Israel (exile) due to recalcitrance. This produces new expressions of faith such as repentance, grief, and hope. Fourth, these new expressions of faith "talked YHWH into something YHWH had not yet entertained or imagined or intended" (p. 44); namely, YHWH turned back to Israel. Fifth, YHWH re-gathers his people. This re-assembly also produces new expressions of faith like obedience and hope.

Chapter 3 depicts the covenant relationship between God and the human person (Gen 9:8–17) within the framework of Israel's faith. In this partnership, humans live amidst a tension between obedience to YHWH as sovereign and freedom due to YHWH's fidelity. Brueggemann presents three groups of characteristics that describe this partnership: (1) human disciplines (obedience; wisdom and discernment; trust); (2) life in crisis (complaint, petition, thanksgiving); and (3) life in rehabilitation (praise and hope). These features animate an open drama between YHWH and humanity.

Chapter 4 considers YHWH's partnership with the nations. This relationship contains harsh elements such as the destruction of nations for Israel's sake. It also involves positive elements with the nations being blessed by God and called to praise and obedience. Brueggemann also identifies a pattern in YHWH's relationship with four international superpowers—Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, and Persia. These nations receive a mandate from God, rebel, and become dismantled, but have hope for recovery.

In chapter 5, Brueggemann construes YHWH's partnership with creation in three seasons. First, God generously blesses creation to be fruitful. Second, a radical fissure in creation occurs due to forces of chaos and YHWH's curses. Third, a season of radical newness in creation provides an enduring hope.

The book concludes in chapter 6 by presenting a pattern that undergirds the four partnerships. YHWH's partners are created for glad obedience, fail in the relationship, and hope for rehabilitation.

As always, Brueggemann challenges readers toward new, imaginative ways of understanding God. Though his emphasis on YHWH's relational nature is not as unsettling now as it may have been in 1997, this focus brings to the fore concepts central to the theology of the OT.

There are a number of issues that arise when reading the book. I mention two. First, what is the best way to speak of God changing? Is it best to refer to God as fluid, in process (p. xii), and being talked into doing things that he had never imagined or intended (p. 44)? In response to Brueggemann's (perhaps hyperbolic) relational emphasis, evangelicals are challenged to consider how the OT's transcendent perspectives on YHWH fit with the relational perspectives that Brueggemann prioritizes.

Second, the methodology in *An Unsettling God* also raises questions. Since Brueggemann resists the notion that the OT presents a coherent narrative, the book depends upon his own imaginative construal of dialectical tensions. While insightful, his frameworks drift toward psychological categories and lose theological force because they are disconnected from the OT storyline. Works by scholars like Christopher Wright, Bruce Waltke, Rolf Rendtorff, Paul House, and Stephen Dempster are preferable in that they allow the larger OT narrative to inform their theological presentations. That said,

this shorter collection of Brueggemann's work will engage any reader interested in OT theology and will produce needed dialogue regarding how best to understand the relational nature of YHWH.

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Covenant Economics: A Biblical Vision of Justice for All. By Richard A. Horsley. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009, xxi + 193 pp., \$24.95 paper.

The economic world of the United States was turned upside down in 2008 with aftershocks that still can be felt to this day. Given the nation's current economic instability, it is appropriate for believers to ask how the Bible reflects upon these matters.

Into this unsure world comes *Covenant Economics* by Richard Horsley, Distinguished Professor of Liberal Arts and the Study of Religion at the University of Massachusetts. His purpose is to see economic issues through covenantal eyes: "[A] distinctively covenantal concern for economic rights and mutually supportive and cooperative community runs strongly throughout the Pentateuch, the Prophets, the Gospels, and the Letters of Paul" (p. xvii). Horsley's work is intended as "mainly an exercise in historical investigation of biblical texts" on this matter (p. xviii).

Horsley follows well the design set forward in the introduction, as he divides his work into two parts: "Economic Justice and the Common Good", a treatment of the OT; and "The Renewal of the Covenant Community," a treatment of the NT. In each part, he covers basic matters from a historical and economical point of view and then considers relevant biblical texts. This makes for interesting reading because some old, familiar verses take on deeper and richer perspectives.

Particularly helpful is the presentation of the believing community in both testaments as standing apart from the world around it. Horsley takes seriously Jesus' claims for his followers to be a counter-cultural influence in the world. For those who appreciate reading the Bible as a whole, seeing strong lines of continuity between the testaments, Horsley's work will be both interesting and thought-provoking, especially when he considers subjects such as the OT concept of the sabbatical year and release from debt.

As seen in the title, the theme presented through the book is "covenant." In the OT section, Horsley focuses on the Mosaic covenant as found in the Pentateuch and its iterations found in places like Joshua 24. Accordingly, he views the prophets as examples of those who protested the covenant abuses of the monarchy in defense of the people's moral economy. In the NT, he presents Jesus as "concerned directly and in a primary way with economic issues" (p. 113), and considers the Sermon on the Mount to be a speech of covenant renewal (p. 103). These observations contribute to the overall positive qualities of the book.

There are, however, some significant points which I believe hurt the author's overall thrust. Throughout the book, Horsley takes a very low view of the "establishment"—either powers with whom Israel struggled early in its history (e.g. Pharaoh) or the Israelites themselves who did not follow covenantal principles. An example of the latter is Joseph, whom Horsley calls "chief operating officer of the imperial regime, engaged in what we today would call systematic extortion" (p. 13). His critique of the "establishment" goes further.

More troubling in my view is Horsley's understanding of the Davidic covenant. He argues that the covenant with David itself in 2 Samuel 7 is a construct of the monarchy

designed to link the kingship to God, demanding the people's total financial allegiance. Thus Horsley is critical of Solomon's building of the temple as a grave exploitation of the people and a dethroning of God, noting that moving the ark to the most holy place is "a subordination of the ark and the covenant to the new monarchic order symbolized by the 'the house of Yahweh'" (p. 56). Here it appears that his anti-establishment presuppositions have led to a dismissal of what the text actually says. Where, for example, is the discussion of Deuteronomy 17's covenant-keeping king, or of Isaiah's picture of a just and righteous king ruling on David's throne? In my estimation, these are notable oversights, making it much more difficult to say Horsley has accurately captured the fullness of the biblical witness.

These caveats notwithstanding, Horsley's work deserves thoughtful reflection, because on this side of eternity, economic difficulties will always be with us.

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The Meaning of the Pentateuch: Revelation, Composition and Interpretation. By John H. Sailhamer. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2009, 632 pp., \$40.00.

John Sailhamer's *Meaning of the Pentateuch* is difficult to summarize concisely. Its wide-ranging nature is caught in its subtitle, "Revelation, Composition and Interpretation," each term corresponding to one of the three major units of this book. Perhaps the book can be characterized best as constituting a detailed presentation of Sailhamer's distinctive approach to not only the Pentateuch but to OT studies in general and how the OT should be fully incorporated into the Christian Bible.

Although Sailhamer affirms the historicity of the events recorded in the Bible, he emphasizes that divine revelation is not to be found in our reconstructions of biblical history enhanced by extra-biblical information from archaeology. Rather, revelation is in the scriptural version of that history. Hence it is the literary presentation of biblical events in the Bible, and not the reconstructed history behind the text, that should be the biblical theologian's focus. A chapter on the history of interpretation attempts to show how the rise of the historical-critical method caused history to eclipse the biblical text even among conservative scholars.

Sailhamer's understanding of the authorship of the Pentateuch is that Moses wrote a "book of the law" (Josh 1:8), but it is wrong to say that Moses wrote the Pentateuch as it now stands. Moses' book might be called "Pentateuch 1.0," but what we have is Pentateuch 2.0, a second edition of the Pentateuch based on Moses' work that reflects the editorial concerns of later prophets. It is this canonical version, and not any hypothetical earlier edition, that is our repository of divine revelation. Sailhamer's entire focus is the final, canonical form of the text, not its prehistory.

To Sailhamer, the key to understanding the Pentateuch is to be found in the major poems that conclude its units (Genesis 48–49; Exodus 15; Numbers 23–24; Deuteronomy 32–33) as well as in editorial comments in the OT's "literary seams" that connect units of the Hebrew Prophets and Writings, namely Joshua 1, Malachi 4, Psalms 1–2, and 2 Chronicles 36. He believes these seams reflect the viewpoint of the final, prophetic editors of the Hebrew Bible.

The present Pentateuch is not primarily a book of "law," an erroneous viewpoint Sailhamer attributes to Schleiermacher. It is instead a book about the need to live by faith in covenant relationship with God, like Abraham, who by faith kept the law without having received it (Gen 26:5). The Pentateuch in fact demonstrates the failure of

the law to produce a life of faith as Israel fell into idolatry and unbelief despite having the law (e.g. Exodus 32). Just as Paul (and Johann Coccejus) observed, the more Israel sinned, the more laws were imposed on them (Gal 3:19). The law's failure leads the Pentateuch to anticipate a new work of God (Deut 30:1–6), namely the new covenant mentioned by the prophets (e.g. Jer 31:31–34). That new work of God is associated with a prophet like Moses (Deut 18:15), though no such prophet had yet appeared in OT times (Deut 34:10). It is also associated with the coming king from Judah (Gen 49:8–12), a matter also anticipated in Num 24:5–9 and Deut 33:4–7. Language about that king is linked verbally though Gen 27:29 to the Abrahamic promise (Gen 12:1–3), suggesting that the king of Judah of the poems is the singular seed (not “seeds,” Gal 3:16) of Abraham that fulfills the promise. Thus the purpose of the Pentateuch is not to teach laws of the old covenant order, but to teach about the new covenant and its associated king. The anticipated king and seed constitutes the “Jesus” of the Pentateuch.

Sailhamer is an innovative scholar and an original thinker. His book contains many exegetical insights for which we should all be grateful. His approach merits serious consideration. That said, however, I find a number of weaknesses to this book and its thesis to which I now turn.

A general weakness to this book is that it is unnecessarily long and repetitive. The publishers could have significantly improved the final product had they limited the author to about three hundred pages. This would have forced the author to sharpen his focus and, in the process, made the book more readable. The book's length and lack of tight focus will significantly limit its audience.

A question on a more substantive level is whether the privileged position Sailhamer gives to the Pentateuch's major poems and the Hebrew Bible's canonical “seams” is fully justified. It is not clear that these poems have a special place in the Pentateuch. Some evangelicals will be uncomfortable with Sailhamer's view of the Pentateuch's non-Mosaic editing on which this privilege is based. Others may find it plausible that the poems in the Pentateuch provide some commentary and structure to the Pentateuch's overall message, but think that other starting points—the promise or the covenants—are more useful for biblical theology. Sailhamer has shown that his approach can make sense of the theology of the Pentateuch. But he has not to my mind proven his approach is better than all others.

There are also questions about Sailhamer's exegesis of passages. I sense a tendency to choose readings of texts that support Sailhamer's overall thesis even where other interpretations seem more probable. For example, Sailhamer refers throughout his discussions to the messianic king in Numbers 24:7. This king will be victorious over Gog, the eschatological enemy of Ezekiel 38–39. But this view hinges on two questionable assumptions: that this poem has been edited by someone familiar with Ezekiel and that the true text is the variant reading (the MT reads Agag). On the surface, reference to Ezekiel's Gog seems anachronistic on the lips of Balaam. If the correct reading is Agag, then the fulfillment is probably David (1 Sam 27:8–9), not the Messiah. Likewise Sailhamer emphasizes the singular pronouns of Num 24:8–9 to associate the language with this supposed anticipated messianic king, though reference to Israel visible below Balaam's mountain perch seems a more contextually appropriate explanation (hence the rendering as plurals by the NIV). Sailhamer goes on to read Hosea 11:1 (“out of Egypt I called my son”) in the light of his (dubious) conclusions about Numbers 24 when he argues that Hosea is actually making a direct messianic statement based on an exegesis of Numbers 24 along the lines Sailhamer suggests, even though the more obvious reading to me of Hosea 11:1 is that it is a historical statement about the exodus, not a prediction about anything. Moreover, Hosea 11:1 lacks clear allusion to Numbers 24. If Numbers 24 does not refer to a messianic king other than David (cf. Num 24:17), then a key element of Sailhamer's thesis about the major poems is exploded.

Similarly problematic is Sailhamer's attempt to find the messianic king in Deuteronomy 33:4–7. There a reference to Yahweh as king seems clear, but Sailhamer attempts to find reference to a king from the tribe of Judah. While possible, this view is not probable. Sailhamer's view hinges on Deut 33:7 making allusion to *šilōh* in Genesis 49:10. Sailhamer takes *šilōh* in Genesis 49:10 to mean "the one to whom it belongs." That interpretation of this old crux is possible, but not necessarily probable since other plausible explanations of Genesis 49:10 exist. Thus Sailhamer's reading of Deuteronomy 33:7 hinges on the correctness of Sailhamer's view of the debated term *šilōh* in Genesis 49:10 and on his perception that Deuteronomy 33:7 is referring to *šilōh* even though it is a less-than-obvious allusion. Neither of these is certain. If either is wrong, then another major poem also lacks messianic reference. Here and elsewhere, Sailhamer builds too much on texts whose exegesis is problematic.

Sailhamer's chapter on the purpose of the Mosaic law is helpful, but could easily have gone farther. The law shows Israel's failures, was meant to keep Israel from straying from God, and shows God's justice, just as Sailhamer says. But Sailhamer skirts the issue of whether or to what extent Christians today are to abide by specific Mosaic laws. His vague conclusion that "one becomes good and just by reflecting on the laws in the Pentateuch" (p. 562) seems lame. Why so many individual laws if the purpose is no more than that? I would argue—and have—that we should look for moral and religious principles in the various Mosaic laws. (See J. M. Sprinkle, *Biblical Law and Its Relevance* [Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2006].)

No short review can do this lengthy book justice. While I am critical of some of its conclusions, this work represents the culmination of a lifetime of study and reflection on the part of an important OT scholar whose views merit serious consideration. I have learned much in the process of reading it. I will no doubt reread it in the future. Sailhamer illustrates the kind of fresh and creative thinking on the OT that is possible for an evangelical scholar. One or another of John Sailhamer's devoted students is likely to take this method further in the next generation.

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Justice and Compassion in Biblical Law. By Richard H. Hiers. New York: T & T Clark, 2009, xi + 243 pp., \$34.95 paper.

Richard Hiers undertakes the task of evaluating biblical laws "to describe and consider their substance along with the concerns and values implicit in them" (p. 1). Hiers is primarily concerned with the development of the biblical concepts of justice and compassion as they are exhibited in biblical laws. Hiers also wishes to suggest that biblical laws, while not directly applicable to modern society, may offer a useful framework for the assessment of contemporary values and the practices associated with them.

Hiers divides his work into three sections corresponding to civil law, criminal law, and social legislation. He provides a brief introduction to each section, explaining the contemporary legal terminology and providing an overview of the topic to be covered. After this introduction, he engages several texts within the category under discussion. These treatments are well documented and insightful and appear as one of the strongest components of Hiers's work.

Section 1 deals with civil legislation related to contracts, torts, and various forms of property transfer through inheritance or bequest. Besides offering a helpful overview of the topics, the major contribution of these chapters may be located in the discussions

concerning the passing of property via inheritance to female heirs and the practices related to birthrights and the firstborn's inheritance. Each of these sections raises questions concerning the conventional understandings of these issues and highlights the complexity of the inheritance laws in the OT.

Section 2 treats criminal legislation related to equal protection and impartiality and capital offenses. Despite helpful treatments of several biblical texts in this section, Hiers's strongest work in this section concerns capital punishment and his discussion of the inconsistent application of Genesis 9:5–6 and other biblical legal material in contemporary debates on capital punishment. Hiers offers a critique of both pro- and anti-capital punishment positions while highlighting the value placed on human life in both biblical and contemporary legal texts. He also offers helpful insights in the rationale behind due process legislation and the way in which such laws served to protect lower classes.

Section 3 addresses social legislation. After a discussion of various biblical laws, Hiers addresses the potential relation between biblical and modern social welfare policy. Hiers identifies the relevance of biblical law in its ability to "provide some basis for evaluating the kinds of arrangements and programs for aiding the poor and other disadvantaged individuals and classes of persons in contemporary society" (p. 218). He also suggests that it portrays "the ideal or model community" to "inspire contemporary efforts to achieve a society—if not a world—in which the basic welfare interests of all, even those of low degree, are protected and affirmed through appropriate public policies and legislation" (p. 218). Such conclusions assume that an "ideal or model community" may be disconnected from the knowledge of God in ancient Israel and from the testimonial function of adherence to the law motivated by Israel's belief in the faithfulness of God. Ignoring this knowledge minimizes the differences between the contemporary relevance of the biblical texts and that of any other ancient legal code. The success of Israel as a nation was never based solely on legal genius, but upon the people's capacity to remain loyal to God and to trust in his blessing rather than in their own capacity to administer justice and show compassion.

In addition, Hiers's use of narrative texts to illustrate legal concepts could have been strengthened through some interaction with the field of law and literature and with inter-textual issues concerning the potential connections between the narrative and legal texts. His use of later apocryphal and NT texts to illustrate various legal arrangements would also benefit from a discussion of inter-textuality.

The conceptions of compassion and justice are more implicit than explicit in *Justice*. Compassion is used with reference to specific legal provisions whereas justice is identified with concepts such as wholeness, fairness, and equity. Given the title of Hiers's work, one would expect a more sustained argument related to the manner in which the biblical law encouraged the practice of justice and compassion and how those laws might impact contemporary law.

While it does not offer a sustained theological argument concerning biblical law, *Justice* has several strengths. First, Hiers's integration of modern legal terms with biblical legal material offers helpful terminological clarity. Second, his exposition of the legal texts cited is impressive. His utilization of secondary literature from modern legal studies is also helpful for those interested in interdisciplinary studies. Overall, Hiers's work offers a useful overview of a variety of biblical legal texts and will appeal to and benefit those interested in studying OT legal material.

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The Ten Commandments: Ethics for the Twenty-First Century. By Mark F. Rooker. NAC Studies in Bible and Theology. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2010, 248 pp., \$24.99.

Given the extensive secondary literature on the Ten Commandments, my first response to Mark Rooker's work is to ask the question, "What can it say of significance in two hundred pages?" The answer is, "Quite a lot." The book begins with an introductory chapter that provides an overall context for the Ten Commandments, not only in their biblical and ancient Near Eastern (ANE) setting, but also regarding their use in Jewish and Christian ethics. Among other things, Rooker discusses the background of the commandments in the context of ANE law codes, as well as the perpetual question of the enumeration of the commandments. He also comments briefly on the two listings of the commandments (Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5).

Following the introductory chapter, the book devotes a chapter to each commandment in sequence, using the traditional Protestant enumeration. Each of these chapters follows the same order: a comparison of the commandment to other ANE law codes; an exposition of the commandment itself, often focusing on key words (especially important with regard to Commandments 6 through 10); the broader OT usage of the commandment; the NT use of the commandment; and a concluding section that deals with application to current ethical issues. It is important to note at this point that, while most of the commandments clearly have their ANE counterparts, two of the commandments stand out in this respect. There is nothing equivalent to, or approaching, the Fourth (Sabbath) Commandment or the Tenth Commandment (coveting) in any of the ANE codes. That observation in itself clearly sets the Ten Commandments as body of law or of moral statements apart from its ANE context—a point well made by Rooker.

The final chapter provides a summary of conclusions in which Rooker addresses such things as the interrelationship of the Ten Commandments and their setting in the context of salvation history. Among the more important sections of this chapter are his discussion of "The Church and the Law," "The New Testament and the Law," and "The Moral Law and the Natural Law."

Many things impress me about this work. First, there is the simple fact that Rooker is able to address such a multitude of issues in such a condensed, but intelligent, fashion. For example, as he discusses in each chapter the ANE context of the particular commandment, he is able to present a clear picture without losing the reader in too many details. Second, when dealing with disputed matters, such as the enumeration of the commandments, he fairly represents the differing views. For example, in his treatment of the Fourth (Sabbath) Commandment, I disagree with his conclusions regarding the perpetuity of the Sabbath, but I cannot fault his presentation of the opposing views. Third, Rooker has made a useful selection of the secondary literature on the commandments. This is no small feat in a world where Amazon.com gives over 2,400 results to a search for "Ten Commandments" in books, and Google Books brings up almost half a million hits. The literature Rooker has drawn on gives the reader a gateway into this vast collection of literature. Fourth, Rooker's bibliography represents not only the range of Christian thinking on the commandments, but a range of Jewish thought as well.

On a final note, the subtitle of the book puzzles me. I suppose it points to the concluding sections of each chapter, which make some ethical applications of the individual commandments. However, the subtitle seems to promise more than is actually delivered. That quibble, however, should not detract from the usefulness of what Rooker has done. I would not hesitate to assign this as required reading in a course on the Ten Commandments, biblical law, or Christian ethics. I would also recommend it as a solid

introductory work to anyone interested in the Ten Commandments and the issues that spring from them.

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Disturbing Divine Behavior: Troubling Old Testament Images of God. By Eric A. Seibert. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009, xii + 347 pp., \$22.00 paper.

Eric Seibert is Associate Professor of Old Testament at Messiah College. His new book, *Disturbing Divine Behavior*, contains a prologue, an introduction, three major parts, an epilogue, two appendixes, notes, bibliography, an index of biblical texts, and an index of modern authors.

In Part 1, "Examining the Problem of Disturbing Divine Behavior," Seibert describes OT texts that he sees as containing problematic portrayals of God (chap. 1). He identifies groups of people for whom these portrayals constitute a problem (chap. 2), and then evaluates both ancient (chap. 3) and more modern approaches (chap. 4) to dealing with these portrayals, none of which he finds satisfactory.

In Part 2, "Understanding the Nature of Old Testament Narratives," Seibert addresses the issue of whether or not the texts should be viewed as historically accurate (chap. 5). He discusses concerns that arise when the question is raised (chap. 6) and surveys varying ideas about agendas that may have driven the production of the materials (chap. 7). Finally, he considers what Israelite worldview would have led to the content of the texts as we now have them (chap. 8).

In Part 3, "Developing Responsible Readings of Troublesome Texts," Seibert sets forth his approach. First, we must distinguish between "the *characterization* of God in Scripture and the *character* of God in reality" (chap. 9). Second, we must use a "christo-centric hermeneutic" to determine which texts are reliable and trustworthy reflections of the actual God (chap. 10). Finally, in chapter 11, he argues we must learn to draw positive truth from problematic texts, even those in which "certain images are judged to be totally unsuitable for helping us think rightly about God" (p. 217). In chapter 12, Seibert offers practical suggestions for broaching and addressing the subject in a variety of settings.

Although Seibert can be commended on some counts, including his willingness to address directly a real challenge in OT study and his stated desire to honor the OT as authoritative Scripture (pp. 5, 41), I found his argument neither logical nor compelling.

A reasonable question is whether the problem is as monumental or as central as Seibert argues. Granted, the history of interpretation of the OT reflects the fact that readers through the ages have struggled with texts like those Seibert addresses. But this same history also shows that neither the Jewish faithful nor Christian believers have been deterred by these issues from reading the OT as a positive message of God's work to redeem the world, notwithstanding the depiction of God as both severe judge and merciful savior. Related questions are also pertinent: If the problem is so prominent, why the need for a book that goes to such lengths to help people understand it? Is the nature of Seibert's depiction of the problem really fair to the texts and their entire context? Part of the basis for the latter question is what I would call inflammatory language, evident in excessive repetition of certain words and phrases, such as "disturbing divine behavior," and in biased descriptions of God, such as "God as Mass Murderer" (p. 20) and "God as Dangerous Abuser" (p. 26).

Seibert finds the solution to the problem as he sees it in the nature of OT narrative and in the nature of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. First, he argues that the texts do not tell readers “exactly what happened” (this phrase, or one very much like it, repeatedly occurs; see, e.g., pp. 103, 111, 116–17, 119, 125–26, 128, 140, 143–44, 165). Consequently, what the texts say about God may or may not be true (p. 87). Or, put another way, the reality of God will always transcend any textual depiction of God; therefore any textual depiction is deficient, or worse, a distortion (p. 170). But the perspective is a simplistic one. Of course, the texts do not tell “exactly what happened” because any written record involves a particular perspective and selection of key information to stress that point. And by the very nature of human language, any description of God will be deficient in that it cannot do absolute justice to who God really is. But to make these admissions does not mean the record we have is untrustworthy, unreliable, or a contradiction to the fuller truth, nor is it a basis for rejecting any components of the limited literary representation.

Second, since Seibert sees OT texts as always potentially unreliable, readers must decide which texts provide trustworthy portrayals of God and which do not. He sees the standard for this evaluation in the God revealed in Jesus Christ. But this understanding of Jesus cannot be based on the NT as a whole since it reflects similar problems in its depiction of Jesus/God as the OT, so Seibert narrows his basis to the Gospels. However, since some portrayals in the Gospels are unacceptable as well, Seibert concludes, “Despite the presence of inauthentic Jesus sayings in the Gospels, I believe the general portrait of Jesus that emerges is reliable enough to serve as a standard by which to evaluate portrayals of God in the Old Testament and elsewhere” (pp. 187–88). But this position is extremely subjective, consisting of what Seibert sees, believes, and decides. And this process of deciding is central to the argument as a whole: readers must decide just which Gospel texts are acceptable, so they can decide just what picture of God Jesus reveals, so that they can decide the standard by which they will decide just what OT texts are acceptable for portraying God appropriately.

