

BOOK REVIEWS

The Promise-Plan of God: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments. Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008, 419 pp., \$34.99.

In Walter Kaiser's *Toward an Old Testament Theology*, he convincingly showed how the OT is bridged together with consistency and continuity of theology in unfolding God's promise throughout the complete OT work. In his thoroughly revised and expanded publication, *The Promise-Plan of God*, he shows how the unifying theme builds in the NT *epangelia* (promise) and combines that with the plans of God in the OT.

Toward an Old Testament Theology was foundational to this new publication as it presented a strong, evangelical biblical theology of the OT, Kaiser's *magnum opus*. However, some reviewers suggested the first seventy pages of this work were dry, heavy, and difficult to work one's way through. Kaiser first presented the history behind other OT theologies and argued they fell short in many ways. He then went on to present his OT theology and a precise hermeneutical approach requiring the reader to respect the intended message of each author. This was an excellent introduction, but it sometimes read like endless genealogies, and the mind had a hard time concentrating on the passage and being able to take in the full meaning. However, this time, the author built on *Toward an Old Testament Theology* and responded wisely to his critics in this new book by cutting out the first seventy or so pages of introductory material from his earlier work.

Many times OT scholars are so narrowly focused on their discipline that they are lost when they need to address a much broader subject matter. Kaiser's well-established OT scholarship is equally supported by his wide breadth of expertise in producing books on archaeology, history, apologetics, biblical theology, ethics, missions, preaching, prophecy, and hermeneutics, as well as a sizeable number of commentaries. In addition, Kaiser allows his OT scholarship to be foundational for the understanding of the NT.

Beginning in the preface, the author presents the reason for writing this book in our postmodern times. There is a need to approach the truth of God's Word today through biblical theology unfolded from the text of Scripture itself (p. 13)

Some attempts at biblical theology have been Christo-exclusivistic, seeing the promise of the coming Messiah as the central theme, but Kaiser's approach is to develop a broader scope that unifies the Bible and builds the case for God's Promise-Plan as revealed throughout the Scriptures with different characteristics. Kaiser's "Epangelical" proposal for doing biblical theology attempts to go beyond the reformed/dispensational debate, and he points to five different ways to relate Israel and the church, concluding with the "Epangelical" position as a renewed covenant to the seed of Israel. I sense a real kinship with Kaiser, who wrestles with different systematic theologies and wants to study the Scriptures afresh.

In Part 1, Kaiser devotes eleven chapters to moving chronologically through the books of the OT, addressing (1) The Pre-Patriarchal Period; (2) The Patriarchal Era; (3) The Mosaic Era; (4) The Pre-Monarchial Era; (5) The Davidic Era; (6) The Wisdom Era; (7) Prophets of the Ninth Century BC; (8) Prophets of the Eighth Century BC; (9) Prophets of the Seventh Century BC; (10) Exilic Prophets; and (11) Postexilic Times. Kaiser places the book of Job in the Patriarchal Era as he assesses the language of this book in chapter 2 and briefly addresses a theology of God and the Canaanite genocide in chapter 4.

Part 2, a Biblical Theology of the New Testament, is broken down into nine chapters that also build on a chronological listing of the NT books as follows: (12) The Law of God; (13) The Mission of the Church; (14) Paul's Prison Epistles; (15) The Kingdom of God; (16) The Promise of the Holy Spirit; (17) The Purity of Life and Doctrine; (18) Letters to Pastors; (19) The Supremacy of Jesus; and (20) The Gospel of the Kingdom. In chapter 12, Kaiser has a brief, but helpful article about the promise of Gentile inclusion and the Law in the OT and in Paul's writings. In chapter 20, the author addresses the question of the binding of Satan before or after the Second Coming and also the question of one or two resurrections—physical and spiritual.

The appendices are helpful as well. These present chronological charts on the dates of Bible books and a study of the word *epangelia* ("promise") in the NT.

As a professor of over twenty years, I am pleased when I read a new book that would work well as a course textbook. *The Promise-Plan of God* is one of these rare finds. Kaiser has written many books, and some have found their way into my library. His scholarship is always sound, but in the case of *Toward an Old Testament Theology*, it was hard for some to fully appreciate and dig down into the text when some would bog down and become lost in the lengthy introduction. This work has readability and the visual layout of the publication has real eye appeal as well. I recommend this work for personal libraries for pastors, for academicians, and also as a text for teaching biblical theology. Thanks are due to Walter Kaiser for his latest work.

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An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach. By Bruce K. Waltke, with Charles Yu. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007, 1040 pp., \$44.99.

Bruce K. Waltke, the dean of evangelical OT scholars and teacher of a multitude of students who follow in his train, has written *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach*, presumably the *magnum opus* of a lifetime of scholarship, including thirty years of teaching OT theology (p. 21).

The objectives of this work are broad: (A) to know God personally; (B) to understand the nature of God's revelation; (C) to know one's self; (D) to understand the OT; (E) to understand the NT; and (F) to contribute to spiritual formation (pp. 10–17). With this wide wingspan of objectives, Waltke launches his journey through OT theology, equipped with an expert knowledge of the primary and secondary literature. While objectives A and F are quite welcome in a book of this nature, only the serious reader will be able to assess whether these objectives have been satisfied.

The title of the book, however, gives no clue the author would pay so much attention to the NT (Objective E), even though this is often a neglected area of concentration in OT theologies, wherein the NT sometimes merits no more than a chapter or two at the end of the theology. At times, in fact, Waltke seems more intent on doing biblical theology in general than OT theology in particular. Nevertheless, we can applaud him for his sustained attention to the NT.

The author sets forth his OT theology in three parts. Part One: Introduction (chaps. 1–6) follows T. C. Vriezen's threefold outline for writing a biblical theology: to establish (1) the basis (chap. 1); (2) the task (chap. 2); and (3) the method (chaps. 3–6) of OT theology. In this section of the book, the author lays out the terms and issues of the discipline in a thorough manner. His discussion of revelation, inspiration, and illumination is particularly helpful and sets the stage for his evangelical approach to the discipline, for which he is unapologetic (pp. 31–36). A feature that is usually implicit

in OT theologies, but thankfully not in Waltke's work, is his extensive and insightful section on hermeneutics in three parts: Part 1: *Hermeneutica Sacra*; Part 2: *Narrative Theology*; and Part 3: *Poetics and Intertextuality* (chaps. 3–5). Part 1 concludes with a chapter in which this revered author sets out to “substantiate the claim that the center of the Old Testament, the message that accommodates all its themes, is that Israel’s sublime God, whose attributes hold in tension his holiness and mercy, glories himself by establishing his universal rule over his volitional creatures on earth through Jesus Christ and his covenant people. This in-breaking of God’s rule involves battling against spiritual adversaries in heavenly places and political, social, and religious powers on earth and destroying them in his righteous judgment while saving his elect” (p. 144). The chapter consists of a survey of the corpora of OT literature and their witness to or role in bringing the kingdom of God to pass, concluding with a discussion of the kingdom of God in the NT. Unfortunately, this theological center plays no consistent part in shaping the larger theology and merits only occasional reiteration throughout the book.

