

## BOOK REVIEWS

*Roots of Rabbinic Judaism: An Intellectual History, from Ezekiel to Daniel.* By Gabriele Boccaccini. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002, xvii + 230 pp., \$24.00 paper.

The author is professor of New Testament and Second Temple Judaism at the University of Michigan. He has argued in previous publications that Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism were parallel developments from “middle Judaism” (*Middle Judaism* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991]) and that the residents of Qumran were a splinter group from the larger Essene movement, which itself split from the Zadokite priestly group due to its adherence to Enochic traditions (*Beyond the Essene Hypothesis* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998]). The present work presents a typology of intellectual developments in Judaism during the time of Rabbinic roots, from the Babylonian exile to the Maccabees. A projected study will deal similarly with what the author refers to as the period of Rabbinic origins, from the days of the Maccabees to the redaction of the Mishnah. The author writes from the methodological perspective of “intellectual history,” which he learned at Florence and Turin from Italian scholars Eugenio Garin and Paolo Sacchi (pp. 26 ff.). The result is a radically different view of Rabbinic roots and origins than one finds in *m. Abot*.

In *Roots* Boccaccini attempts to reconstruct the trajectories of the Zadokite, Enochic, and sapiential traditions by discovering and developing “chains of documents” or “communities of texts” which link the individual traditions (pp. 31–32). In his view, during the post-exilic period the Zadokite faction usurped the remnants of the house of David and the other priestly lines and became the rulers of Israel (pp. 43–72). The priestly Enochic faction opposed the Zadokite concept of order and stability due to Enochic traditions on the supernatural origin and end of evil (pp. 89–103). The sapiential tradition’s lack of explicit affirmation of Zadokite covenantal theology is taken as an argument (from silence) that this lay tradition also opposed the Zadokites (pp. 103–11). The crucial capstone of this reconstruction elevates Daniel, which Boccaccini dates in the Hasmonean period and views as mistaken in its predictions, as a sort of revolutionary synthesis of Enochic and Zadokite traditions, amounting to the first text that can be called “proto-Rabbinic” (p. 207).

Boccaccini’s work is always innovative and provocative. No doubt his hypothetical intellectual history of Rabbinic roots is plausible. His familiarity with Second Temple literature and its current interpreters is not in question. Yet many readers will conclude that his arguments for the linear development of his main trajectories often overreach the scant evidence from the primary texts. This results in what is plausible being presented as if it were assured fact. The author’s confident style of writing generally avoids such cautionary language as “perhaps,” “probably,” “most likely” (but see p. 207), giving the unwary reader the impression that this hypothetical reconstruction is fact. His bifurcation of the historical reconstruction of facts and theological pronouncements on the meaning of the facts as separate and autonomous disciplines is problematic, and the claim that his historical method is free from any philosophical or theological aporism is all the more so (p. 41).

David L. Turner  
Grand Rapids Baptist Seminary, Grand Rapids, MI

*In the Shadow of the Temple: Jewish Influences on Early Christianity.* By Oskar Skarsaune. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2002, 455 pp., \$30.00.

Skarsaune's *In the Shadow of the Temple* is a valuable contribution toward understanding the Jewish background to early Christianity. Skarsaune's target audience is the general reader. To reach that larger audience, he includes all original texts in English translation only, with virtually all non-English words in transliteration. He keeps footnotes to a minimum. He does not ignore scholarly debates, but treats them concisely, without trying to argue in detail his own solutions to knotty problems.

However, though not in a scholarly format, this work is not simplistic. Skarsaune's great learning is clearly seen in the use and selection of sources. His use of secondary works (both English and other European languages) indicates a broad knowledge of both older and newer scholarship. He also makes extensive use of primary sources, always with great care. For example, Skarsaune (p. 105 and n. 2) consciously avoids the error of past scholarship that sometimes used rabbinic sources uncritically by assuming that views held by rabbis after the destruction of the temple in AD 70 also represented the views of the Pharisees beforehand. Also, in contrast to some scholars who *a priori* assume the unreliability of certain sources (e.g. especially Josephus and the NT) or to others who demand an extreme minimalist approach to all sources, he treats all the primary sources fairly by gleaning information and fitting it together without ignoring incongruence. Skarsaune excels in reading texts sympathetically yet not naively.

The layout of the book is distinctive in its approach both at the chapter and at the book levels. Each chapter begins with a summary and concludes with a small text box called "*Temple Square*" in which the author pursues an item or theme from the chapter with suggestions for further reading, which often include helpful and brief annotations. At the book level, Skarsaune does not try to market another chronological treatment of intertestamental Judaism and the origins of Christianity. His work is arranged thematically and divided into four parts.

In the first part, he treats Jewish history and culture from the Maccabean Revolt up to about AD 200. In the first two chapters he weaves together his own narrative with primary sources including the key events that the non-specialist may not know, but needs to. In the next two chapters Skarsaune deals with the geopolitical aspects of Judaism, focusing on Jerusalem and its centrality for all of Judaism. Here his description of the Jewish priesthood is helpful (pp. 98–102). Chapter 5 provides an excellent survey of the Jewish factions.

The second part deals with the beginnings of Christianity during the first (chaps. 6–8) and second (chaps. 9–13) centuries. Skarsaune begins by placing Jesus within the context of Judaism. In chapters 7 and 8, Skarsaune demonstrates how the first Christians, themselves Jewish believers, understood their relationship to Judaism, the temple, and the Torah, and how this affected preaching to the Gentile believers. Skarsaune's analysis (p. 170) of the decree recorded in Acts 15 concerning prescriptions for Gentile believers is illuminating. Skarsaune presents evidence that it was Jewish believers living in the land of Israel into the fourth century, who continued to be the theological teachers of the entire Church, both to Diaspora Jewish believers and then through them to God-fearer believers (chaps. 9–10). When in the second century the overwhelmingly Gentile church began to fight paganism and heresy, Skarsaune argues that the tools they used were first forged by Jews and then brought into Christianity by Jewish believers. Moreover, he argues that the major Christian heretics, the Gnostics and Marcion, seem to have been pagans who explicitly rejected Judaism (chaps. 11–12). Later the church became increasingly dominated by Gentiles from a pagan background and with little understanding of the OT and Jewish teaching. Gradually the church moved away from its Jewish roots to the point of becoming anti-Semitic.

The third part deals with Christian institutions from the perspective of Jewish influence (chaps. 14–20). These topics are major Christian themes: OT and NT canon, Christology, Pneumatology, conversion/baptism, worship/calendar, and Eucharist. Skarsaune bases the tracing of Jewish roots for each of these on careful discussions of Jewish and Christian texts.

Part 4, chapter 21, is an epilogue that places modern “philo-Semitism” in the context of the grass roots philo-Semitism that has been present at various times and places throughout Church history. Skarsaune appreciates Christianity’s debt to its Jewish roots, both past and present. In fact, he closes his book with an invitation for Jewish believers to contact the Caspari Society Project, which studies the history of Jewish believers from antiquity to the present.

Skarsaune’s work makes a very profitable read. The only major drawback is the parsimonious indexing. The reader is advised as he reads to record references to items he may wish to look at again. There are, however, many strengths. His work is careful but readable for a wide audience and serves as an excellent introduction to the Jewish background of the NT and early Christianity. Yet *In the Shadow* presents much for specialists to consider as well. Professors will certainly want to read the work. Upper-class undergraduate students will profit. Even preachers in the local congregation would be better equipped through this book to avoid common pitfalls of “pop-scholarship” about NT times and the Jewish roots of Christianity.

Lee M. Fields

Roanoke Bible College, Elizabeth City, NC

*Rethinking New Testament Textual Criticism*. Edited by David Alan Black. Grand Rapids; Baker, 2002, 157 pp., \$16.99 paper.

*Rethinking New Testament Textual Criticism* explores biblical textual criticism and introduces current issues in the field of textual studies. This work was based on a symposium held at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, NC in 2000.

In the first chapter, “Issues in New Testament Textual Criticism: Moving from the Nineteenth Century to the Twenty-First Century,” Eldon Jay Epp surveys the history of textual criticism, placing importance on “internal” and “external” evidence and describing especially the *rigorous eclectic* and the *reasoned eclectic* approaches to textual criticism. This section explains the establishment of text-types for the purpose of reconstructing “the history of the New Testament text by tracing the lines of transmission back through the extant manuscripts to the earliest stages and then selecting the readings that seem best to represent the earliest attainable level of textual tradition” (p. 35). Epp also surveys and evaluates the critical texts and emphasizes the influence of Westcott and Hort’s work on critical editions of the past two centuries.

Michael Holmes in “The Case for Reasoned Eclecticism” defends the *reasoned eclectic* approach, which encompasses both internal and external evidence concerning ancient manuscripts. He provides a detailed definition of this text-critical approach and offers a comparison with the other approaches taken by the presenters at the symposium. Holmes acknowledges that the various methodologies “too often attempt to make decisions about specific variations on the basis of a few overarching rules or general guidelines” (p. 89). He argues that “no critical methodology . . . works in a vacuum; it functions only in conjunction with a view of the history of the transmission of the text” (p. 91). Holmes concludes with an established list of points by which one might understand the history of the text.

J. K. Elliott in "The Case for Thoroughgoing Eclecticism" seeks to demonstrate the use of only internal evidence to determine a manuscript's trustworthiness. Elliott provides the definition of his methodology (p. 103) and demonstrates how proponents of *thoroughgoing eclecticism* differ from those following other methodologies, in particular the proponents of *Byzantine priority*. He cautions that "in many ways the results of the three methods do not differ in all respects [in regard to principle and praxis]" (p. 104). Elliott calls for a consistency in methodology, giving examples of the UBS committee's inconsistency. Elliott also demonstrates the application of *thoroughgoing eclecticism* with select texts. Throughout these texts, he seeks to recognize and restore consistency of words, to harmonize parallel passages, to make paleographical considerations, and to consider each variant on its own merits. Elliott then focuses on the historical development and characteristics of manuscripts. He concludes, "Thoroughgoing textual criticism should be concerned not only with establishing as far as possible the original words of the original authors; it should try to explain the likeliest direction of change and why secondary texts arose" (p. 124).

Maurice A. Robinson in "The Case for Byzantine Priority" argues that "the original text can be recovered primarily from the consensus agreement of vast amounts of manuscripts that comprise what is termed the 'Byzantine Textform'" (p. 126). According to Robinson, the eclectics evaluate "only a small number of sequential variant units . . . [whereas,] if one were to follow the aggregate testimony of all manuscripts over those same sequential variant units, one would find that a continual degree of support remains, and that support is found primarily among the Byzantine witnesses" (p. 127). Robinson is careful to list principles of internal and external evidence, followed by excellent, detailed descriptions of each. However, Robinson's method, in essence, stacks the deck with a methodology that is biased in favor of the Byzantine text, rather than offering a complete evaluation of all NT manuscripts. Though Robinson offers clear and concise arguments, he makes some conclusions based on "presumptive evidence" and supposition (p. 137).