Although Seibert specifically states that he is not at all about deleting materials from the Bible (pp. 211–12), one example, his treatment of the command to kill the Amalekites (1 Samuel 15), raises questions about the practical value of his approach (pp. 220–21). Although the depiction of God here is unacceptable and to be rejected, Seibert suggests we can draw positive teaching from the text by focusing on the subject of the importance of obeying God. Here Saul is condemned and faces all kinds of problems because he did not obey God’s direct command. So what we learn is how important it is to obey God rather than what people say. But the suggestion makes no sense when, in context, the obedience that was expected and that Saul did *not* deliver, would have meant Saul’s actions would have validated a “violent, genocidal God”! For most readers, Seibert’s approach, practically, would eliminate the majority of the OT from consideration as useful text.

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Genesis. By R. R. Reno. Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible. Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2010, 304 pp., \$32.99.

As the series title indicates, this commentary is focused on presenting a theological approach to Genesis. As a result, this commentary on Genesis does not delve into source

criticism issues, though Reno brings some of this into his discussion. The commentary also does not deal with textual criticism, Hebrew words, or cultural and historical background to the text in any depth. As far as word studies are concerned, the commentary contains one transliterated Greek word from the Septuagint describing Joseph's robe, thus demonstrating that the meanings of words are not a focal point of this commentary. Reno discusses various words but does not provide the reader with the Hebrew or Greek words in his comments.

Since many commentaries do provide all the above kinds of information, Reno's commentary on Genesis stands out by providing a purely theological approach to the Scriptures. The series focuses upon a theological approach that embraces the Nicene tradition and holds to "the conviction that dogma clarifies rather than obscures" (p. 11) the study of Scripture, but Reno does not limit himself to one particular dogmatic view. Though he comes from a Catholic background, this is certainly not a commentary limited to a Catholic interpretation of Genesis. Reno draws from a wide diversity of theologians, Christian and Jewish, from across time, including Augustine, Calvin, Rashi, and more.

Reno does not attempt to comment on every single verse in Genesis, but he addresses the verses he believes have some level of theological significance within Genesis, relate to the theology of the NT, or relate to some important theological concept within Christian theology. Certain passages and themes evoke a more lengthy discussion in the commentary. Reno spends nine and one half pages on the phrase "in the beginning" and an additional seven pages on the theological concept of creation *ex nihilo*. Other theological themes in which Reno engages in some lengthy discussions in the commentary include righteousness, justification, and sanctification, circumcision, fear and love of the Lord, election, the inner versus the outer life, and the church and the Jews and replacement theology.

The key theological theme to which Reno repeatedly draws attention is the garden and rest concept. Reno points out that the account of the seventh day does not contain the formula "and there was evening and there was morning;" thus, God's new work of blessing and sanctifying his creation and God's continued effort to bring his creation into his rest has a beginning but no end (p. 60). Reno weaves this theme throughout the commentary so that the land promised to Abraham will become the fulfillment of Eden, Abraham listening to his wife returns the reader to Eden, circumcision becomes a sign in the flesh set in contrast to Adam and Eve who chose to live according to the law of the flesh, and the commentary ends with a note that Joseph's "body waits for its final rest" (p. 291).

Reno indicates in his introduction that he does "not follow a consistent method or pattern of exegesis" (p. 21) as he works his way through Genesis. At times the free flowing style is enjoyable, but at other times, certain inconsistencies arise. With some passages, he draws in unexpected theological views on a passage such as how Catholic theologians tie in the concept of celibacy to the command to be fruitful and multiply (an unexpected view at least from a Protestant perspective). With other passages, certain inconsistencies arise, such as Reno associating Abraham's three visitors in Genesis 18 with the Holy Trinity, but in Genesis 19, referring to the two visitors who left Abraham to go down to Sodom to rescue Lot and his family as angels. Fortunately, such inconsistencies are few and far between.

The commentary is aimed at preachers, teachers, and students, and Reno's imagery and diversity of sources is a gold mine for the reader. He says that concupiscence "makes us more like hamsters, seeking the pleasures of the moment, and less like the devil" (pp. 95–96). Reno has the style of swinging the reader from earthly levels to citations and concepts from Augustine's *City of God*, and from the Targums into a play by Lord Byron that explores the personality of Cain. He also constantly swings from the

message of Genesis into the message of the NT, tying concepts and themes together that will be helpful for preachers, teachers, and students as they seek to expound the Word of God and make its message relevant to the modern audience.

This is a great commentary for those who seek to be exposed to a wide diversity of theological views that have been put forth regarding the book of Genesis.

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Leviticus: Holy God, Holy People. By Kenneth A. Mathews. Preaching the Word. Wheaton: Crossway, 2008, 287 pp., \$32.99.

The distance between the modern reader and the ancient text is perhaps felt more with Leviticus than with any other book of Scripture. Leviticus is rarely preached on or even read in most Western congregations. Kenneth Mathews, Professor of Divinity at Beeson Divinity School, has written an expositional commentary on Leviticus that consistently approaches the third book of Moses as Christian Scripture that is both relevant and necessary for contemporary Christians.

After a brief preface, the author offers twenty-three exegetical sermons covering all twenty-seven chapters of Leviticus. In this review, I will consider first Mathews's analysis of Leviticus in its original context; second, his treatment of the book in light of the NT witness; and third, his pastoral application for the church.

In the first sermon on Leviticus 1:1, Mathews situates the book into the narrative context of the Pentateuch, following the completion of the Tent of Meeting at Sinai and prior to Israel's departure for Canaan. He writes, "The book of Leviticus is essentially the message that God spoke to his people at that time in preparation for their departure. The teaching of Leviticus was both revelatory and regulatory" (p. 16). Sinai was for Israel "the site of revelation, promise, and command," and the tabernacle functioned as a kind of portable Sinai that signified God's continued presence with Israel in the wilderness (p. 17). He comments that the "sounds, smells, and blood" of the burnt offering "would have indelibly marked the memory of the Israelite's worship of God. The person's transgressions had cost the life of another creature" (p. 29).

Mathews explains key terminology without being overly technical, and he occasionally refers to the Hebrew text using transliteration (cf. the reference to the word play in 9:24 that "accentuates the theology of the passage," p. 90). According to Mathews, sins committed "unintentionally" (Lev 4:2) were occasions in which a person broke the covenant law through neglect or ignorance. In such cases the offending party incurred guilt that necessitated a sin offering (p. 42). Mathews interprets 5:1-4 as illustrative of "unintentional sins," though it is not clear whether the violations in 6:1-7 (e.g. robbery, swearing falsely) are understood as "unintentional" or "intentional" sins of rebellion such as in Numbers 15:27-31). The author is somewhat inconsistent in his treatment of the term *'āšām*; he seems to prefer the translation "be guilty" on page 46, yet shifts to "realize [one's] guilt" on page 58. Mathews succinctly defines "atonement" as "reconciliation of two conflicting parties through an act of appeasement," and he helpfully observes that the Hebrew word translated "forgive" in 4:20 (*sālah*) "is only used of God as the one who forgives" (p. 47).

In his discussion of Leviticus 11, Mathews suggests the food laws highlighted God's prerogative as Creator and served to distinguish Israel from the surrounding nations. Commenting on Leviticus 12, he lucidly explains the symbolic, ritual significance of "uncleanness."

In his preface, Mathews articulates his conviction that Leviticus should be approached as Christian Scripture. He states, "Jesus Christ is the core, and from his gospel emanates the whole of the Bible's proclamation—the Old Testament anticipates him, and the New Testament culminates in him" (p. 12). Mathews follows the author of Hebrews in recognizing the Day of Atonement as "a picture of the death of Christ, whose shed blood provided complete purging and eternal forgiveness for Christian believers" (p. 139). He notes that the imagery of the tent of meeting informs the explanation of Christ's incarnation in John 1:14 (pp. 18, 86). He reads Leviticus 18:5 in light of Romans 10:5, arguing that "the Law cooperating as it does with sinful humanity cannot grant life" and that the "means of receiving righteousness is the word of grace that God had long ago promised and that the new age in Christ has brought" (pp. 164–65). In the course of his study, Mathews references most books of the OT and every book of the NT except 2–3 John.

It is clear that Mathews consistently labors to apply the message of Leviticus to the modern reader. He presents Leviticus as relevant for addressing issues such as homosexuality (pp. 158–59), religious pluralism (p. 228), leadership in the church (p. 186), and the need for spiritual maturity in matters of food and drink (p. 108). It is somewhat surprising that the prosperity gospel movement is not addressed in the treatment of blessings in Leviticus 26.

The chief strengths of Mathews's book include its readability, its robust biblical-theological approach, and its creative and thoughtful application of the text to modern Christians. The index of sermon illustrations is a helpful feature especially for pastors.

The primary weakness of the book is its lack of an introduction to Leviticus that could have oriented readers to the book's structure, the author's methodology, and the hermeneutical considerations for studying and preaching from the OT Law. Mathews does succinctly and clearly lay out his understanding of the structure of Leviticus on p. 133, but this explanation would have served readers well at the beginning of the book. Additionally, the author gives little explanation for his demarcation of the textual units in Leviticus for sermons. In general his sermons follow the chapter divisions of English Bibles, but he makes a break mid-chapter in chs. 4–6 and 18.

In my judgment, Mathews accomplishes his aim in drawing attention to the individual testimony of Leviticus while interpreting it faithfully as Christian Scripture (cf. pp. 12–13). His exposition of this neglected section of the Bible should encourage and equip pastors, students, and church members to read and profit from Leviticus. Mathews's expository commentary would serve as a good complement to exegetical volume such as Gordon Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979).

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The NIV Application Commentary: Joshua. By Robert L. Hubbard, Jr. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009, 656 pp., \$34.99.

Joshua's world consisted of bloody battles and ethnic cleansing. Justice could cost every member of a household his/her life. What should a reader make of the bloody battles and the question of genocide in the book of Joshua? How should preachers and teachers develop application for the people in the pews from the troublesome issues found in Joshua? Do they simply overlook these so-called problems when teaching the people in their churches, preferring instead to speak only of the heroic nature of some

of the characters? Even if overlooked, the average readers of the book of Joshua will nonetheless find some of the content of the book troublesome. Robert L. Hubbard, Professor of Biblical Literature at North Park Theological Seminary, anticipates the reader's problems with these issues and aids the reader in discovering the rich applications embedded within Joshua. Hubbard masterfully works through Joshua, leaving no stone unturned, in his attempt to bridge the cultural gap between then and now.

Hubbard maintains the format and style represented by the commentaries in the *NIV Application Commentary Series*. He offers a fifty-one-page introduction that addresses critical components necessary for readers (e.g. setting, composition, conquest models, archaeology, *hērem*, modern issue of the land, and theological themes). Moreover, for those unfamiliar with the current literature concerning the book of Joshua, he includes a helpful selected bibliography.

The format of the book is as follows: NIV translation of a passage; "Original Meaning" (traditional exegesis); "Bridging Contexts" (connecting points between the ancient culture and the modern culture); "Contemporary Significance" (applying the message of Joshua to a wide variety of modern contexts). The introduction is worth the price of the book and is the book's greatest strength. Hubbard acknowledges that many first time readers of Joshua may face a "jarring experience," especially if their primary exposure to the Bible is by way of the NT (p. 21). I would agree with Hubbard that the NT "does not prepare readers for the world of military violence and ethnic cleansing" in Joshua (p. 21). Considering many modern readers are often not aware of some of the critical issues surrounding Joshua, the main thrust of this commentary is to give Joshua a clear hearing on its own terms.

Although Hubbard favors the late date of the exodus, he describes the situation in Canaan relevant to both the early and late dates as he places Joshua in its historical setting. He offers models that range across the spectrum of the debate surrounding the conquest and to what extent it actually happened. He refuses to fully embrace either position, critiques both, and then sets forth an alternative that effectively extracts the best evidence to support his perspective of a conquest model that is not restricted by a too literalist approach to history. His overall approach focuses on the literary nature of Joshua.

Hubbard's focus on the literary nature of the text is influenced by three ideas: (1) he recognizes that literary devices of hyperbole, ideology, and legitimation play important roles in the book; (2) he accepts the contribution of Joshua to history as well as the limits of the book's information for historical reconstruction; and (3) he refuses to set texts against each other by deciding one to be theological and one historical.

Hubbard employs the term "complex reality" as a referent to the concept that Joshua pictures the conquest as more complex than simple (p. 39). He intends for the reader to "first understand it [book of Joshua] as literature before one can glean history from it. Its basic outline is historical but highly simplified" (p. 40). Hubbard's desire to introduce the reader into understanding the literary nature of Joshua is noteworthy given the average reader's unawareness of this important aspect for interpretation of biblical literature.

In the section, "Now, about All That Killing . . ." Hubbard deals with the controversial issue of "Yahweh war." Hubbard invokes pastoral honesty as he handles this issue. He perceptively informs the reader that this type of war is a sacred act that only Yahweh has the authority to impose. The sacredness of *hērem*, in the case of Joshua, was meant to protect the young nation of Israel from the idolatry of the Canaanites. Hubbard unveils three "unappealing realities" with which the modern reader must deal. These points shine with pastoral wisdom. Hubbard, with unabashed honesty, informs the reader of his discomfort concerning what transpires in Joshua (p. 44). In attempting to bridge the cultural context, the reader is reminded that the contemporary culture

is *totally* different than the days of Joshua, especially in light of the teachings of Jesus (p. 45). In the “Bridging Contexts” sections of chapters 5–6 and 7–8, Hubbard returns to *hērem* with further elaboration. One of the applications offered reminds the reader that “Jesus Christ has already won the decisive battles.” Another affirms, “The cross and resurrection mark Jesus’ most decisive victory” (pp. 212–13).

One of the final issues in the introduction is entitled “Who Owns the Land Today?” This question is especially relevant considering the infiltration of unquestionable support of modern Israel’s right to the land found in many stripes of fundamentalism. Hubbard understands these positions as weakened by the failure to take into account progressive revelation and that they jump from the OT and miss the modifications made in the NT. In the “Bridging Contexts” section from chapters 13–19, Hubbard argues that the land is interpreted typologically in the NT. Thus, the NT points Christians away from a physical land “toward an international one—from Jerusalem to the uttermost parts of the earth” (p. 436). Part of the application of these chapters is that “the fulfillment of the land promise to Israel finds one historical fulfillment in Christ and a final fulfillment at the end of time” (p. 444).

I have spent a great deal of spacing discussing the introduction. Nevertheless, I find this section to be the greatest strength of the commentary. The reason for this—and I hope Hubbard would agree—is that the issues in Joshua, especially the killing and the land, are important for readers to understand if there is any hope of bridging the cultural context and making proper application for the modern reader. Hubbard shows the importance of these issues by the way they show up time and time again throughout the commentary.

Richard Hess called the book of Joshua the “most nationalistic of books” (*Joshua*, 1996, p. 52). Hubbard’s work artfully aids the reader to understand how this nationalistic book of Israel transcends time and is relevant and applicable for the Christian reader. No other commentary on Joshua comes close to such a focus on application. A final benefit of this commentary is that his applications are not so focused on issues particular to this decade so that they will become obsolete within a few years. I would humbly suggest this commentary as an excellent text for personal study, for adult education in churches, and for English exegesis classes on the college or seminary level.

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Judges. By Trent Butler. WBC 8. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2009, xcii + 538 pp., \$49.99.

Think Adrian Monk—or go back, if you remember him, to Peter Falk’s Columbo on television. Trent Butler likens his work in solving the riddle of *Judges* to that of a detective. Over the course of his investigation, Butler unravels many enigmas, examines evidence that may help solve a few more, and leaves some to stand as cold cases.

This volume stands in the top tier of studies on this knotty book for four reasons: (1) it tackles difficulties in the text honestly and offers plausible solutions; (2) it converses with an extensive sampling of modern literature on *Judges*; (3) it displays sustained sensitivity to the rhetorical features of the text; and most noteworthy (4) it views the book as accurate historical testimony and gives the textual record the benefit of the doubt instead of presuming it to be a hypothetical reconstruction of dubious historical value.

The translation is Butler’s own. It is lively but not at the expense of transparency, colloquial but not eccentric. His rendering of 5:26, for example, retains the participles

māhāqā and *māhāšā* in his rendering, “shattering, piercing” (p. 115) while most versions transform them into full verbal clauses. He also preserves the ambiguity in idiomatic expressions, avoiding speculative reductionism. The reader, then, may interpret for himself whether “sustain your heart” (19:8, p. 405) means “refresh yourself” (NIV) or something with more spiritual substance.

Text-critical notes to the translation amount to a veritable textual commentary on Judges. Here Butler is thorough and judicious, focusing mainly on variants involving LXX^A and LXX^B. The Old Latin version also receives special attention via Niditch’s recent work (S. Niditch, *Judges* [WJK, 2008]). He even mentions the mysterious apocryphal judge Asemada, known only in the OL at 17:1.

According to Butler, Judges shows that Israel’s covenant disloyalty to Yahweh and to each other brings anarchy and self-destruction. The cycle leading from obedience to apostasy to deliverance deteriorates as the period unfolds. At the core of this degeneracy is failed leadership; in fact, he argues that the judges are mere caricatures of leaders. Butler discusses the “no king in Israel” refrain in detail and concludes that the writer looks to a true king emulative of Joshua’s earlier leadership. Further, Judges is the rhetorical and theological foil of the book of Joshua—the anti-Joshua. The people of God have now abandoned their commitment seen at the close of Joshua and are serving Canaanite gods. Notable in Judges is the absence of specific, detailed statements about God. Yet the text makes a significant theological point metonymically. The individual stories are parts representing the whole—that is, the larger message that God’s people desperately need to be one with him if they are to be one with one another.

Also characteristic of the volume is Butler’s repeated affirmation of the accuracy of the Judges narrative in depicting true history. Contrasting his continual assertion in the 1983 WBC volume on Joshua that Deuteronomistic redactors had reworked many accounts, he takes nearly every opportunity he finds in Judges to cast doubt on theories that “long-removed historians created material to construct a previously unknown identity for Israel” (p. 58). Such a welcome shift builds upon Provan, Long, and Longman’s verification principle in viewing testimony as real history.

Butler astutely examines literary features in the text as well. He credits the author, not hypothetical “imbecilic editors” (p. lvii), with a dexterous employment of “complex structures . . . literary figures, complicated characterization and plotting, and exquisite use of irony” (p. lvii). As with Joshua, Judges displays a thematic structure anchored by the themes of failure and lack of leadership. The Judges author has sprinkled satire, mirroring, inclusio, chiasm, hendiadys, pun, and other literary devices throughout his work. However Butler wisely cautions against imposing chiastic structure where none is evident (“pan-chiasm,” p. 412). Many of Butler’s insightful appendices in the volume offer fresh approaches to genre analysis and narrative structure as alternatives to hypothetical redaction postulates.

For added value, this work navigates a deft course through many of the traditional difficulties in Judges, including: the book’s provenance (a polemic against Jeroboam’s illicit worship centers in the north); complexities in Deborah’s song (“Commentary on Judges 5 may be the most difficult task that an interpreter of the OT attempts,” p. 135); the Gideon, Barak, Jephthah, and Samson fiascoes in light of Hebrews 11:32; the Spirit’s “clothing” Gideon; the 300 years of 11:26 (a round number); Jephthah’s daughter (he did sacrifice her out of a lack of trust in Yahweh); the *šibbōlet*/*šibbōlet* issue in 12:5–6; chapters 17–21 as occurring early in the period; and the curious reading in 19:18, among others.

More features that enhance the value of the commentary include: Butler’s attention to key Hebrew words and important syntactical features; his restraint in offering unsubstantiated speculation (p. 297, though he does some on p. 327); welcome restraint in discussing sexual allusions in the text; relevant archaeological and geographical

details; a pastoral tone in his summary comments; and a wry sense of humor (such as the “goat parade” in 15:1–3).

The work’s strong points thus outweigh the few areas of concern I have. Some frustrations are due to the cumbersome WBC format. The “Form/Structure/Setting,” “Comment,” and “Explanation” sections, for instance, tend to promote a repetitious style. As a case in point, note that the opening paragraph in the “Form/Structure/Setting” units for 13:1–16:31; 17:18–31; and 19:1–30 are exactly alike except for changing the text reference numbers. Butler occasionally gives too much weight to oral tradition in the composition of Judges, in my opinion. Archaeology has shown that a dominant written tradition existed early in Israel’s history, as suggested by Judges 8:14—which curiously stands without note in his “Comments” section on the verse. Butler seems fairly certain that “separate traditions lie behind” portions of the Abimelech story (p. 233), and that the Samson narratives “incorporate folklore elements” (p. 347). How would he or we know that? I would also like to read more on how he views inspiration and the Spirit’s role in producing the text. And in a related vein, the volume seems a bit thin in defining the role of Judges within the larger framework of OT theology. Is “the basic question of the Old Testament and even biblical theology: who are the people of God?” (p. 33)? My inclination is that he overstates this thesis. Finally, as I read to understand Butler’s views on what the text is saying, it was often difficult to know what his conclusions were, so thorough was his treatment of the relevant literature.

Still, Butler’s *Judges* is a commendable work and takes its place alongside Block and Younger as indispensable tools in solving the riddles posed by this essential, enigmatic OT voice.

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Ezekiel. By Robert W. Jenson. Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible. Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2009, 367 pp., \$32.99.

A vast number of commentaries understandably place a heavy emphasis on the biblical text itself. The Brazos series instead spends most of its space on the theological messages and implications of the text. The series editor Russell Reno’s introduction to the commentary makes it clear that the literalist’s approach is inadequate and that the Brazos commentaries will instead pursue interpretations that are true to the church’s traditional creeds. While Reno’s tone seems assertive and even combative at times, the words of the commentator Robert Jenson have a much more welcoming and conversational feel.

Jenson is a Lutheran theologian who has published on a variety of topics and has a particular interest in philosophical and ecumenical studies. Though he has a softer tone, he is just as committed to a postmodern methodology, one that he concedes is a critical method which he casually labels a “Nicene theory” (p. 25). Instead of exegetically pursuing the text until objective principles surface, Jenson reads it through the lens of Christian doctrine affirmed by the creeds. It is encouraging to see he is comfortable working with the Hebrew language to a degree, occasionally offering his own translations of phrases and showing them in the Hebrew script with transliteration. He also asserts his views on a redactor’s placement of certain texts throughout, but does not go into great detail.

The layout of the commentary is straightforward. Jenson’s introduction is an explanation of his method, including a description of the history and background of Ezekiel’s

day. He also explains that, though he covers the entire book, he has not gone verse-by-verse. Such, he says, “would exceed any normal attention span, including mine” (p. 26). Instead, he gives a helpful list and comments on the importance of some of the most significant phrases and formulas found in Ezekiel, such as “thus says the Lord” and “son of man” (p. 28). Thereafter, he ends the introduction with a “warning” intended to intrigue the reader that God’s message in Ezekiel “can easily undo ordinary religiosity—to say nothing of the disastrous spiritual adventures that might be ignited by his visions” (p. 30).

The chapters of the commentary are short and have two-part titles, giving the verses addressed and a news headline or even a sermon topic title. One he names “Cheap Grace” (Ezek 33:23–33) after Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s comments in his book *The Cost of Discipleship*. Atop each page is the biblical reference the chapter addresses—a feature the reader will find helpful. Following the chapters are short bibliographies Jenson finds most helpful in interpretation, a lengthy subject index, and separate Scripture index. He regularly supports his findings with footnotes and parenthetical citations.

As for his theological perspective, Jenson favors a Reformed view and often references the early Church fathers, the apologists, the reformers, and theologians such as Karl Barth and Rudolf Bultmann. Though he sees value in demythologizing on occasion, he treats the text with care. He does so particularly in 26:19 to describe the waters of the deep covering Tyre as symbolic of the coming of utter chaos upon the city (pp. 213–14). As for his eschatology, he sees the temple in Ezekiel 40–48 as an eschatological structure that God does not command men to build. Rather, it presents a picture of the blessings in the new heaven and earth (pp. 303–4). Regarding Israel’s status in the age of the church, Jenson suggests that Israel has not been excluded from God’s plan and warns against supersessionism (pp. 208–9). As for the valley of dry bones in Ezekiel 37, he sees it as a picture of physical resurrection of both Israel and the Gentiles grafted in according to Romans 11:17. Yet, he curiously suggests that others might also be included: “Will there be a resurrection also of those who are neither of the original tree nor grafted-in branches?” (p. 285). What he means by this statement is not clear.

While it is true that Jenson’s method of interpreting Ezekiel is more fluid, allowing for creative insights, one wonders just how creative a reader should become. The author does well in his studies and observations in each section of Ezekiel, often referring to commentators who support and inform his historical, cultural, and linguistic conclusions about the text. At the same time, one wonders how much of this is actually necessary if the existential reading of the Christian is indeed preferred over the literalist’s exegetical method. Jenson sometimes raises thought-provoking questions drawn from the examined text, leaving them with the reader to ponder. It is a powerful technique and is one of the commentary’s greatest strengths, but it took Jenson’s own careful study supported by other sources to arrive at such questions. It seems it took the work of a literalist to provide the foundation for such theological musings. The committed exegete devoted to a literal method will enjoy the observations and stimulating insights, but may wonder why Jenson criticizes a method he tends to employ, coming to conclusions the reader might well appreciate! Also troubling is the notion that a Christocentric reading is distinct from that of the literalist, who often seeks the original meaning of an OT text and then reconsiders it in light of NT revelation. Nevertheless, the reflections that Jenson provides, citing concepts from theologians throughout Church history is refreshing and valuable perhaps even to the literalist.