In Part 2 (chaps. 7–28), Waltke sets forth the historical basis for OT theology, which is comprised of two corpora, the Deuteronomistic History or Primary History [Genesis–2 Kings], and the Chronicler (1–2 Chronicles, Ezra–Nehemiah), which constituted a second history of Israel from Adam to the restored community (c. 500BC). Yet he rightly insists the proper focus of OT theology is on the text, not the event, even though he leaves the reader to fend for himself on the merits of this choice. Quite obviously he accepts Martin Noth’s theory of the editorial nature and function of Deuteronomy through 2 Kings as a deuteronomistic work, although he never offers a defense of the theory, the absence of which may make some evangelical scholars uneasy. His use of the term “gift” as the key word to introduce each chapter is somewhat of a mystery that he never explains. Beginning with Part 2: *Primary History*, this term is part of every chapter title until the end of the book. Its frequency might suggest it is tied into the theological center of the irruption of the kingdom of God, but no such connection is made. One would think that some term or phrase related to the theological center, that is, the irruption of the kingdom of God in history, should have stood in its place. This might have given the book a semblance of unity under the theological center of kingdom, something the book is sadly lacking. The term “gift” rather stands where some term relating to the center should have stood and could have shaped the book into a theology of the kingdom of God. The chapters on the Pentateuch (chaps. 7–17) are some of the most thorough portions of the book, Genesis alone occupying six chapters (chaps. 7–12), and the Pentateuch getting 339 pages of text, or approximately 65% of the entire book. Yet the reader will be grateful for the thorough discussion of the Pentateuchal foundations of the OT. Unfortunately, this means other portions of the OT text, particularly the prophets, get an inexcusably brief discussion.

In Part Three: *Other Writings* (chaps. 29–35), Waltke deals with the prophets, Ruth, Psalms, and the Wisdom books (Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes). He introduces the prophets with an introductory chapter (“The Gift of Prophecy Part 1: The Prophets,” chap. 29), and then follows with a single chapter on the prophetic books themselves (“The Gift of Prophecy, Part 2: The Prophetic Books,” chap. 30), in which he all too inadequately surveys this significant body of material. Due to its cursory treatment, this is one of the most disappointing chapters in the entire book.

Unlike his treatment of the prophets, Professor Waltke prefaces no introductory discussion of the wisdom phenomenon but merely introduces the chapter on Proverbs (chap. 33) with a brief statement on wisdom (pp. 897–901). Hermeneutically, Waltke’s Christocentric interpretation of the OT is both commendable and disappointing—commendable in that he gives a valid place for this hermeneutic that too often proves an embarrassment for exegetes, but disappointing in that he often draws upon the Christological view before the OT text has had a chance to speak through its own lips. For example, he interprets Hos 6:2 as fulfilled in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ

(p. 832; also the Fourth Servant Song, p. 845), with which I would not disagree, but he does so without giving any attention to the historical situation that produced this text.

One of the hermeneutical peculiarities of the book is the application of the OT text to the contemporary world. While this is most appropriate for homiletics and systematic theology, it confuses the basic hermeneutical agenda of the book. One example is his comparison of the United Nations building to the Tower of Babel (p. 311; for other examples see pp. 144, 178–79, 211, 305). This would be much more at home in a homiletical commentary than in an OT theology.

There is much helpful material in this book, but it lacks consistency as an OT theology, sometimes turning more into an OT survey than theology. As a textbook, it is entirely too long. Perhaps this could have been remedied by breaking it into two volumes, but practically, this is not an ideal textbook scenario either. The major problem of the book, in my opinion, is the lack of the development of the theological center the author set forth in chapter 6. If he had followed this plan, conceivably this would have given a greater sense of unity to the volume and produced a more succinct treatment of OT theology.

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Reading the Old Testament: An Inductive Introduction. By Michael B. Dick. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2008, xxii + 367 pp., \$29.95.

Reading the Old Testament is at once innovative, refreshing, and exasperating. The author's goal is commendable: to introduce the student to the OT in a dynamic, interactive, and innovative manner. He seeks to do this by providing a relatively lively text, in which he uses works such as Jonathan Swift's *A Modest Proposal* and Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass* as well as ANE works such as *Atrahasis* to help the student learn how to read various OT texts. Interspersed throughout the text are a host of study questions (326 in all) intended to get the student to interact with the OT text, not merely to read the textbook. The accompanying CD-ROM contains all the questions (in PDF format) and enables the student to fill out the answers electronically and email them to the professor. All of these devices enhance the appeal and usefulness of the work.

Ultimately it is not simply the packaging of a text, but its content that is the key factor in determining a book's usefulness. And here, sadly, this work is lacking, especially from an evangelical perspective. Though the author claims in his preface that his is an "academic" approach that is "certainly not meant to 'threaten' any particular religious position" (p. xvii), such is not the case. Dick espouses standard moderate/liberal critical approaches to the OT, including post-exilic dates for the composition of most of the OT, and embraces source criticism, form criticism, redaction criticism, literary criticism, and reader-response criticism. He views much of the OT history with skepticism.

Chapter 1, "Interpreting the Text of the Bible," consists of a presentation of a complex seven-stage process in the development of the book of Genesis. According to the author, each phase represented a crisis in society, and each crisis "demanded a re-reading of the text the society had received from its earlier period" (p. 7). In fact, Dick later argues that "each of the additions to the three-part Jewish canon was compelled by a crisis" (p. 21). Dick does not distinguish clearly between text and interpretation in his seven-phase approach. Nor is there any basis for concluding that "crisis" is the predominant motif either in a book's development or in the canonical process.

One of Dick's favorite terms is "re-reading." As an example, in phase 4 (the Targum and the Mishnah) Dick writes that the Mishnah is similar to NT books, which were

“written roughly at the same time—both were written as commentaries or re-readings of the Hebrew Bible, one by the Jews and the other by Christians” (p. 26). When Mark wrote the first Gospel, “he undoubtedly did not consider it ‘biblical,’ but rather a commentary or re-reading of the one Bible—the Hebrew Bible” (p. 25). Such a low view of the inspiration of NT writers is not presented as opinion but fact. Mark’s main purpose is to present the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, hardly similar to the Mishnah or a “commentary or re-reading” of the OT.