Moisés Silva provides the final chapter in this book. Silva commends the work and contributions of Hort with regard to textual criticism, for his synthesis and articulation of "nineteenth century text-critical scholarship, which was itself the culmination of intensive work tracing its lineage back to Bengel in the eighteenth century, Bentley in the seventeenth century, and Erasmus in the sixteenth century" (p. 142). In light of Hort's work, Silva evaluates the contributions of the presenters at the symposium, primarily Holmes, Elliott, and Robinson.

One problem with this work is that the chapters are imbalanced. The first chapter represents nearly fifty percent of the text; whereas, Robinson's chapter is so condensed that pertinent information seems left out (see p. 126, n. 2). In conclusion, this work is not designed to replace the introductions to NT textual criticism by Metzger or by the Alands; however, it serves as an excellent supplement.

Steven L. Cox  
Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, Germantown, TN

*Hidden Gospels: How the Search for Jesus Lost Its Way.* By Philip Jenkins. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001, 260 pp., \$14.95 paper.

Recently some critics have expended a great deal of effort rewriting the story of Jesus and Christian origins based on the Nag Hammadi texts, NT Apocrypha, and other documents. According to their new version of Church history, Jesus inspired not

one but many Christianities, each with its own doctrines and practices. According to the revision, powerful bishops in the second and third centuries AD began attacking their theological enemies, discrediting their opponents' gospels as heretical, and declaring their own texts to be canonical. In *Hidden Gospels* Philip Jenkins provides a brilliant critique of this revisionism from a historical perspective.

Much of the revisionist reconstruction depends heavily on Q and the *Gospel of Thomas*. As the argument goes, Matthew and Luke were using Q in the 80s, so the final edition of Q must have been written no later than the 70s. Assuming that the original Q underwent two subsequent revisions, the first edition or "layer" of Q (Q<sup>1</sup>) is then dated as early as the fifties.

Since both Q<sup>1</sup> and *Thomas* are sayings Gospels, the sayings format of *Thomas* is seen by the critics as an indication of its early age. Passages in *Thomas* that are similar to passages in Q are then assumed to be independent, providing multiple attestation for a core of what can be known about the historical Jesus. This core is then used to authenticate all other sayings. So, for example, apocalyptic sayings are judged inauthentic since they do not appear in *Thomas* or Q<sup>1</sup>. Since Q<sup>1</sup> and *Thomas* omit all mention of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, revisionists often assume that these doctrines were either unknown or not important to the earliest Christians.

Jenkins finds numerous faults with this whole line of reasoning. First, he demonstrates that the early dating of *Thomas* does not hold up to scrutiny. Not only does the *Gospel of Thomas* contain numerous unmistakable Gnostic allusions characteristic of the second century AD, but the sayings format is not necessarily an indication of early age either, since the third-century AD *Gospel of Philip* also has a sayings format. Second, Jenkins points out that if the original text of *Thomas* was revised as the critics claim, it would be impossible to know whether the editor(s) removed any Jewish or other un-Gnostic elements like apocalyptic, the crucifixion or resurrection. Third, while modern scholars find it difficult to believe that any group would omit teachings as important as the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, Jenkins explains that many religions in the ancient world only gradually revealed their doctrines to those who had undergone a lengthy process of initiation. Finally, the revisionists' reconstruction of history fails to take seriously early evidence from Paul in 1 Corinthians, from earlier hymns quoted in Philippians and Colossians, and from the earliest Gospel, Mark.

The revisionists' theories are also based in no small part on arguments which attempt to place various non-canonical Gospels on the same level as canonical Gospels. Jenkins believes these arguments are deeply flawed. First, although the canon was not finally fixed until the fourth century, the degree of disagreement about what constituted the canon was not very wide even as early as the second century. Second, contrary to impressions left by the critics, writings from Nag Hammadi never even rose to the level of disputed texts in early Church discussions. Third, since the golden age of Gnosticism began about AD 135, it is unlikely that any of the Nag Hammadi documents originated much before the mid-second century. Finally, Jenkins points out that the Gnostic Gospels were more concerned with Jesus as a subjective internal reality than they were with the Jesus of history. Jenkins notes that both Irenaeus and Athanasius complained that Gnostics made up or modified Gospel tradition to suit their purposes (p. 104).

Among the most prominent advocates of certain Gnostic Gospels have been radical feminist scholars. Yet, according to Jenkins, these scholars seem to ignore the fact that although Gnostic texts had much to say about women, the Gnostic religious system regarded women as being used by evil beings to keep humanity enslaved through their childbearing. For example, Gnostic texts repeatedly express the idea that the Savior came to "destroy the works of the female." Jenkins concludes, "The willingness to claim such texts as part of a lost women's canon is troubling testimony to the ideological character of some modern interpretations of the hidden gospels" (p. 147).

Jenkins covers an amazing amount of territory in only 260 pages, including: (1) extant sources like the Nag Hammadi documents and NT Apocrypha; (2) hypothetical sources like the “sayings Gospel” Q and Crossan’s *“Cross Gospel”*; and (3) pseudo-sources like the *Archo Volume* and *The Unknown Life of Jesus Christ, from Buddhist Records*. In addition, Jenkins also discusses the dating of these sources and the making of the NT canon, as well as the treatment of Jesus in the modern media.

As excellent as Jenkins’s work is, there are a few short passages that will be of concern to many evangelicals. For example, Jenkins characterizes Deuteronomy as a “successful forgery” (p. 23) and asserts that the evangelists may have “invented stories” to be more relevant. He also says—with apparent reference to the birth stories in Matthew and Luke—that as time went on “mythological and supernatural elements” about Jesus accumulated (p. 79).

As serious as these statements may be, they are mentioned only in passing and are not at all characteristic of the work as a whole. Jenkins’s historical understanding of early Gnosticism and early Church history, as well as his knowledge of nineteenth and twentieth-century religion in American life, provided a powerful basis from which he effectively refutes modern revisionists. The book is fascinating, easy to read, well documented, and well indexed. *Hidden Gospels* deserves the widest possible reading not only by scholars and students, but by the general public as well.

Dennis Ingolfsland  
Crown College, St. Bonifacius, MN

*Three Views on the Origins of the Synoptic Gospels*. Edited by Robert L. Thomas. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2002, 400 pp., \$22.99 paper.

Kregel has here adapted Zondervan’s and IVP’s very helpful “multiple views” format to present divergent evangelical perspectives on the Synoptic problem. Three major essays are each followed by brief responses from the other contributors. The novel element is a fifty-one page topical summary of the issues by Thomas at the end of the book. Grant Osborne (TEDS) and Matthew Williams (Talbot) co-author the case for Markan priority, discussing both the two- and four-source views. John Niemala (Chafer) defends the “two-gospel” view (Griesbach and variations). David Farnell (Master’s) then argues for literary independence.

The presentation by Osborne and Williams proves the most predictable. All the standard arguments are rehearsed, but special emphasis is placed on Matthew’s and Luke’s consistently improving Mark’s style and language. The authors also show how analogous Matthew’s and Luke’s changes are, on the assumption of Markan priority, to the rules of textual criticism that enable us to sift earlier from later variants.

Niemala’s chapter emerges as the most distinctive of the three. Instead of reviewing all the major arguments for his approach, he focuses almost entirely on issues of order and content. He shows how weak Markan priority is here (a point that Osborne and Williams already conceded) and summarizes his dissertation, which involves elaborate statistical analysis of the likelihood of both Matthew and Luke omitting and/or transposing the same Markan texts the precise number of times they do. Unexpectedly but helpfully, Niemala uses about one-third of his space to preface his presentation with a survey of both Luke and patristic sources, showing that they support literary dependence.

Farnell divides his section into two parts: stressing the liberal presuppositions of the initial supporters of modern theories of literary dependence, which he believes can-

not be separated from the theories themselves, and clarifying what the independence view entails. It allows the Synoptic writers to have consulted with each other, relied on oral tradition, and even used shorter, written eyewitness sources. Farnell also claims that this was the dominant view throughout the history of the Church, citing various ancient and modern authors in some detail.

A useful critique within the confines of a short review proves daunting. Still, I offer the following. (1) The editor initially claims these three views “dominate discussions among New Testament specialists at the beginning of the twenty-first century” (p. 9), but later corrects himself by admitting the virtual absence of the independence view in recent scholarship (p. 18). Had the book truly presented the three most common perspectives, we would have read about Markan priority, the Augustinian hypothesis (and its recent Goulder-Goodacre modification), and Griesbach. (2) Osborne and Williams give away too much by claiming that *only* the question of style, among Streeter’s arguments, really holds water. (3) Niemala thinks his approach will most likely convince the “Jesus seminarian,” but experience shows that the case for conservative oral tradition within the framework of Markan priority has a greater effect on moderating skepticism.

(4) Niemala’s overreliance on one small part of the Griesbachian argument serves his position poorly, especially when the statistical discussion is so convoluted that even people with mathematical or engineering backgrounds (like Williams and myself) find it hard to follow (and what they do follow seems unpersuasive). Indeed, the whole premise of Niemala’s study seems faulty, when he asks if Matthew and Luke are independently editing Mark, “why do not their desertions of Mark *coincide* more frequently” (p. 164)? But frequent coincidence (the “minor agreements”) would actually lead one to suspect Matthew’s use of Luke or *vice versa*—the more standard challenge of the two-gospel hypothesis to Markan priority.

(5) Farnell commits the genetic fallacy by confusing the origin of a theory with its truth value. And, as Osborne and Williams stress in their reply, thoroughgoing conservative Henry Owen proposed the two-gospel hypothesis ten years before Griesbach made it famous. (6) In his entire chapter, Farnell never once turns to a Synoptic text to show what positive evidence from Scripture itself favors the independence hypothesis (perhaps because there is none?). (7) Instead, he makes the false accusation that advocates of literary dependence of necessity deny inerrancy and employs very strained and out-of-context interpretations of Clement, Augustine, and Chrysostom to try to make them say that they believed in independence. Nowhere is there any admission that most of Church history, believing it was following Augustine, supported Matthew-Mark-Luke-John as the order of composition of the Synoptics, *with each successive Gospel writer knowing the previous works*. (8) Astonishingly, Farnell grants this much with respect to John knowing his predecessors and thus deliberately not often repeating their material. But why isn’t this theory as “liberal” by Farnell’s standards as theories of Synoptic interrelationship? (9) Further, once he grants that the Synoptists could have relied on accurate but *uninspired* oral tradition or short, written sources, why could not a previously *inspired* Gospel serve (even more reliably) as a source for a later Gospel (a point Osborne and Williams stress in their reply)?

(10) Finally, the length of Thomas’s summary was surprising. It certainly does not create a manageably-sized review of the various arguments and counterarguments. Those who do succeed in working through it could wonder why we needed the rest of the book in the first place.

The most encouraging feature of the book was the model of courteous dialogue by Osborne and Williams even in the face of inappropriate, false accusations. The most discouraging feature was Farnell’s mistaken conviction that only his view is consistent

with orthodoxy and the blistering invective against his opponents that he occasionally unleashes.