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The Dead Sea Scrolls: A Full History. Vol. 1: 1947–1960. By Weston W. Fields. Leiden: Brill, 2009, 592 pp., \$99.00.

Preceded by *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A Short History* (Leiden: Brill, 2006; 128 pp.), this volume is the first of projected two volumes offering a more complete account of the discovery of the scrolls and their history over the past 60 years. According to its author, this book is neither by a specialist nor for specialists. Instead, “[t]he emphasis here is on what has not been published already, though it is not limited to that. In these twilight years of the first generation of scrolls scholars it was important to record as much of the oral history of the earliest periods and as many personal reminiscences as I could. Everything written here has an oral or written source, apart, of course, from my own summaries and deductions” (p. 17). Indeed, Fields has conducted scores of personal interviews all over the world, reviewed personal diaries, a mountain of personal letters, archives of various kinds, and tried to piece them together in a strictly chronological fashion to provide a first-hand account of the years in question while avoiding secondary sources of any kind. It is impossible to do justice to the whole contribution Fields makes, so I will limit myself to a brief summary with a few reflections.

Fields’s first chapter covers “First Discoveries at Qumran: 1946–1948” (pp. 23–90). The author provides a detailed narrative of the end of the British Mandate in Palestine and pieces together the disparate, even contradictory, accounts of who saw the scrolls first, and the original impressions of those who first saw them. He sifts through what Sukenik and Trevor (and Burrows) were told concerning who knew about the scrolls, and when. Day-by-day, even hour-by-hour accounts, of names, places, and events fill this chapter.

“The Mystery of Cave 1: 1949–1950” (pp. 91–114) is the title of the second chapter. Fields recounts the travel of the scrolls to the U.S. for decipherment and the beginnings of legal concerns of their ownership. It also introduces de Vaux’s involvement, the scurry for the (correct) identity of and (legal) access to Cave 1, and the birthing of the *DJD* series. One is struck by the difficulties of reporting to the antiquities authority due to the expiration of the British Mandate and uncertainty of security and transition of authority. Fields recounts ledgers and receipts of those involved in buying and selling the scrolls, amounts paid, and locations of discoveries as first reported by sellers. The chapter recounts how prices were set for fragments and gives details about the important dealings of the board of PAM (Palestine Archaeological Museum).

The “Discoveries at Wadi Murabba’at: 1951” is the topic of chapter 3 (pp. 115–30). Here one reads extensive transcriptions of de Vaux’s account of the earliest acquisitions of fragments. Various stories, narrated by de Vaux himself, describe the discovery of illegal excavators, many of whom he hired because of their availability and expertise. The fourth chapter is called “The Bountiful Year: 1952” (pp. 131–74). In it, Fields recounts how both discoveries and publications quickened. Four new caves were found at Qumran, and additional fragments were discovered at Murabba’at. Readers also learn how the Bedouin would work feverishly in shifts, looking for manuscripts and trying to keep a step ahead of the antiquities authorities and get their finds to the antiquities market as quickly as possible. It shows how biblical scholars and curators quickly found themselves in the difficult position as fundraisers. Still more fragments were found the following year (chap. 5: “More Acquisition and Decipherment: 1953,” pp. 175–90), and acquisition accelerated yet again. Meanwhile, the reconstruction of fragments had hardly begun, no publisher was yet chosen, excavations continued at Qumran, and the Copper Scroll was not yet opened.

Chapter 6 discusses the fascinating personalities of “The Cave 4 Team” (pp. 191–239). Fields provides the names and brief biographies of the entire team, including some who had to decline for various reasons. Frank Moore Cross, József Milik, Preben Wernberg-

Møller, John Marco Allegro, John A. Emerton, Jean Stracky, John Strugnell, Claus-Hunno Hunzinger, Patrick Skehan, Maurice Jean Joseph Baillet, and Roland de Vaux are all profiled. Readers learn that many scholars participating had to secure leave from their home institutions and funding for their participation to study the scrolls, even though, to that date, few knew the truth of what they contained. During this period the fables of the Cave 4 team originated. Many began to surmise that there was some small shadowy group of selfish men who had been keeping the scrolls all to themselves, conspiring to hide their contents, presumably to protect their own fame and fortune or to protect Christianity or in other presumptions, to protect the Vatican. There is not much truth to any of this, and this chapter unpacks how the team was put together, its mission, and how it worked; it also includes information about the men, their training, background, and personalities. There is no evidence that team members were chosen either because of faith commitments (or lack thereof) or ideological inclinations. Personal referrals based on competence in the field were the criteria.

What happened to the original scrolls secured by Mar Samuel? Fields addresses this in chapter 7, "The St. Mark's Scrolls Return: 1954" (pp. 241–49). It seems that Mar Samuel tried to sell the scrolls in the U.S. from 1949–1954, unable to find a buyer. Further problems arose in the political arena. Brownlee explained that the buyer may not be a Jew, since the Syrian Orthodox folks would disapprove due to Zionist violence of the day in the Holy Land. Moreover, the Jordanians considered Samuel a smuggler, and people were unwilling to purchase because of the possibility of confiscation. Difficulties arose at every turn for the PAM, particularly finding people who had the combination of sufficient wealth, an appreciation of the religious, cultural, and scientific value of the scrolls, and an inclination to generosity. Eventually they were purchased indirectly by Yadin and returned to Israel. Mar Samuel's patience paid off to the tune of \$250,000, though the IRS also benefitted by the \$60,813 Samuel paid in taxes for the sale! Meanwhile, letters to and from Allegro were written pertaining to the Copper Scroll and the progress of its opening.

"The Most Productive Year: 1955" is the title of chapter 8 (pp. 251–93). What a year it was: it saw the publication of Sukenik's English edition of the Hebrew University scrolls and Burrows's own publication of scroll material. Meanwhile, work at the PAM in Jerusalem continued, and participants sought to complete preparations for the publication of Cave 1 fragments. The Copper Scroll was opened, and one can read first-hand of the increasing obsession with it from Allegro himself. There is also a fascinating photo of Harding working sorting scroll fragments with a lit cigarette dangling from his mouth!

The title of chapter 9 speaks for itself: "Cave 4 Work Continues but is Stopped by the Suez Crisis: 1956" (pp. 295–359). During this time the scrolls are removed to Amman. Fields deals with the tensions occasioned by Allegro's sensationalist (public) claims made about the scrolls under his charge. Also during this time Cave 11 was discovered, and Harding left the department of antiquities. After the Suez crisis (Chapter 10: "Regrouping after Suez: 1957," pp. 361–407), scholars tried to recover from the dispersal of the team, the loss of Harding, and the removal of the scrolls to Amman amidst the Suez events. Fields shows how the publication projects never recovered from Harding's loss, and the government of Jordan started from this time forward to put roadblock after roadblock in front of the scrolls scholars. Meanwhile, estrangement between Allegro and de Vaux continued.

Chapter 11 describes "The Last Cave 4 Scrolls: 1958" (pp. 409–29). After the team spent five years piecing together thousands of fragments, Kando brought forth more! The seemingly endless struggle for financial support reaches an acute point (Chapter 12, "The Museum is on the Brink: 1959," pp. 431–49) but is rescued by the heroic efforts of those seeking buyers for the scrolls (Chapter 13, "A Ray of Hope for the Museum: 1960," pp. 451–91). Fields's book ends with a "Postscript" (p. 493) describing what to

expect in the second volume, a “Timeline of Events Related to the Dead Sea Scrolls through 1960” (pp. 495–515), list of abbreviations (p. 517) and endnotes (pp. 519–60), transcription of the “Scrolls Ledger” purchase by the PAM (pp. 561–65), a glossary of terms (pp. 567–68), and an index of texts, names, subjects, etc. (pp. 569–92).

This book is remarkable for many reasons, notably its attention to detail, sensitivity to chronology, and even-handedness with which material is presented. Fields is careful to present primary materials in the authors’ own words and leave assessment to the reader. Where contradictions are evident, Fields does not refrain from acknowledging them. Where information is lacking to draw conclusions, Fields simply says so. The pictures included are vivid, engaging, and illuminating. One prone to pass judgment on the delay of the publication of the scrolls will find the volume instructive. Fields gives the reader a sympathetic exposure to the challenges facing the patriarchs of DSS studies: financial, personal, interpersonal, academic, professional, linguistic, etc. While lengthy and at times tedious, Fields’s work is remarkably concise for the amount of material he wades through to arrive at the present volume. A considerably abbreviated edition is found in the aforementioned 2006 volume, affordably priced at \$20. This is a fabulous book, filled with riveting stories, first-hand access to fascinating personalities, and bringing the otherwise obscure early history of the scrolls to light. This is a valuable contribution that will serve to lend sympathy to the earliest scrolls scholars and admiration for the seemingly insurmountable challenges faced by de Vaux and others.

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Women in the World of the Earliest Christians: Illuminating Ancient Ways of Life. By Lynn H. Cohick. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009, 350 pp., \$26.99 paper.

Lynn Cohick in her book, *Women in the World of the Earliest Christians*, is attempting, in her words, to “dress a ghost” (p. 321). She describes in various ways what she has attempted to do in the book. Cohick says: she has made a “small” attempt (p. 322) to provide “an engaging and accurate reconstruction of the ancient women’s way of life” (p. 21) by examining the “fundamental categories of life: birth, death, family, work, [and] religion” (p. 25); she has set out “to tell the story of the average woman and her life passages, her opportunities and limits, the sorrows and joys that accompany her throughout her journey” (p. 23); she has intended “to offer an authentic, descriptive historical picture of women’s lives in the Hellenistic and early Roman imperial period, with special attention to earliest Christianity” (p. 30).

Cohick’s book reveals that women in the ancient world are a study in contradictions. She uncovers an ancient woman who is reluctant to be described in simplistic terms. She is one who, while being silent, had a voice in religious festivals; who, while staying at home working within the confines of her family, earned a living in the marketplace; who, while enjoined to be seen only with her husband, is represented by numerous statues as a solitary benefactor for a city, without husband or father or son or brother (p. 285).

Cohick presents her research in nine well-written chapters sandwiched by a short introduction and conclusion. Each chapter deals with particular aspects of the life of a woman in the Roman Empire. One can perceive that Cohick’s chapters could be further grouped into three general spheres in which the Greco-Roman woman lived. The first sphere is that of the *home*. Chapters 1 through 4 discuss a woman’s various roles within that sphere. Chapter 1 deals with the woman as a daughter, chapters 2 and 3 with marriage, matron ideals, and the role of wife, and chapter 4 with motherhood.

The next two chapters deal with women in the *religious* sphere, although Cohick is quick to point out that such a distinction is anachronistic (p. 159). Chapter 5 focuses on Gentile women and women God-fearers, while chapter 6 centers on Jewish and Christian women and their influence in religious activity.

The final sphere is the wider *society* within which women lived. The working lives of women is the subject of chapter 7, and the related subjects of slavery and prostitution are the concern of chapter 8. The final chapter addresses the very important, but wholly underappreciated, subject of women as benefactors and patrons in the Roman Empire.

Chapter 9 is perhaps where the most pay dirt in the book is to be found, at least from my perspective. In the introduction, Cohick cautions that research on the topic of women in the ancient world must not focus exclusively on gender, on “women as a category” (p. 22). Because the Greco-Roman culture was “penetrated” by layers of social status, a survey of the women’s lives of that world must “consider issues of gender, class, status, and ethnicity” (p. 22). Thus, one of the most important factors to be considered, according to Cohick, is the institution of patronage, which extended “the household into the public arena” affording women the opportunity for political and religious influence in their cities. “Patronage provided women with an avenue for attaining public honor and for impacting society” (p. 23). As Cohick sums up: “In the institution of patronage, status trumped gender” (p. 319).

In the conclusion of the book, Cohick offers a corrective to the inaccurate perception of much of contemporary evangelical scholarship about women in the ancient world. She offers a snapshot of women’s involvement in a wide breadth of society: “Women were active in the commercial world as merchants, vendors, artisans, and shopkeepers. Women populated the marketplace, selling, buying, and loaning money. Women worked as midwives and wet nurses, as doctors, writers, and philosophers. They composed verse and wrote stories. Women enjoyed the Roman banquet and the baths. A few spoke in court” (p. 324). In addition, she offers three “modest observations” about the possible impact of a “robust” understanding of the lives of ancient women on contemporary discussions of women’s roles in both religious communities and society. First, she suggests we must have “more imagination” to repopulate the ancient landscape with women. Otherwise, she says, “we fail to include women as active members of the polis or rural town; we assume that only men were writing, drawing, buying, selling, building, cleaning, and doing all the other jobs upon which society depends” (p. 325). “Women,” she says, “were everywhere” (p. 325). Cohick notes that for the NT reader this fact should change one’s conception of the landscape of the public arena within which Paul and others conducted their missionary preaching: women were alongside men in public places.

Second, it must now be accepted that women held both official and unofficial titles and positions of power in both religious communities and city governments. “Patronage, social status, and wealth often trumped gender as the most important social category,” states Cohick (p. 325).

Finally, Cohick points out that women controlled their own funds and finances in the Greco-Roman world and this is dissimilar to the situation of women in much of the later history of the West. The wealth of some women allowed them to be entrepreneurial in their use of money sponsoring business ventures and religious communities. Women with this kind of means were also typically well educated. Some women, then, were far from passive recipients of society; instead, Cohick asserts, “they had opportunities to affect and change their local milieu or even the world stage” (p. 326). The implication for those who read the NT according to Cohick is a proper expectation of the role of women in the ministries of Jesus and Paul. She states, “We should expect that Jesus, Paul and traveling missionaries (which included women) met educated women with strong business acumen and effective community influence” (p. 326).

Women in the World of the Earliest Christians is based on solid research in both literary and non-literary sources from the ancient world. Cohick’s judgments are critical,

and she rarely oversteps her evidence when drawing conclusions. The book is an important contribution to understanding the real lives of the women we find in the pages of the NT for both scholars and interested Bible readers alike. While thick with detail to appease even the most rigorous specialist, the book is accessible to any interested reader. I can envisage a pastor, for example, using the book to great effect as a resource when preparing sermons on NT passages related to women.

Cohick's historical work and her accessible style have gone a long way in dressing the ghost of the first-century Greco-Roman woman for a twenty-first century reader. *Women in the World of the Earliest Christians* no doubt will become a standard resource for every serious reader of the NT.

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Granville Sharp's Canon and Its Kin: Semantics and Significance. By Daniel B. Wallace. Studies in Biblical Greek 14. New York: Peter Lang, 2009, xxii + 348 pp., \$69.95.

This modest revision of Dan Wallace's Dallas Theological Seminary Ph.D. dissertation from 1995 attempts to defend a more restrictive definition of Granville Sharp's "canon." Wallace is certainly to be commended for his highlighting of the work and accomplishments of Sharp. Sharp was indubitably a great man who, though an autodidact, did not let his limited circumstances hinder his great achievements. As a result, he was accomplished in various areas of scholarship, including both Greek and Hebrew, a pioneer of various Christian causes, and an unheralded leader of the abolitionist movement.

Wallace's volume consists of essentially four sections. The first is an introduction that describes the author's method. Next, in part 1, Wallace first offers an appreciative summary of Sharp's life and contribution (chap. 1) and then two chapters on the fortunes of Sharp's rule concerning use of the article with substantives, claiming that the vast majority of scholars have misunderstood this rule, despite recent work to revive it (chaps. 2 and 3). In part 2, Wallace first defines the article-substantive-kai/-substantive construction (abbreviated as TSKS; chap. 4), and then devotes informative individual chapters to various configurations of it. These include chapters on constructions with personal, singular, non-proper substantives (chap. 5); personal, plural, non-proper substantives (chap. 6); personal, singular, proper names (chap. 7); impersonal substantives (chap. 8); and mixed constructions (chap. 9, a chapter of one page). Part 3 examines the exegetical implications of impersonal substantive constructions (chap. 10); personal, plural, non-proper constructions (chap. 11); personal, singular, non-proper substantive constructions (chap. 12); and mixed constructions (chap. 13), before offering a conclusion, followed by an appendix of all of the constructions that fit Sharp's rule in the NT, a bibliography, and ancient sources indexes.

Wallace's goal is to test Sharp's rule (the first of six that Sharp developed) regarding use of the Greek article with two substantives relating to the same person. Wallace's contention is that Sharp's rule is valid for the NT, and, when rightly considered, for Greek outside the NT. The legitimate promotion of Sharp, however, is not sufficient to commend this volume. The most important shortcoming of the book is Wallace's failure to analyze Sharp's rule adequately and to follow his own evidence where it leads.

In chapter 1, Wallace lays out Sharp's position. Sharp's rule as stated by Sharp in expanded form is that, "*when the copulative καὶ connects two nouns of the same case, [viz. nouns (either substantive or adjective, or participles) of personal description, respect-*

ing office, dignity, affinity, or connexion, and attributes, properties, or qualities, good or ill], if the article ὁ, or any of its cases, precedes the first of the said nouns or participles, and is not repeated before the second noun or participle, the latter always relates to the same person that is expressed or described by the first noun or participle: i.e. it denotes a farther description of the first-named person . . ." (p. 51, italics his). There are two points to note here. The first is that Sharp does not address the question of plurals, and the second is that he states that the second "relates" to the first or is a "farther description." Wallace notes that later in his work Sharp states that "there is no exception or instance of the like mode of expression, that I know of, which necessarily requires a construction different from what is here laid down, except the nouns be *proper names*, or in the plural number; in which case there are many exceptions" (p. 52, italics his). What Wallace does not note is that, continuing on, Sharp says that, "there are not wanting examples, even of plural nouns, which are expressed exactly agreeable [*sic*] to this rule" (G. Sharp, *Remarks on the Uses of the Definitive Article in the Greek Text of the New Testament* [3d ed.; London: Rivington, 1803] 6). Sharp apparently had a broader view of his own rule, one that knew of no exceptions in the singular but that also recognized exceptions in the plural. Wallace further stresses that Sharp means that the substantives must have an "identical referent" (p. 52 n. 95; cf. p. 91); however, that is not what the rule says. It is only when Sharp is discussing Christologically significant examples that he uses such terms as "identity of person(s)" (Sharp, *Remarks* 28, 30). Wallace seems to have a narrower view of the rule than did Sharp himself. Nevertheless, for the sake of continuing discussion, I will assume that Wallace is right about Sharp and that he intended the rule only to apply in a strict way to personal, singular, and non-proper substantives in the TSKS construction. Here he states that all TSKS constructions (whether they are narrowly construed or not) "bring together two substantives into a conceptual unity" (p. 90), but he wants to assert that Sharp's rule is about "*identity of referent, not identity of sense*" (p. 91, italics his). However, as we have seen above, it is possible that conceptual unity and some type of sense similarity, and not necessarily only identity of reference, are exactly what Sharp's rule was about in its broad formulation.

Wallace importantly admits that there have been exceptions to Sharp's rule noted previously. Wallace, relying upon the objections gathered by Calvin Winstanley in 1819, lists the following: (1) what he calls generic substantives; (2) one example from the Septuagint; (3) examples with three or more elements; (4) and examples from Patristic literature. To this group, Wallace adds two further categories: (5) those with ordinal numbers and (6) an example from a papyrus with an indefinite article. I do not have space to discuss all of these in detail, but I offer some comments to illustrate that Wallace himself does not appear to have grasped all of the implications of Sharp's rule but is instead involved in special pleading for another understanding of it. I limit myself to the evidence Wallace himself cites.

(1) Wallace admits that there are what he calls generic substantives that violate Sharp's rule but explains them as being "plural *semantically*" and "not within the purview of the rule," which "applies only to nouns that have an *individual* referent, as opposed to a class or group. . . . On a deep structure level, then, Sharp's rule has not been subverted by generic singulars" (p. 123, italics his; cf. p. 250). There are several problems here. The first is that this may not be the best explanation of generics, and they are not so easily dismissed. Singular generics are not plural (whether one appeals to deep structure or not), but are closer to being partitive, with generic plurals constituting a different semantic category (see John M. Anderson, *The Grammar of Names* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007]). The second problem is that Sharp himself does not follow this logic. In fact, Sharp cites as an affirmative example of his rule one that Wallace admits is generic, Rev 16:15 (one of about 24 generic examples in Wallace's counting). Wallace attempts to explain this example away by distinguishing

between nouns and participles, as Rev 16:15 uses participles, and he wants to restrict the category to nouns. This is not a distinction that Sharp makes, when he specifically includes both nouns and participles in his rule. Wallace further clouds the issue by referring to generics used in such a configuration (including Rev 16:15, with participles) as being “*semantically* equivalent to a double protasis conditional clause” (p. 123, n. 67) requiring both elements to be fulfilled—again a distinction Sharp does not make. Sharp apparently saw his rule as encompassing generics, whether nouns or participles. Therefore, there are a number of exceptions to the strict interpretation of Sharp’s rule, both within and outside the NT.

(2) Proverbs 24:21 has a single article with “God” and “king,” two different persons. Wallace offers various possible explanations of this clear exception, but nonetheless concludes that it stands out as an exceptional example in the LXX and is to be seen as “not representative of the idiom of koine Greek” because it is a translation (p. 126). Wallace advocates modifying Sharp’s rule to take this into account. Yet there are also problems with this analysis. Again, Sharp says nothing of the sort in his formulation, and Wallace is inconsistent in his use of a distinction on the basis of translation. Wallace does not address whether this restriction eliminates any examples that are words of Jesus in the Gospels, ostensibly translations from Aramaic into Greek; rather he seems to proceed with these intact. Further, he does not address any examples in the NT that cite the OT in Greek translation. Three examples appear in Wallace’s list of instances: Luke 20:37; Heb 7:1; and 1 Pet 4:18. Wallace, though numbering the first two as examples of the construction, (rightly) claims (p. 287) that these have textual variants that exclude them from Sharp’s list—although Wallace elsewhere cites them for illustrative purposes in his volume (e.g. Luke 20:37 at pp. 92, 107, 128, 252; Heb 7:1 at pp. 111, 112). First Peter 4:18 he designates as generic (see above), but it has two adjectives, whereas his discussion was of generic nouns. Wallace appears to be trying to have it both ways with discussion of purported translation Greek. In any case, he is making a distinction that Sharp does not make.

(3) Herodotus (4.71) speaks of “the cup-bearer and cook and groom and servant and messenger” with a single article before the first noun (p. 127), but with clear reference to different persons. Wallace also identifies a sixth-century AD papyrus that refers to “the . . . scribe and tabularius and public defensor” (P.Cairo Masp. 67353.25–26; p. 119, n. 53). Wallace explains these by stating that in the TSKS construction “typically a *third* epithet would be superfluous” (p. 127; italics his). Apart from “special contextual reasons,” one would only expect two elements. Thus, Wallace says, he can refine Sharp’s rule “still further,” by noting that “where *several* nouns are involved in the construction it may or may not follow the rule” (p. 128, italics his). There are once more problems with Wallace’s analysis. The first is that, again, Sharp does not make such a distinction. The second is that Wallace has altered and mitigated the strictness of the rule by eliminating its precision. The third is that Wallace appears to be engaged in special pleading, because he goes on to argue that every one of the examples with three or more elements in the NT is explainable for special reasons (p. 128 and n. 86). The only problematic example for Wallace is Luke 6:47, which he admits enumerates rather than elucidates, and has three participles that he claims are generic and functioning conditionally (see above on these categories). I believe that each of the other examples Wallace cites is also debatable. Perhaps Phil 2:25 qualifies, but it, to use Wallace’s wording, “emulates a pentamorous TSKS construction” (p. 128, n. 84) not found elsewhere in the NT. Another example Wallace wants to dismiss because of textual variants (Luke 20:37).

(4) Wallace admits that there are examples from the Patristic writers that violate Sharp’s rule as narrowly understood. These include, for example, Polycarp (*Mart. Pol.* 22), citing Polonius who refers to “glory to the God and Father and Holy Spirit,” and Clement of Alexandria (*Paedagogus* 3.12.101), who praises “the only Father and Son,”

each instance using only a single initial article (p. 267; cf. pp. 270–71 for further examples). After dismissing possible explanations such as the persons of the Trinity being seen as proper names or an overzealous expression being used by the Church fathers, Wallace concludes that this construction was used by the Patristic authors to express in a grammatical shorthand the identical *being* rather than *person* of the members of the Trinity. There are problems with this argument as well. Wallace strangely states that “it would be too hasty on our part to assume that here *and only here* is Sharp’s rule violated” (p. 271; italics his). However, it still is a violation even of his narrow construal of the rule, on Wallace’s admission. Further, it is not, as we have seen above and will see below, the only violation. Finally, rather than requiring various efforts to make this clear exception still seem to fit the rule, it is apparently within the bounds of what Sharp himself defined in his rule as how one substantive is “related” to the other.