Chapter 2, “Exercises in Reading and Exegesis,” is devoted to reading and providing an exegesis of two texts: Jonathan Swift’s *A Modest Proposal* and the book of Jonah. Dick’s approach is innovative (and I personally love Swift’s work), but is it really a good use of space to devote half a chapter to Jonathan Swift? Undoubtedly Dick’s main point is that it is important to determine the genre of a work before one can interpret it. He clearly does not view the book of Jonah as historically accurate, and wants the reader to see it as a different literary genre, not concerned with the truthfulness of the narrative. Dick does not even mention the reference to the prophet Jonah in 2 Kings 14:25, choosing instead to include a ninth-century midrash on Jonah illustrating a Jewish re-reading of the text.

In chapter 3, “The Beginning: A Response to a Crisis,” the author explains the importance of the Ezra-Nehemiah time frame, since he assumes OT narrative came into being during this time period. He explains that whether or not the narrative events described in the OT actually took place “is a complicated matter” (p. 74). In chapter 4, “Genesis 1–11: An Introduction to the Pentateuch or Torah,” we are finally introduced to the beginning of the canonical OT. Genesis 1–11 is regarded by Dick as “myth,” so there is no problem if it is not historical or accurate; unlike science, “myth can accommodate two or more narratives without worry over a dreaded contradiction” (p. 105). He then compares Genesis 1 to two short Mesopotamian creation stories and, later, Genesis 2 to Atrahasis, the text of which is included in the appendix. Dick concludes that “the stories in Genesis 1–11 are simple, child-like fairy tales with gods, cherubim, talking snakes, magic trees, cosmic disaster, and so on” (p. 129).

Chapter 5, “The Thesis of the Pentateuch and Its Development,” is the longest chapter in the book (59 pages). Here we are introduced to the Priestly writer; a full treatment of the documentary hypothesis, with support for a Hexateuch rather than a Pentateuch; and three theories of Israel’s occupation of Canaan. Dick states that the book of Joshua is “idealized,” not realistic, because it does not agree with Judges 1, and archaeological evidence does not support its claims: “Jericho, Joshua’s most famous conquest, had already been in ruins for centuries by the end of the thirteenth century” (pp. 152, 160). But Joshua also contains many passages indicating the Israelites’ failure to drive out the inhabitants completely (Josh 13:13; 15:63; 16:10; 17:11–12; and 19:47). Moreover, the archaeology of Jericho is quite complex, with neither Garstang’s nor Kenyon’s excavations supporting Dick’s statement concerning Jericho (not to mention that the date of the conquest may well have been the end of the fifteenth century BC, not the thirteenth!). When discussing Deuteronomy, Dick states that though it presents itself as the last words of Moses, “in reality it represents the reform program of refugees during Manasseh’s reign” (p. 180). There are scores of statements like this scattered throughout the book (especially in chaps. 1, 4, and 5), where I found myself asking, “Where is the evidence—*any evidence*—to support this statement?”

Chapter 6, “Torah: Story and Law,” discusses the Law, trying to show its dependence on Hammurabi’s law code, and explaining Deuteronomy’s apparent dependence on ANE vassal treaties (the Esarhaddon Vassal Treaty is presented in an appendix). In chapter 7, “The Prophets,” we learn it is very difficult to determine the words of the prophets themselves, since nearly all their words have come “through the ‘filter’ of the Deuteronomistic group” (p. 228). The only two passages considered in detail are 1 Kings 17–19 (Elijah) and the book of Amos. There is virtually no discussion of the important

books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, or most of the Minor Prophets, and there is not one word about predictive prophecy. This is the most disappointing chapter of the book.

Chapter 8 (“The Psalms”) and 9 (“The Wisdom Movement: Proverbs and Qoheleth/Ecclesiastes”) are perhaps the best chapters of the book. Chapter 8 provides a good (but brief) discussion on the Psalms and the basics of Hebrew poetry. There is no discussion of messianic psalms. In chapter 9, wisdom literature is introduced, with Proverbs and Ecclesiastes the representative books briefly examined. Dick holds that the book of Proverbs was edited after the exile, when “women seem to replace men as the focal point of the new community” (p. 287). If so, one wonders why there are so many proverbs not flattering to women (Prov 2:16–19; 6:24–26; 7:5–27; 9:13–18; 11:22; 19:13; 21:9, 19; 23:27–28; 25:24; 27:15–16; 30:20) in the book.

The most curious chapter in this book is the last. Chapter 10 is devoted to “The Jewish Short Story: Ruth, Esther, and Judith.” Judith is, of course, an apocryphal book (the only one discussed in this work). And Ruth is set in the time of the judges, and was probably written during the time of David, not in the exile. That leaves only Esther as a post-exilic biblical book. But somehow Dick links these three books together to prove his point: these books “speak to the needs of the vulnerable post-exilic Jewish community” (p. 311), and in all three books the women assume the part of the liberator “precisely because men have failed” (p. 299). While Ruth’s actions are certainly highly commendable, her male counterpart is Boaz, who is presented not as a failure, but as the ultimate liberator (kinsman-redeemer) for both Naomi and Ruth.

Oddly, the book ends with a discussion of Judith. There is no summary or concluding section, only an appendix with *Atrahasis* and the *Vassal Treaty of Esarhaddon*, followed by a helpful glossary of terms and subject and Scripture indices.

I am left wondering who would profit from this book. Even for a non-evangelical audience, there are too many non-supported assertions made throughout the work. Further, there is precious little coverage of the OT in this book: while *A Modest Proposal* and *Through the Looking Glass* may make for fun reading, it would be better to discuss extensive sections from Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, or Job instead. For the intended audience (college students needing a basic introduction to the OT) a far better work would be *Encountering the Old Testament (EOT)* by Bill Arnold and Bryan Beyer (2d ed.; Baker, 2008). *EOT* is evangelical in perspective, quite visually engaging (with many full-color photographs and maps, plus CD-ROM), easy to read, and far more even and extensive in its coverage of the individual OT books than Dick’s work.

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The Interpretation of Scripture. By Joseph Fitzmyer. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 2008, 142 pp., \$18.95 paper.