Craig L. Blomberg  
Denver Seminary, Denver, CO

*The Bible Knowledge Key Word Study: The Gospels.* Edited by Darrell L. Bock. Bible Knowledge Series. Colorado Springs: Cook Communications Ministries, 2002, 430 pp., \$44.99.

*The Bible Knowledge Key Word Study: The Gospels (KWS-G)* is the inaugural volume in a series apparently intended as an augment to the popular *Bible Knowledge Commentary* written and edited by faculty members of Dallas Theological Seminary (DTS), though the precise relationship between the aforementioned volumes is stated only in passing (p. 13). In the preface, the series editor, Darrell L. Bock, Research Professor of New Testament Studies at DTS, indicates that the *KWS* volumes are “designed for lay people and pastors who want a ready reference to the basic meaning of certain key words in their individual content” (p. 13). Bock further describes it as a tool that can be kept to one side and used for reference as one reads through Scripture.

The volume opens with Bock’s discussion of method in word studies, including fundamental rules, the types of meanings involved, the difference between diachronic and synchronic analysis, and a brief list of word fallacies, followed by endnotes on pp. 25–28, which provide further bibliographic details. This portion is clearly presented and will likely benefit the busy pastor in need of a quick refresher but will be especially helpful for laypersons largely unfamiliar with such matters.

Following the preface there is a brief four-page selection of abbreviations and ancient sources combined together, followed by a transliteration page. The explanations that are provided of the ancient sources are brief but informative (e.g. Josephus [p. 32] and Philo [p. 33], though the abbreviations are not always consistently applied throughout the volume: e.g. MM [p. 33] vs. M/M [p. 229]). The content of the *KWS-G* proper is divided into four segments. David K. Lowery of DTS is the author of the section on Matthew (74 pp.), Joel F. Williams of Columbia International University is responsible for Mark (63 pp.), Darrell Bock, as one might anticipate, does Luke (83 pp.), and W. Hall Harris of DTS contributes the segment on John, the longest of the entries in the volume (128 pp.). Two indices round out the volume: an English index, with English entries and accompanying scriptural references, followed by a Greek transliteration index, laid out similarly to the previous index.

The success of the volume must obviously be judged by its usefulness in treating key words and phrases in the four canonical Gospels. In this regard, the *KWS-G* evinces a number of strengths, for the individual contributors exemplifying careful research combined with the laudable ability to present the details of their research in accessible prose. Controversial interpretive issues are frequently dealt with competently and concisely: e.g. Matt 1:17, where a gematria explanation is offered for the thrice-repeated number fourteen (p. 40); Matt 1:23, where Jesus is interpreted to be the “greater fulfillment” of the Isaianic Immanuel prophecy (p. 41); Matt 3:2 (p. 44); 6:10 (pp. 58–59); and 12:28 (p. 74), where the concept of the kingdom is judicially discussed. Important, difficult, and controversial passages helpfully treated include, *inter alia*, Matt 10:23 (p. 69); 16:18 (p. 79); and 27:52 (p. 110); Mark 1:1 (p. 113); 1:15 (pp. 116–17); 10:45 (p. 150); 11:13 (p. 152); Luke 2:1 (p. 187); and John 1:1 (p. 261), 12 (pp. 263–64), 14 (p. 264), 18 (p. 266), 29 (pp. 268–69); 14:2 (pp. 347–48); and 14:15 (pp. 349–50). Occasionally one



sees differences in the treatments of the same incident in the triple tradition, as when Lowery (p. 91) and Williams (pp. 152–53) describe “making a profit” and “swindling” (respectively) as a motivation behind Jesus’ temple action, whereas Bock, more plausibly, sees the point at issue to be a violation of temple space (p. 241: “The money-changers were not price gouging, but had just moved into the temple area to sell these items”). Some issues may well have been worthy of fuller comment than the attention given, such as the meaning of the historically controversial “procession” of the Holy Spirit in John 15:26 (p. 357).

In addition to the evident strengths of the volume there are also some potential weaknesses. One of the key factors in word study, as Bock rightly stresses in his introduction to word studies (p. 16), is context. The *KWS-G* by the nature of its layout and focus provides comments only on isolated words and phrases. At points, moreover, the English translation and the Greek transliteration do not fully correspond (e.g. three instances on p. 177). Another issue, one that Bock candidly admits in the preface (pp. 13–14), is that there is at times a good deal of interpretation involved in treating some of the words and phrases selected. Perceptive readers will notice this particularly in the largely futurist interpretations of some of the key words and phrases in Matthew 24 (e.g. pp. 99–100), Mark 13 (e.g. pp. 159–60), and Luke 21 (e.g. p. 241). The treatment of the two longest text-critical issues in the Gospels is inconsistent. Williams alerts his reader to the textual problem of Mark 16:9–20 on p. 174 (though it might have been useful for general readers had he explained what manuscripts *Aleph* and B mean), while Harris bypasses comment on the even bigger question of John 7:53–8:11 (pp. 311–12).

Time and usage should determine which target audience the *KWS-G* will best serve. It may well prove too elementary for well-trained Seminary or Bible College pastors who can (and, indeed, should!) consult standard reference works for information of the sort contained in the *KWS-G*. Some aspects of the volume may prove too esoteric for poorly trained users, who will have little clue as to the meanings of some of the references employed (e.g. *m Abot* 5.21; *Gen Rab* 95; *m Ketub* 1.2; *1 Apol.* 66.3; Irenaeus, *Haer.* 3.11.8). Weighed as a whole, however, the volume should prove profitable to a broad audience, particularly for pastors who have not had the opportunity for Seminary training, as well as highly motivated laypersons who have a desire to study the Scriptures in greater detail than the limited aids available in a Study Bible or devotional commentary. For such persons Bock and the contributors have provided a serviceable and welcome volume, one that should probably also be made available in electronic form.

James P. Sweeney  
Immanuel Church, Chelmsford, MA

*Matthew 1–13*. Edited by Manlio Simonetti. ACCS. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2001, lii + 326 pp., \$40.00. *Matthew 14–28*. Edited by Manlio Simonetti. ACCS. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2002, xv + 344 pp., \$40.00.

These volumes are part of a series, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture (ACCS), edited by Thomas C. Oden. The series promises to be “a twenty-eight volume patristic commentary on Scripture” (1.xi), including the Apocrypha, and incorporates comments on these texts from Clement of Rome (fl. c. 95) to John of Damascus (c. 645–c. 749). The first of the Matthew volumes begins with a “General Introduction” to the series (1.xi–xxxi) written by Oden and available online at [www.ancientchristian.com](http://www.ancientchristian.com). In it, Oden outlines the three goals of the series: renewal of preaching, education of lay readers, and enhancement of scholarship by providing an accessible means for readers

to examine primary sources (1.xii). Though unapologetically a “practical homiletical and devotional guide to the earliest layers of classic Christian readings of biblical texts” (1.xii), it purports to be a contribution to scholarship as well (1.xv).

The ACCS editors used a variety of Greek, Latin, Coptic, Syriac, and Armenian sources, most notably the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* (TLG) and the Cetedoc edition of the Latin texts of *Corpus Christianorum*, to search for references incorporated in the commentary (1.xiii). In choosing ancient comments, editors looked for “theological, Christological, and triune reasoning as the distinguishing premises of classic Christian thought” (1.xix). Ultimately, their intent was “to set apart those few sentences or paragraphs of patristic comment that best reflect the mind of the believing church on that pericope” (1.xx; cf. 1.xxi–xxii). Following Oden’s introduction is an essay, “Introduction to Matthew” (1.xxxvii–lii), by Simonetti in which he attempts to survey the various methodological approaches to the first Gospel and overviews several major patristic texts, including the commentaries of Origen, Hilary of Poitiers, and Jerome, the *Opus imperfectum in Mattheaeum* (*OIM*), and several homilies.

The volumes are relatively user-friendly, with pericopes of Scripture provided in the RSV text, followed by a “topical heading” in which a particular aspect of the text under discussion is summarized (1.xxxiii). This is followed by the patristics comments (1.xxxiii) in a “catena” format. These comments are provided in dynamic equivalent translations (in some cases, for the first time in English), preceded by an “overview” statement in bold print, which gives readers “a brief glimpse into the cumulative argument of the pericope” (1.xxvii) and summarizes the author’s arguments. This is followed by the name of the ancient author and a quotation from his work. Very helpful footnotes are found throughout which refer to cross references in other biblical and apocryphal texts, critical issues normally pertaining to translation, and references to the printed sources in which the selections can be found. These references correspond to the abbreviations near the front of the volumes (1.xxxv; 2.xv) where full bibliographic information is provided.

The back of each handsomely bound volume contains an appendix to “Early Christian Writers and Documents Cited” (1.297–98) in which the editors provide the names of the authors, their works, and the respective TLG or Cetedoc references from which they were taken. There is a very helpful “Biographical Sketches & Short Descriptions of Select Anonymous Works” section (1.299–307; 2.317–25) that briefly describes all authors and works cited in each volume in the ACCS series published to date. A “Timeline of Patristic Authors” (1.308–11; 2:326–29) is organized by both date and geographical location. An additional “Bibliography” (1.313–14; 2.331–32) “refers readers to original language sources” and supplies TLG and Cetedoc Clavis numbers where available. There is an “Author/Writings Index” (1.315; 2.333), “Subject Index” (1.317–21; 2.335–40), “Scripture Index” (1.323–26; 2.341–44), and “A Guide to Using This Commentary” (1.xxxiii–xxxiv) section.

While the editors are to be commended for the extent of this project, it is not without its serious limitations. The lay audience for whom these volumes are primarily intended (1.xiv) will not be helped by the frequent use of Latin terms left untranslated in the introduction. Moreover, Oden says the editors “seek the most representative comments that best reflect the mind of the believing church (of all times and cultures)” while elsewhere he insists citations are representative of the time and culture of the respective authors. Oden’s introductory essay is unnecessarily lengthy, and the space could be better served by the inclusion of a broad overview of Church history through the Patristic period, with which they seemingly presume their readers to be familiar. An annotated bibliography of works on Patristic Church history and exegesis would have likewise been helpful.

Simonetti's aforementioned essay is troubling in that while it provides a helpful survey of the handful of sources mentioned above, it emphasizes the Alexandrian, allegorical interpretation to the complete neglect of other voices, such as that of Theodore of Mopsuestia. His historical survey of interpretation is void of the work of the apologists or "apologetic" use of Matthew in general. There are no references to the work of Justin, though he made use of Matthew, and these volumes have remarkably little from the "Apostolic Fathers" tradition. It also fails to incorporate several important works on the subject, such as the homily of Melito of Sardis, the commentary of Isodad of Merve, and the distinctively Matthean sections in Ephraim the Syrian's *Commentary on Tatian's Diatessaron*. Moreover, while purporting to examine "the distinctive characteristics of this exegetical literature on Matthew" (1.xxxviii; cf. 1.xxxix), Simonetti in fact hardly approaches distinctive features on *Matthew*, and much of his essay could just as easily apply to most any NT document.