(5) A fifth category of exception is found in Strabo’s *Geography* 17.1.11, where Strabo states that “the fourth and seventh [TSKS with a single article] were the worst, along with the last one” (p. 129). Wallace admits this is a “clear violation of Sharp’s canon” (p. 129), but it constitutes a “special class” (p. 130), in which ordinal numbers are “more like proper names than common nouns” (p. 130) or it is idiolectal. There are even problems with this analysis. Besides the fact that Sharp does not address such exceptions and seems to encompass them within his rule as stated, Wallace’s explanation is weak, as he notes the use of the article again with “the last one.” Clearly the author is using the article to group elements, perhaps in keeping with Sharp’s idea that the article is used to indicate relation among elements.

(6) The final example is P.Oxy. 486.6, which speaks of payment being made to a man’s “father and to a certain money-lender,” with the article before the first element and indefinite pronoun before the second (p. 130). Wallace takes the indefinite pronoun as functioning “like in [*sic*] indefinite article” (p. 131) and thus changing the construction. Again, there are problems with this explanation. Wallace introduces a category not found in Greek, and not referred to by Sharp. Sharp refers to the Greek article preceding the first element and not being repeated before the second one. There is no indefinite article in Greek, and the indefinite pronoun certainly is not one, even if it may have indefinite sense in some constructions.

In light of these problems, I am surprised when Wallace concludes that he has examined numerous examples “and they all tell the same monotonous story: Sharp’s rule is valid” (p. 133). This is hard to fathom and can only come about after Wallace has restated Sharp’s rule in a very narrow and constricted form that essentially eliminates all of the noted exceptions (see p. 132; cf. p. 233, where he refers to Sharp’s rule as an “absolute principle of *NT* grammar,” but only if the rule is more narrowly defined and constricted beyond what Sharp envisioned)—one that clearly is not the rule as originally stated by Sharp. Wallace has in some ways anticipated this criticism by noting that, however, “even if every one of our linguistic explanations proved invalid [and I believe they have], none of these exceptions would affect the christologically significant texts” (p. 250, italics his). Here I believe we see the reason for Wallace’s work—to justify a particular interpretation of the Christologically significant texts (i.e. Titus 2:13 and 2 Pet 1:1).

In his attempt to prove Sharp’s rule at almost any cost, Wallace ends up becoming one of those who has misunderstood Sharp, like those he so sharply criticizes in chapters 2 and 3. What Wallace apparently really wants to do in this volume is *theology*—that is, defend the high Christology of the NT through invoking Granville Sharp’s rule in an unexceptionable way that proves that at least two NT references indicate that Jesus is God. That is apparently why he frames his discussion with theological considerations (pp. 20 and 27–30). However, Wallace must do so at a price that disfigures Sharp’s rule and the general nature of the discussion. Even though I think that Wallace’s conclusion is right, his method and approach are wrong. The virtue of Sharp’s rule is

that it provides a usable general principle certainly for the Greek of the NT, and probably for extrabiblical Greek, that establishes that elements under a common article are related to each other, and in some circumstances are meant to be equated with each other, as in certain Christological passages.

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Sinners: Jesus and His Earliest Followers. By Greg Carey. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2009, pp. xiii + 221 pp., \$29.95 paper.

Greg Carey, Professor of New Testament at Lancaster Theological Seminary, in *Sinners: Jesus and his Earliest Followers*, focuses on the way in which being perceived as people who are described as transgressing “conventional social norms,” (i.e. sinners) formed the identity of the earliest Christ-movement. Carey concerns himself with the way texts reflect and are complicit in the formation of identity. Furthermore, he concentrates on Christ-followers’ sub-group identity in contrast to other local expressions of social identity within the Roman Empire.

Chapter 1 reads Luke 7:36–50 in order to uncover what it means to be a sinner. Though recognizing the theological nature of the concept, Carey’s focus is on sin in the sociological sense. Thus, the sinful woman in Luke 7 may be described as one who does not conform “to some expectations of her particular cultural environment” (p. 14). This social-scientific understanding of sin draws on the concepts of deviance and labeling for its ideological legitimation. This conceptual framework allows Carey to introduce the idea of a “sinful identity” (p. 9). This identity, he argues, becomes a salient node in the identity hierarchy of the emerging Christ-movement.

Social memory plays a key part in the formation of Christ-movement identity. In chapter 2, Carey contends that Jesus is remembered as a friend of sinners, one who engages in table fellowship with those culturally identified as deviant. Moreover, Jesus’ acceptance of these individuals is complete, and Carey points out several times (e.g. pp. 27–29) that there is no evidence of Jesus calling individual sinners to repentance in those commensal settings.

In chapter 3, Carey rightly presents Jesus as one who did not violate Jewish purity laws; rather, he overcame impurity by God’s power. Furthermore, Carey correctly notes that “if Jesus actually violated the Torah, then most of his Jewish contemporaries would have seen him as a sinner” (p. 38). Jesus’ own purity concerns centered on the Pharisees. Their appeals to the “traditions of the elders” revealed an interpretive framework that Jesus did not share. However, Carey rightly notes that this disagreement with the Pharisees did not contribute to Jesus’ crucifixion (p. 52). Jesus’ earliest followers remembered him keeping Torah, and this contributed to the formation of early Christ-movement social identity.

Gender roles contribute significantly in the formation of social identity. In chapter 4, Carey uncovers, drawing from the resources of the emerging discipline of masculine studies, the way Jesus and Paul conformed to and transgressed accepted gender discourse. Both Jesus and Paul were rhetorically effective and thus demonstrated a key characteristic of masculinity during the imperial period. However, both failed to establish a household, and neither contributed to public life or set out on a *cursus honorum*. Both endured suffering and engaged in manual labor; however, neither leveraged their power over others in a culturally expected manner. The way that the early Christ-

movement remembered Jesus and Paul with regard to masculinity resulted in the development of a discursive tradition that critiqued Roman expectations of masculinity, though often in an asymmetrical manner.

Chapters 5 and 6 discuss the way the death of Jesus formed the identity of the Christ-movement. First, Carey argues that Jesus did not die on the cross as an innocent victim; rather, he was crucified by the Romans because of sedition (p. 81). Jesus created a disturbance in Jerusalem during Passover week, and this led to an inevitable conflict with the ruling authorities, resulting in his death on the cross. The cross was central in the formation of Christ-movement social identity, but it was an event that required reinterpretation, since a crucified messiah would be understood as scandalous. Carey focuses on the social significance of the cross and argues that “the cross posed a major obstacle for early Christian self-definition” (p. 122). Between chapters 5 and 6, Carey provides theological reflections concerning the sinlessness of Jesus. His purpose is not “to refute the doctrine of Jesus’ sinlessness”; rather, he suggests that scholars refer to Jesus’ “righteousness and faithfulness instead” (p. 98). He is not alone in his contention; he draws from and extends both Pannenberg and Bonhoeffer to buttress his case. The two primary areas where Carey has concerns with regard to speaking of Jesus’ sinlessness include: structural sin and moral growth (p. 100).

Chapters 7 and 8 focus on the way interaction with those outside the Christ-movement contributed to the formation of Christ-movement identity. First, Carey provides a survey of four canonical works that show various levels of social integration. The concern for respectability and deviance, both identity-forming factors, are central to understanding the way the earliest Christ-followers interacted with their environment, especially when there was a perception of imminent persecution. Second, Carey outlines the way pagan writers described the Christ-movement. He relies on the works of Suetonius (*Claudius* 25), Tacitus (*Annales* 15.44), and Pliny (*Letters* 10.96 and 10.97). After surveying these sources, Carey concludes that socially identifying with Christ was sufficient grounds for persecution. Thus, the fear of suffering and the potential for persecution contributed significantly to the formation of Christ-movement identity, even into the second century.

In a review this size, there is only room for a few critiques. First, with regard to the way identity is formed, it is not clear how these disparate remembrances coalesce into an identity for the Christ-movement. For example, the texts cited were written to various communities that may not have had any influence beyond their local settings during the first century. So, it may be better to describe these texts as complicit in the formation of local expressions of early Christ-movement identity. Second, Carey’s suggestion that a crucified messiah was a major obstacle for the formation of identity overlooks the fact that Paul never had to address the importance of Jesus’ death for Christ-followers’ identity, and there is a lack of evidence, in the first century, for any groups bifurcating the teachings of Jesus and the social significance of the cross. Jesus’ death could at least be interpreted outside the Christ-movement as vicarious or within the noble death tradition (cf. Epictetus *Disc.* 4.1.168–69; Seneca *Ep.* 24.6). For more on this topic, see Jerry Sumney’s essay, “Christ died for us: Interpretation of Jesus’ Death as a Central Element of the Identity of the Earliest Church,” in *Reading Paul in Context: Explorations in Identity Formation* (ed. Kathy Ehrensperger and J. Brian Tucker; London: T & T Clark, 2010) 147–72. Third, with regard to the sinlessness of Jesus, Carey lists the four verses (Heb 4:15; 2 Cor 5:21; 1 Pet 2:22; 1 John 3:5) that have provided the exegetical substantiation for this teaching; however, though he does not wish to overturn the doctrine of Christ’s sinlessness, his suggested reinterpretation requires at least a minimal interaction with these verses—which does not occur. Fourth, Carey is right to point out the way in which being a sinner contributes to the formation of Christ-movement social

identity; however, it may equally be appropriate to suggest that there is more to the calculus than simply socially identifying oneself as a sinner. It may be, as in Luther's description of those who follow Christ as *simul justus et peccator* ("at the same time justified and a sinner"), that the formation of Christ-movement social identity happens in the internal-external dialectic between the ways in which one's previous identities continue in a transformed manner in Christ (1 Cor 7:17–24).

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A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters. By Andreas J. Köstenberger. Biblical Theology of the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009, 652 pp., \$39.99.

In the last paragraph of his conclusion to *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters*, Andreas J. Köstenberger shares this closing message: "I love the gospel of John, and I hope that this book will ignite a similar passion for this wonderful gospel in you. Thank you for joining me on this journey, embarked on not primarily by a scholar seeking to master the gospel but by a worshiper and disciple longing to be mastered by it" (p. 567). We may make at least two observations from this marvelously stated and refreshing conclusion—observations that should challenge all of us as evangelical pastors, teachers, and students of God's Word.

First, we notice the twin motivations that stand behind why it is that Köstenberger has emerged as one of the leading Johannine scholars of the first quarter of this century (space does not permit me to validate my assessment of Köstenberger's contribution to the field by listing all of his Johannine-related publications, which include two commentaries, numerous articles, and multiple essays, et al.): his love for the Gospel of John and his desire to assume the posture of a disciple in his engagement of the Fourth Gospel. Some may consider it preposterous for a "scholar" to reveal these motivations in a scholarly text, since to do so is to state one's lack of neutrality toward the subject matter. However, others recognize that every scholar, regardless of discipline, comes to the task with certain presuppositions. In the language of Cornelius Van Til, there is no such thing as pure facts. Everyone takes facts and organizes them according to their presuppositions in much the same way that a jewelry-maker organizes beads (facts) along a string (presuppositions). The great Rudolf Bultmann had his own presuppositions that influenced his proposal that Mandaean Gnosticism stood behind the theology of John's Gospel, presuppositions that have since been challenged quite successfully. J. Louis Martyn had his own presuppositions that influenced his proposal that the Gospel of John was produced by a Johannine community rather than a single author. The difference is that, unlike those who may hide behind the claim of neutrality, Köstenberger has clearly and boldly stated his presuppositions.

Second, we may observe how Köstenberger's posture as a disciple has really influenced his approach to doing biblical theology—an approach that takes seriously the historical claims of the Gospel of John and the Johannine Letters, an approach that takes seriously the text's call upon the reader to faith in Jesus Christ, and an approach that takes seriously the need (based on the unity of revealed Scripture) to relate the Gospel of John and the Johannine Letters to the rest of the canon while at the same time recognizing the uniqueness of their contribution.

A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters is the first of eight volumes that will make up the Biblical Theology of the New Testament series. Köstenberger's contribution is

a massive volume of 652 pages, which includes a lengthy table of contents (pp. 7–25), a series and author's preface (pp. 26–29), listing of abbreviations (pp. 30–34), an impressive bibliography that encapsulates the important secondary literature in Johannine studies to date (pp. 568–614), a variety of helpful indices (pp. 615–52), and of course the actual body of the text (pp. 37–567).

Part 1 of the text is titled "The Historical Framework for Johannine Theology." This part begins by indicating his approach to doing biblical theology and then sets to work exploring the historical setting of the Gospel of John and the Johannine Letters. At the end of the day, Köstenberger rejects the Johannine community authorship proposal and posits a somewhat traditional view that the Gospel of John was written by John the son of Zebedee, the disciple of Jesus, and that it was written specifically to present Jesus as "a coping strategy" for Jews after the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in AD 70. This explains why so much of the Fourth Gospel is taken up with how Jesus fulfills and replaces the temple as well as the Jewish festivals.

Part 2 is titled "Literary Foundations for Johannine Theology." This part begins by exploring what the Gospel genre really is and moves in the direction of identifying specific literary features of John's Gospel, including misunderstanding, irony, the various so-called seams, symbolism, and structure. This part of the book concludes with a wonderful "Literary-Theological Reading of John's Gospel" (pp. 175–262) and then a "Literary-Theological Reading of John's Letters" (pp. 263–72), which is a running commentary of first the Fourth Gospel and then John's Letters while all the time drawing attention to some of the features identified earlier in this part of the book.

Part 3 of the text is titled "Major Themes in Johannine Theology." This part is the meat of Köstenberger's book and this part alone makes the book well worth the purchase price. Here he identifies nine major Johannine themes and devotes an entire chapter to each one. The nine themes are "The Messiah and His Signs," "The Word: Creation and New Creation," "God: Father, Son and Spirit," "Salvation History: Jesus' Fulfillment of Festal Symbolism," "The Cosmic Trial Motif," "The New Messianic Community," "The Johannine Love Ethic," "John's Theology of the Cross," and "John's Trinitarian Mission Theology." Köstenberger's methodology in this part of his book is worth mentioning. After introducing a theme, he first walks through the Gospel of John, chronologically, identifying how the theme is developed as the storyline of the Fourth Gospel unfolds. Then, after identifying any ways in which the three Letters of John contribute to the theme, Köstenberger draws things together in a summary conclusion. The strength of this approach is that it takes into account the idea that the Johannine themes are not simply abstract concepts but that they have a narrative development to the way that they unfold.

Part 4 is titled "Johannine Theology and the Canon of Scripture." This last part, which is actually a fairly short chapter in light of the length of the book up until this point, engages in the work of comparison and contrast between the Gospel of John/the Letters of John and other corpora of the NT. After surveying the secondary literature that questions the historicity of the Johannine literature, Köstenberger calls for a reassessment of the historical reliability of the Gospel of John along the lines of the contribution of Craig Blomberg. In addition, the author explores whether or not John knew the Synoptics. At the end of the day, Köstenberger proposes that the author of John's Gospel perhaps knew of the Synoptics (or at least an oral Synoptic tradition) and intentionally supplements that tradition.

My critiques of this work are only minor. First, I am waiting for someone to attempt what is perhaps the undoable: write a theology of the Johannine corpus that includes all five canonical works attributed to John the disciple of Jesus—the Gospel of John, the three Letters of John, and John's Revelation. One can understand why this would

be quite the challenging project! Here is a 652-page text that presents a biblical theology of John's Gospel and John's Letters. What would a text look like that incorporated the Apocalypse also? Perhaps someday, someone will attempt such a project.

A second critique could be the organization of this book. On an initial perusal of the table of contents, the organizing principle of the book looks somewhat confusing. It was only after having read the introductory chapter that the breakdown of the four parts of the book made sense. Perhaps a more aesthetically pleasing table of contents would have relieved some of the initial *Angst* that I felt.

A third critique has to do with the limited use of the Letters of John in this volume. It seems at times that the three letters were minimized or were swallowed up by the Gospel of John. As such, their importance appeared at points to be minimized. The end result, unintentional to be sure, was that this text was more of a theology of John's Gospel than it was a theology of John's Gospel and Letters.

Whether one is a professor or a pastor, this book will be most helpful. A professor teaching a course on the Gospel of John will find part 3 incredibly helpful. The unpacking of the nine Johannine themes that Köstenberger engages in is a real *tour de force*. Pastors will find this same part of the book helpful, as each theme could lend itself to a series of powerful Bible studies or sermons.

In closing, as one who has read just about all that Andreas J. Köstenberger has published on the Gospel of John, I would say that *this* text represents the apex of several decades of meaningful, in-depth research on the Gospel of John. If you do not currently have *anything* in your library written by Köstenberger on John, now is your chance to pick up a book that represents the culmination of that fine scholarly work.

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Imperfect Believers: Ambiguous Characters in the Gospel of John. By Susan E. Hylen. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009, x + 206 pp., \$24.95 paper.

In this excellent book, Susan Hylen presents an alternative strategy for reading characters in John's Gospel. Rather than viewing many Johannine characters as "flat" or one-dimensional, she argues that John's characters display various kinds of ambiguity. After the introductory chapter, the book is divided into two parts: part 1 deals with six characters who are often read as flat (Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman, the disciples, Martha and Mary, the beloved disciple); part 2 treats the more complex and extensive characters of "the Jews" and Jesus, followed by the conclusion. Hylen provides a helpful bibliography at the end of each chapter and indexes of ancient sources and subjects at the end of the book.

In her introductory chapter, Hylen quickly identifies the problem in Johannine character studies: while many interpreters read most Johannine characters as flat, embodying a single trait and representing a type of believer, the sheer variety of interpretations proves that it is difficult to evaluate John's characters. Hylen identifies four aspects of the reading strategy that most Johannine scholars use and then qualifies each of them. First, she reads the Johannine characters in their literary and social context. She stresses that ancient characterization allows for complexity and that John's characters do not represent real people but serve to draw the reader into a process of discernment about true discipleship. Second, while Hylen acknowledges John's dualism, she resists evaluating the Johannine characters in "either/or" categories and allows for their ambiguity to exist. Besides, Hylen suggests that we read John's Gospel, and hence

its characters, metaphorically (rather than symbolically), where the reader is drawn into John's worldview. Third, rather than subordinating characters to a plot that only allows them to respond with belief or unbelief, Hylen suggests a broader plot that also focuses on the content of belief and other traits of John's characters. Fourth, observing that John uses indirect modes of characterization, Hylen suggests a two-part analysis, where she analyses both what John says about each character and the decisions that other interpreters make in evaluating John's characters. She contends that John's indirect modes of characterization allow for a great deal of ambiguity.

In chapters 2–8, Hylen analyzes various Johannine characters, arguing that they display ambiguity of different kinds. Nicodemus's ambiguity lies in the uncertainty of what he understands or believes (chap. 2). The Samaritan woman (chap. 3), the disciples (chap. 4), Martha (chap. 5), the beloved disciple (chap. 6), and "the Jews" (chap. 7) display a more prominent ambiguity, namely that of belief in Jesus mixed with disbelief and misunderstanding. Finally, although Jesus' character is unambiguously positive, it is at the same time ambiguous through the many metaphors John uses to characterize Jesus (chap. 8). In her conclusion (chap. 9), Hylen points out that although the ambiguities of these characters are somewhat different, they have a similar function—to draw the reader into deeper understanding of Jesus' identity and of true discipleship. She finishes with four implications. First, from her analysis of the characters' interaction with Jesus, she emphasizes that belief in Jesus is a faithful continuation of Judaism rather than a sharp break from it. Second, belief is a process or a spectrum, and it mingles with disbelief and misunderstanding throughout the Gospel. Third, John does not explicitly instruct readers how to evaluate the characters but leaves it open, and consequently the characters serve to blur rather than to reinforce John's dualism. Fourth, John's ambiguous characters assist in the formation of readers because the evaluation of the characters calls for discernment and for an evaluation of the readers' own behavior.

I have three general observations. First, I am uncertain how Hylen differs from Colleen Conway, who criticizes the "flattening" of Johannine characters, arguing that they contain varying degrees of ambiguity and do more to complicate the clear choice between belief and unbelief than to illustrate it (*BibInt* 10 [2002] 324–41). Second, Hylen often observes (correctly in my view) that certain characters are not perfect in their belief and understanding, and this "imperfection" she labels as "ambiguity." However, can imperfect faith not still be adequate (i.e. sufficiently authentic) without being called ambiguous? Or does an ambiguous action make one immediately an ambiguous character? Since no one is perfect, holds perfect beliefs, and is completely consistent throughout life, everyone would be ambiguous. Thus the concept loses its meaning. Third, simultaneous to Hylen's book my twofold work on Johannine characters appeared (*BibInt* 17 [2009] 375–421 and *Encountering Jesus: Character Studies in the Gospel of John* [Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2009]), where I suggest a theory that analyzes Johannine characters along three continua (complexity of traits, development, inner life) and then plots them on a resulting characterization continuum. Hylen appears to use a continuum of ambiguity, which possibly enhances my theory. Nevertheless, I wonder whether Hylen attributes more ambiguity to the Johannine characters than John intended. Would John have intentionally built ambiguity into each of his characters? We should not confuse diversity in modern interpretations with the author's (supposedly) intended ambiguity. Otherwise we must conclude that the entire Bible is intentionally ambiguous. Ambiguity, as witnessed in the variety of interpretations, may be more the result of modern hermeneutical enterprises than the author's intentional design.

My queries are well intended; they reflect my immense interest and appreciation for Hylen's valuable contribution to Johannine characterization. I applaud any endeavor that resists treating the Johannine characters in a reductionist way. I therefore

enthusiastically recommend this well-written book to anyone who is interested in character studies.

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Encountering Jesus: Character Studies in the Gospel of John. By Cornelis Bennema. Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2009, x + 228 pp., £14.99 paper.

The author of this intriguing book is professor of New Testament at the South Asia Institute of Advanced Christian Studies (SAIACS) in Bangalore, India. There has been an increasing trend in biblical studies in the last few decades to study the Bible as literature and story. Yet, one of the least developed disciplines of literary theory and narrative criticism still is characterization. In fact, there is not even agreement among scholars on how to approach, analyze, and classify characters. Following R. Alan Culpepper's lead in studying the Fourth Gospel as literature in his seminal work *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), where Culpepper provides a brief study on Johannine characters, Bennema offers a first full book-length treatment of all the significant characters in the Fourth Gospel that encounter and respond to Jesus. Applying a comprehensive theory of character to John's Gospel, Bennema presents a detailed analysis of both the characters and their responses to Jesus.

Even a cursory glance at the table of contents of the book or the catchy chapter titles shows Bennema's description of the Johannine characters. He has chosen twenty-three characters from the Fourth Gospel to develop and explore: John (the Baptist)—Witness *Par Excellence*; the World—Enveloped in Darkness but Loved by God; “The Jews”—Opponents *Par Excellence*; Andrew and Philip—Finders of People; Simon Peter—A Shepherd in the Making; Nathanael—The Genuine Israelite; The Mother of Jesus—A Catalyst in His Ministry; Nicodemus—In the Twilight Zone; The Samaritan Woman—An Unexpected Bride; The Royal Official—His Word Is Enough for Me; The Invalid at the Pool—A Lame Response; The Crowd—A Faceless, Divided Mass; The Twelve—Slow but Sticky; Judas Iscariot—The Black Sheep of the Family; The Man Born Blind—Once I Was Blind but Now I See; Martha—The Ideal Johannine Confessor; Mary of Bethany—At Jesus' Feet; Lazarus—The Dead Shall Hear His Voice; Thomas—Let Me See and Touch; The Beloved Disciple—The Unique Eyewitness; Pilate—Securing a Hollow Victory; Joseph of Arimathea—Faith and Fear; Mary Magdalene—Recognizing the Shepherd's Voice. The list of Bennema's characters is comprehensive in both breadth and depth. In addition to the common “Gospels characters” such as John the Baptist and Peter, Bennema develops Johannine characters such as “the Jews,” Nathanael, Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman, Mary and Martha, Lazarus, and the Beloved Disciple.

While Bennema's exploration of these Johannine characters is impressive, a couple of examples will suffice. First, in portraying Nicodemus in John 3, Bennema correctly points out that Nicodemus is a type of “a man” that the narrator refers to at the end of chapter 2 and that, even as a Pharisee, he still stands outside of God's kingdom and remains in the darkness along with the world. Bennema's own description best illustrates this: “It remains unclear whether Nicodemus experienced the new birth that would have brought him into the kingdom of God. Besides, there is no evidence of any form of confession or discipleship. John's implicit message to the reader is that anonymous discipleship or secret Christianity will not suffice. A public confession of

some kind that Jesus is the Christ seems appropriate and necessary. For John, remaining in the twilight zone, i.e. continual ambiguity, anonymity or secrecy, is not a valid option. Nicodemus is attracted to the light but does not remain in the light; he keeps moving in and out of the shadows, and within John's dualism, there is no place for a twilight zone. Too often, people feel compelled to put Nicodemus on one or the other side of John's dualistic world, but John does not redeem Nicodemus of his ambiguity. The point John wants to make is that continual ambiguity is not an acceptable attitude" (p. 84).

Another example of Bennema's intriguing Johannine characterization is "the Beloved Disciple," to whom he attributes the title "The Unique Witness." He is the one John's Gospel introduces as "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20). After addressing the issue of whether the Beloved Disciple is the author of the Fourth Gospel or merely its source (he sides with authorship), Bennema also addresses the controversial issue of his identification. While acknowledging that one simply cannot be dogmatic, he cautiously proposes the Beloved Disciple to be John, the son of Zebedee, but lists John the Elder as a strong contender (if these two figures are distinct, that is).