As an evangelical Protestant I must say that I am encouraged and excited about the broader movement of the Roman Catholic Church and more specifically the espoused desire of Joseph Fitzmyer to return to a theology driven by the Scriptures. Fitzmyer repeatedly states that his Roman Catholic counterparts want to be more biblically centered and more biblically literate in their beliefs and practices. Fitzmyer is promoting a focus that would lead to a greater submission to biblical authority and a centering of church belief and practices on biblical principles. I would applaud and encourage such a direction and believe that both Catholic and Protestant scholars would enjoy

greater unity and influence if all Christians would seek to embrace a high, authoritative view of the Bible and its integrity.

The question left in my mind after reading *The Interpretation of Scripture* is whether or not Fitzmyer intended the same meaning as I would intend as I write or teach about biblical interpretation and sufficiency. It is clear Fitzmyer has a high regard for the historical-critical method of interpreting the Bible. He calls it “indispensable” in trying to understand the benefits of the Bible for the church. The historical-critical method is defined as an approach of two preliminary steps that borrows from classical philology. Step one is the consideration of introductory questions such as the authenticity of the writing; the unity of any given text; date and place of composition; content and style of the writing; and the occasion or purpose of the writing. These issues are all familiar to biblical scholars who are used to seeing such topics covered by the introductions in technical and semi-technical commentaries. Second, Fitzmyer encourages the practice of textual criticism. This discipline helps the interpreter understand the transmission of a biblical text in the original languages and other ancient versions. These two steps (classical philology and textual criticism) are ones that should be embraced by every serious Bible student, Catholic or Protestant. Fitzmyer critiques other interpretive methods (e.g. sociological, psychological, liberation, and feminist), showing how the historical-critical method is more objective, scientific, and effective in getting to the original meaning of biblical authors. On page 78, Fitzmyer writes, “The historical-critical method . . . has as its goal the ascertaining of the literal sense of the written Word of God.” This should be the goal of any Bible interpreter who believes the Bible is divinely inspired by an omniscient, strategic, purposeful God who desires to reveal himself to humankind. Fitzmyer states that the historical-critical method was a move to return to the sources. He contrasts this approach with the patristic approach to hermeneutics, which he describes as “highly allegorical, typological, and homiletic.” The author sees the patriarchal approach and early medieval modes as too cavalier and felt these methodologies did not have a high regard for the original literal meaning of the biblical texts. Protestant scholars would find a hearty resonance with Fitzmyer on this point.

In chapter 4, Fitzmyer also reviews several different types of disciplines used to help students understand the intent and meaning of Bible passages. Literary criticism, historical criticism, form criticism, and redaction criticism are all succinctly explained. The chapter serves as a good refresher to those who have formal theological training.

On several occasions, Fitzmyer distances himself from what he describes as the “fundamentalist reading” of the Bible. He writes that a “fundamentalist” reading of the Bible carries a “presupposition of divine dictation and a mode of understanding that rescinds from or fails to cope with the literary genres or forms in which God’s Word was formulated by human beings long ago” (p. 83). Fitzmyer believes all Christians should be interested in the literal sense of God’s Word but reject a “literalist reading” of the Bible as if it was “dictated by the Holy Spirit.” Some terms found in Fitzmyer’s work may beg further definition and further clarification. My understanding is that a literal hermeneutic of God’s Word would include understanding literary genres such as poetry; narrative; apocalyptic literature; and wisdom literature. A literary hermeneutic would and should take literary devices and literary genres into consideration when seeking to understand the original intent of the biblical writers. Fitzmyer may be referring to some who would take a simplistic approach to biblical interpretation without considering the original languages, historical occasion, or specific literary styles. It would seem obvious that poetical literature, narrative, and wisdom literature, to name a few, should be handled in different ways to understand God’s originally intended message for us in an accurate way.

Perhaps the largest and most substantive point of contention conservative Protestant scholars would have with Fitzmyer in this work would center on where his use of the historical-critical method leads him. Fitzmyer does not believe Jesus said everything put on his lips by the Gospel writers. In fact, Fitzmyer describes three stages in the Gospel tradition. A distinction is made between what Jesus actually said (AD 1–33), what was preached about Jesus and his words and deeds (AD 33–65), and what Gospel writers actually wrote (AD 65–95). According to Fitzmyer, the Gospel writers penned what was most beneficial to the faith community of that time. This conclusion tears at the integrity of the Gospel accounts and the Gospel writers. It also introduces enormous doubts regarding the actual acts and words of Christ. This conclusion also casts doubt on the straightforward and uncomplicated words of John as he writes in his first epistle regarding “that which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched” (1 John 1:1). Fitzmyer is actually degrading the authority of the Scriptures, for which he has argued elsewhere, when he makes such assertions about the Gospel traditions.

May Catholics and Protestants both embrace greater biblical literacy and authority as we seek to understand the message of the Bible. It appears the future focus should center upon the details and methods of reaching such a lofty and ambitious goal.

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Biblical Theology: Issues, Methods, and Themes. By James K. Mead. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007, viii + 328 pp., \$29.95.

James K. Mead, associate Professor of Religion at Northwestern College in Orange City, Iowa, has given classroom professors a great gift. He intends that this book will make the complexities of biblical theology accessible for students, and he has indeed succeeded in his goal.

Chapter 1 introduces the challenges in defining biblical theology. Mead’s working definition of biblical theology is that it “seeks to identify and understand the Bible’s theological message, that is, what the Bible says about God and God’s relation to all creation, especially to humankind” (p. 1). Throughout this chapter and the rest of the book, the author seeks to find out what the Bible says about God, how it says these things and by whom and for whom it speaks.

Chapter 2 is written to help the reader avoid misconceptions about the history of biblical theology that might hinder our continuing discussions and progress on the topic. Mead discusses pre-Gabler “biblical theology” and the history of the development into the current discipline, including significant issues such as the division in the testaments, and the distinctiveness of the history of religions school.

Chapter 3 is an expert summary on all the relevant issues that must be addressed when dealing with biblical theology: relationships between the testaments; the use of extrabiblical texts; unity and diversity; descriptive vs. normative; and relationships between history and theology. I especially enjoyed his discussion of the perspectives of postmodern, feminist, Jewish, and postcolonial thinkers. Also, his distinctions between the content of biblical writings (the subject of the history of religions school) and the context of biblical writers (the subject of biblical theology) will prove helpful for students, all the while reminding them of the necessity of continued interaction between the two.

Chapter 4 is organized around three main foci: what the Bible’s theology is (here he discusses content, themes, and narrative); how scholars express that content (here he

discusses tradition history, canonical authority, and testimony); and where we enter into dialogue with it (here he discusses existential, experiential, and communal perspectives). Mead insists that each of the methods helps in our continued search for theological content. I would have appreciated more on how methods are shaped by one's understanding of authority, especially in regard to social-communal perspectives.