The project, at least in terms of the Gospels, is not as innovative as Oden so boldly suggests (1.xxx–xxxi). H. Smith edited a work that provides more comprehensive treatment, though covering a briefer time span (*Ante-Nicene Exegesis of the Gospels* [6 vols.; London: SPCK, 1925–1929]). A survey of the role of Matthew's Gospel in the early Church is concisely provided by R. T. France in *Matthew: Evangelist & Teacher* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1989), esp. pp. 13–20. More technical works are also available. A helpful essay focusing on yet earlier sources is O. Koch's "Kenntnis und Verwendung des Matthäus-Evangeliums bei den apostolischen Vätern," in *Studien zum Matthäusevangelium* (ed. L. Schenke; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1998) 157–78, and especially É. Massaux's encyclopedic *The Influence of the Gospel of Saint Matthew on Christian Literature before Saint Irenaeus* (ed. A. J. Bellinzoni; trans. N. J. Belval and S. Hecht; 3 vols.; Macon: Mercer University Press, 1993).

Unfortunately, the nature of such a project leaves the readers at the selective mercies of the editors, and thus should be considered neither fully representative of Patristic exegesis nor exhaustive. Simply put, there is no substitute for knowing Scripture well and immersing oneself in the sources. However, these volumes are a useful and accessible tool for pastors, students, and lay people to quickly get a brief taste of what the ancients had to say about the familiar text of the first Gospel. Despite their limitations, they are reasonably priced and sufficiently fulfill their intentions of introducing laity to these sources and enhancing preaching by what they contribute. Scholars should note the editors' hope to expand the work to an electronic version which may be of more use for academic purposes (1.xiv).

Daniel M. Gurtner  
St. Mary's College, University of St. Andrews, Scotland

*Sentence Conjunctions in the Gospel of Matthew*. By Stephanie L. Black. JSNTSup 216. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002, 420 pp., \$99.00.

The groundbreaking research of Stanley Porter (1989), and shortly thereafter, Buist Fanning (1990) articulated and convincingly demonstrated the aspectival character of the Greek verb: the Greek "tense" carries far more than mere time distinctions. Their work has influenced the new generation of Greek grammars we use in our classrooms today. In a way similar to Fanning and Porter, Stephanie L. Black may very well launch another quiet revolution. Her study, joined by other such works exploring expanded sections of the NT, could translate itself into highly practical materials that will

change the way students and exegetes alike actually do discourse analysis. At the very least, Dr. Black's work is a model example of how one can approach and perhaps resolve many of the questions surrounding discourse analysis using the available modern tools.

By Black's own admission, much of this volume is not for the faint of heart! The reader will do well to dust off old notes from college Statistics or Engineering courses. However, through numerous summaries and a clear, explicative style, the diligent reader can follow along with the "science" in the book. *Sentence Conjunctions*, which began its life as Black's dissertation, seeks to apply the results of modern linguistic research to the study of the Greek NT. In particular it is concerned with the conjunctions used in Matthew's Gospel. Though the topic might at first seem excessively arcane, consider that nearly seventy percent of the sentences in Matthew begin with a conjunction that serves as a link to the previous sentence. If there is meaning at the discourse level, then surely conjunctions must form a vast field of meaning that deserves exploration. Black, however, is not satisfied simply to tell us what Matthew *means* when he uses these conjunctions in a particular text. Her book sets out more broadly to define linguistically what conjunctions themselves mean, or as she says it, what is "their linguistic function in discourse and what do they contribute to the communicative intent of a Gospel as a text" (p. 21).

The first chapter of the book gives the linguistic theory that undergirds the study. Black does an evenhanded job in integrating the insights of de Saussure ("everything is based on relations") and Roland Barthes ("no word has a meaning value of zero"). In balancing the two, she follows the model of M. A. K. Halliday, which informs her method of analysis. When analyzing conjunctions Black looks not only at how each conjunction works in various contexts (Saussure), she also asks questions concerning the significance of the author's choice among the available conjunctions (Barthes). That is, not only must one ask what is a given conjunction doing in a particular context in light of the word order, the presence or absence of a subject, and so on, but one must also ask, out of the author's total stock of conjunctions, why here did he choose *this* one instead of *that* one?

Black follows in the second chapter by wrestling with the question, "what do conjunctions mean?" The discussion will profit mostly those whose specialty is Linguistics, yet the summaries provided are useful and clear. For example, she writes, "In the chapters which follow I argue that Matthew uses *καί* to signal that what follows is continuous with the audience's ongoing mental representations of the narrative, while *δέ* informs the audience that a low- to mid-level discontinuity occurs at that point in the discourse. The other sentence conjunctions in Matthew's Gospel likewise serve as procedural signals as the audience construct and modify mental representations" (p. 64).

To this point, those familiar with notable discourse analysts such as Stephen H. Levinsohn might be justified in issuing a verdict of "nothing terribly ground-breaking so far." However, it is chapter 3 that makes Black's work an important step forward. Her use of computerized statistical analysis may very well become a paradigm for how discourse analyses will proceed in the future. In her research Black asked two simple questions: "Where do connective words occur between the sentences in Matthew's Gospel?" and "Why do they appear?" The statistical answer proved to be very complex. The answer required a database not tied to individual words (as, for example, the morphological databases of Gramcord or BibleWorks), but one formulated at the clause and sentence level. The unavailability of such a product led Black to analyze patiently all 2,302 sentences in the first Gospel, recording type of sentence, constituent word order, verb tense, type and presence (or absence) of the conjunction, in addition to numerous other factors. Black also employed a test (a "z-score") to ensure that during analysis, results were statistically significant. With *καί* appearing more than 700 times as the sentence initial conjunction, intuition alone tells us a z-score is not necessary, but with *τότε*, for

example, since it appears only fifty-five times, can one have confidence in the numbers? The z-score gives that assurance.

Yet in all this, art must meet science. Black is aware of that. She notes, "While quantitative descriptions of linguistic patterns are useful in understanding narrative syntax in Matthew's Gospel, they do not tell the whole story. Quantitative data contribute to an awareness of probabilities . . . to an exception of what features are likely to be combined in any given context. This forms a background against which one can begin to recognize the impact of linguistic choices the evangelist makes at specific points in the Gospel" (p. 102). The "pure science" of quantitative analysis shows about eighty percent of the time the writer does things the same way in the same context. It is the other twenty percent that calls for the art of qualitative analysis. It is from these "marked cases," when her research is eventually translated into practice, that matters of exegetical significance will undoubtedly arise. This balance of quantitative and qualitative analysis makes Black's work a useful paradigm for future discursive investigations. Heretofore, most discourse analyses consisted in amassing a great number of examples—so great, in fact, that intuition was often the only tool powerful enough for inductive conclusions. Throughout the book Black's computerized approach both validates the power of much previous intuition, but also conclusively shows many examples of its shortcomings.

Chapters 4–8 are the results of the individual investigations, and chapter 9 is a look at the whole system of conjunctions together. The conclusions of all this labor are presented in chapter 10. In brief, καί signals continuity with the audience's mental picture and is the unmarked default conjunction. Δέ indicates a low- to mid-level discontinuity, perhaps no more than a change of actor, but may also indicate change in time or place, in addition to some contrastive or adversative relationships. Asyndeton can be either indicative of the closest of connections or of major, high level breaks. Τότε is the indicator of marked continuity. Finally, γάρ and οὖν integrate material that is "off-line" into the sequential narrative.

This book is basic research. Even those who teach Greek may not be tempted to run right out and purchase their own copy, although they will surely want their school librarian to do so. Black's work still stands a long way off from being a practical text like Wallace or Mounce, but it is significant nonetheless. Knowledgeable exegetes and students alike will eagerly look forward to the next generation of classroom grammars integrating the results of Black's fine research and the research of others, which it will inspire.

Henry S. Baldwin  
Singapore Bible College, Republic of Singapore

*The Story of Romans: A Narrative Defense of God's Righteousness.* By A. Katherine Grieb. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002, 167 pp., \$19.99 paper.

As the title states, Grieb's work traces the OT narratives that underlie Paul's letter to the Romans. Written for the laity, this work is both enjoyable to read and easily read. Grieb lays out the OT themes and narratives in Romans and traces them throughout Romans. Each chapter ends with several application questions designed for individual and group thought. These questions are intended to probe the reader's understanding of the text, its OT background, and its application to the believer's life today, individually and corporately.

In her interpretation of Romans, Grieb draws almost entirely from the new perspective, especially from the work of Wright, Dunn, Sanders, Hays, and Käsemann. As such, her presentation is far too one-sided in many controversial passages. More troubling is her ready dismissal of other views and failure to interact with exegetical decisions that differ from her own. The book is short on discussing passages where scholars disagree and quick in presenting conclusions without showing the basis for them. The uninformed might easily assume that her presentation is the commonly accepted understanding of Romans and might therefore miss controversies and other approaches. While her presentation is partially due to the book's length and audience, Grieb too easily dismisses more traditional understandings as coming from those who see Romans as "a collection of doctrinal *loci*" (p. 46) or "as a textbook of Christian doctrine" (p. 60). She also presents conclusions but does not show how they are relevant or how she arrived at her conclusions. For example, she states that Romans 9–11 are structured as a lament psalm but neither states how she arrived at this conclusion nor why it is relevant (p. 98). I would instead recommend an approach that briefly deals with relevant issues from both sides and offers a more balanced treatment of controversial issues within Romans. Doug Moo's recent *Encountering the Book of Romans* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002) does this admirably.

In spite of her dismissal of non-new perspective views, there are several points of agreement with more Reformed views. The most significant of these is the importance of faith in setting us right with God. Another point is that all of humanity is united in sin and in the need for salvation. Unless God had acted to bring us salvation, we would all be condemned.

The strength of Grieb's book lies in helping the reader understand the OT themes that Paul drew on as he wrote Romans and showing how these themes tie Romans together. She describes how Jesus completes the salvation history to which the OT points. He did what Israel was not able to do, redeeming the world from slavery to sin. She also relates the purpose of the letter to Paul's circumstances and his mission to the Gentiles and Spain (pp. 139–41).

Grieb ties chapters 12–16 in with the first eleven chapters very well. She presents the latter chapters as describing how God's people should live out their concern for their fellow believers (p. 120). If Gentile Christians were to be disruptive in society, they would create serious problems for their Jewish neighbors because the latter were at serious disadvantage socially (pp. 124–25). Therefore, the Gentiles should be careful not to create social disruptions (12:9–13:8).

Some of Grieb's questions and conclusions may be uncomfortable for many evangelicals, especially those questions resembling liberation theology or liberalism. For example, at the end of chapter 2 she asks whether the civil rights or anti-apartheid movements may be seen as contemporary analogies to the exodus. Other chapters end by asking the reader how the civil rights movement fits our understandings of Romans. These questions challenge us because they are questions that conservative Christians should face and often have not. On the other hand, Grieb's defense of homosexuality left me unconvinced, especially since she does not really debate the position or interact with the relevant text but instead quotes those who favor her position (pp. 30–31). Similarly, her treatment of election and non election in Romans 9 does not do justice to the text. She presents Romans 9 as reflecting Paul's uncertainty about what God has done in respect to choosing Israel in salvation history (pp. 92 ff.). Paul is asking, "Has God chosen Israel, and if so, how many of them? What OT texts reflect God's treatment of Israel?" Is the best text "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated"? Or is the relevant text Exod 33:19, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy"? Grieb understands Romans 9–11 not as a coherent argument about God's working with Israel in salvation history, but as Paul's musings and agonizing questions about what God is doing, with no real answer to the problem.