As most Johannine scholars would agree, Bennema insists that John's strategy for achieving the purpose of his Gospel—to evoke and strengthen belief in Jesus (20:30–31)—is to put various characters on the stage who interact with Jesus. Bennema further endorses that John wants his readers to evaluate the characters' responses to Jesus, join his point of view, and make adequate belief-responses themselves. However, Bennema contends that if one stops there, all characters would be reduced to their responses and hence to "flat" characters or "types." He insists that Johannine characters are more complex and "round" than has been typically portrayed. He proposes to analyze and classify the Johannine characters along three dimensions (complexity, development, inner life), and then to plot the resulting characters on a continuum of degree of characterization (from agent to type to personality to individuality). Thus, to Bennema's credit, none of his characters is reduced to oversimplification, or "types," as he calls it. However, even when one is careful not to oversimplify characters, one must be careful not to make more of these characters than the Gospel stories warrant or to miss their main character, Jesus Christ.

In sum, Bennema has made a great contribution to the field of Johannine studies with this book on characterization. Alan Culpepper summarizes Bennema's book in his endorsement: "This is a book I have been waiting for—a comprehensive, sophisticated analysis of the characters in the Gospel of John. Bennema gives us the tools to advance both our understanding of John's gospel and the theory of characterization." I echo this hearty endorsement.

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World Upside Down: Reading Acts in the Graeco-Roman Age. By C. Kavin Rowe. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009. x + 300 pp., \$65.00.

C. Kavin Rowe, assistant professor of New Testament at Duke University, has made another helpful contribution to the study of the Lukan corpus. In the present volume, Rowe takes up the task of attempting to read Acts in its Greco-Roman context. It is not that others have neglected to read Acts in this context; however, Rowe is consciously making this material shape his study of the book. Rowe is not unique in this approach, but he allows the background material to prepare the way for the reading of the text.

The historical and cultural context is more than a support for his exegesis. Rather, it is an essential aspect of the exegetical process. This approach leads Rowe to reveal and defend his understanding of the purpose for Acts. Rowe is aware of and sensitive to various strands of interpretation concerning the book's purpose. He directly challenges such views, including the majority view that Acts is an *apology* of the church to the Romans. When Acts is considered in detail as a whole, the majority view (as well as some others) is unable to remain convincing. On the one hand, Acts presents Christianity as a challenge to the Roman culture. On the other hand, this challenge is not intended to replace the present world order. These two observations expose a tension in the book that Rowe sets out to resolve or at least make comprehensible. Further, Rowe is concerned with the modern use of Acts.

Rowe attempts to immerse the reader in the Roman context of Acts. His first chapter helpfully lays out his plan. After briefly describing his goals and the development of his argument (pp. 3–7), he describes his method and other issues related to this type of study. He acknowledges that this is an interdisciplinary project and it will benefit from many approaches; however, he does not plan on following a specific theory (pp. 7–8). Nevertheless, his approach is clear. He desires to provide information on the first-century Roman world to help with interpretation. This includes a rejection of anachronistic distinctions such as religion and politics (p. 9). This first chapter provides an excellent argument supporting a sophisticated use of the context of a biblical book in interpretation.

Chapters 2–4 provide the bulk of Rowe's case. In these chapters through his contextual information, he exposes a tension that, when properly understood, impacts the reading of the text. In chapter 2, Rowe demonstrates how Luke presents his message in a way that challenges the Gentile culture. Here he discusses events from four chapters in Acts (chaps. 14, 16, 17, 19). For example, Rowe's description of the context of Paul's time in Athens (Acts 17) demonstrates that Paul is not merely trying to establish common ground by pointing out the altar to an unknown God. Rather, Paul is in an official trial-like setting. The incident includes allusions to the trial of Socrates, and Paul's speech challenges the hearers as ignorant idolaters who are in need of repentance (pp. 27–41). Given their own context, the readers would have seen these intended allusions. In these passages, Rowe reveals that Christianity seriously challenged the dominant culture.

In contrast to chapter 2, chapter 3 provides what seems like the opposite position. Rowe carefully examines the passages in Acts where Paul stands before Roman officials (Gallio, Claudius Lysias, Felix, Festus, and Herod Agrippa II; pp. 57–87). These passages are often used to argue that the Romans did not see Christianity as a threat. Rowe agrees with this. However, his discussions are quite detailed, and he reveals that, although the Romans did not judge against Christianity, it was not necessarily because they saw Christianity in a positive manner. The officials probably did not understand Christianity very well (if at all). They were not equipped with the hermeneutical and theological tools to understand Jewish and Christian arguments. Their judgment was not to endorse a religious movement; rather, their concerns were for much more practical, such as to maintain order. Also, these judgments were local and particular and not intended to express an official Roman position on the Christian movement.

Rowe's insights on the passages discussed in chapters 2 and 3 are interesting on their own, but his purpose is much more ambitious. The material in these chapters has led to opposite conclusions about the purpose of Acts. This reveals a tension for the modern reader. In chapter 4, Rowe attempts to resolve this tension. Beginning with Acts 17:1–9 and developing themes such as the Lordship of Christ, mission, and Christian assembly, Rowe recreates a context in which the tension can remain. Christianity truly is out to change the culture; however, it is not interested in taking over the Roman world and replacing the Roman establishment.

In chapter 5, Rowe brings his study into the present. He describes Acts as an “apocalypse of God” (e.g. p. 140). Thus, Acts describes a new and different type of life that is nothing short of the “formation of a new culture” (p. 140). In this chapter, he desires “to reread an ancient text with historical knowledge and acumen precisely so that we might better understand how to think intelligently about the very real problems that face us today” (p. 7). He wrestles with universal truth claims and what such claims produce in practice. Rowe spends much time here discussing important contemporary issues such as *truth* and *tolerance* in light of the ancient context. Among other things, he rejects the notion that “polytheism” was tolerant in an absolute manner mentioning Druids, Christians, and others as examples of polytheistic intolerance (pp. 162–68). He acknowledges that Acts can be read in an intolerant manner (pp. 170–71). However, persecutions, wars, and other tragedies in the name of Christianity are counter to Christ’s Lordship (p. 173).

I believe Rowe’s reading is convincing. His use of the contextual material to shape his reading is an important methodological aspect of the exegetical process. Through this approach, the modern reader shares more background information with the original author and readers. Thus, problems are often solved before they arise. The reader is more sensitive to the development of the message and less likely to be as blinded by personal concerns and presuppositions. Rowe’s approach is a conscious effort to get beyond our own biases (although none of us can completely remove our biases and presuppositions). This approach leads to his larger goal of purpose and securely puts his conclusions on solid ground.

This is a helpful book. Some will quibble over small points of interpretation, but overall Rowe makes his case. One such quibble is Rowe’s rejection of the title κύριος for Jesus as a challenge to Caesar (especially p. 112 against Horsley, Wright, Crossan, Reed, and others). Rowe suggests that it is Caesar who is the rival (p. 112). In light of Rowe’s careful use of contexts and his acceptance of “both/and” when clear in the text, such a rejection seems dismissive. Without rejecting Rowe’s position that it is Caesar who is the rival in Luke’s presentation, I would argue that it is easy to conceive of readers who believed that Caesar was their Lord (biblical authors would be aware of this). Such readers could easily see the claim of Lordship for Jesus as demanding a replacement of their Lord. Thus, challenges can go in both directions depending on the context being considered. Also, Rowe’s discussion is focused on Luke. Some whose position he rejects are primarily concerned with Paul (e.g. Wright). In addition to small quibbles, there are two weaknesses that can be mentioned. Rowe should be commended for attempting to focus on the text of Acts (p. 11). This is refreshing; however, this approach minimizes some important previous work on Acts. In light of his statements against some other readings, some might feel he does not give such readings a fair hearing. For example, concerning readings that depart from the traditional *apology* perspective, he states, “The few challenges to this view that have arisen amount to little more than adjustments to the basic premise . . . or exegetical feeble denials of the dominant reading” (pp. 3–4; to be fair, Rowe nuances this position when he develops his positive arguments, and in practice he is not as harsh as this statement suggests; see pp. 53–56). Although true of some works, I do not think it is accurate concerning Acts scholarship in general. Also, his rejection of the “either/or” dichotomy in favor of a “both/and” reading is not entirely unique, although admittedly, his organization and argument are well balanced and he avoids emphasizing one aspect of the argument over the other. Unlike most who emphasize one side of the issue, Rowe consciously strikes a balance. Second, and to be fair, not so much a weakness as a missed opportunity (it is a weakness of our field), I fully agree with Rowe’s approach that fronts contextual material in the exegetical process and utilizes it throughout; however, he lacks a formal discussion of method for his moves. This is not to suggest that method is lacking. Methodological rigor is present

throughout. However, without a clear articulation of his approach, there is a danger that some of his conclusions may be weaker than they seem. The probability of his conclusions is dependent upon the strength of his contextual recreation. This is the case with all such work. There is an assumption that the evidence supplied from the context is sufficient to prove his argument convincing. Again, I think it is sufficient, but a formal, developed method for this approach would be welcome from a scholar of Rowe's caliber.

One drawback to the volume is its use of endnotes instead of footnotes. There are nearly 90 pages of notes in the back (pp. 177–265). Thus, the interested reader must keep a marker in the notes to refer back continually, if desired. The book concludes with a select bibliography and three indexes (Scripture citations, ancient sources, modern authors).

C. Kevin Rowe has made an important contribution to Lukan studies. Minor weaknesses and quibbles are just that, minor. Rowe's work is helpful. Even if one is not fully persuaded that the *apology* reading is insufficient, Rowe has challenged all of us to consider Acts in its entirety and in its own context.

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Philippians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary. By John Reumann. The Anchor Yale Bible 33B. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008, xxiv + 805 pp., \$65.00.

John Reumann was Professor of New Testament and Greek at Lutheran Theological Seminary of Philadelphia for fifty years before his death in 2008. This commentary is the fruit of some 35 years of study and publication on Philippians. Consequently, Reumann's commentary displays a breadth and depth found in few other places.

Consistent with the Anchor Bible format, one finds three major sections for each passage of Philippians treated: "Translation," "Notes," and "Comment." The notes "survey and report the varied opinions of commentators, lexica, and other resources on philological, grammatical, literary, rhetorical, historical, and other matters, often without reaching any conclusion" (p. xviii). The "Comment" is further divided into Section A (sources and forms) and Section B (conclusions about "what Paul meant, and the interpretation given to his words by the Philippians and others since then" (p. xviii). With this layout, those seeking the bottom line and wanting to avoid the technical detail of the notes can go straight to the comment, and vice versa.

After a 25-page introduction—which includes six pages of bibliography on particular issues—Reumann provides 28 pages of "General Bibliography." When these two bibliographies are combined with the sectional bibliographies found after each pericope, the result is 67 pages of bibliography. The 692 pages of the commentary proper are followed by six pages of "General Index" and a 14-page "Index of Authors." Finally, the "Index of Scripture and Other Ancient Texts" (pp. 765–805) displays one of Reumann's strengths: his extensive interaction with ancient sources.

The following discussion will blend comments on Reumann's strengths, weaknesses, and unique contribution. Unfortunately, several factors make the work hard to read. First, it is tersely written, which is probably one consequence of being cut down from "a first draft . . . over 2800 pages" (p. xvii). Second, ubiquitous parenthetical text-notes, which can go on for five lines, interrupt the flow. Third, we find some unfamiliar abbreviation (e.g. O'B = O'Brien; txt = in the text of the translation; while Bockmuehl is cited as "Bockmuehl," Dibelius is cited as "Dib"). Fourth, one needs to become accustomed to sentences that begin with a lower case. This often happens if a sentence starts with

a citation of the author's translation. Fifth, incomplete sentences are frequent in both the notes and comment.

Since at least the time of Schenk's commentary (*Die Philipperbriefe des Paulus* [Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1984]), many scholars have viewed Philippians as a compilation of other letters. Reumann relies more heavily on Schenk than on others and views canonical Philippians as composed of three letters (p. 3): Letter A (4:10–20, AD 54), Letter B (1:1–3:1, and likely parts of 4:1–9, 4:21–23; late AD 54 or early AD 55), and Letter C (3:2–21, perhaps parts of 4:1–9, AD 55). Reumann first writes commentary on each "letter" as an independent document. Thereafter he asks how a particular paragraph would have been understood once the three letters were combined. In his view the result is generally negative. Three examples follow: First, Letter A (4:10–20) says nothing about Paul's incarceration. Thus the affliction mentioned there (v. 14) is only taken as imprisonment when it is wrongly read against 1:12–14. Second, when treating Phil 2:12–18, Reumann asserts, "Once Letters C (Phil 3) and A (4:10–20) were added to Letter B, 2:12–18 lost their significance as conclusion of the chief paraenetic section in B" (p. 416). Third, Reumann asserts that "treating 3:4b–11 within a longer letter has often diminished the overall importance of vv 4b–11" (p. 526). One wonders, therefore, if the only way to avoid diminishing the importance of the "Philippian Letters" is to have separate commentaries on First Philippians (Letter A), Second Philippians (Letter B), and Third Philippians (Letter C).

Reumann's translation clearly communicates his exegetical decisions. It is fresh, engaging, creatively rendering unique wording or phrases in the letter, and is worth consulting, even if at times one might challenge his conclusions. Examples include the following: (1) In my view, against most translations, 1:3 is correctly rendered "I thank my God because of your every remembrance of me" (p. 101). (2) Likewise, although in my view wrongly, 1:7b is rendered "because you have me in your heart" (p. 101). (3) While many English versions reproduce an ambiguous genitive at 1:27 (struggle together "for the faith of the gospel" is basically found in KJV, NIV, NASB, ESV, NRSV), Reumann clarifies it well with "engage together in the struggle for the gospel faith" (p. 261). (4) At times, Reumann gives odd English for good Greek. The verbless clauses of 2:2 yield the following: "give me further joy in that you think the same thing, having the same love, together in soul, thinking one thing, nothing from self interest, nor from vainglory" (p. 297). (5) Those with knowledge of Greek recognize that ὑπέρ with the genitive has the force "for," "on behalf of," "for the sake of," or the like. Reumann, however, reads 2:14 as if it were ὑπέρ with the accusative: "both to will and to work above and beyond goodwill" (p. 384). (6) On translation tendency, Reumann selectively translates some present imperatives with the phrase "continue to" or the like (e.g. 2:14: "keep on doing all things" [p. 384]; 2:29: "give him a continuing welcome" [p. 418]; 3:17a: "continue to become . . . imitators of me" [p. 566]; 4:6b: "constantly made known" [p. 605]). As grounds, he merely states that the verb is present tense and thus designates "repeated" (p. 590) or "continuing action" (p. 614). Some present imperatives, however, are translated gnominically (e.g. "exercise your citizenship" at 1:27; "think this" at 2:5a; "take note" at 3:17b; "assist them" at 4:3). No rationale is given for the different translation approaches.

In a few places, Reumann asserts that Paul's use of the second person plural excludes the individual from consideration (e.g. 1:6; 2:12). He particularly disapproves of the individualistic understanding of 2:5 ("Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus"; NIV), giving as evidence only the fact that the verb and pronoun are plural. Reumann's misunderstanding of the second person plural has become common (see further G. W. Peterman, "Plural You: On the Use and Abuse of the Second Person Plural," *BBR* 20 [2010] 183–96).

It is quite odd that a few times Reumann implies that the change from Saul to Paul is a Damascus Road change (whether we call that "conversion" or "call" is not important) rather than a pragmatic mission change, as is hinted at by Acts 13:9 (e.g. p. 517).

The Christ-Hymn (2:6–11), in Reumann’s view (and with dependence on Schenk), is “an encomium the Philippians had worked out to use in mission proclamation about Christ and God in their Greco-Roman world” (p. 333; also pp. 362–63). The encomium had problems, however. When Paul wrote Letter B (1:1–3:1), he cited this hymnic material back to them, adding verse 8c (“death on a cross”), since their original composition, “out of sensitivity to potential converts,” had no reference to crucifixion (p. 375). Furthermore, Paul’s reference to enemies of the cross has to do with those are gladly allied to an exalted, not to a suffering, Christ. Perceiving such as a threat to the Philippians, Paul had to warn them since “their theology [seen in] 2:6–11 ignored the cross; they were vulnerable here” (p. 593).

Pastors might not find Reumann’s work helpful. While occasional insights can be found, the work is generally thinner on theology, often gives extensive detail about different views without reaching a conclusion, and—as also previously mentioned—is difficult to read. Though without as much detail, other recent, helpful, and much more readable commentaries include Stephen E. Fowl, *Philippians* (Two Horizons New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005) and Bonnie B. Thurston, “Philippians,” *Philippians & Philemon* (Sacra Pagina; Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2005). For those with good knowledge of Greek, P. T. O’Brien’s work is highly recommended (*The Epistle to the Philippians* [NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991]).

Scholars of Philippians will not want to be without Reumann’s work. His surveys of views on a passage (e.g. on 2:5, 4:10–20) can be quite helpful. Likewise, as mentioned earlier, his bibliographies and his interaction with ancient sources are valuable.

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The Letter to the Philippians. By G. Walter Hansen. PNTC. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009, xxxiii + 355 pp., \$44.00.

Walter Hansen is to be commended for writing a clear, concise, and cogent argument analyzing Paul’s letter to the Philippians in the Pillar New Testament Commentary series. The series promotes biblical exegesis and exposition firmly rooted within biblical theology and relevant to today’s church. In keeping with the series’ aims, Hansen probes the biblical text with one eye to its first-century context and the other to our modern milieu. The connecting link for Hansen is the continuity of human nature, which eschews sacrifice and suffering but promotes self-interest. Paul’s ethical injunctions for unity among believers and their personal humility drive the letter.

Hansen briefly sets the Philippian congregation within its ancient context as evidenced in Acts, making the case that it is a Gentile church in a city that has little or no Jewish presence. After walking the reader through a detailed summary of the arguments, Hansen concludes in favor of the letter’s integrity. Hansen argues that Philippians is structured as a friendship letter, basing his claims mainly on the language of friendship used throughout the epistle. He provides several pages of defense for his position using important modern commentators as dialogue partners and listing ten parallels with Hellenistic friendship motifs. Applying the structural framework of friendship in his outline of Philippians, Hansen labels Phil 1:27–2:18 as “Request for reassurance about the recipients” (p. 12). Yet because Paul speaks theologically and ethically throughout his letter, Hansen insists that Paul shapes the ancient concept of friendship to fall in line with the gospel, which promotes the equality of all believers. In a few significant places in the commentary, Hansen connects his analysis to friendship and partnership motifs

from the Hellenistic world, but his main burden is to show that “Paul radically transforms the social convention of partnership in the light of the gospel of Christ” (p. 305).

Hansen identifies three problems in the Philippian church: (1) rivalry among church leaders; (2) hostility from outsiders who challenge the faithful; and (3) false teachings that promote attainment of perfection. Expressed in different terms, the Philippians struggle with (1) disunity; (2) burdens and suffering; and (3) opponents. The disunity within the congregation has its roots in self-interest and ambition. Paul responds with two central themes: the gospel of Christ and the community in Christ. Hansen stresses throughout his commentary the corporate nature of the phrase “in Christ,” over against the modern reader’s propensity to view Paul’s teachings solely through an individualistic lens.

Hansen maintains that the Philippian letter speaks of four separate opponents. First, Paul identifies those preachers who teach the gospel from impure motives (1:15–17). Second, he refers to those outside the church in Philippi who intimidate believers (1:28). Third, Paul critiques the Jewish Christians who persuade Gentile believers to follow Jewish Law (3:2). Fourth, Paul laments those Gentile Christians overcome by pressures of their pagan culture (3:18–19).

Hansen sees in Philippians a strong emphasis on personal piety and congregational unity. He maintains that one of Paul’s central concerns is demonstrating pure, godly behavior that the Philippians should emulate, even as Paul imitates Christ. For example, Hansen argues that the thanksgiving section of the letter “discloses . . . elements in Paul’s practice of prayer” (p. 46). Hansen discusses the significant verb *phronein* translated as “feel” (TNIV) in 1:7, concluding that “Paul shows that one way of thinking and feeling leads to unity in the church, growth in Christ-likeness, and expressions of concern for those in need. Another way . . . leads to divisions in the church, hostility toward Christ and a preoccupation with selfish interests” (p. 51).

Concerning the Christ hymn of chapter 2, Hansen concludes that its primary purpose is to highlight Christ’s humility, which serves as the supreme model for all believers. Paul includes the hymn to advance his ethical argument for selfless service within the church by citing Jesus Christ as the most superior example to emulate. Hansen asserts that Paul draws verbal connections between key terms such as “humility” (2:3) and “death” (3:10) in the hymn and his instructions to the Philippians.

Hansen maintains that Paul drew this hymn from the worship life of the church and endorsed its teachings, but was not the hymn’s author. Hansen’s reasoning is twofold. First, the vocabulary is quite distinct from Paul’s typical expressions (although Hansen notes this argument is not determinative, as we cannot claim to know the breadth of Paul’s writing abilities). Second, Hansen recognizes that the hymn speaks to more than ethical concerns. If the hymn only addressed Christ’s humility, then perhaps one could successfully argue that Paul wrote it, for it would have fit nicely with what Hansen determines is Paul’s overarching topic of ethical behavior within the church.

Yet Hansen’s recognition that the hymn covers foundational theological motifs could have led him to reconsider his view that the hymn functions predominantly as an ethical component in Paul’s argument and led to deeper theological reflection on the incarnation and the Trinity as informing other aspects of Paul’s argument. Hansen devotes several pages to discuss the hymn and might have integrated his helpful findings more throughout his commentary. For example, in his discussion of chapter 3, Hansen might have reflected on the nature of the incarnation in terms of its implications for a believer’s pursuit of Christ-likeness. He rightly insists that the hymn speaks to Christ’s pre-existence. He offers three possible interpretations of 2:7: (1) *kenotic* view; (2) incarnation view; and (3) Servant of the Lord view. He argues these are not mutually exclusive and draws on all three in his analysis, concluding that “His [Christ’s] act of self-emptying was the incarnation; the result of the incarnation was humiliation, suffering,

and death" (p. 515). He spends several pages discussing the theology of the hymn in the first-century context. He remarks that Paul takes ancient Jewish monotheism and reshapes it into Christological monotheism.

In his discussion of Paul's autobiographical account of his life in Judaism and as a believer in Christ in chapter 3, Hansen follows a traditional reconstruction of first-century Judaism, emphasizing its view of salvation as based on self-reliance in following the Law. Hansen highlights two key questions that arise from this section. First, what does "faith in Christ" (3:9) mean? He discusses the two major interpretations: our faith in Christ and Christ's faithfulness. He concludes the former is most likely in this context. The second question examines Paul's meaning of "faultless" (3:6). Hansen argues that the term "clearly communicates Paul's 'palpable satisfaction' with his upright behavior based on the law" (pp. 228–29). He adds that Paul wants the Philippians to reject the "propaganda for perfection by belonging to the Jewish people" (p. 223). Perfection continues to be the focus of Hansen's discussion of the enemies noted in 3:18–19, but here Paul condemns those who avoid suffering for Christ and are selfishly ambitious. Hansen contends that Paul's target is Gentile believers who at one point were members of the Christian community but who in their refusal to suffer with Christ have alienated themselves from the source of their salvation.

Hansen makes the Greek text accessible to the non-specialist; he includes helpful information about Greek grammar and vocabulary without cluttering his prose with needless jargon. He traces the use of specific terms through the letter itself, the Pauline corpus, and the NT, and he connects terms with the wider Greco-Roman world and the LXX. He includes a sixteen-page bibliography, as well as three indices, on "Authors," "Subjects," and "Scripture References."

The commentary could be a bit more tightly written in spots, but Hansen's style is enjoyable to read and his reiterations serve as helpful reminders or to solidify a point. An exception is his repetition almost *verbatim* on page 48 of four sentences from page 32. Furthermore, while Hansen demonstrates admirable skill in discussing matters of Christian piety and evangelical disputes on hot-button topics such as justification, in a few places he seems not as finely tuned to debates related to the ancient historical and social context. For example, in describing the Jewish Christians of 3:2, he states that they intend to "convert" the Gentile believers to Judaism (p. 219). I was left wondering whether the opponents were Jewish *Christians* after all, or Jews from the synagogue who pursued Gentile Christians. A brief discussion on the modern conversation about whether Jewish Christians saw the Law as that which saved them, or that which was necessary to follow as faithful members of Christ's fellowship, would have made his argument easier to follow.

Hansen's commentary on Philippians is a valuable tool for professors, pastors, and serious students of God's word who desire to explore both the biblical text and its contemporary relevance.

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The Catholic Epistles and Apostolic Tradition: A New Perspective on James to Jude. Edited by Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr and Robert W. Wall. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2009, x + 536 pp., \$69.95.

The Catholic Epistles and Apostolic Tradition is a collection of papers given over a five-year period under the auspices of the SNTS seminar on the Catholic Epistles

(2001–2006). The initiating question that brought this helpful collection of essays together focuses on the evidence and influence of various apostolic traditions reflected in the Catholic Epistles. The scholars represented in the collection look upon the Catholic Epistles as a group of texts that have been neglected both by the academy and by the church as well as texts typically filtered through a Pauline lens. While the original goal of the seminar was to “rehabilitate this Society’s interest in the Catholic Epistles (CE)” (p. 1), Robert Wall notes that another interest emerged as the seminar progressed: “consideration of the CE as a discrete collection of writings, with its own distinctive contribution to make and role to perform, when considered in relationship to the other parts of the biblical canon” (p. 1). These two concerns—apostolic traditions reflected in the Catholic Epistles and the Catholic Epistles as a discrete collection of texts—form the center of gravity around which all the essays in the collection revolve.