Chapter 5, the longest of the chapters, examines three main themes: God, our relationship with God, and our relationship with one another. As I read through the somewhat laborious historical chapters, I found myself anticipating the controversy sure to be found in this chapter. But in this I was somewhat disappointed. The content of the chapter begged for the author's more detailed interaction, but he remained relatively impartial, choosing rather to merely list the many themes that seem to cross both testaments.

In the end I wish Mead would have asked more questions and even sought to answer some of them from his Christian perspective. It is the controversial nature of biblical theology that makes it exciting especially for students, and in this the book was greatly lacking. So while he has succeeded in making biblical theology accessible, I do not feel he has made it more attractive. I fear seminary students will miss its great value as they attempt to just make it through it.

Nevertheless, as an informative introduction Mead's book is excellent. The bibliography alone is a great asset to student and professor alike, and the organization of the book makes it a great reference for the many reminders we all need. Mead has succeeded in assimilating and distilling vast amounts of information into a relatively short and adequately readable book. In his summary chapter 6, he revisits his now inadequate definition of biblical theology from chapter 1, and in so doing aptly summarizes both the discipline and his book:

Biblical theology seeks to identify and understand the Bible's theological message and themes, as well as how the Bible witnesses to those themes and to whom and by whom it declares that message. The outcome of such investigation will lead us to hear what the Bible says about God's being, words, and actions; about God's relationship to all creation, especially humankind; and about the implications this divine-human encounter has for relationships between human beings (p. 242).

Mead's overview work has competently filled a more than two decade-long gap and should be commended.

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Elements of Ancient Jewish Nationalism. By David Goodblatt. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, xvi + 260 pp., \$84.00.

Is it possible to speak of an ancient Jewish national identity or nationalism? Or, as most recent scholars have agreed, is such a perspective anachronistic? If it is possible to speak of a national identity in antiquity, how would such an identity have been constructed, sustained, organized, and expressed? What would be the elements of a Jewish nationalism?

These are the basic questions and issues that University of California professor David Goodblatt seeks to address in his book *Elements of Ancient Jewish Nationalism*. Goodblatt's own understanding of his contribution is evident in his concluding chapter,

“Jewish Nationalism—What Rose and What Fell?” Here he articulates how his conclusions can serve to refine the issues raised by the recent contributions of particularly Doron Mendels, *The Rise and Fall of Jewish Nationalism* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), and Seth Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001). While affirming many of the central ideas of their work, he attempts to “reframe” these ideas by sharpening the focus of the debate and clarifying the questions (p. 210).

The result of Goodblatt’s sharpening and clarifying endeavor—one which he tells took a decade of research and reflection (p. xiii)—is a convincing argument for not only the use of the term “nation” and its derivatives for ancient societal groups including the Jewish people of the Second Temple period (chap. 1), but also for a Jewish national identity and nationalism constructed from the sacred text, Hebrew language, and priesthood (chaps. 2–4) and expressed in the names they used for themselves (chaps. 5–7).

In the preface, Goodblatt explains that the focus of his work is on the human subjects who reside in “the province of Judah (*Yehud*, *Ioudaia*) of the Achaemenid, Ptolemaic, and Seleucid empires, on (nominally) independent, Hasmonaean-Herodian Judah, and on the Roman province of *Iudaea*” (p. xiii). With the book’s territorial focus one would expect that his use of the term “Jewish” in “Jewish nationalism” has in view those who are Judeans—making “Jewish” and “Judean” synonymous terms. Yet this is not the case. While Goodblatt’s practice in the book is to translate the ancient terms referring to the people of the territory (e.g. Aramaic *yehudai*) with “Judean(s)” to preserve the ambiguity of the original languages, he nonetheless opts for “Jewish nationalism” instead of “Judean nationalism” for a specific reason: the phenomenon of the overlapping of Judean and Israelite identities. Because Second Temple Judeans saw themselves as Israelites as well and invoked the name “Israel” in support of their nationalism, Goodblatt consciously chose “Jewish” because it allowed for a broader field than the narrower “Judean,” and he asserts that the ambiguous term “Jewish” can imply either “Judah” or “Israel” or both.

Chapter 1 provides the foundation for the book’s six main chapters by establishing the appropriateness for the use of the terms “nation” and “nationalism” for ancient Judaism. Goodblatt states, “My purpose in this chapter was to justify the use of the concepts of national identity and nationalism in the study of ancient Jewish history” (p. 27). This was necessary because of the consensus of opinion among recent historians of the ancient world calling into question the use of the words “nation” and “nationalism” when writing about Jewish history. It has become commonplace to assume that such terms are a modern invention and therefore inappropriate when discussing ancient societies.

Through an application of recent social-scientific research along with detailed engagement with the ancient sources, Goodblatt convincingly argues that nationalism is *not* a modern invention as is supposed. Rather, a national consciousness can be found in the ancient world and especially among Second Temple Jews. In addition, Goodblatt asserts that the concept of nation should be distinguished, as it is today, from that of a state such that national identity in antiquity does not imply a state. This latter distinction dispels the false assumption equating the possession or dispossession of a political state with the presence or absence of national identity—an assumption that has characterized previous research. Finally, having shown that the concepts of nationalism and ethnicity are synonymous, Goodblatt offers this definition of national identity and nationalism:

By national identity I mean a belief in a common descent and shared culture available for mass political mobilization. By shared culture I mean that certain cultural factors are seen as criteria for, or indications of, membership in the

national group. Which cultural factors are singled out as criteria or indicators may shift over time. Also, the kinship or the cultural factors or both may not in fact be shared. What counts is that people believe they are and are ready to act on that basis. Finally, by nationalism I mean the invocation of the national identity as the basis for mass mobilization and action (pp. 26–27).

Chapters 2 through 4 deal with the social construction of ancient Jewish nationalism by discussing the role of Scripture (chap. 2), the Hebrew language (chap. 3), and the priesthood (chap. 4) in that creation. While some may wish to expand this list, I can imagine no one criticizing Goodblatt for the elements he has chosen. These doubtless represent some of the most important resources available to Second Temple Judaism for constructing and sustaining a national identity.