I would recommend this book, especially if readers (whether individually or as a group) were at the same time to read a work such as Moo's that presents different exegetical options and the reasons for the choices made. Many of the gaps in Grieb's work would then be filled, and the reader would be better able to appreciate the strengths of her work.

Stephen Pegler  
Trinity International University, Bannockburn, IL

*The Letters to the Thessalonians.* By Gene L. Green. PNTC. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002, xl + 400 pp., \$42.00.

Gene Green, Professor of New Testament at Wheaton College, has produced a first-class, scholarly commentary on 1–2 Thessalonians that is consistent with a high view of Scripture and evangelical theology. The main emphasis of this commentary is an interest in Greco-Roman sources and socio-economic background.

Green's interest in Greco-Roman background is consistent throughout the commentary. A large and useful part of the introduction concerns information on Thessalonica *per se*, including detailing what actual literary and archaeological sources are extant concerning Thessalonica. Within the commentary proper, there are many quotes and multiple references to Greco-Roman parallels.

Two other recent major commentaries on 1–2 Thessalonians have a similar emphasis on Greco-Roman sources and socio-economic background: Charles Wanamaker's in the NIGTC series (1990) and Abraham Malherbe's in the AB series (2000). (Green did not have access to the Malherbe commentary, but he did have access to Malherbe's voluminous other works in this area.) Given the similarities, how do these three differ methodologically? Green differs from Wanamaker in that Green rejects using ancient rhetorical categories as a major hermeneutical key for Pauline letters. (I heartily agree with Green here.) Green is more similar to Malherbe in their use of literary sources, though Malherbe puts more weight on parallel philosophical discourses to aid exegesis.

All three of the commentaries interact with the newer socio-economic emphasis by some that patron-client relationships are the basic glue that held Greco-Roman society together. A patron had money and social access that he gave to a client. A client in return gave honor and loyalty back to the patron. According to this newer view, many NT passages need to be reinterpreted within this framework. For 1–2 Thessalonians, Malherbe tends to reject this thesis, Wanamaker uses it to explain some passages, but Green uses it consistently to understand many passages.

According to Green, the client-patron relationship explains better, for example, the use of "faith" in 1 Thess 1:3 (the client showed faith/loyalty to the patron); the "thanksgiving" in 1 Thess 3:9 (thanksgiving was a debt owed to the patron); the identity of the leaders of 1 Thess 5:12–13 as patrons; the imperial cult and its relationship to 2 Thess 2:1–12 (the imperial cult in Thessalonica was especially important due to Rome's patronage to Thessalonica); and God as the patron who will protect us, his clients (2 Thess 3:3). The patron-client relationship especially explains the idle-worker discussions of 1 Thess 4:11–12 and 2 Thess 3:6–15. The idle workers were clients who were receiving money from their patrons. This explains their lack of motivation to work, not a misunderstanding of eschatology.

Concerning introductory matters, Green has traditional conclusions. Paul is the primary author (with his companions) of both 1 and 2 Thessalonians, and 1 Thessalonians was written first (*contra* Wanamaker). The provenance of both letters was Corinth. Gentiles formed the majority of the Thessalonian church. Acts provides accurate,

although not exhaustive, information concerning Paul's travels. 1 Thess 2:14–16 is not an interpolation.

Green exhibits conservative, evangelical theological commitments. In 1–2 Thessalonians Green sees a high Christology, including interpreting *theos* of 2 Thess 1:12 as referring to Christ. 1 Thess 5:10 (“he died for us”) refers to Christ’s substitutionary death. A Christian’s entire salvation, including his good works, is within a grace system (pp. 237–38). The wording of “fallen asleep” (1 Thess 4:4, 5:10) is improperly used to advance soul sleep. 2 Thess 1:9 teaches the eternal destruction of the wicked, not annihilation.

Other interpretations of interest include: Green disagrees with the traditional view that 1 Thess 2:1–12 is a real defense against real opponents. Instead, Paul is writing in anticipation of problems. Green interprets 1 Thess 4:15–17 as Christ meeting the Church in the air and then all returning to earth (*contra* traditional rapture view). Concerning 2 Thess 2:1–12, the imperial cult is the background allusion for the future event. The “temple of god” alludes to the imperial cult. The restraining activity is done by demonic forces.

In the main, I am not convinced by the patron-client methodology. Consider 2 Thess 3:6–13. According to Green, Paul is correcting the non-working clients who are being supported by the patrons. This seems to disregard that (1) not all clients even within the patron-client view did no work for their patrons; (2) in 2 Thess 3:8–9 (and elsewhere) Paul clearly uses labor practices, not patron-client relationships, as the logic from which he argues; and (3) if Green’s interpretation is correct, Paul should have also chastised the patrons who were equally contributing to the problem. Although not convinced, I did appreciate Green’s consistent application of his patron-client methodology to a variety of verses. It allowed me to understand better the advantages and disadvantages of this methodology and gave me an opportunity to evaluate it fairly. Also, even for passages that Green concluded were illuminated by the patron-client methodology, he did not allow this to overturn the surface understanding of the text. Hence, many times our differences were only at the margins.

As is well known, 1–2 Thessalonians do not have any explicit OT quotes, but they do include many OT allusions and echoes. Green well notes these allusions and echoes; however, I wish he spent more time exploring their possible impact on Paul’s text.

Despite my disagreement with the patron-client methodology, I still consider this commentary a very good guide to interpreting the vast majority of 1–2 Thessalonians. I already have and will continue to recommend it to my pastoral students.

Robert J. Cara  
Reformed Theological Seminary, Charlotte, NC

*I & II Timothy and Titus: A Commentary.* By Raymond F. Collins. New Testament Library. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002, 408 pp., \$34.95.

Raymond Collins’s commentary on the Pastoral Epistles (hereafter, PE) is the lead volume in the New Testament Library series. Since it is the lead volume in the series and many readers may not be familiar with it, it may be worthwhile to give a brief introduction. According to the editors (C. Black and B. Gaventa from Princeton with J. Carroll from Union Theological Seminary) this series attempts to offer “authoritative commentary” on “every book and major aspect of the New Testament.” Thus, it is intended that the series will eventually encompass both commentaries on NT books as well as monographs dealing with topics related to NT study. Some examples of the latter are



a forthcoming treatment of Pauline theology by V. P. Furnish and a forthcoming volume on the use of the OT in the New by J. R. Wagner. With regard to the commentaries on the NT letters, as in the case of the particular volume under review, "authoritative commentary" translates into an attempt to provide fresh translations, critical reconstructions of the historical background, consideration of matters of literary design, and "theologically perceptive exposition," all gathered together with a diverse audience in mind ("a commentary for the student and the professional scholar, for the pastor and the serious lay reader").

The intended audience of the series provides a convenient jumping off point for an evaluation of the particular volume under review. The impossibly wide target audience sets Collins's work up for disappointment. His easy-to-read style, careful explanation of the text, wide grasp of primary sources, and affable tone certainly invite readers. But what type of readers would be satisfied with the fare on offer is another question. This is not to impugn Collins's work in and of itself, only to point out that it is impossible to satisfy such a wide gambit of readership. For students being encouraged to enter into the scholarly debate over a disputed text, both to become informed and to observe a model of proper engagement, for a professional scholar looking for straightforward, explicit, and careful engagement with scholarship on key passages (as opposed to sleuthing one's way through a passage in order to detect who has influenced/stands behind the author's views), or for a pastor wanting to look further into a particular issue raised in the commentary—these will very likely not be satisfied with the design plan of this series. While including an exhaustive index of primary sources, a limited subject index, as well as a representative bibliography, the volume contains no author index, undoubtedly due to the fact that so few authors are explicitly mentioned in the commentary (a few authors are parenthetically referenced in the text while some appear in the infrequent footnotes—averaging less than one per page). The approach also offers little by way of argumentation. Collins walks the reader carefully through the book explaining passages with hardly a mention of the issues swirling around his explanations or without argumentation showing how he arrived at his interpretations over against competing options. This assessment is not so much to fault Collins as it is to suggest that the target audience of the series is narrower and that the text takes a particular tack toward addressing that narrower slice, so that the commentary may not be wholly satisfactory for classroom or study use, especially for those not necessarily in agreement with Collins's explanations. Or, at the least, Collins's volume would be a complement to an already robust library of resources on the Pastorals, but not a likely purchase for the single or primary resource for study in these letters.

The contents of the commentary are divided into an introduction to the corpus, an introduction to each book, section introductions, verse-by-verse commentary, and nine excursions on various topics (e.g. "Excursus 6: Debate on Marriage and Food"). The interpretation of the letters is set within the framework of double-pseudepigraphy—both author, "Paul," and recipients, "Timothy" and "Titus," are literary creations put forward by an unknown author, "the pastor," somewhere around 80 CE. (That the author is someone other than Paul "is beyond reasonable doubt" [p. 7]. The reader is further assured that pseudepigraphy was an accepted mode of writing by the early Church and carries no opprobrium.) The "pastor" is attempting to bring Pauline tradition into meaningful contact with the Hellenistic world of the late first century to help the Church find its niche in the Greco-Roman world now that the *parousia* is no longer imminent. Although he may be over-accommodating at times with regard to the development of his ethic (e.g. he fails to assert the "radical equality of men and women in Christ" that Collins sees in the real Paul [p. 73]), the "pastor" does not engage completely uncritically with his culture and attempts to provide a faith-based anchor to his paraenesis. The opponents he battles are another pseudepigraphical device since he addresses no

identifiable group. He simply wants to “put the community on guard against various kinds of error, no matter the source” (p. 12). On the literary level, there is a similarity of 1 Timothy and Titus to early documents on church order (e.g. *Didache*) and of 2 Timothy to testamentary texts (e.g. *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*). These literary categories help to explain the disparate nature of their material as well as contribute to Collins’s case for their inauthenticity (since neither genre is associated with truly original compositions).

All in all Collins’s work is to be commended for its serious treatment of the author as a theologian in his own right. In this way he reflects the growing trend in scholarship, whether among those who view them as authentic or those who view them as inauthentic, that recognizes that the author of the PE is no second-rate theologian who clumsily juxtaposes theological shards into a less than coherent mosaic. This work also deserves recognition for the enlightening and helpful collection of Greco-Roman sources that, although one might disagree with Collins as to how they relate to the substance and ethos of the “pastor’s” own theology and ethics (especially if his pseudepigraphical framework is found unconvincing), certainly must be considered. These admirable points make me happy to have the book on my shelf. However, as one unconvinced by the pseudepigraphical framework of this commentary and as one unconvinced of the historical validity of describing pseudepigraphy as an accepted form of canonical writing in the early Church (such that pseudepigraphy historically equals forgery/deception), this work seems to add less to our understanding of the PE than it takes away, given its interpretive framework and its method of presenting this framework (see comments above).