As with any collection of published papers the length, scope, and degree of relevance to the central theme varies from paper to paper. Several essays focus on connections within the Catholic Epistles corpus (Feldmeier, Frey, Hafemann, Konradt, Nienhuis, Painter, and Wall), while others consider particular connections between the Catholic Epistles and the rest of the NT (Gospel/Jesus traditions—Hartin, Kloppenborg, Niebuhr; Acts—Konradt, Wall; Pauline—Nienhuis, Wall). These essays also represent different methodological starting points: the inner connections within the Catholic Epistles are seen through historical and traditio-historical interrelations (Konradt); historical connections through literature and religion (Frey, Feldmeier, Doering); connections seen through literary forms and text transmission (Panter, Niebuhr); and via the “ecclesiastical reception of the canon,” a species of canon criticism (Nienhuis, Wall). The contributions are organized into seven unequal parts: parts 1 and 2 contain a brief introduction followed by an orienting essay by Robert Wall; part 3, the longest section, contains several papers on the Epistle of James; part 4 takes up 1 Peter in two essays; in part 5 the letters of John receive attention in only one paper; part 6 is devoted to Jude; and a concluding essay makes up part 7.

After a general introduction, Robert Wall’s essay, “A Unifying Theology of the Catholic Epistles: A Canonical Approach” (pp. 13–40), serves an orienting function especially for the emerging question of the collection that centers on the function of the Catholic Epistles as a discrete collection of canonical texts. Here Wall argues two points: (1) that, as the Catholic Epistles became a collection, the Letter of James became its “frontispiece” serving as an introduction to the grammar of the collection’s unifying theology; and (2) that the Catholic Epistles became a collection along with Acts, which constituted the narrative context for the Catholic Epistles as a collection and guided readers to understand the contribution of the Catholic Epistles to the NT canon. Wall reasons that “James could be read as putting into play a variety of distinctive themes, whose linguistic and conceptual similarity with other CE may reasonably be explained as the sharing of common traditions.” He concludes, “these thematic agreements could then be pressed into service as the rubrics for a ‘unifying theology of the CE’” (p. 27). At the close of his essay, Wall offers a sequence of five major themes initiated in James that also constitute the theological unity of the rest of the Catholic Epistles.

Part 3, the largest section of the volume, consists of eight essays taking up various themes in the Letter of James. The length and substance of this section is due to the fact that several of the participants in the SNTS seminar are seminal figures in Jacobian studies. Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr opens part 3 with his essay “James in the Minds of the Recipients: A Letter from Jerusalem” (pp. 43–54), where he reconstructs a portrait of the implied readers via a sensitive discussion of the genre and communicative form of the letter. Niebuhr’s essay sheds new light on some old and stagnate questions in James; his helpful discussion of the implied reader in James leads to a greater appreciation

of James's theological contribution to the NT canon. Offering further insights originating from his earlier work *James and the Q Sayings of Jesus* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1991), Patrick Hartin points up the similarity between James and Jesus in their reassessment of Judaism in his essay "James and the Jesus of Tradition: Some Theological Reflections and Implications" (pp. 55–70). Especially in James's teaching regarding solidarity with the poor, rejection of favoritism, and the call to friendship with God, Hartin sees connection to and appropriation of Jesus' teaching. In a related essay, John Kloppenborg notes the striking degree of contact between James and Jesus ("The Reception of the Jesus Tradition in James," pp. 71–100). After surveying six basic models for understanding James's "use" of the Jesus tradition, Kloppenborg outlines and tests his argument that James uses a type of paraphrase and *aemulatio*—that is, restating the words of a predecessor in one's own words.

Continuing the rich discussion of James, Matthias Konradt considers how James and 1 Peter stand as distinct witnesses to the same branch of early Christian tradition ("The Historical Context of the Letter of James in Light of Its Traditio-Historical Relations with First Peter," pp. 101–25). Using this helpful data, Konradt situates James in its traditio-historical setting. The last four essays in part 3 all loosely fit within the trajectory set by Wall's introductory essay mentioned above. These essays consider both the intentional placement of James as the first of the Catholic Epistles (Wall, "The Priority of James," pp. 153–60; Painter, "James as the First Catholic Epistle," pp. 161–81; and Nienhuis, "The Letter of James as a Canon-Conscious Pseudepigraph," pp. 183–200) and James's placement within the NT as a whole (Wall, "Acts and James," pp. 127–52).

Part 4 turns attention to the Petrine Epistles in two essays by Reinhard Feldmeier ("Salvation and Anthropology in First Peter," pp. 203–13) and Lutz Doering ("First Peter as Early Christian Diaspora Letter," pp. 215–36). Feldmeier's essay notes that 1 Peter takes up and relies upon more Hellenistic themes than usually appreciated, and Doering's essay offers ample evidence for understanding 1 Peter as an early Christian *diaspora* letter.

Part 5 is comprised of one lengthy chapter taking up the Johannine Epistles. Here, in the face of historical-critical consensus, John Painter argues that the Johannine Epistles, rather than collected and assessed as part of the larger Johannine corpus according to a historically reconstructed author, should in fact fit within the logic of the Catholic Epistles ("The Johannine Epistles as Catholic Epistles," pp. 239–305). After tracing the early use and canonization of the Johannine letters, Painter concludes that, because on the one hand the "collection of the CE was more important than the connection between the Johannine Epistles and Revelation" and on the other hand because the "collection of the Gospels was more important than the connection between the Gospel and the Epistles of John," these letters of John should be read within their canonical context as Catholic Epistles (p. 249).

Constituting part 6, Jörg Frey and Scott Hafemann take up Jude's placement within the broader cultural context of Judaism and Hellenism ("The Epistle of Jude between Judaism and Hellenism") and Jude's relation to other texts in the Catholic Epistles ("Salvation in Jude 5 and the Argument of 2 Peter 1:3–11"), respectively. Concluding the volume in part 7, Ernst Baasland offers a summary essay entitled "A Prolegomenon to a History of the 'Postapostolic Era' (Early Christianity 70–150 CE)."

The collection as a whole represents a growing, and perhaps now sustained, movement to understand first James, and now the entire Catholic Epistles collection, independently from a Pauline perspective and on their own terms. This growing interest in the Catholic Epistles can be seen not only in the increased output of monographs on the individual texts and edited volumes considering the Catholic Epistles as a whole (e.g. *The Catholic Epistles and the Tradition* [ed. Jacques Schlosser; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2004]) but also in the recent SBL Consultation on "Methodological

Reassessments of the Letters of James, Peter, and Jude,” which will now be an ongoing section entitled “The Letters of James, Peter, and Jude.” Within this growing chorus of interest in the Catholic Epistles, *The Catholic Epistles and Apostolic Tradition* represents some of the most seasoned voices considering this long-neglected group of texts. Many of the essays here will repay careful study. Wall summarizes the project as a whole concluding “that the CE, when considered as a whole, speak with a distinctive voice and with an independent theological and moral point to score” (p. 2).

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What Are They Saying About the Letter of James? By Alicia J. Batten. New York: Paulist, 2009, vi + 111 pp., \$14.95 paper.

There is a certain irony to writing a book review for a book that is itself a review of current literature. There is by necessity very little original text to evaluate. Can one criticize the author for her summaries of what other authors have argued? By eliminating the usual content and argumentation flow expected in a book, *What Are They Saying About the Letter of James?* reads much like a state of research article and leads the reviewer to a pedantic type of critique. That said, while there are weaknesses to this text as will be discussed below, this book provides a helpful overview of the current state of research in a variety of areas regarding the Epistle of James, generally in a fair and balanced manner. Even more impressively, Batten typically demonstrates multiple views on a question without tipping her own hand, thereby allowing the different authors’ arguments to stand on their own and students to decide for themselves. This is impressive particularly because she at times covers a wide diversity of opinions. Only at times when the consensus of the field has clearly shifted does criticism for one view become more apparent.

On the surface, this book has a simple layout: an introduction and four body chapters, followed by endnotes and an extensive bibliography. The text itself runs a mere 83 pages, making it a manageable introduction for students of James. The four chapters follow the obvious questions of (1) Genre, Structure, and Rhetoric; (2) Authorship and Audience; (3) Thematic Issues; and (4) James and the Sayings of Jesus. Within each chapter are subdivisions exploring different approaches to each of these questions, such as the question of the relationship between Paul and James under “Thematic Issues,” and particularly how this question affects one’s interpretation of James. Within this simple structure, however, Batten struggles to codify her data consistently, at times leaving the reader confused by the inclusion or exclusion of different authors and subjects under a larger heading. For instance, in a discussion of the rhetoric and structure of James on page 24, Batten introduces Bauckham’s view regarding the overall structure (or lack thereof)—which is itself redundant from page 15 when she then tangents into his conclusions about James’s use of Jesus’ teachings—a topic for which she has dedicated an entire chapter later in the book and which does not fit well here. Her conclusion to this interruption on page 26 highlights the awkwardness to the reader. This redundancy comes to its fullness in chapter 4 where on page 80 she has an identical quote from Kloppenborg as on page 25 and repeats much the same summary of his argument. This type of hiccup in the flow of subject matter happens fairly often throughout the text, leaving one at times with a sense of disorientation.

Some of the difficulty stems from what might be almost too-precise section divisions. For example, creating “Rhetoric” as a separate category from “Structure” is misleading,

since many of the books and articles included under “Rhetoric” seek to determine a rhetorical *structure* for the entire epistle, and she thus creates a strong sense of redundancy, as seen in the Bauckham example above. Other times, one wonders what drove the decision-making concerning whom to include where, such as *not* including Mitchell’s discussion of ancient letter writing and the genre of James on page 8, or why “Purity” is a theological issue (p. 61) rather than a moral one (starting on p. 64) and “Wealth” the reverse. Still, many of these criticisms relate also to the complexity of the Epistle of James, where questions of structure affect how one reads the author and audience and vice versa and where every major topic in the epistle is repeated, nuanced, and intermingled with the others. Batten does an admirable job under the circumstances in attempting to disentangle the variously woven—or tangled—threads of James scholarship and introducing the reader to the most active areas of current research.

One of the biggest complaints with the book is not Batten’s fault but one that I assume lies with the series: its use of endnotes. In a book introducing the reader to what “They” are saying, it is incredibly inconvenient to be consistently flipping to the back of the book to find out the name of an article or a book’s publication date, a quirk that leaves the material less accessible than an introduction ought. Additionally, at times her endnotes have simple explanations further defining terms that the unwary student would easily miss. I found I read with one finger in the back, and the constant flipping interrupted any readability, leaving the text feeling even more choppy. Compounding this problem is Batten’s use of “more recently” to introduce anything from 1992–2007 (cf. p. 11 for the former). In a book essentially surveying the last 30 years of scholarship, a 15-year spread for “recent” scholarship is misleading and again compels the reader to flip back and forth from the text to the endnotes. The margins of my book are filled with scribbled notes of titles and dates in an attempt to keep everything straight, something a simple use of footnotes would have eliminated.

Despite all these critiques about the formatting, this book stands as a useful summary of current research. For the student who struggles to understand the relationship between apocalypticism and the Epistle of James (or who failed even to realize there might be one), is confused by the nuances scholars are making about James’s use of the Jesus tradition, or any number of other topics at the forefront in James research, this book is a highly helpful introduction. Clearly intended for students, it provides a more readable and comprehensible introduction than a state of research article. As such, due to its approachability and brevity, it should prove a welcome addition to any classes that are specifically on James or even the latter NT. Even despite Batten herself confusing the chapter numbers (cf. p. 28!), in such a simple four-chapter structure the student is readily guided through the majority of James scholarship in a mere 83 pages. What would perhaps help in a future edition would be to expand the table of contents to include the subheadings, as that may help the reader make sense of redundancy and see how each topic fits into multiple categories.

Perhaps simply as a result of the book’s nature as a review of literature, ultimately Batten’s book, much like the Epistle of James itself, simply ends with a brief one-paragraph conclusion—of which arguably only the last two sentences conclude the book as a whole. Whether there is need for a more comprehensive conclusion may be questioned, but it is rather startling to emerge from the depths of the relationship between Jesus and James into the endnotes with only the help of what appears to be a section conclusion. It may have helped the curious reader to have been presented with a recap of the most pressing current questions for future research or at least a more clearly delineated conclusion along the lines of the utilitarian but functional 4-page introduction. Having admirably completed her task in a readable fashion and having summarized several topics more than once, perhaps Batten found it better to allow each section’s

conclusion to carry its own weight and not drag the book through one more recitation of the main themes and questions. While the book at times felt complicated by its own structure, I intend to use it in future James classes—at least for the next few years while “recently” is still recent!

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Seeing Things John's Way: The Rhetoric of the Book of Revelation. By David A. deSilva. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009, xiv + 393 pp., \$49.95 paper.

David deSilva is distinguished professor of New Testament and Greek at Ashland Theological Seminary, Ashland, Ohio, and author of more than ten books on the NT. The principal strategy of this book is to see what happens when the goals and methods of classical rhetoric in use at the end of the first century AD are applied to the entirety of the book of Revelation. It may be the most thoroughgoing rhetorical analysis of Revelation yet published, especially in its exploration of the emotional and argumentative strategies of the Apocalypse.

At the start, deSilva dispenses with the four typical “schools of interpretation” (futurist, etc.), claiming that these all ignore the relevance of the book’s symbols to Roman Asia Minor (pp. 3–5). He prefers a “contemporary-historical approach” that sees the book as written simply for churches in Roman Asia Minor at the end of the first century. One should approach Revelation, he says, just as one would study Galatians. The author is John, an itinerant prophet (not the apostle), who was exiled to Patmos as a “dangerous person” during the “later Flavian period” (probably under Domitian, p. 37).

Revelation participates in three genres. The book as a whole is a pastoral *letter* addressed to seven churches in Asia (Rev 1:4). As *prophecy*, it brings a word from God to a specific people in a specific situation. As an *apocalypse*, it opens the “canopy of space and time” to put reality in proper perspective (p. 14). In chapter 1, deSilva gives readers a brief introduction to classical rhetorical criticism, relying especially on the Greek and Latin handbooks of Aristotle, Anaximenes, Cicero, and Quintilian. The handbooks describe how orators (and speech writers) could persuade audiences to take a specific action, adopt a certain value, or render a certain verdict (p. 19), through three kinds of appeals or proofs: the appeal to *logos* (reason), the appeal to *pathos* (emotions), and the appeal to *ethos* (one’s perception of the speaker). The “working premise” for deSilva is not that John had studied rhetoric but that he learned it inductively through hearing and observing public speakers (p. 17, n. 49).

In chapter 2, deSilva lays out his case that the symbols of Revelation focus on Rome, Roman imperialism, and the imperial cult in Asia Minor. Temples to Rome and Augustus were established throughout the provinces. The imperial cult brought temples, shrines, altars, and images dedicated to Augustus and all his successors. By the end of the first century, thirty-five cities in Asia Minor were imperial cult sites, including all seven addressed by John (p. 41). Participation in these cults demonstrated the proper gratitude expected by good citizens for Roman peace and prosperity. Global trade was centered in Rome, resulting in the economic subjugation and deprivation of the provinces. Roman economic and religious imperialism is the principal focus of Revelation 4–22.

Chapter 3 investigates John’s rhetorical goals. His overall goal is to persuade his readers to develop “critical distance” from the imperial ideology and practices of Rome and to “overcome” the resultant challenges to faithful discipleship to Christ (pp. 70–71).

This involves withdrawing from every contact with idolatry, refusal to engage in an unjust economic system, and willingness to suffer rather than compromise their faithfulness to the true God. Chapter 4 looks at why John chose to write a book like Revelation. For deSilva, the genre of apocalypse offers John a “greater rhetorical gain” than an epistle (p. 116).

Chapter 5 shows that John worked to establish authority and credibility (*ethos*) for his book at both the beginning (Revelation 1) and the close (22:6–21). By using the term *apokalypsis*, John claims a particular kind of prophecy, one that originated in a particular mode of revelation. The book’s content was “seen” and “heard,” not “created” (p. 120). “The rhetorical gains of writing in this mode, rather than arguing in his own voice, are immense” (p. 121). Yet throughout his book, deSilva struggles to balance his emphasis on John’s rhetorical strategy (on the one hand) with Revelation’s emphasis on the divine origin of the visions and on John as merely a “seer” and writer of what he saw (on the other hand). John demonstrates an enormous knowledge of the Hebrew Scriptures. According to deSilva, the prophet’s visionary experiences drew on this knowledge. The visions of Daniel and Ezekiel did not merely influence John’s writing of the visions; they influenced the visions themselves. I find this explanation problematic and lacking in ability to make sense of how John describes the visions and his own reaction to them.

John’s use of the Hebrew Bible is analyzed in chapter 6. John includes material from almost three hundred OT verses, but he never explicitly cites any of it. What rhetorical gain does John receive from doing this? DeSilva thinks that by “recontextualizing” authoritative OT prophecy, “John subtly invites these Scriptures to lend their authority to his own visions” (p. 148). His readers hear “Scripture” in John’s writing. The biblical word thereby “becomes John’s word” (p. 149). The incorporation of previously accepted revelation helps John’s writing be heard as authentic.

Chapters 7 and 8 focus on how Revelation appeals to its readers’ emotions (*pathos*). Chapters 9, 10, and 11 analyze John’s appeals to rational argumentation (*logos*). Once the reasoning has been identified, deSilva seeks to determine what makes each argument work—specifically, what the readers must accept as true in order to accept the argumentation as valid rational discourse.

Finally, chapter 12 (subtitled “What Might the Spirit Continue to Say to the Churches?”) is deSilva’s countercultural application of Revelation to modern consumerist America. After deriding fundamentalist (futurist) Christians for their misunderstanding of the point of Revelation (“reducing it to an end-times playbook,” p. 315), he ridicules them for claiming to be “persecuted” by secular humanism while at the same time colluding with the dominant political and economic (American) culture. Revelation can still be used by the church today, but only when readers take into account the distance between their and John’s situations. From this point the chapter becomes an impassioned sermon against domination systems and for a kind of democratic approach to determining theological boundaries. John assumed that his book would be “tested” by other prophets; so John was “not ultimately authoritarian or exclusive” in his pronouncements, but merely submitting his “revelation” to the community “for testing” (p. 340). This shows the importance of developing a culture of “testing” (critical thinking, discussion, and discernment) in our own churches today. What deSilva does not say is whether this would allow us (as churches or individuals) to lop off the parts of Revelation that we conclude are lacking in spiritual worth (John strongly warns us against this in Rev 22:19).

This book has at least four weaknesses. First, deSilva too quickly and easily ignores the possible application of rhetorical criticism to a futurist approach to the prophecy. Why could John (or Christ) not have used the same rhetorical devices and strategies

(appealing to reason, emotion, and credibility) to encourage a positive response to an unveiling of Christ's plan to bring about the fulfillment of all prophecy in a great tribulation and Christ's return at the end of the age, with a similar understanding of the same commands, threats, warnings, and promises given by the same returning Judge? He also ignores the significance of Christ's reference in Rev 4:1 to "showing" John things which "must happen after these things" (referring to the visions of chapters 4–22). This reference makes deSilva's contemporary-historical approach problematic, but he never seriously deals with it. Second, the author never adequately deals with the problem of attributing a "rhetorical strategy" to a biblical author who, throughout his writing, consistently and forcefully says that he simply heard, saw, and wrote down the oracles and visions as he was told to do. Third, deSilva succumbs to the pitfall of allowing *suggestions* in the first part of the book (e.g. that John *may* have deliberately used the rhetorical devices that are detectable therein) to become *certainties* by the end of the book. Fourth, in my opinion deSilva fails to prove that John intended the images of Beast and Whore/Babylon to represent specifically (and only) the Roman empire, emperors, and emperor worship of his own day; this identification is crucial to his interpretations throughout the book.

Overall, this book is a great achievement for its author. A marvelous compendium of information on the Apocalypse, its indexes are thorough, the bibliography is useful, and it makes the methodology of rhetorical criticism accessible to all. The publisher says this book will "redefine" the study of Revelation. I doubt that, but all scholars in the field will need to deal with it.

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Remythologizing Theology: Divine Action, Passion, and Authorship. By Kevin J. Vanhoozer. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010, xix + 539 pp., \$125.00.

This latest installment from the eloquent evangelical theologian traverses territory unexplored in earlier writings, but long overdue. Currently Blanchard Professor of Theology at Wheaton College, Kevin Vanhoozer presents "a communicative ontology (i.e. a set of concepts with which to speak of God-in-communicative-action) and sketches the contours of a theodramatic metaphysics (i.e. a biblically derived set of concepts with which to speak of the whole of created reality)" (p. xv). Herein, he appropriates his speech-act work for theology proper, but not without calling his earlier approach "too cavalier" (p. xiii).

A helpful introduction provides impetus for "remythologizing" by contrasting nineteenth- and twentieth-century "demythologizing" (e.g. Bultmann and especially Feuerbach's projecting human ideas onto the divine) and resisting the "mythic" in his metaphysical constructions. Before offering ten theses on "remythologizing" (pp. 26–30), Vanhoozer establishes this project's agenda: "that both the transcendence and immanence of God are best viewed in terms of communicative agency rather than motional causality" (p. 24).

The book consists of three parts. Part I considers "'God' in Scripture and Theology," preparing for the book's major critique and construction. Chapter 1, "Biblical Representation," offers gloss readings of biblical texts, observing dramatic or performative dynamics, highlighting how the remythologizing approach views history "as a drama in which God and human beings have speaking parts" (p. 67). Strongly emphasizing the

Reformed Creator-creature distinction for human participation in (and relationship with) God, instead of with metaphysical speculation, Vanhoozer builds an ontology “in terms of God’s covenantal self-determinations and the subsequent missions of the Son and Spirit” (p. 69).

Chapter 2 sketches twentieth-century theological trends, showing wrongheaded onto-theological developments recently replaced with relational conceptual schemes. These birthed ranges of open, process, and kenotic panentheist developments, yielding the “new orthodoxy” delineated in chapter 3: “The New Kenotic-Perichoretic Relational Ontotheology.” Here, Vanhoozer’s “‘classical’ concerns” bear down on relational trends, even suggesting that the relational turn looks more Feuerbachian than Trinitarian (pp. 157–62). He then traces the fundamental problem of God’s relationship with the world, displayed in the incarnation with Christ’s passion and suffering, and also in God’s real fellowship yet real inequality with the world.

Part II, “Communicative Theism and the Triune God,” continues the critique, integrating the dialogical model leading to a core of Vanhoozer’s proposal, that of “*saying who/what God is—what this ‘who’ is like—on the basis of what God says and does*” (p. 198). He works with a Barthian Christological view of divine simplicity supplemented (chap. 4) with “other instances of divine speaking and acting alongside the Incarnation.” This approach recognizes who God is by his action in all “biblical accounts of God’s self-presentation in speech and act” (pp. 203, 207, 223). This “*theodrama*” reveals that God’s “[b]eing-in-act spills over as it were into self-communicative action,” revealing that God’s being is in communicating (p. 224).

Chapter 5 expounds immanent and economic Trinities through the motifs of life, light, and love, ultimately affirming the adapted (from Karl Rahner, *The Trinity*) maxim: the economic Trinity *communicates* the immanent Trinity (p. 294). Rather than perichoretic relations, God’s relationship with creatures is participatory via God’s being-in-communicative-act (p. 271), which itself (i.e. God’s being in eternal communicative act) is “the basis for his self presentation to creatures, his historical ‘speaking out’” (p. 245). A remythologized definition defines participation in God’s life as “to benefit from his words and acts in history, especially the history of Jesus Christ” (p. 279). Six theses are offered, keeping creatures from being absorbed into the Creator’s life in salvific communion, suggesting that union with Christ is eschatological, medial, covenantal, dialogical, sapiential, and ecclesial (pp. 289–94).

Part III continues Vanhoozer’s proposal, more thoroughly integrating the dialogical model for the doctrine of God in light of contemporary debates about divine action. Borrowing the dialogical idea from Mikhail Bakhtin’s work, employing the *analogia auctoris* (analogy of the author) that, coupled with triune communicative action, offers “new conceptual resources for conceiving the time/eternity relation” (p. 319). Rather than a contradiction to created time, as God’s own time eternity points to divine Authorial “outsideness” and freedom from the created realm that in turn God enters to both author and dialogue freely with his creatures.

Chapter 7 advances into the area of “[d]ivine communicative sovereignty and human freedom,” where human “heroes” freely talk back to the divine Author. After considering how these dialogues occur, Vanhoozer posits that God’s authorial Word enters the scene via incarnation, adding a new dimension to the theologian’s “dogmatic description of what, from a human perspective, is the chief instance and location of human/divine dialogical interaction, and thus the substance of the human creature’s interpersonal relationship with God” (pp. 377–78). God the Author dialogically determines and refines heroes through prayer (p. 381), which is where “[c]ommunicative action brings about its effects irresistibly yet non-coercively, through reasoned discourse that, because it is true, good, and beautiful, resonates with human minds and hearts (i.e. is internally persuasive)” (pp. 383–84).