For the first of the three elements, Goodblatt, while entertaining recent critical scholarship's assertion of a very late composition of the Scripture, sidesteps these critical issues by addressing the question within the context of the Second Temple period when the so-called "primary history" (David Noel Freedman's term for Genesis through Kings) had been established for some time. Furthermore, Goodblatt argues for the widespread and regular practice of the public reading of biblical texts based on the preponderance of extant manuscripts from the Second Temple period. This he believes would explain how ideas of common descent and shared culture could reach a mass audience. Of the latter two elements, Goodblatt first argues that Hebrew served to help construct Jewish identity because it was the language of Israel's ancestors, the national literature, and the national religion (p. 70). Second, the priesthood's contribution to the construction of Jewish national identity is threefold: their role as preservers and teachers of the national literature, their function as rulers of Judah, and their provision of an ideology of resistance to foreign domination (p. 75). While one may wish to quibble here and there over details of Goodblatt's argumentation, all three of these points on the whole are well argued and anchored in the documentary and literary evidence of the Second Temple period.

Chapters 5 through 7 deal with three names that, according to Goodblatt, played a role in ancient Jewish nationalism: Israel (chap. 5), Judah (chap. 6), and Zion (chap. 7). Of the first moniker he points out the curious fact that the term Israel was avoided by the Hasmonean state for which "the Judeans" was the preferred, although they would have had ample reason to have used it. In contrast, Goodblatt shows that, with the use of the term Israel by the rebels of the first and second Jewish revolts (p. 121), their nationalistic ideology was centered on the concept of Israel (p. 138). Within this discussion Goodblatt notes the use of the phrase "house of Israel" during the second revolt, a phrase that Jesus of Nazareth also used according to Matthew's Gospel (cf. Matt 10:6; 15:24). Interestingly Goodblatt suggests that the phrase may have a technical nuance in this context whose meaning represents a second-century Hebrew equivalent to what we would call the "state of Israel" (pp. 134–36).

Goodblatt argues that the name Zion was used during the first Jewish revolt but not in the second. The phrase "freedom of Zion" is found on bronze coins of the late first century. He suggests that the interest in Jerusalem and the Temple on the part of the rebels may explain its usage. What is interesting is that Goodblatt does not perceive the Davidic implications in the name "Zion" and as a result does not think to inquire whether Davidic messianism had any role in its usage. Perhaps this is because he early averred that evidence for messianism in the first revolt is meager (p. 137), with the use of the term Zion perhaps less meager than he imagines.

David Goodblatt has made an important contribution to the study of Jewish nationalism in the Second Temple period both in the areas of method and information. No doubt *Elements of Ancient Jewish Nationalism* will be useful for specialists in Second

Temple Judaism as well as the NT. The strengths of this monograph perhaps lie mostly in the wealth of primary source material in the form of epigraphic, numismatic, and literary evidence contained in each chapter along with the numerous subarguments and discussions he offers in support of his primary agenda. From a NT perspective, the latter may have the potential to open up some new lines of thinking on old questions, not least questions surrounding the kingdom of God in the preaching of Jesus of Nazareth.

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Ancient Near Eastern Themes in Biblical Theology. By Jeffrey J. Niehaus. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2008, 203 pp., \$18.99 paper.

In this volume, Jeffrey Niehaus seeks to link themes common to ANE cultures and the Bible in a Christological manner. The themes include the royal shepherd; covenant and conquest; city; temple; image; abandonment and restoration; covenantal household; and restoration of all things. Niehaus focuses upon similarities between the Bible and ANE cultures since God's purpose in instituting these parallels "was to make such ideas somewhat familiar to God's people so that, when he actually broke into the historical plane and acted, his acts would be recognizable against their cultural background" (pp. 29–30).

Niehaus's approach contains three parts: (1) the OT contains the true versions of events while other documents preserve corrupted accounts; (2) the OT uses literary and legal forms common to the ANE; and (3) the correct views of pagan cultures are due to common grace while distortions occur as a result of demonic activity (pp. 29, 54). At this point we can appreciate Niehaus's approach that values theological fidelity and seeks to employ self-consciously a methodology that reflects biblical truth. However, his execution is often in need of strengthening.

His discussion of *têhôm* contains many errors. He writes, for example, about "the analogy between *tehôm* and Babylonian *tamtu*, the general term for 'the deep' in Babylonian. The gender of the words supports this obvious parallel: *tehôm* and *tamtu* are masculine common nouns, whereas *Tiamat* is a feminine proper noun, not the better match for *tehôm* from a linguistic point of view" (p. 24). However, *tamtu* should be written *tâmtu* (as it is in Akkadian dictionaries, e.g. CAD T pp. 150–58) because the macron indicates two vowels coalesced (GAG §55j)—the older form was *tiâmtu(m)*, which is clearly the word from which the proper noun *Tiâmat* (in the *status absolutus*) is derived (AHw p. 1353). Furthermore, *têhôm* appears in both genders in the Bible (see HALOT 1690); in Gen 7:11 the feminine form *rabbâ* modifies *têhôm*. Also, *tâmtu* is not masculine, as Niehaus asserts, but feminine, as the *t* between the root and case ending indicates. Even though the etymological connection is certain, it is obvious there is no semantic link to the goddess *Tiâmat* in Genesis 1 (cf. K. van der Toorn et al., *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, 869), but we do not need to misrepresent linguistic facts to prove it.

Niehaus also misapprehends Mesopotamian law codes/treatises. In his critique of John Walton's view of law treatises (*Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament* [Baker, 2006] 287–89) Niehaus defends his view that Hammurapi's law code was a functioning law code by pointing to the "a high degree of specificity" contained in the cases (p. 56, n. 1). However, specificity should not be equated with the use of Hammurapi's law code within ancient legal circles. Hammurapi's code was never referenced, nor were its stipulations reflected in the thousands of legal documents that have been

discovered from Mesopotamia. This makes it unlikely that it functioned as a law code. Furthermore, there is a strong propagandistic aspect regarding the medium on which the laws were written and the flamboyantly self-flattering prologue.

Lastly, Niehaus infers that since deities were seen to impart law through a mediator that was often the king, deities and kings were in a covenantal relationship (pp. 56–57). Not only is his view of the origin of law contested (e.g. Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought* 287–97), but there is no evidence of a covenantal relationship of this sort was ever thought to exist in cultures outside of ancient Israel. No doubt kings were in covenantal relationships with other kings, but I know of no text that outlines or discusses a covenant between a deity and a king or anyone else for that matter. Because of this I believe the notion of being in covenant with a god was particular to ancient Israel.

Lastly, Niehaus represents his conception of the relationship of gods and nations with two charts: (1) Egypt: Amon Ra > Pharaoh > warfare > covenant with conquered > temple service; and (2) Bible: God > Jesus > warfare > new covenant > temple service (p. 173). This chart and the associated discussion are simplistic. It is akin to saying one could substitute Jesus for Nirvana and change Buddhism into Christianity.