Greg A. Couser  
Cedarville University, Cedarville, OH

*Jude, 2 Peter*. By Steven J. Kraftchick. ANTC. Nashville: Abingdon, 2002, 190 pp., \$20.00 paper.

In this commentary Kraftchick approaches the epistles of Jude and 2 Peter from a critical perspective. In his introduction to Jude, Kraftchick argues, “it is unlikely that Jude, the brother of James and Jesus, authored the book” (p. 21). The only ground he gives is that the Greek of the epistle is better than one would expect from a Palestinian Jew. He argues that 2 Peter was not written by the apostle Peter and that the unknown author used the apostle’s name to lend “authority to his arguments” (p. 86). Based on 2 Pet 1:14, he identifies the epistle as a “farewell testament” and explains that “by choosing the ‘farewell’ genre and by providing ‘proofs’ that follow in vv. 16–20, the author establishes his trustworthiness as a guide and interpreter of the fundamentals of the faith” (pp. 101–2). Since Kraftchick sets the composition of the epistle “somewhere between 90 and 100 CE” (p. 72), it is difficult to understand why he contends that the alleged author would have used a pseudonym to establish his authority and would have chosen the “farewell” genre to establish his trustworthiness. The original readers would certainly have known that Peter was already dead.

Kraftchick demonstrates some weakness in his understanding of the Greek language. For example, in his comments on 2 Pet 1:12, he mentions “the present indicative of the infinitive ‘to remind’” (p. 102). Since infinitives do not express mood, it is incorrect to label the infinitive as indicative. He identifies the phrases “of the Lord” and “of the apostles” connected to the word “commandment” in 2 Pet 3:2 as “double possessives” (p. 149). These are properly understood as genitives of source. Kraftchick’s explanation

of what the genitives mean, however, is accurate. He describes the participle “dissolved” in 2 Pet 3:11 as modifying “these things” (p. 166). The participle, however, is not functioning as a modifier. It is in a genitive absolute construction and “these things” is the subject of the participle. He argues that in Jude 4 the word “Master” in the phrase “our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ,” most likely refers to God the Father. “Master,” however, is articular and “Lord” is anarthrous in the Greek. The Granville Sharp rule requires the understanding that Jesus Christ is both Master and Lord. Kraftchick also fails to mention this rule in connection with the phrase “our God and Savior, Jesus Christ” in 2 Pet 1:1 (pp. 87–88) where the word “God” is articular and “Savior” is anarthrous in the Greek. The construction highlights the deity of Jesus. Even though Kraftchick’s theological bias, rather than his weakness in Greek, may be the reason for not mentioning the Granville Sharp rule, the lack of comment indicates an area of weakness in his scholarship, or at least in the display of his scholarship.

Kraftchick offers some invalid interpretations. For example, he argues that the wickedness of Sodom and Gomorrah in Jude 7 was not homosexuality, but seeking to have sexual relations with angels and that this was a reversal of the sin described in Gen 6:1–4, which he explains to be angels having sex with humans (pp. 38–40). The Scriptures, however, present angels as spirit beings and only the men of Sodom as guilty of lusting after Lot’s visitors, whereas Jude refers to the sin of Sodom, Gomorrah, and the surrounding cities in going after other flesh. Kraftchick carries his interpretation of v. 7 into v. 8, where he suggests, “the expression ‘slandered the glorious ones’ is equivalent to Sodom’s treatment of the angels” (p. 41). Another example of a weak interpretation is his explanation of the phrase “the corruption that is in the world” in 2 Pet 1:4. He does admit it “can refer to moral decadence,” but “more likely refers to the decay or decomposition of nature” (p. 93).

Despite its many weaknesses, this commentary has some strengths. Kraftchick has produced more than a mere running commentary on these epistles. He has provided helpful analysis of the elements of each epistle and their relation to each other. This may be readily seen in his table of contents. His identification of interpretative issues is helpful even if one does not agree with his conclusions. A chart listing the parallel passages in Jude and 2 Peter appears in his introduction to 2 Peter (p. 79). He gives much attention to emphatic expressions and word play.

Most conservative scholars will probably not find that the strengths of Kraftchick’s commentary outweigh its weaknesses. His theological perspective permeates the work. Evangelicals seeking solid interpretation and insight for these epistles would do well to look elsewhere.

Sidney D. Dyer

Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Taylors, SC

*Then the Whisper Put on Flesh: New Testament Ethics in an African American Context.* By Brian K. Blount. Nashville: Abingdon, 2001, 232 pp., \$21.00 paper.

This provocative volume of just over 180 reading pages is a theological exposition based on various sections of the NT, chosen because of their contribution to NT ethics and their usefulness in African Americans’ reading of the Bible: The Synoptic Gospels is the source of “Kingdom Ethics”; the Gospel of John supports “the Christology of active resistance”; the “undisputed Pauline writings” exemplify a “theology that enables a liberating ethics”; and the apocalypse of Revelation bears “witness of active resistance” theology and offers hope for the future. In his first two chapters, Blount lays out his

basic pre-understandings: The NT's apparent "hodgepodge of moral exhortations" have their own structure of ethics, called "events ethics"—that exist at the literary level of "narrative"—and can be liberating to African Americans. Oppressed conditions keep African Americans in a state of "psychological occupation" and contribute to their disenfranchisement as well as the disintegration from within the African American community. However, this community has a legacy of reading biblical narratives "from 'in front of the text'" by having their oppressed situation influence and be influenced by their interpretation of the Bible (pp. 24–26). The slave narratives with their 150-year history of engaging the biblical text provide a liberation lens through which the oppressed black community can now find liberating ethics in the NT.

Blount correctly notes that the Gospels do not offer a "universal, systematic presentation of what New Testament ethics should look like"; they offer narrative ethics and "make clear the implications of confessing faith in Jesus as the crucified and resurrected Christ for the life and actions of the community of faith" (p. 46). "The presence of Jesus as the incarnate revelation of God's will" is a unifying factor for the ethics of the kingdom at the heart of the narratives. The breaking into human history of the kingdom in the presence of Jesus ushers in a new ethics for the community of God, one that "pushes on against human landmarks that were once established to regulate life" (p. 52) and set peoples apart.

In Mark, Blount sees kingdom ethics as cast in unavoidable conflict with the established religious, cultural, and legal traditions that formed boundaries between the Jewish people and other communities. Mark offers a "transformative boundary-breaking" ethics expressed in the Golden Rule that creates a new ethics characterized by love and liberating action (pp. 54–60). In like manner, Matthew's transformative kingdom ethics points to "a better righteousness," an ideal for the people of God, as seen in the Sermon on the Mount and other Jesus narratives. This ethics is based not on external observance and legal obligations for on a higher level of moral behavior and inner character. In Luke, this kingdom-driven ethics offers social and political reversal, "a perspective that is distinguished by its solicitude for the poor and oppressed and by its concern for the mutual respect of Jewish and Gentile Christians" (p. 79). Says Blount, "The liberation theme hits home in the narrative demonstration of God's care for the poor and oppressed . . . the captive, blind, oppressed, hungry, weeping, excluded, reviled, maimed, lame, and leper" (pp. 80–81).

John's narrative on love is probably the last place in the NT in which one might look for a theology of resistance. Yet, therein Blount finds an ethic of resistance characterized by a self-sacrificing, community love based on the work and example of Christ. Jesus provides the link that binds faith and love together; Jesus loved and laid down his life for others. The community-centered love shown among Americans across ethnic lines during the Civil Rights struggle is a passive resistance love but it is strong enough to resist hostility, alienation, and oppression (pp. 93–108).

According to Blount, some African Americans have, in the past, shown an ambivalence to Paul in whom they see a double take on Christian ethics, an apparent support for slavery on the one hand and a gospel of freedom from bondage on the other. Blount solves this problem by examining only what he regards as undisputed Pauline writings that proffer a liberating ethic, one that shatters the racial, ethnic, social, religious, and other boundaries separating the people of God. This boundary-breaking ethic has as its axis justification by faith in Christ which places everyone on the same level in an "existence where humans are reconciled with God, and thereby brought into right relationship with one another" (p. 128). For Blount, Paul's boundary-crossing ethic is required of the community of faith in Christ where love conquers ethnic and class distinctions.

This theological work is a must read for theologians, seminarians, preachers, and other Christian insiders, persons who are brought together through Christ and who are

attempting to live out the true meaning of their new status in a community of faith. Blount's crafty interweaving of a vast knowledge of biblical scholarship with the black experience in the interpretation of Scripture provides a fresh way of doing biblical theology with an ethics label. In spite of its African-American focus, the book's theological engagement can find currency among all biblical scholars and Bible-believing communities. The book creates its own space among well-known works the likes of Victor Paul Furnish's *The Theology and Ethics of Paul*, Cain Hope Felder's *Stoney the Road We Trod*, and Raboteau's *Slave Religion*.

My appreciation for Blount's book has not silenced a few questions in my mind. How would a Jewish reader for whom the Christ event in Blount's kingdom ethic is a major stumbling block, receive this book? Blount makes an attempt to establish theological conversation across cultural lines but his book is clearly not written for interreligious dialogue. On a different note, do we in the African American community always have to allow our past enslavement to be the determining factor in how we read the Bible and how we live? Can we use the Bible for our empowerment so that we look to no one but God and ourselves to bring us hope and liberation, economic or otherwise, rather than blame "psychological occupation"?

Blount's book highlights the old problem of compartmentalizing Paul in order to produce a true liberating and enabling NT ethic. When some scholars found difficult ideas concerning women in the Pauline writings, they separated them from so-called genuine Pauline works. Should we shrink the Pauline corpus further so as not to ascribe politically or ethnically incorrect ethics to the apostle? In order to produce a peacemaking and peace-loving Jesus, we ascribed only to the evangelists the anti-Jewish sentiments in the Jesus narratives in the Gospels. Could it be that we want to see in the Bible only an ethic we feel comfortable living with? This is certainly not Blount's aim, for he makes it very clear that NT kingdom ethics stands in dialectic tension with the dominant cultural tradition and ethical mode.

Nathaniel Samuel Murrell

The University of North Carolina at Wilmington, Wilmington, NC

*Visual Faith: Art, Theology, and Worship in Dialogue.* Engaging Culture series. By William A. Dyrness. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001, 188 pp., \$21.99 paper.

We live in a visual age, so it is crucial that Christians find effective ways to communicate their faith through visual media. William A. Dyrness, Professor of Theology and Culture at Fuller Theological Seminary, issues a clarion call for contemporary Christians to be engaged with the visual arts in this first volume in a series entitled Engaging Culture, edited by Dyrness and Robert K. Johnston.

In the first two chapters of *Visual Faith* and in a later chapter on modern art, Dyrness traces the history of the somewhat uneasy relationship between Christianity and the arts. He provides an excellent analysis of the religious significance of many works of art, and offers a helpful description of the relation of key Christian theologians to the arts. Dyrness is not attempting to write an art history, so his overview of ancient art is understandably not as rich as such works as Robin Margaret Jensen's *Understanding Early Christian Art*. However, Dyrness's chapter that surveys the contemporary art scene presents a particularly insightful and perceptive explanation of the meaning and significance of modern art. This discussion alone is worth the price of the book.