Chapters 8 and 9 venture directly into the realm of divine (im)passibility, highlighting Feuerbachian errors of contemporary theologians while offering a covenantal concern-based theodramatic construal by which Vanhoozer employs concepts in an *ad hoc* manner with a “ministerial” aim. He ultimately locates “God’s covenantal steadfastness” and his capacity to patiently endure as “the proper dogmatic location for the doctrine of divine impassibility” (p. 457). God’s sovereign ability to withstand secures his steadfastness and divine patience, generating the gracious voice that covenantally “summons and sustains” (p. 467).

The concluding chapter summarizes the argument, showing how Vanhoozer’s re-mythologizing avoids mystery and mysticism by seeking a more biblical reasoning (divine communicative action’s formal principle). This shows the triune God as both Author of space-time and as a character within it (p. 475). A final summary is added on triune authorship (divine communicative action’s material principle), which Vanhoozer sees as a controlling metaphor for other biblical metaphors for God. This Authorial action is efficacious toward the Author’s desired “soteric” dialogical end (pp. 493–4).

This book is written with Vanhoozer’s characteristic wit and style. The prose is astonishingly beautiful, invoking readers to feel deeply the reality both in and behind his constructions. While highly coherent, displaying Vanhoozer’s constructive caliber for doing serious systematic theology, this book is not for theological lightweights.

Some critical comments remain. By assuming what can be known of God in terms (on the basis?) of what we know of communicative agents *and* God’s self-revelation, is the former not unduly prioritized, perhaps leading Vanhoozer’s method to subvert his aim? I wonder also why he majors on the notion of “metaphysics” rather than ontology, when the former carries recent pantheistic or panentheistic baggage regarding the nature of creaturely union with Christ. Nevertheless, his metaphysical corrective to *mythos* is helpful (pp. 482–86). I also wonder what place Vanhoozer will give to serious biblical exegesis in the future, and why he delays this work save a few gloss readings, that is, how/when will he display rigorous exegetical readings (listening) with the grain of the text, and when will he model the exegetical and ethical performances of which he writes (pp. 189, 216, 479)? It is hoped that his forthcoming work on hermeneutics (*Mere Hermeneutics: Reading Scripture for the Love of God* [Zondervan]) will not only explain *how* reading along the grain of the biblical discourse ought to be done in his schema, but also will provide examples of these exegetical performances.

I would also like to see Vanhoozer tap the rich *imago Dei* theme more than the dozen or so passing glances, hopefully proceeding undaunted by mileage others have gotten from the motif. Difficulty also seems to arise if a version of a Barthian Christological simplicity is merged with the rest of God’s action throughout the canonical historical narrative, and how this finds creaturely union with Christ (thus, union with God) prior to the ascension, for which Vanhoozer does not seem to provide a scheme. In addition, the few meager references to eschatology leave room for much more eschatological development in his program, all of which should be forthcoming in due time as Vanhoozer continues his theological engagement.

At the current price, *Remythologizing Theology* will only be purchased by a few, though seminary libraries will be deficient without it. Hopefully, it will reach paperback edition soon, enabling users to benefit more fully from one of today’s leading evangelical theologians who is beginning to make significant strides in developing a classical Reformed evangelical theology in the present context. This volume will repay huge dividends to the diligent reader.

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He Who Gives Life: The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Foundations of Evangelical Theology. By Graham A. Cole. Wheaton: Crossway, 2007, 310 pp., \$30.00.

He Who Gives Life is the fourth volume in the Foundations of Evangelical Theology series by Crossway, and like the previous three books it is an excellent contribution to evangelical systematic theology, both in content and example. Graham Cole's work is an examination of the Holy Spirit's person, work, and relationships. Although it does not offer any new or novel views, it is a clear explanation of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit from a Reformed evangelical perspective. Cole consistently and self-consciously seeks to be biblical, drawing his conclusions about the Spirit from the findings of exegesis and biblical theology. At the same time, he interacts with and draws from some of the key theological ideas concerning the Spirit past and present, evangelical and non-evangelical. His work is also purposely practical, as Cole offers applications for belief and practice at the end of each chapter. The entire book is written with an attitude of epistemic humility, befitting the Spirit who is himself elusive and humble.

In his introductory chapter, Cole explains his methodology and outlines the book, which is divided into four parts: the mystery of the Spirit, the ministry of the Spirit from the OT perspective, the ministry of the Spirit from the NT perspective, and a concluding note on the magnificence of divine selflessness. Cole strongly emphasizes an evidence-based approach to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, with the primary evidence being the special revelation of Scripture. Before he begins his analysis of the Scripture's teaching on the Spirit's person and work, however, he examines the elusiveness of the Spirit. Appealing to Jesus' statement that the Spirit's action is like the wind in that he blows where he wills (John 3:3–8), Cole maintains that there is mystery with the doctrine of the Spirit that cannot be overcome. There is a certain incomprehensibility about God's nature and actions that demands an attitude of humility when it comes to speaking about the Spirit. The Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and evangelical strands of Christianity have all realized this mystery to a certain extent. The mystery of God helps to set the boundaries for theology, as theology can only explain so much about God and then must bow before him when the revelatory data is exhausted.

This chapter on the elusiveness of the Spirit sets the tone for the entire book. There are certain areas of doctrine, such as the personhood of the Spirit, that are non-negotiable because they are strongly supported by the scriptural evidence. Other areas of doctrine ought to be seen as theological opinion because the evidence is not as clear. Examples include the precise relation of the Spirit to the Father and the Son, and the relationship between the Spirit and the atonement. Further evidence of the Spirit's elusiveness lies in the range of meanings of the words translated as "Spirit." Cole helpfully highlights the challenges inherent in translating the words used for Spirit in both the OT and the NT; it is difficult at times to know whether *ruach* or *pneuma* refer to the Spirit or to wind, breath, or spirit. This difficulty again demands a certain epistemic humility when it comes to making pronouncements about the Holy Spirit. Cole's acknowledgement of the incomprehensibility of God and the need for humility in theological construction is commendable, and his humility before God's revelation is evident throughout the book. There are times, however, when this humility results in conclusions that are perhaps too modest, as Cole works carefully to avoid an overly dogmatic stance on issues where he believes the Scriptures are not as clear.

Appropriately, Cole moves from the mystery concerning the Spirit's elusiveness to the mystery of the Spirit and the triune God. In doing so, he commits himself to a pneumatology from above; he aims to examine who the Spirit is in the life of the Godhead before he examines the Spirit's work. The Spirit's personhood and deity are both established by Scripture. Cole understands persons as constituted through relationships with other persons, and in light of this he commits himself to social Trinitarianism, but he does

not elaborate on this position or thoroughly explain why he prefers this understanding. In regards to the issue of the gender of the Spirit, the Bible often uses feminine imagery of the Spirit, but the Bible never refers to any persons of the Godhead with feminine pronouns or names. Scriptural precedent designates the Holy Spirit as “he” and not “she” or “it.” Furthermore, Cole is cautious when it comes to praying to the Spirit, believing that it is not wrong on occasion but underscoring the normal scriptural pattern of addressing prayer to the Father in the name of the Son in dependence on the Spirit. One area that Cole draws perhaps too modest of a conclusion is at the end of this chapter when he states that he does not believe we can erect specific models for marriage, church, and society based on speculation about the inner life of the Trinity (pp. 89–91). While there are certainly differences of opinion on what these models should look like, this does not mean that one model is not more reflective of Scripture than another. Scripture seems to indicate that the inner life of the Trinity does impact how men and women ought to relate to one another (e.g. 1 Cor 11:3).

Having established who the Spirit is, the second part of the book begins exploring the Spirit’s work, and does so from the perspective of the OT. Cole begins by looking at the Spirit’s involvement in creation. Here, as elsewhere, he is exegetically sensitive, presenting all of the options for translating *ruach* in Gen 1:2 while concluding that the verse is referring to God’s Spirit. The Spirit is not presented as an agent of creation *ex nihilo*, but as the “perfecting cause” of creation. In discussing the Spirit’s role in creation, Cole raises the question of how Christians ought to read the OT, and whether the Holy Spirit is legitimately spoken of in the OT. Although the discussion is brief, Cole rightly defends an understanding of the Holy Spirit in the OT by appealing to the canonical context of Scripture and to the way that the NT authors saw Christ in the OT. The chapter ends with a note on the Spirit’s role in common grace. This section could have been more developed; Cole maintains that Calvin’s biblical warrant for his view of common grace is unconvincing but fails to give any alternate biblical foundations for common grace (pp. 110–12). Similarly, Cole states that the Spirit is at work outside of Israel and the church, which is true, but he does not elaborate on what this work is or might include.

The next two chapters examine the Spirit’s relationship with Israel in general and the messianic hope of Israel in particular. Both of these chapters are excellent examples of how biblical theology ought to be incorporated into systematic theology. In relationship with Israel, the Spirit can be seen as the one who cares for God’s people, who governs God’s people, who communicates with God’s people, and who is present with God’s people. Through the Holy Spirit God is at work throughout history, bringing about his purposes. A major part of the Spirit’s work in history was his preparation through Israel for the person and work of Jesus Christ, which will ultimately result in the new creation. This aspect of the Spirit’s work ought to lead believers to place their hope in God and to live in light of the eschatological horizon. God is also seen to be someone who cares about aesthetics, working his beauty through the material and historical orders of creation. These chapters end with an excursus on the question of whether or not OT believers were regenerate. Cole again displays his exegetical sensitivity and concludes that OT believers were regenerate but not indwelt by the Spirit (a conclusion that John 7:37–39 and 16:7 substantiate).

The third section, which makes up nearly half the book, looks at the work of the Spirit from the perspective of the NT. Building upon the Spirit’s work in the messianic hope of Israel, this section begins with an examination of the Messiah as the bearer of the Spirit. The key moments of Christ’s life are examined to see how the Holy Spirit was at work in them, with a purpose to understanding whether or not the Spirit-directed life that Christ lived is paradigmatic for the rest of humanity. Cole generally understands the Spirit’s role in Christ’s life in redemptive-historical terms. For example, the

virgin birth is an eschatological work of the Holy Spirit, not a metaphysical one, and the accent on Jesus' baptism is that a turning point in redemptive history has been reached. Only the transfiguration and the ascension are not presented as Trinitarian moments, as there is no explicit biblical evidence of the Spirit's involvement in them.

Cole is careful in this chapter to see the Spirit only where the Scriptures say he is present. He is perhaps overly careful here, though, as some of the implications he draws at the end of this chapter are questionable. First, he uses the subordination of the Son to the Spirit during the incarnation as evidence that the persons in the economic Trinity do not relate in the same way as they do in the immanent Trinity. For Cole, appeal cannot be made to the economic Trinity in order to illuminate the immanent Trinity (p. 173). On the one hand, Cole is correct in noting that the incarnation presents a new way of relating within the Godhead, as Jesus now becomes human; on the other hand, it is problematic to conclude that there is an asymmetry between the inner and external workings of the Trinity. If there is an asymmetry, then there seems to be no way to know for sure who God is, as his actions in creation do not necessarily reflect who he is in himself. Second, Cole concludes that Jesus' experience of the Holy Spirit is not paradigmatic, as there is no biblical text that establishes this point (p. 175). I appreciate Cole's respect for the text, but is there not sufficient theological warrant to see Christ's human experience, including his experience in the Spirit, as paradigmatic? If Jesus is the human being *par exemplar*, and we are supposed to live in his image and in the power of the Spirit, is that not warrant enough to seek direction in the way that he lived in the Spirit? Granted, Jesus is the unique God-man, but he lived his life as a human being, serving as our supreme example in all things.

The next chapter examines the relationship between the Messiah and the Spirit from the opposite angle: the risen Christ is now the bestower of the Spirit. Cole's exegesis and grasp of biblical theology once again highlight this material. He understands John the Baptist's prophecy of Christ baptizing with the Spirit and with fire to refer to two separate baptisms, one of blessing and one of judgment. He does a fine job explaining John 14–16 and the promise of the *Paraclete*, preferring to leave the term untranslated and let the context determine its meaning. He understands Spirit baptism as taking place at salvation and not as power for service; he also distinguishes between the fullness and the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Pentecost should be understood in the context of redemptive-history, and not as an event that is normative for all subsequent Christians. Cole is more Eastern than Western on the question of the *filioque*, believing that the Spirit eternally proceeds from the Father through the Son. He does not believe that this eternal reality is reflected in the economic Trinity, however, demonstrating the asymmetry he believes is present. He rightly emphasizes that no matter what one's position on this issue, pneumatology must never be divorced from Christology in the economy of salvation.

After exploring the relationship between Christ and the Spirit, the next chapter looks at the relationship between the church, the Spirit, and salvation. The book does not include a separate chapter on the Spirit and the individual, but instead explores life in the Spirit as "a corporate reality with individual implications" (p. 210). Pentecost serves as the birth of the Body of Christ and a restoration of Israel to its prophetic role in world missions; the Spirit now serves that mission to bring believers into the church. Cole makes a good point about the effectual call of the Spirit, noting that the Bible never refers to this call as the Spirit's work, but that it is nonetheless theologically appropriate to do so. Salvation is described as a work of God requiring a human response. Highlights of this chapter include a discussion of the Spirit's role in the ordinances (Cole urges caution in this area) and *theosis* (believers should not become God, but become like God). The practical applications of the Spirit's role in forming the church are also excellent: We should appreciate our union with Christ by the Spirit, recognize the im-

portance of unity, be filled with the Spirit, be holy, and understand that the Spirit actually grieves and God actually suffers because of our sin.

There is a brief explanation of spiritual gifts and their relevance for today at the end of this chapter. Cole takes a middle road between cessationism and continuation of the gifts in today's age, calling his position "open but discerning" (p. 256). He describes it as a form of continuationism, but admits that for him it is practically the same as cessationism. I appreciate Cole's caution here and his desire not to quench a legitimate work of the Spirit, but I find his position problematic. If one is a continuationist and believes that the gifts are still operative today, should one not be encouraging them in every way possible (even if they are not fully understood) for the good of the church? Is this not the purpose of spiritual gifts, and should they not be earnestly desired? To be practically a cessationist and theologically a continuationist is inherently contradictory.

The final chapter of the book concerns the role of the Holy Spirit in knowing God. The Christian relationship comes with a worldview, and the Spirit is the one who helps believers develop this worldview. Throughout the chapter, Cole examines the relationship between the Spirit and special revelation, believing that there is too little scriptural evidence to discuss general revelation and the Spirit (p. 260). As Christ is the redemptive mediator, the Spirit is the epistemic mediator. The entire chapter is an excellent discussion of illumination, the Spirit's witness concerning Scripture, and the believer's assurance of salvation. The act of discerning the Spirit is also explored, with an emphasis on the Spirit's Christological and scriptural accents.

In the conclusion, Cole reiterates the divine selflessness of the Spirit and shows how this characteristic uniquely contributes to the Spirit's magnificence and glory. It is a fitting way to end a book on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. The strengths of the book are many: it is biblically based, exegetically sensitive, humble, irenic, informed by history, and practical. It covers a wide range of material and is broad in scope. Several areas could have been explored further, such as the work of the Spirit beyond Israel and the church, his work in general revelation, and his work in the new creation, but the book is careful not to go beyond what can be conclusively established from Scripture. Readers who are interested in what the Bible says about the Spirit and not in speculation will be pleased. The material is well written and could be used as a book in a Bible study at church or as a textbook in a seminary classroom. It is a resource that I will come back to again and again, and I recommend it to all who are interested in a robust biblical and systematic theology of the Holy Spirit of God.

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

No great symbol of Christianity has seen as much controversy as baptism. Somehow, this ancient and biblical act of celebration symbolizing new spiritual life became a source of confusion and division in the modern church. Much modern historiography has complicated the interpretation of primary sources, only touching on preferred writers and often revealing confessional interference. Everett Ferguson seeks to elucidate these same sources, as church history offers a more generous and faithful reading of the ancient practice of baptism. The early church discussed and advanced its understanding of the biblical significance of the act, elaborated on the great wealth of spiritual benefits it embodied, and hosted a variety of catechetical and practical applications. This study spans

the entire patristic period, and stands as a masterful opus that immediately becomes the definitive resource on baptism in the early church.

Everett Ferguson, now Distinguished Scholar in Residence at Abilene Christian University, is arguably the most influential second-century scholar of our time. In yet another significant work, he examines closely the literary sources containing material on baptism in the first five centuries of the church, preferring the earlier years due to the readily available sources on the fourth and fifth centuries. The book also considers the art and archeological sources that the author admits required some learning on his part. Ferguson intends to stress the wide agreement among scholars on the historical facts, and asserts his intention to be historically objective on the controversial topic of baptism. Such a task is enormous.

Material on the belief and practice of baptism in the early church is laid out chronologically. Its six major parts include antecedents to Christian baptism, the NT, and the four successor centuries through AD 500. The twelve-page Table of Contents lays out individual patristic figures, literary works, and historical events that contributed to the development of the doctrine of baptism. Predictably, the most trusted and leading figures on baptism are treated: Ignatius, Justin, Tertullian, the *Apostolic Tradition*, Cyprian, Origen, Ephraem, Ambrose, and Augustine. The geographical range is impressive, with chapters devoted to Syria, Egypt, Antioch, Spain, Coptic areas, Armenia, and Gaul, in addition to the ever-important Palestine, Asia Minor, Italy, and urban North Africa. This cultural span takes even the informed Western reader into the broader baptismal activities of the early church.

Immediately impressive is how every patristic figure or work even referencing baptism in the early church is treated. The Table of Contents neatly clarifies topics featured by each church father, city, or school preserving an aspect of baptismal theory or practice. Additional works whose authors cannot be definitively identified enhance the study, thus removing some of the stigma that a reader might associate with a particular patristic personality.

After a literature review of major studies, the book considers antecedents and foundations of Christian baptism. The analysis of ceremonial washings and baptismal practices in the Tannaic period, as well as baptism significance in the Gospels and Epistles of the NT, will be of great interest to biblical scholars. Hellenistic practices influenced first century Judaism, seen in the variety of purification practices in ceremonial washings and early baptismal movements. John the Baptist remains the great harbinger of baptismal history, though, with rare exception in the Essenes and one solitary ascetic Bannus preceding him. The etymologies of βάπτω and βαπτός receive much attention, and Ferguson insists that they are inseparable from a notion of “submerging” (p. 59). Likewise, the etymologies of βαπτίζω and βαπτισμός receive much attention, and linguists will appreciate the regular delineation of key terms, including “bathe” λούω, to “wash” body parts νίπτω, to “wash” inanimate things πλύνω, and “sprinkle” ραίνω. Pseudepigraphal and apocryphal works also receive attention. Ferguson points out that they add little to our understanding of the practice, but do reinforce the importance of baptism. The earliest paintings in the Roman catacombs are pictures of baptism, predominantly Jesus’ own, with symbols of the Holy Spirit, faith, and new birth, and either depict water or allude to the presence of water.

The *Didache* is the first extrabiblical reference to Christian baptism, emphasizing the Trinitarian formula, fasting beforehand by the baptizand and the witnesses, and the practice of pouring if “living water” is unavailable. Ferguson claims that living water means “moving or running,” and rightly draws out its imagery of imparting new life (pp. 203–4). The second-century *Epistle of the Apostles* confirms the popular images of light and seal with baptism, as well as the laying on of hands. However, the work also confirms baptism of the righteous dead by Jesus, permitting them to leave Hades for heaven.

As the book moves through the centuries, key trends and controversies are treated to construct a developmental account of the doctrine of baptism. Important literary works and notable events, issues of mode, theological rationale, various practical elements, liturgical elements, and controversies are all treated to reveal ancient practices. In fact, the content is so complete that at times the historical and theological details can become indistinct between patristic writers, suggesting that its best use is as a resource tool. This review presents some effects and specific examples as a mere sample of the larger, complex presence and practice of baptism in antiquity represented in the book.

Virtually all writings ascribe a saving significance to baptism. The most common associations were new birth imagery expressed by the water, cleansing by immersion, the practice of nude baptism, the receipt of a white gown, and martyrdom as baptism by blood for new life beyond. Its connection to a necessary work for salvation varied, but tended to signify faith rather than cause it. Although Melito of Sardis may have written the first treatise on baptism, Tertullian wrote the first surviving treatise about AD 200. A controversial element appears there: the seeming necessity of baptism for salvation. Tertullian allows that no sacrament of water was necessary before Christ, but now “faith was put under obligation to the necessity of baptism” (p. 339). Faith and repentance find universal association with baptism, even in the liturgy of infant baptism. Amidst this tendency toward baptismal responsibility, Ferguson rightly insists that baptism was always viewed as a divine gift and never a human work, “premised on the saving effect of Christ’s death on the cross and his victorious resurrection” (p. 854).

The eras of Constantine and Theodosius find richer descriptions of the significance and practice of baptism, especially in writers like Theodore and Chrysostom. One phenomenon was the increased practice of postponing baptism until the end of one’s life. A third-century reference captures the rationale for “clinical baptisms” when the *Questions of Bartholomew* attributes to Jesus, “It is good if he who is baptized preserves his baptism without blame” (p. 227). The Cappadocian Fathers discourage the practice (although Basil seems also to have practiced it), and Chrysostom speaks against it: “[Some] receive baptism amidst laments and tears, but you are baptized with rejoicing and gladness . . . the time for mysteries is in health of mind and soundness of soul” (p. 623). Ferguson identifies how the reasons for this sickbed practice were a desire to optimize one’s readiness for heaven without risking the detriment through further sin. However, he comments that this policy instituted and modeled by Constantine may have led some to evade undertaking full responsibilities of church membership (p. 617).

John Chrysostom serves as an example of how a single writer can embody a whole range of theological and practical features. He describes how the baptizand was anointed on the forehead with oil of the Spirit—an olive oil used by athletes mixed with unguent used by brides—applied with the sign of the cross. The candidate is now “a combatant chosen for the spiritual arena” (p. 540), portraying just a few of the many symbols surrounding baptism. In this case, athletic, nuptial, and Christological identification buttress the baptizand’s observance. Chrysostom also provides an explanation for the Syrian tradition of shallower baptismal fonts. His liturgy describes the dipping of the head underwater by the priest three times, raising the head up and down while the rest of the body is probably kneeling in the water. Such an explanation seems more elucidatory than Ferguson’s additional reason that “persons were not as tall then as today” (p. 542). Finally, Chrysostom lists blessings of baptism beyond the forgiveness of sins: sanctification, justice, filial adoption, inheritance, and establishing dwelling places of the Spirit.

The Novatian and Donatist controversies receive expected attention in the writings of Cyprian and Augustine, as these groups rejected individual baptism on the grounds of lapses during persecution or the moral character of the administrator. Less known is the disagreement between Cyprian and Stephen of Rome over the rebaptism of converts from heterodox and heretical bodies. Stephen insisted that heresies showed no other

innovation about conversion except the creditability of the hands laid on the converts; thus, no rebaptism should be required. Furthermore, there was no precedent for rebaptism in the tradition of the church, to which Cyprian retorted: "A custom without truth is but error grown old" (p. 384). The controversy is important to Protestants changing denominations or converting to Orthodoxy, where one can be confronted with pressure for rebaptism.

Augustine's influence on the theology and practice of baptism is obvious, and Ferguson thoroughly reconstructs the baptismal rite at Hippo from the bishop's writings, including features of confession, fasting, exorcism, instruction, tasting salt, nudity and humiliation, the Trinitarian formula, the laying on of hands as a symbol of receiving the Holy Spirit, and the baptismal Eucharist. In a passing claim, Ferguson remarks that "infant baptism, although not yet the norm, was common" (p. 788), yet still provides clear patterns of adult sponsors and the continuity of practicing immersion in infant baptism. The Pelagian debate saw Augustine introduce infant baptism as a principle support for original sin, and not the other way around, Ferguson insists. By the time of the dispute, baptism was commonly associated with the forgiveness of actual rather than inherited sins. The controversy solidified a coupling of original sin and infant baptism as standard doctrine in the West.

A natural curiosity for readers will be the data surrounding the mode and eligibility of baptism in the early church. Tertullian made reference to the practice of baptizing children in his day, to which he remarked "the delay of baptism is more suitable, especially in the case of small children" (p. 364). Likewise, the *Apostolic Tradition* instructed to "first baptize the small children," including those not able to speak for themselves (p. 366). In three homilies, Origen justified infant baptism, as exemplified in the following: "Through the mystery of baptism, the stains of birth are put aside. For this reason, even small children are baptized" (p. 367). Cyprian offered a case that baptism should occur regardless of birth age, in response to Fidus's insistence that infants should be at least eight days old before they are baptized. The doctrine of original sin enters in most clearly here, a debate foundational to the doctrine's establishment in the West.