There is much of great value in this book. For instance, I joyously agree with Niehaus that Jesus is the focal point of all of history, and the author's approach is inspiring and refreshing. However, I think that in his desire to identify parallels, Niehaus at times has reshaped or overly simplified aspects of history and culture within the ANE to fit predetermined categories so that they better correspond with alleged biblical parallels.

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Knowing God the Father through the Old Testament. By Christopher J. H. Wright. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2007, 232 pp., \$15.00 paper.

Having previously written the volumes *Knowing Jesus through the Old Testament* (1992) and *Knowing the Holy Spirit through the Old Testament* (2006), by his own confession it seemed only natural that Christopher Wright would complete the trilogy with a third installment, *Knowing God the Father through the Old Testament*.

Although it would be inaccurate to describe Wright's work as devotional reading, *Knowing God the Father through the Old Testament* is not a volume written exclusively for the scholarly community. While devoid of the research typically associated with scholarly writing (little citation and no bibliography), the book nonetheless takes the reader through the process of evaluating the OT text through the eyes of one trained in the field of OT scholarship. Wright capably demonstrates proper theological methodology while performing limited exegetical evaluation of the biblical text, demonstrating a biblical theological approach that can be grasped by the common reader.

In spite of the title, Wright's book is not a treatise on the systematic presentation of the first person of the Trinity in the OT. Rather, it develops two interrelated themes. In chapters 1, 4, and 7, the main emphasis is on knowing God *as* Father through the evaluation of the Father/Son metaphor. In chapters 2, 3, 5, 6, and 8, the primary focus is on *knowing* God the Father in the same manner in which OT saints were called to *know* Yahweh their God. Indeed, *Knowing God the Father through the Old Testament* is as much a book on simply *knowing* God as it is a systematic look at God the Father as distinct from God the Son or God the Holy Spirit.

Approached from a biblical theological perspective rather than a systematic one, Wright treats the depiction of God as "Father" in the realm of metaphor rather than

“Person,” gleaned knowledge of God through the details of this very human metaphor. The fact that Wright treats the subject from a biblical theological perspective is one of the greatest strengths of his work, and thus his survey is firmly rooted in an inductive approach to the text, generally avoiding the pitfalls of proof texting so common among similar treatments.

While the fatherly metaphor is often the subject of Wright’s descriptive survey, it is not the exclusive metaphor treated within the book. He also examines other metaphors by which God revealed himself throughout the OT, primarily selecting those that describe the relationship between God and his people in terms of familial relationship. These include the metaphors of the adoptive parent/child relationship and the more distant husband/bride relationship. While a descriptive picture of God may best be derived from the pages of the OT through the means of metaphor, Wright is not exclusively interested in a survey of how God is described in the OT. He is more keenly concerned with how one might come to know God through the OT in terms of relationship rather than by way of description.

In reference to the theme of *knowing* Yahweh, Wright masterfully surveys the means through which God is known in the OT. These include the retold story of Israel through a theology of remembrance (chaps. 2 and 3); the means to knowing God through the experience of prayer (chap. 5); the knowledge of God reflected in the prophetic call to justice (chap. 6); and the knowledge of God derived through a theology of prophetic hope (chap. 8). The emphasis on *knowing* God comes to a practical culmination in the final chapter as the knowledge of God is set in correspondence with a call to faith, wherein the only way to truly know God is to approach him by faith.

Knowing God the Father through the Old Testament is a well-written, insightful survey of two corresponding themes, suffering only in its lack of structural organization between the twin themes. Among its strongest attributes are the broad cross-section of OT literature surveyed; poetic, prophetic, and narrative genres are equally represented. Few weaknesses exist, although some readers may detect traces of a personal agenda in reference to geo-political commentary in chapter 8. Also, some may question the frequent references to the NT in a book purporting to focus on the OT. Nevertheless, *Knowing God the Father through the Old Testament* provides a competent and applicable contribution to the evangelical community in the realm of OT theology.

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New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture, Vol. 1B: Genesis 11:27–50:26. By Kenneth A. Mathews. Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2005, 960 pp., \$32.99.

Kenneth A. Mathews has produced a well-written, detailed commentary on the patriarchal narratives that should appeal to both pastor and scholar. This volume is a continuation of Mathews’s NAC commentary on Genesis 1:1–11:26 (1996). While the commentary is based on the text of the NIV, Mathews interacts with the Hebrew Bible throughout the commentary. Issues of authorship and literary structure were covered in the previous volume in the New American Commentary series.

A fifty-eight page introduction covers issues related to the patriarchal narratives. Of major importance is the ongoing debate with the so-called “minimalist” school that denies the patriarchal narratives have any historical value whatsoever. Mathews surveys the history of the dialogue between those who place value on the biblical literature as well as archaeology and those who emphasize the archaeological record to the exclusion

of the biblical material. He interacts with several recent texts that attempt to answer the minimalist argument, such as K. A. Kitchen's *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* (Eerdmans, 2003). According to Mathews, the minimalists' problem is their *a priori* dismissal of religiously motivated literature. If followed consistently, no written records of any ancient people would be allowed to help write a history (p. 34).

Mathews points out several elements of the patriarchal narrative that are compatible with the archaeological record: the names of persons and towns; the migration of Terah; customs from Mari; the settlement of Canaan in the second millennium BC; Hurrian family law; and the distinctive features of patriarchal religion. This last point receives a more in-depth analysis in a later section of the introduction. Mathews contrasts the religion of the patriarchs with that of the later Mosaic period. While he finds many elements of continuity, enough distinctive elements appear that suggest a later writer would not likely have created these stories. For example, with respect to worship, Abraham planted a tamarisk tree and built a personal altar as did Jacob, despite the fact that these things are forbidden in the Mosaic Law (Gen 21:33; 28:18, 22; Exod 23:13; 34:13; Lev 26:1; Deut 7:5). No centralized religious location or cult site appears in the patriarchal narrative. Abraham married his half-sister (Gen 20:12) and Jacob married sisters (Gen 29:21–30), yet the Law forbids these practices (Lev 18:9, 11, 18). With the exception of circumcision and two instances of tithing, the patriarchs practiced very little of what would become important boundary markers in the Mosaic Law. These religious contrasts form a powerful argument for an early date of composition for Genesis. An exilic or post-exilic writer may have sought to eliminate these non-Mosaic practices.