Dyrness does make two historical claims that appear to be overstated. First, he probably exaggerates the evangelical disaffection with the arts when he accuses Protestantism of "giving up on the visual arts" (p. 12). While the early Reformation leaders

obviously reacted strongly against the misuse of art objects in the Roman Catholic Church and reasserted the priority of the written and spoken word of God, they did find other visual ways of expressing Christian truth. Dyrness himself later lists numerous examples of post-Reformation Protestants who have made valuable artistic contributions. Although Dyrness notes that secular visual arts have expanded beyond the formal boundaries of institutional “high” art, he does not take into account the widely disseminated “low” art of Christian artists such as Warner Sallman, thus making the purported gap between evangelicals and the arts seem further than may be the case. Second, Dyrness insists that nineteenth-century American art (as evidenced in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts collection) “contains little reference to the Christian faith” (p. 11), “does not even illustrate a particular Christian belief” (p. 11), and contains “little or no particular theological content” (p. 59). In fact, the Boston museum collection has numerous paintings with explicitly Christian theological themes, from Thomas Cole’s classic painting *Expulsion from the Garden of Eden* to dozens of works by John La Farge in various media (paintings, stained glass, wood engraving, etc.) on a variety of biblical persons and themes. Other nineteenth and twentieth-century works in the museum feature biblical characters and events including Moses, Elijah, Belshazzar’s feast, Jesus, Mary, Lazarus, and an angel releasing Simon Peter from prison, not to mention those depicting angels, churches, and scenes from Church history. Furthermore, Dyrness’s claim does not adequately take into account the profoundly Christian symbolism in nineteenth-century American art, particularly through expressions of the Hudson River School (over one hundred of which are at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts), in which religious symbolism played a significant role (especially through the use of light, the cross, and church scenes), or the *trompe l’oeil* school of Harnett and Peto (which raises questions about the nature of reality and the significance of life, not unlike those of Rene Magritte in contemporary art).

Dyrness develops a rich biblical and theological foundation for the arts in two thoughtful and well-written chapters. He first surveys the biblical language about beauty and the use of images in Scripture in the course of developing a biblical aesthetic. He then outlines a theology of the arts that is both trinitarian and incarnational. Dyrness rightly grounds his theological aesthetic in the doctrine of creation. He offers the questionable thesis, however, that virtually all art can bear at least an indirect witness to Christ because of creation and common grace, whether the art of other world religions or of an unbeliever such as Picasso (pp. 85, 96). Dyrness offers no clear set of Christian values by which one might evaluate a work of art produced by an unbeliever. While believers may see something of the tragedy of the fall in much contemporary art, they may not be able to see God in or through these works. In general, Dyrness is able to locate more common grace in works of modern art than many evangelical Christians will be able to recognize in them.

The final four chapters explore the challenges and opportunities available to Christians who get involved with the arts. Dyrness calls upon the Church to achieve a new vision for the arts, to incorporate the arts in a renewal of worship, and to restore the great tradition of Christian art. These are worthy aims if they can be achieved without theological compromise. There is no doubt that many (and perhaps most) younger and median-aged Americans are visual learners, and the church that does not take this crucial factor into account will lose a tremendous venue for communicating Christian truth. Furthermore, there are clear biblical precedents for utilizing the visual arts to help facilitate worship.

Dyrness provides a compelling apologetic for evangelicals to incorporate visual arts into Christian faith and worship. Furthermore, he provides a strong biblical and theological rationale for a church to be more engaged with the visual arts, and identifies possible points of dialogue and rapprochement between Christian faith and the arts.

It would have been helpful, however, had he provided a specific proposal of suggested steps that evangelical churches should take in order to close the gap with the visual arts. For example, Dyrness mentions the case of a church that gratefully accepted a painting donated to the church by a member who was a Christian artist, but the church was unsure about how to utilize this artwork in the service of the church. The painting was prominently displayed in the church for a period of time, and then taken down, much to the disappointment of the artist. Dyrness never provides any specific answers to how this church could have solved this dilemma and utilized the painting more effectively. Some specific plan of action or proposed list of initiatives for a church to utilize the visual arts more effectively would have been a useful addition.

Nonetheless, Dyrness provides a compelling case for evangelicals to interact more seriously with the visual arts. Ministers and other Christians interested in more effective engagement with contemporary culture will find this book to be an interesting read and a valuable resource.

Steve W. Lemke

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, New Orleans, LA

*A New Meeting of the Religions: Interreligious Relationships and Theological Questioning.* By E. Luther Copeland. Waco: Baylor University Press, 1999, ix + 179 pp., \$19.99.

This new and useful addition to the growing literature on religious pluralism and Christian mission is written in two sections. Part one contains a useful survey of the now familiar exclusive-inclusive-pluralist model (and some of its manifest inadequacies) and helpfully elaborates the appeal of pluralism to many people. It also offers a representative and well-digested survey of the variety of theologies of religion—conservative and liberal, Protestant and Catholic, Western and non-Western—that are offered these days. For readers familiar with the literature, there may be little to learn but others—students included—will find the surveys to be fair and representative. Part two is much longer and more stimulating and original in content as Copeland begins the task of constructing a positive Christian theology of the religions.

I am impressed by a number of positive features about this book. Copeland takes seriously the contribution of theologians from the third world and he has read widely (and clearly benefited from) those who would not share his own generally evangelical starting points. Hick and Hocking, Samartha and Song, Tillich and Toynbee—not to mention a number of Catholic scholars (Rahner, Panikkar, Pieris and Knitter are the most quoted)—are among the many to whom readers are introduced. Then there is Copeland's willingness to ask and answer hard questions. Part two, for example, launches straight into a list of fourteen searching questions—together with his own answers!—about revelation and salvation and how the world's religions (and therefore the vast majority of the people made and loved by God) might be related to what Christians know of God's revealing and saving finality in Christ. These are widely asked questions, and Copeland may be right in saying that his is the first theology of religions that raises all of them as explicitly as he does. (The exception, curiously absent from the quite extensive bibliography, is Calvin Shenk, *Who Do You Say That I Am? Christians Encounter Other Religions* [Herald Press, 1997]). But Copeland certainly asks the searching questions and faces them honestly. He is content to remain agnostic (for example, about whether, finally, there are few who will be saved) and to argue for answers with which many evangelical colleagues would disagree (for example, he judges that even common interreligious worship is "not impossible" in some circumstances). Moreover, Copeland

has at least worked as a missionary (in Japan), and this adds a helpful realism to much of what he relates and undoubtedly reinforces his strong advocacy of both tolerant respect for and constructive listening dialogue with followers of the world's great faiths. At the same time he remains an energetic proponent of world mission, believing it to be required by the revelation of the triune God and motivated by grateful loyalty "to the One who has purchased me at so great a price" (p. 76). But (and here again he sounds a note that is not always heard among evangelicals) this mission is to be modeled on the incarnation and undertaken with humility and dialogue while employing both Christian testimony and interreligious cooperation. In other words, Copeland expends considerable effort to ensure *balance*: balance, for example, between freedom for Christians to assert the universal lordship of Christ and fairness in allowing people of other faiths to define and pursue their missions; balance between the imperatives of Christian mission and openness to interreligious dialogue (albeit within proscribed limits); balance between seeing all religions as containing something of the God who has not left himself without a witness anywhere and yet as bearing negative marks as well. Indeed, he concludes that "some, maybe many, who never hear the Christian gospel in this life will be saved, but none is saved apart from the redemptive work of God in Jesus Christ" (p. 144). It is clear that Copeland belongs to the growing number of evangelicals who are not "restrictivists" (what he calls at one point "negativists") in this area.

Several aspects of this volume, however, are open to criticism or improvement. For example, readers are poorly served by an index that has numerous references that are of no possible use or are trivial or not informative in any way. To the bibliography I would add the following entries that cover some of the same ground as Copeland: Shenk (see above); Vinoth Ramachandra, *The Recovery of Mission: Beyond the Pluralist Paradigm*; and Michael Nazir-Ali, *Citizens and Exiles: Christian Faith in a Plural World*. But the largest question mark concerns the speculative elements that crowd the concluding chapter in which Tillich, C. S. Song, Pieris, Samartha, Toynbee, Hocking, and even Freud lead Copeland into a flurry of possibilities from "Buddhist Christians" and the link to reconception and possible eschatological fulfillment of the religions. One is reminded of the fictional hero who "rushed outside, jumped on his horse and galloped off wildly in all directions!" The chapter is not without some biblical undergirdings, and some of what Copeland says may come about. Yet I have serious questions about his many speculations. The tumble of possibilities is intriguing and for the most part remains Christ-centered, but each calls for far more consideration than space seemed available. In fairness to Copeland he does stress the tentative nature of many of his remarks in this final chapter.

So, is the book worth buying, reading, and commending to our libraries? The answer is a clear yes, and its readership should include all those who realize that questions generated by the realities of religious pluralism are increasingly being raised. I think I'll stay with Shenk as required reading for my students in the area of mission and pluralism ahead of this interesting volume, but Copeland's book will feature prominently nonetheless in reading lists.

Bob Robinson  
Bible College of New Zealand

*Graven Ideologies: Nietzsche, Derrida and Marion on Modern Idolatry.* By Bruce Ellis Benson. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2002, 243 pp., \$19.00 paper.

In this engaging study, Bruce Benson focuses on "conceptual idolatry," which he defines as "the creation or the adoption of a concept or idea that we take to be equivalent



to God and thus worship *as* God" (p. 19). This form of idolatry is explored in the context of phenomenological theory. According to phenomenology, theoretical concepts should arise from phenomena of the world themselves, instead of being imposed *a priori* on the phenomena. Phenomenology highlights the danger present in all philosophy, "that our theories reflect more of ourselves than of the phenomena we are attempting to explain" (p. 28). This is, Benson says, precisely the danger of idolatry—namely, that in seeking to know God we fashion a concept in our own image rather than allow God himself to determine our knowledge of him. Benson argues that both philosophy and theology have been characterized by a tendency towards this kind of conceptual idolatry. What is needed, then, is the detection and deconstruction of idols, such as Jesus performed in his polemic against the scribes and Pharisees and modern philosophers like Nietzsche, Derrida, and Marion performed in their engagement with the Western intellectual tradition.

Benson begins with a study of Friedrich Nietzsche's denunciation of Platonism and Christianity. Platonism (and often Christianity as well) is an attempt rationally to transcend and, therefore to master, truth and reality; but in this attempt, we encounter only ourselves—that is, our own philosophical idols—rather than reality. Benson is sympathetic to Nietzsche's announcement of the "death of God" insofar as Nietzsche is speaking of the God of rationalistic liberalism and "the God of the philosophers," rather than the God of Christian faith. In this respect, "Christians can find in Nietzsche an ally—someone who proclaims what they themselves should have been more vocal in proclaiming" (p. 76). But Benson criticizes Nietzsche's equation of Platonism and Christianity, because in Christian faith it is Christ the Logos who masters us, not we him.