Yet, Ferguson seems engrossed with softening such patristic instructions by pointing out less obvious points of the writers. A rare drawback of the work is the effort with which Ferguson concretizes a case for believer baptism, and the ease with which he dismisses paedobaptist practices, so that his interpretation of the literary data systematically sounds one-sided. For example, he simply claims the *Apostolic Tradition* practice of baptizing small children is "clearly a secondary development" despite the force of other principal witnesses to the text (p. 367). He posits Tertullian's "opposition to baptizing children" when the Church father simply says it is "more suitable to delay"—not objecting entirely to the baptism of infants while even describing the practice of sponsorship and the later need for confirmation (p. 340). Ferguson claims that Tertullian would not have "rejected a generally accepted practice" (p. 364), which begs the question of both the writer and the culture. He claims that "Origen's innovation is to extend the baptismal forgiveness of sins to ceremonial impurity, particularly associated with childbirth" (p. 369), which feels like Origen bases infant baptism only on Levitical regulations while detracting from its presence in a significant Christian community. In this case, Ferguson minimizes key Roman, Carthaginian, and Alexandrian sources clearly testifying to the practice—not anomaly—of infant baptism by the year 250. Thus, he concludes it was not normative until the late fourth century (p. 379). However, such pre-disposed conclusions are brief and never sound hostile. Perhaps this emphatic interpretation is part of his prefaced admission: "I may have pushed the areas of consensus further than many might" (p. xix).

For the origin of infant baptism, Ferguson offers an interesting hypothesis: the common threat of death to infants in the ancient world. An epitaph from Macedonia reveals the comfort of Christian parents because Christ "gave her [their daughter] from

an eternal spring the life of heavenly beings." A Greek inscription of one Macaria, who "lived three years, three months, sixteen days," claims that "she died a believer." On the other hand, he evenhandedly reveals how other Christian infant inscriptions lack such claims, concluding no pattern of routinely baptizing infants shortly after birth (pp. 376–77). Ferguson's analysis rightly includes him engaging the influential 1958 work of Jeremias, who argued that infant baptism was normative for the Christians in the first three centuries.

Perhaps the greatest contribution of the book is the indispensable theology surrounding baptismal acts, particularly those seemingly minor practices included in the often variable rite of baptism. Exorcism, the Trinity, healing, nudity, typology, blood and martyrdom, and Christological imagery arise in patristic writings, liturgy, and art, as well as ideas of crucifixion, purification, resurrection, new life, and eternal life. Several examples can illustrate the multiplicity of topics associated with early church baptism. Basil recognizes the place of raising hands, kneeling, and standing (p. 619). Tertullian and the Pseudepigraphal *Acts of Paul* offer the earliest evidence of triple immersion that became customary from the third to fifth centuries and is still practiced in Eastern Orthodoxy today. Syriac sources display a practice of spitting at the devil in renunciation early in the baptism ceremony. Justin suggests how the rite was followed immediately by the opportunity to receive the Eucharist with the congregation for the first time. Ambrose refers to an "opening of the ears" in the liturgy whereby the priest would touch the ears of the baptizand in a ceremony the night before her baptism, that she would be "open to his words" (p. 636).

Ferguson provides architectural and theological attention in a special section on baptisteries in both East and West. He includes the earliest dated Christian baptistery of Dura Europus in Syria, and the Greek graffiti in the room, "Christ Jesus be with you," is a reminder of the central place of Christ in Christian baptism (pp. 442–43). He presents twenty-four pictures of early baptisms on sarcophagi, carvings, and illustrated manuscripts in the third to sixth centuries, in addition to pictures of baptismal fonts with various features of shape and function.

Eerdmans has done a great service to publish this high-quality work, and the value to the field is obvious. *Baptism in the Early Church* is the most thorough, detailed handbook on baptism in the early church, surpassing all other single treatments of the topic. Its literature review plus its bibliographical material is bounteous, it deals with every considerable patristic figure, and its various motifs and applications receive due attention. In addition, it could serve as an excellent graduate study in the development of doctrine, and libraries with interests in Christian history must have this work. Cost will be a factor, but this almost thousand-page work will profit academic audiences with historical, theological, and social interests in one comprehensive volume. Perhaps its contents will help the church appreciate even more this historic and biblical rite, and so appreciate the unity and mystery prompting Paul's adage: "One Lord, one faith, one baptism."

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Ignatius of Antioch and the Parting of the Ways: Early Jewish-Christian Relations. By Thomas A. Robinson. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2009, xiv + 285 pp., \$27.95 paper.

Ignatius of Antioch has long been an underused and undervalued contributor to the development of earliest Christianity. The reasons for this oversight vary from questions of the validity of his claim to be the bishop of Antioch in any meaningful sense

in early Christian history, to challenges of his sanity in light of his quest for martyrdom. Fortunately, this neglect has been remedied by some important recent works regarding the bishop of Antioch and his seven letters. Thomas A. Robinson's *Ignatius of Antioch and the Parting of the Ways* is a particularly welcomed analysis from a seasoned scholar who is not new to this terrain. His first monograph was *The Bauer Thesis Examined: the Geography of Heresy in the Early Christian Church* (SEBE 11; Lewiston, NY: Mellen, 1988), in which Robinson confronted numerous assumptions of Bauer's thesis for the Mediterranean world not long after this seminal work was translated into English (Walter Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971]). The current work is a challenge to newer consensuses in modern scholarship, particularly with reference to Ignatius's treatment of Jews and Judaism in his correspondence.

Robinson defends the significance of Ignatius and his devotion of a full volume to him in the opening chapter. Most crucial is that "Ignatius's writings speak forcefully to almost every issue in our contemporary debates about the early Christian movement, from the shaping of Christian self-understanding and its perception of the 'parting of the ways' from Judaism to the question of the diversity of early Christian assemblies, to the numerous developments that came to characterize the Christian movement by the mid-second century" (p. 5). The primary area of concern for Robinson, however, is the light that Ignatius's correspondence sheds on Christian identity and Jewish-Christian relations in this early period. In sum, Robinson asserts three main points: Ignatius presents Christianity as a movement entirely separated from Judaism and far more distinct than what the current scholarly debate admits; Ignatius's "pointed assessment of Judaism is much more dismissive and uncompromising" than what is often portrayed; and Ignatius represents a mainstream rather than a lone or novel position (p. 6).

To set the context of Ignatius, Robinson provides an enlightening analysis of the city of Antioch, its history, population, and cultural and religious mix, with a special focus upon the status of Jews and Judaism. Robinson is careful not to overstate evidences and cautions against such methodological errors as assuming parallels between Hellenistic cities in the Mediterranean world—a common temptation in light of the paucity of evidence for Antioch—and taking ancient sources at face value, particularly Josephus who, while a critically important voice, is an "apologist" for Judaism in Antioch (p. 30). The conclusion that emerges is that Antioch was a revitalized city in the Roman period as an imperial capital and strategic military center in the East. It was also a religiously diverse city with a significant Jewish population (estimates range from 22,000 to 45,000) that had maintained a presence in this city very likely for the entire four centuries of its history. The status of the Jewish community in Antioch was influenced by a variety of historical and social factors, including the Maccabean revolt of the second century BC, the first Judean revolt of AD 66–74, various waves of Jewish and pagan immigrants to the city, as well as the early presence and advance of Christians and Christianity.

Robinson tackles numerous thorny issues regarding Jews and their status, addressing questions of citizenship, as Josephus contended, or their constituting a *politeuma*, a self-governing community, in Antioch. Each of these options is dismissed due to a lack of verifiable evidence, the latter due essentially to questions of the real existence of such a category for Jews in the ancient world (p. 29). Robinson posits the Jews as a relatively stable population in Roman Antioch, somewhat at odds with the native population due in large part to the Jewish revolt of AD 66–74. For example, Josephus contended that the citizens of Antioch twice petitioned Titus to expel the Jewish residents from the city, but he refused (see Josephus, *J.W.* 7.100–103, 109; p. 36, n. 131). Robinson raises some important questions regarding how and to what degree the local Jewish community controlled admission to its circle, particularly in light of Jewish immigrants and Gentile converts, most pointedly after the Jewish revolt. If the native population was suspicious

of the Jewish population and Jewish immigrants to their city, then this issue would set the two communities at odds, a factor which would likely have implications for Jewish-Christian relations in Antioch as well.

Robinson addresses the topic of "Christian Conversion in Antioch" in chapter two. He provides an excellent analysis of such categories as proselytes and God-fearers, a vitally important study in light of modern theories regarding the growth of Christianity from these sub-groups and reconstructions which identify converts from these groups as the primary opponents of Ignatius. In short, Robinson challenges a number of concerns of these views: the numerical strength of each of these categories; the social and religious instability of Jewish proselytes; the position of Judaism as a "way station for pious Gentiles on their way to Christianity" (p. 48); and, most importantly, the likelihood that God-fearers and Jewish proselytes would continue to be a source for Christian conversion at Ignatius's point in history. On the latter point, it is clear from Acts that God-fearers were attracted to the new faith; however, what must be kept in mind is that the situation of Acts was decades prior to Ignatius's time, and the movement of individuals within these groupings from interest in Judaism to interest in Christianity is unlikely, particularly if Ignatius's writings are used as indicators.

What is quite fascinating from Ignatius's letters is that God-fearers and Jewish proselytes do not seem to be in view in any real sense. Ignatius is concerned about both Jews and Gentiles coming to faith in Christ; however, what seems to concern the bishop most in his polemical sections is individuals who come to the Christian faith from pagan backgrounds and then take special interest in Judaism. Thus, the Judaizers—if Ignatius's opponents can be identified as such—are not Jewish converts to Christianity seeking to retain and advance Jewish practices among Christians (though certainly such issues would concern our bishop); rather, they are Gentile converts to Christianity who have been introduced to Judaism through the new faith and have taken a special interest in Judaism, promoting its theology and practices. It is on this point that Robinson makes one of his most significant observations: "If we want to speak of a middle ground, *both* Christianity and the God-fearers should be considered such between paganism and Judaism, providing for some pagans a pathway to Judaism" (author's emphasis, p. 61). It is this context that creates the most likely situation in early second-century Antioch, where established Judaism and emerging Christianity competed for converts.

In this engaging discussion, Robinson challenges a number of consensus held among scholars of early Christianity and calls for more nuanced positions or their abandonment, including: the "age of anxiety" promoted by Dodds (p. 62); the urban nature of Judaism and Christianity in this era; the social and financial status of Jews; the continued attraction of Hellenized Jews, God-fearers, and Jewish proselytes to Christianity in the early second century; and the division of Judaism and Christianity into multiple "Judaisms" and "Christianities." Robinson argues that by the turn of the century, Christianity was still a fledgling movement struggling for legitimacy within an empire where scandalous rumors and threats of persecution were developing, while Judaism, still a legal religion, was developing its own response to the Christian movement and very likely advancing its own mission to Gentiles. In many senses, Judaism was an attractive option over Christianity because of its antiquity, legality, and established position in the Mediterranean world, its negative reputation notwithstanding.

As stated, Robinson laments the modern scholarly trend of multiplying "Judaisms" and "Christianities" in the ancient world. While he is willing to admit to the unique perspectives of various documents and collections of Jewish and Christian writings in this period, he does not see these diverse perspectives as the basis for a separate community for each document. Such a trend is not good historical method and often creates a picture of a fragmented religious world out of sorts with ancient realities. Using Ignatius again as an indicator, Robinson observes that he had two extreme positions within his church,

Judaizers on the one hand and Docetists on the other. Given this diversity within the Christian community that he served as bishop, Ignatius is a signal for the unity versus the fragmentation of early Christian communities. This point is further supported by the fact that Ignatius gives the impression that the schism within his church in Antioch was recent rather than a long-standing condition. Robinson argues, “groups were able to function with a range of options within single communities” (p. 75). What is more, “Those who contend that there were numerous theologically distinctive Christian communities in the year 100 must rest their argument on communities mostly without histories or futures” (p. 78). Similar arguments can be made for Judaism. The picture that emerges is that Judaism and Christianity were distinct and separate religions in the early second century AD, and Ignatius writes his letters as bishop of the church at Antioch, addressing as one of his primary concerns the threats he perceives from those who would have Christians move back toward Judaism.

Robinson provides a rather clear image of Ignatius and his church’s situation in light of numerous contemporary scholarly debates. He challenges Magnus Zetterholm’s recent analysis on numerous points (*The Formation of Christianity in Antioch* [New York: Routledge, 2003]), including the payment of the temple tax (*fiscus judaicus*) and the identity of the Christian church as a *collegium*. He places Ignatius’s church in continuity with Matthew’s community as well as that of the *Didache*. Robinson also challenges the revisionist portrayal that mutes the hostility between Christianity and Judaism in this early period. His portrait includes the following distinguishing features: the Christian church in Antioch was essentially unified, not divided into numerous “denominational” groups with little relationship and no shared authority structure; Ignatius was the primary bishop of the Christian church in Antioch, representing an early presence of “monepiscopal” church structure; Ignatius had a positive relationship with the presbyters and deacons of his church; opposition to Ignatius’s leadership does not seem to derive from the leadership, but rather from a marginalized group or groups within his church or from a smaller body outside his assembly; the schism that is of concern to Ignatius seems to be a rather recent development; and lastly, much of Ignatius’s trouble and polemic is related to Judaism, and even his arrest and martyrdom appear to have resulted from civil unrest rather than schism within his Christian community.

Each of these points addresses significant debates in early Christian studies, and Robinson provides excellent engagement with and documentation of the varied discussions. In all of this, he proves a careful scholar, respectful of ancient sources (though not naïvely so), and a challenger of current scholarship especially when modern sensibilities drive contemporary academics to restructure the past to make it more palatable. Nowhere does this show up more clearly than in his final chapter, “Boundaries, Identity, and Labels.” Here, Robinson shows deference to the literary works and terminology of the ancient sources in a way that is uncharacteristic of some current trends in modern scholarship. If the terms “Christian” and “Jew,” “Christianity” and “Judaism,” were meaningful categories to Ignatius, then it is the task of the historian of religion to understand what he understood and meant rather than reconstructing his meaning based upon modern sensibilities. Obviously, the contemporary debate over terminology and its usage in the process of separation between Judaism and Christianity and identity-making is significant and should not be abandoned; nevertheless, it is incumbent upon modern scholars to allow the voices and language of the ancients to be heard rather than dismissing them as imprecise and even useless. What has resulted is that reconstructions generated in our “post-Holocaust world” and “post-colonial era” (p. 239) have muted and obscured ancient voices, including that of the bishop of Antioch.

While this review has focused upon the many excellent features of Robinson’s careful analysis, the book does exhibit several rather minor deficiencies or disappointments, some ironically due to Robinson’s cautious scholarship. Having argued quite convincingly against the two- and three-heresy interpretations of Ignatius’s opponents,

Robinson does not offer a proposal as to how Docetic and Judaizing conceptions might have been united in one particular group or opponent. In fact, he distances himself “from all camps that try to identify the particular heretical character of Ignatius’s opposition” (p. 117), because such identifications require precision that Ignatius’s letters and the historical evidences do not provide. Likewise, having argued against the self-martyrdom of Ignatius or his betrayal by an opposition group, Robinson does not offer an explanation of why the civil authorities in Antioch chose to arrest the bishop and find him guilty of a crime that was worthy of execution. What is more, he does not tie in how the Jewish community, with which Ignatius was likely at odds, fits into this scenario. He does offer a word of explanation: “We would be better off to admit that Ignatius’s situation remains unexplained than to settle for a hypothesis that starts from a weak central premise about the cause of Ignatius’s anxiety and ends with so many issues unresolved” (p. 202). Though one must respect Robinson for this guardedness in a day of bold reconstructions, one would ask that he bring his cautious ways to bear by helping the reader imagine what might possibly have been the case. In the absence of a better hypothesis, the default position is most often that of the consensus.

Several other concerns and deficiencies bear mentioning. In his discussion of the Ignatian corpus and its status historically, he does not address recent debates regarding the authenticity and dating of the seven letters, accepting generally the Lightfoot consensus of seven letters from near AD 110. Quite recently, Paul Foster has accepted a date of AD 125–150 for Ignatius based upon modern challenges (“The Epistles of Ignatius of Antioch (Part I),” *ExpTim* 117 [2006] 487–92). Though I agree with Robinson’s position, the debate needs to be acknowledged in an academic work of this nature, especially because an early second-century date for Ignatius is pivotal to many of Robinson’s arguments. In addition, in several cases, he avoids some thorny issues of dating and authorship for canonical works. While not relevant to his thesis, he side-steps the debate on the authenticity of the Pauline letters (p. 69, n. 84). More pertinently, Robinson dates both Matthew and Acts to the AD 80s or 90s, when an earlier dating would lend greater support to his thesis that Matthew’s community represents an earlier group in continuity with that of Ignatius rather than a competing contemporary community. Finally, for those less familiar with the geography and history of Antioch throughout the four hundred years of its existence, a map of the region related to its political status in the various eras would be helpful.

These issues aside, *Ignatius of Antioch and the Parting of the Ways* is a wonderful volume, useful to scholars in NT, early Christian, and Jewish-Christian studies. The book provides a wealth of critical information and carefully reasoned arguments from a seasoned scholar, unafraid to challenge consensus, yet careful and nuanced in his judgments. His website at the University of Lethbridge, where he serves as Professor of Religious Studies, advertises that Robinson is working on a project related to rural Christianity in the first three centuries of the Christian movement. I anticipate that this work will provide further challenges to modern scholarly consensus that will likewise enable us to see the early Christian world with greater clarity and precision.

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What Americans Really Believe: New Findings from the Baylor Surveys of Religion. By Rodney Stark et al. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2008, 209 pages, \$24.95.

In the comedy-drama *Dan in Real Life* (Touchstone Pictures, October 26, 2007), released slightly before the publication of Rodney Stark’s *What Americans Really Believe*,

newspaper columnist Dan Burns (played by Steve Carrell) muses, "Most of the time, our plans don't work out as we'd hoped. So instead of asking our young people what are your plans . . . maybe we should tell them this: plan to be surprised."

Burns's final phrase, "plan to be surprised," applies to readers picking up Rodney Stark's startling survey of American religious beliefs and behavior. Perhaps future generations will not be so astonished, but I was amazed at the number of findings that diverge from prevailing sentiments commonly and passionately purveyed by professionals, professors, and pastors who pontificate about church controversies and American religion, or the lack thereof.

Stark offers his report with an introduction, epilogue, and twenty-three short chapters framed around four themes: "Congregations," "Beliefs and Practices," "Atheism and Irreligion," and "The Public Square." Endorsed by George H. Gallup Jr., with the Gallup Organization also providing fieldwork, the 2005 and 2007 Baylor studies were funded with \$716,000 from the John Templeton Foundation. Similar Baylor studies are slated on related topics biannually through 2018.

Part 1, "Congregations," includes chapters on church growth, "strict" churches, traditional congregations, and mega-churches. With regard to churchgoing, Stark records that in opposition to secular stereotypes of religious believers as indigent illiterates, the level of one's education has "no effect at all" on the frequency of churchgoing: "Those with post-graduate training are as likely to attend church as are those whose education ended at high school or sooner" (p. 18). Income, too, has almost no effect, "with the possible exception that those with incomes over \$150,000 are a bit less likely to attend" (p. 18). Moreover, conservative, traditional, and "more demanding" churches currently attract more members, more volunteers, and more active attendees than do "liberal" or comparatively secular congregations.

Maybe the most scandalous portion of part 1 is the chapter on mega-churches. Stark leads with an oft-repeated criticism: "It is widely believed that to be close to God, one should worship in a small, intimate congregation, surrounded by fellow worshippers who have a proper awareness that faith must recognize sin, not just happy returns" (p. 45). But the data comparing small churches (usual attendance under 100) and mega-churches (usual attendance over 1,000) reflects that "members of megachurches are not sitting in comfortable pews, basking in a sunny religion that preaches only the bright side of faith" (p. 46). For example, mega-church attendees are more likely than small church counterparts to believe that heaven absolutely exists (92% vs. 79%) and that they are going to heaven (85% vs. 53%), but they also believe in hell (90% vs. 69%), the devil (83% vs. 66%), and the reality of sin and evil (46, cf. 79–85). Mega-church attendees are more likely to tithe (46% vs. 36%), have more friends in their congregations, share their faith or "witness" to their friends (83% vs. 52%), and volunteer more both *within* their church body and *outside* of their congregation.

Stark presents smaller churches as more "liberal" and with "significantly older" attendees, but it is not clear from the material provided whether the Baylor studies considered age a factor when accounting for church participation categories here. Even so, "In the sense of having friends in the congregation, the megachurch is the more intimate community. . . . Contrary to the widespread conviction among their critics that the megachurches grow mainly through their ability to gain publicity, their growth appears instead mainly to be the result of their members' outreach efforts" (p. 49). Stark then becomes less dispassionate sociologist and more exasperated exhorter: "Indeed, among the things that are lost is the uninspired sound of hymns sung by a few dozen reluctant voices, as compared to the 'joyful noise' of thousands of voices, of large and talented choirs, and . . . professional orchestras that provide the music in the leading megachurches. Also lost is the perception that the band of faithful is old, small, and getting smaller. Finally, what is lost is the reluctance to spread the Good Tidings to others" (51).

Part 2, “Beliefs and Practices” contains, among other statistics, charts on recounted mystical or miraculous experiences, and on beliefs about who is (and who is not) going to heaven. Americans of all stripes who believe in heaven also believe that “when the roll is called up yonder,” adherents of many religions—and even some non-religious people—will be there. Only 21% of those sampled who believe in heaven also believe that no “non-religious” people will enter paradise. Only 16% of Americans who believe in heaven think that no Muslims or no Buddhists will go to heaven, and only 6% believed no Jews will go there.

Stark also references the supposed American trend of rejecting religion but embracing so-called spirituality: “Far from being mutually exclusive categories, spirituality and religiousness tend to overlap in the minds of Americans” (p. 89). Only 10% claim to be “spiritual, but not religious,” while 57% claim to be “spiritual and religious,” 17% “religious, but not spiritual,” and 16% “neither” (pp. 88–89). “Spiritual only” people are also more likely than “religious” people to believe in ghosts, extraterrestrials, and psychic phenomena (p. 91).

Part 3, “Atheism and Irreligion,” reveals that rather than belief in God fading fast into oblivion, the percentage of Americans in 2007 who said they did not believe in God (4%) was the same as the percentage of Americans in 1944 who said they did not believe in God. Furthermore, “irreligion is not effectively transmitted from parents to children. Studies show that the majority of children born into an irreligious home end up joining a religious group—most often a conservative denomination” (pp. 117, 205; cf. p. 7). Many who assert no religion say they still pray, and the majority are not “atheist,” just unaffiliated (p. 141; cf. pp. 117, 142, 205).

Stark cites complementary evidence that despite enduring nearly a century of brutal government suppression of religion, only 4% of Russians and 14% of Chinese did not believe in God near the turn of the millennium. Also embarrassing for self-described “bright” and “rational” New Atheists are statistics demonstrating that irreligious people are “almost three times as likely” to place “great value” in Tarot, séances, and psychic healing, and also more likely to believe in “real” UFOs (p. 125). With regard to occult and paranormal beliefs, “it is not religion in general that suppresses such beliefs, but conservative religion. . . . Traditional Christian religion greatly decreases credulity, as measured by beliefs in the occult and paranormal. . . . [I]t seems that the choice is either to believe in the Bible or in Bigfoot” (pp. 130–31; cf. p. 145).

Part 4, “The Public Square,” looks at American political activism and finds that in spite of bestselling books finagling frenzied and feverish fears of a “theocratic takeover” by the “Religious Right,” evangelical Christians are actually slightly less politically active than other Americans, and like other Americans “are about evenly split on increased funding for the military” (p. 156). Stark further finds that contrary to an assumed taboo on discussing politics and religion, a majority of Americans are “very comfortable” or “somewhat comfortable” talking about religion with family, friends, neighbors, co-workers, and even strangers (pp. 163–64).

In his final chapter, Stark asks, “What happens when mom and dad take their kids to church” (pp. 183–89)? Generally, regular church attendance correlates with young people being “better behaved and more well-adjusted at home and at school” (p. 184), with a lower likelihood of later divorce, with less smoking, with less sex at a young age, and with higher levels of education. The numbers are particularly significant for girls and for women, for when a child’s father is a churchgoer, and for when both parents attend church together (pp. 184–85).

In addition, although young single adults are less likely to attend worship services, they often actively return to church after marrying and having children: “When young people leave home, some of them tend to sleep in on Sunday . . . rather than go to church. That they haven’t defected is obvious from the fact that . . . later in life when they have

married, and especially after children arrive, they become more regular attenders. This happens every generation” (p. 11). This finding also controverts the conventional worry about formerly religious youth fleeing in droves from the faith of their childhood. Even if some churches—mainly smaller, more “liberal” ones—have trouble drawing and retaining young single adults, youthful “falling away” is frequently a temporary rather than a lifelong phenomenon.

While this book review barely scratches the surface of the Baylor surveys on American religion, it hopefully serves as a sampler taste of the bounteous feast dished out in *What Americans Really Believe*, arranged by Stark and his team in bite sized chapters suitable for swallowing in two or three sittings, and for digesting over a longer and more extended period. In critique, at times Stark’s commentary—for example, “the uninspired sound of hymns sung by a few dozen reluctant voices” (51)—will be perceived as off-putting and insensitive to some readers. Yet, other readers may be entertained or even convicted by such sociologically-soaked sermonizing.

As C. S. Lewis wrote in *Mere Christianity*, “Reality, in fact, is usually something you could not have guessed. That is one of the reasons I believe Christianity. It is a religion you could not have guessed. If it offered just the kind of universe we had always expected, I should feel we were making it up” (HarperCollins, 2001, 41–42). Likewise, numerous early twenty-first century readers will probably “not have guessed” the results of the 2005 and 2007 Baylor studies, so cogently condensed in *What Americans Really Believe*. That the data is practical and conveyed with panache renders it triply worthy of attention.

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