Moreover, for Nietzsche the death of God entails the loss of any metaphysical basis for Christian ethics, so that morality is simply an idol of our own making. Benson suggests that Jesus himself would agree with Nietzsche on this point: "Jesus confounds any formulation of God's law that re-creates it in a human image, any simplification that makes the law easier to master and control" (p. 98). Nevertheless, the positive ethical principles of Jesus and Nietzsche stand in sharp antithesis; the "will to power" is Nietzsche's fundamental ethical principle, while Jesus teaches and exhibits a voluntary renunciation of power. Christian ethics thus involves the transformation of Nietzsche's self-centered "will to power" into Jesus' self-giving "will to love" (p. 108). Further, in spite of Nietzsche's attempt to avoid idolatry, Benson observes that the "will to power" is itself suspect of idolatry, since it becomes an all-encompassing metaphysical principle with which Nietzsche seeks to master reality.

In order to set Derrida and Marion in their proper contexts, Benson turns in chapter 4 to Emmanuel Levinas and in chapter 7 to Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger. These philosophers share with Nietzsche the conviction that Western philosophy's attempt to master reality is idolatrous. Levinas responds to this idolatry with the notion of transcendent "otherness": although we seek to gain mastery over the other, it consistently refuses that control, remaining always transcendent and beyond our grasp. For Levinas, while the God of metaphysics is another "being" among others, the God of the Bible is beyond being and can therefore never be conceptually mastered. Similarly, Heidegger sees all philosophy, or "onto-theology," as an attempt to master God conceptually, so that philosophy and theology should always stand in fundamental opposition. The basic theological question, therefore, that arises from these philosophers becomes: "Is there a way to speak of God that both makes God present and allows God to remain other to us?" (p. 169). In other words, can we speak of God in such a way that he does not at once become an idol? Derrida and Marion can help us to engage seriously with this problem.

Jacques Derrida observes that God is always different from what we say about him, so that all our thinking and speaking of God carry the danger of idolatry. But for Derrida, the problems inherent in religious language should not prevent us from

speaking—indeed, even ceasing to talk about God would itself be “saying” something (p. 149). Derrida finds an approach to the problem of religious language in a negative theology that seeks to transcend both affirmation and negation; in our talk about God there is at best neither complete presence nor complete absence, but only a “trace” of the divine otherness (p. 150). Benson criticizes Derrida, however, for implying that the divine otherness is ultimately identical with the otherness of all human beings. If God is wholly other, and if human beings are likewise wholly other, then the very point of negative theology is lost, and God becomes indistinguishable from ourselves. Furthermore, Benson suggests that Derrida’s insistence on the total otherness of God seems to place God even beyond faith, so that we are left, in Derrida’s words, with a “religion without religion” (p. 164).

Benson’s study culminates in his consideration of the Roman Catholic philosopher and theologian, Jean-Luc Marion. Marion is grateful for Nietzsche’s announcement of the death of God, and he describes all philosophy as “folly,” because “the ‘God’ of ontology is rigorously equivalent to an idol” (p. 189). The great theological problem, according to Marion, is to maintain the possibility of God-talk without undermining God’s otherness. Thus theology is “bad” when it leads us to think that our concepts have mastered God; but it is “good” when, in an incomplete way, it helps us to be addressed by God (p. 196). Marion advocates both love (*agape*) and the Eucharist as “good” approaches to speaking of God, since in them theology is action rather than theory, *theology* rather than *theology*. Furthermore, Marion suggests that we can speak of God through prayer, for in prayer the distance between God and humanity is paradoxically both acknowledged and traversed.

While appreciating Marion’s attempt to avoid idolatry by speaking of God while maintaining the divine transcendence, Benson argues that Marion succumbs to yet another form of idolatry, “the idolatry of transcendence” (p. 223). There is, according to Benson, a danger that, having denied the possibility of identifying God by predication, any number of idols may be allowed to take God’s place. What is ultimately needed, then, is “an orthodox Christology” in which the enfleshed Logos is a “real” object in the phenomenological sense (p. 222). Only with such a Christology, says Benson, can we “navigate between the Scylla of transcendence and the Charybdis of immanence” (p. 223). Although we can never possess or master the truth, we can have a “glimpse” of God’s truth. And this glimpse is Christologically grounded: “We have a glimpse of the Word made flesh” (p. 226). In Jesus Christ, we have a “true sight, but . . . not an exhaustive seeing” (p. 226).

This Christological focus with which the study concludes represents the strongest point of Benson’s appropriation of phenomenology. I wonder, though, if Benson is right to suggest that the knowledge of God is threatened by an “idolatry of transcendence.” Is it possible after all to speak too emphatically of God’s transcendence? Perhaps the crucial flaw in both Derrida and Marion is not the notion of otherness as such, but the lack of an equally serious theology of grace. The problem of transcendence receives both its profoundest statement and its proper resolution in the affirmation that the transcendent God is also the *gracious* God—the God whose self-disclosure to us in Jesus Christ is a miracle of grace, in which the impossibility of divine knowledge is displaced by the actuality of faith.

*Graven Ideologies* is a lucid and capable study of conceptual idolatry in relation to divine transcendence. Benson offers a sympathetic and tough-minded analysis of modern philosophers whom Christians have too often ignored or dismissed out of hand; in his willingness to learn from these philosophers, Benson exemplifies the kind of humility that a study of idolatry demands. With its engaging style and its interaction with several important philosophers, the book provides an accessible introduction to post-

modern thought as well as a stimulating contribution to the theological discussion of divine knowledge.

Benjamin Myers  
James Cook University, Townsville, Australia

*Moral Darwinism: How We Became Hedonists.* By Benjamin Wiker. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2002, 321 pp., \$20.00 paper.

At its core the modern scientific endeavor is a philosophical and theological venture. It is for this reason that “every distinct view of the universe, every theory about nature, necessarily entails a view of morality; every distinct view of morality, every theory about human nature, necessarily entails a cosmology to support it. . . . There is no way to escape the interrelationship of science and ethics, and no one should be relieved of the responsibility that this interrelationship entails” (pp. 22– 23). Working from this thesis, Ben Wiker’s *Moral Darwinism* is a plausible account of the philosophical, scientific, and moral lineage that runs from Epicurus to Darwin. It asserts that the apparent “scientific revolution” ushered in by Darwin was very likely a reconstitution and adoption of philosophical and moral assumptions asserted by Epicurus more than two millennia ago and carries with it, as it did for Epicurus, specific ethical implications that drastically influence modern moral thought.

Wiker argues that the Epicurean ideas behind Darwinian evolutionary theory are: (1) there is no God; and (2) all of reality is reducible to material components. The motivation behind these claims, argues Wiker, was their therapeutic value. That is, Epicurus’s desire was to provide a philosophical/ethical theory of life undisturbed by ruminations about divine punishment or worries of regarding the afterlife. Thus, Wiker argues, Epicurus “purposely and systematically *excluded* the divine from nature, not only in regard to creation and design of nature, but also in regard to divine control of, and intervention in, nature” (p. 20).

Likewise, Darwinian evolutionary theory assumes: (1) a closed universe; and (2) a universe totally reducible to material components. Similarly, by adopting the Epicurean view of the universe, modern Darwinian world views also “inherit the moral universe that was necessarily part of his materialist universe, even if it only accepted only the materialist premises of that universe” (p. 23). As a result, with God out of the picture, one can view moral issues like abortion, euthanasia, and sexuality in a totally different light. The underlying philosophical assumptions virtually eliminate the need for concern over objective moral standards regarding such issues. “Since, for Darwin, our nature is the result of random natural selection, human nature has been formed in great part by chance. Darwinism becomes moral Darwinism precisely in advocating that we take evolution into our own hands and remold our nature according to our own will” (p. 221).

Unfortunately, those who have claimed the scientific high ground for the last one hundred and fifty years have tended to take the data of scientific investigation and use it as a proof-text in support of materialist philosophical assumptions while avoiding the attending philosophical questions altogether. For this reason what modern culture calls “science” or “Darwinian evolutionist theory” may in reality be more aptly described as “philosophical materialism.” It is at root an ideology that attempts to explain the nature of reality, but is only one of several options available in the marketplace of ideas and arguably not the best.

Seizing this point Wiker argues that because materialist assumptions are just that—assumptions—they actually function as a type of faith. He then argues that this “faith” is diametrically opposed to Christianity “because it was originally designed by Epicurus to destroy belief in a creator God, the soul, the afterlife, purposefulness in nature and a permanent, natural foundation for morality independent of human opinion. The world view that it leaves in its wake is a unified theoretical and moral account of the universe and humanity’s place in it; and this revolutionized world view is irreconcilable both theoretically and morally with any non-materialist view, but especially with Christianity” (p. 297).

Thus, without a doubt the greatest strength of the book—and there are many—is the connection Wiker makes throughout between one’s underlying world view assumptions and the ramifications such beliefs have in the realm of morality. On this point the ninth chapter is particularly enlightening. His discussions of individuals like Margaret Sanger and Alfred Kinsey present stark examples of the practical ramifications of his thesis. One needs to be warned, however, that this discussion (particularly that of Kinsey) is not for those weak of stomach.

While there is much to be praised in this work, it is not without faults. Wiker tends to be a bit too categorical in his critiques of figures such as Newton and Galileo in chapters 6 and 7. While he does suggest that the intent of these men was to bring Christian understanding to what was taking place in the physical world around them, his characterizations tend to lay maniacal motives at the feet of each figure he discusses. This results in the feeling that there is a demon motivating every scientist or scientific advancement. Certainly there is nothing wrong with seeing God in what is revealed about nature or exploring the scientific realm in a manner that is honoring to God and further reveals his glory. Wiker certainly believes this to be true, but he underplays this thought during his critique. In addition, Wiker’s assumptions about the influence and motives of these men begs the question of how noble-minded men of faith gazing at the stars and discovering new realities should have explained them any differently than they did. This is in part the point of his last chapter and perhaps that will be a focus in future works. The book is set up nicely for just such a “sequel.”

In the final analysis Wiker has hit on a vital point every Christian must realize and embrace. The front line battles of the modern moral culture war (issues such as abortion, euthanasia, and sexuality) are ultimately metaphysical struggles linked to one’s view of the nature of the universe. Ultimately, the positions of opposing sides in these debates are irreconcilable because their foundations rest on irreconcilable world views. Materialism denies God’s existence; Christianity depends upon it. While raw scientific data can and should be pursued and applied in the most coherent model possible, any hope for winning the culture war battles depend not on the proper application of data from the created order (although such integrity would help) but on the conversion of hearts from what is ultimately a hopeless world view to the One who is the hope of our salvation.

By exposing the ideological assumptions underlying the modern scientific endeavor, Wiker provides a foundation from which one can not only understand why the modern moral culture wars are such heated battles but also why evangelism is ultimately the most effective form of moral debate. Basic world view assumptions about the nature of reality drive moral commitments. For this reason alone the book is a must-read.

Mark Daniel Liederbach  
Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, NC