A number of places in the text of the commentary highlight the historicity of the patriarchal narrative. While discussing the composition of 23:1–20, Mathews briefly deals with parallels to Hittite and Akkadian burial practices and concludes the section is “consistent with the general pattern known of deeds and transference of property at many different periods” (pp. 312–13). There is therefore no reason to assume the story is a creation of the first millennium BC. In his discussion of the descendants of Esau (Genesis 36), Mathews argues the “kings” ought to be understood as tribal kings rather than monarchs in the traditional sense, thus removing a potential anachronism in the text (pp. 633–35).

Mathews states the theme of Genesis as “God’s promissory blessings upon Israel’s ancestors that have their *partial* realization in the lives of the patriarchs and the rise of the nation Israel” (p. 72). This working theme for the book of Genesis follows D. J. A. Clines’s *Theme of the Pentateuch* (Sheffield, 1997). This theme is clearly announced in Gen 12:1–3 and is well developed by Mathews in the body of the commentary. Abraham is promised his children will be a great nation and that they will possess the land of Canaan. Mathews makes clear both the tension in the story where there are threats against the promise as well as the partial fulfilment noted by the text of Genesis. For example, when Jacob is forced to leave the land (Gen 28:14–15), Mathews suggests Jacob waited for the command to return because he trusted in the promise of God (p. 452). In commenting on the return of Jacob’s body to Canaan in Genesis 50, Mathews notes the trip to Egypt did not relinquish the claims of the patriarchs on the land of Canaan because “the land was the promissory gift of God” (p. 920).

The body of the commentary is divided into major sections based on the use of the term *toledoth* (“generations”), with each *toledoth* section broken into a series of pericopes. For each of these sub-sections, Mathews first treats the composition of the text. While these short sections give an account of form critical studies (JEDP), Mathews consistently rejects a late date of composition. For example, in dealing with the composition of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 18–19), Mathews concludes the whole section is the work of a single author and the details of the story correspond to a second millennium BC origin (p. 211). Regarding the Joseph stories, Mathews rejects various attempts to describe the section as a “novella” cobbled together out of as

many as three sources and full of internal contradictions. After a concise review of the history of such attempts, Mathews concludes there is “sufficient evidence to conclude that the Joseph narrative was originally the central part of the *Jacobtoledoth*” (p. 679).

After dealing with composition issues, Mathews describes the structure of the unit. Typically framing devices exist for each section—repeated or similar sounding words and phrases. Mathews occasionally observes brief chiasmic structures or other rhetorical devices, but the commentary is not obsessed with finding such elements. Each unit is then divided further into sub-sections or “scenes” based on repeating a motif or key word. After setting the structure for the sub-unit, Mathews gives a verse-by-verse commentary on the text. Hebrew is transliterated in the main text, but grammatical details are treated in the footnotes in Hebrew. When appropriate, a section will include a section on the history of interpretation among both early Jewish and Christian writers. He discusses the rape of Dinah in Genesis 34 (pp. 578–82), and several pages discuss various Jewish and Christian traditions concerning Joseph (pp. 669–74).

The commentary contains seven helpful excursuses on such topics as: Abraham’s Career and Legacy; The Patriarch’s Wealth; Melchizedek; Faith and Obedience; The Sacrifice of Isaac; Edom and the Edomites; and Levirate Marriages. A select bibliography is included along with a subject index, person index, and Scripture index. An index to Jewish sources would have been helpful.

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Genesis. By James McKeown. The Two Horizons Old Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008, 398 pages, \$25.00.

The Two Horizons Old Testament Commentary series aims to “bridge the existing gap between biblical studies and systematic theology” (back cover). While the term “two horizons” might connote scaling the philosophical heights of Gadamer and Thiselton, this commentary series aims more pragmatically at the pastoral task of bringing exegesis to bear on theology. The latest entry by James McKeown, Vice-Principal of Belfast Bible College, offers a theological interpretation of Genesis through the joining of pericope-by-pericope exegesis with essays on important topics such as land, creation, anthropology, and Christian mission. Introductory issues and textual commentary occupy the first half of the commentary, while theological reflection occupies the second half. Needless to say, the combination of exegesis, theology, and ecclesial application is an extremely ambitious undertaking within the confines of a 400-page commentary.

McKeown presents the case for a “new literary” (e.g. Meir Sternberg, Robert Alter) approach to Genesis in his introductory remarks. In contrast to the fragmenting tendencies of historical-critical approaches, he utilizes lexical and thematic repetition to trace a coherent narrative in the final form of Genesis. In addition, he proposes that the primary horizon for understanding Genesis lies in reading the book through the pre-critical lens of an Israelite facing exile rather than through the modern lenses of higher critics and theologians (pp. 4–5). Thus, the primary link between the ancient and modern reader arises through their shared ability “to appropriate these texts and see their relevance in a world where exile is still an all too common experience” (p. 11). This literary approach results in a cogent exploration of the themes of exile and homecoming in Genesis on the one hand, but in a somewhat uneven interaction with historical and canonical issues on the other. The introduction concludes with a critique of the JEDP documentary hypothesis and an exposition of the ANE context of Genesis.

McKeown's commentary on Genesis is useful but brief, with special excurses devoted to significant issues in the history of interpretation. Previewing his topical essays in the commentary's second half, for example, McKeown rejects the "gap theory" for Gen 1:1 (pp. 20–21); argues that the significance of Eve's seed in Gen 3:15 is primarily unfolded in the Genesis narrative itself (pp. 38–39); and observes possible typological correspondences between the "ark" of Noah and the "basket" of Moses (p. 55), among other interpretations that pave the way for his synthetic reflections. Such observations of thematic continuity across the primeval history and later narratives bridge the usual historical-critical splicing of Genesis into disparate sources. This represents the most unique contribution of McKeown's commentary. However, in keeping with his hypothetical construction of an exilic Israelite reader, McKeown sometimes cites the work of historical critics (e.g. Claus Westermann) who hold to an exilic provenance for Genesis. Though McKeown may indeed be correct that the first readers of Genesis were suffering through exile, his somewhat inconsistent use of secondary sources will be problematic for interpreters who hold to Mosaic authorship or a substantial Mosaic core in Genesis.

The second half of McKeown's commentary is structured as a series of topical treatments of Genesis' main unifying themes (descendants, blessing, land); key theological teaching (land, creation, fall, God's character, *imago Dei*, the life of faith); relevance to contemporary issues (science, mission, ecology, feminist approaches); and biblical-theological relationship to the rest of the canon (Pentateuch, historical books, wisdom literature, prophets, and NT). McKeown's analysis of the thematic continuity of descendants, blessings, and land in Genesis constitutes his most substantive contribution, an unsurprising fact given that he has already treated these at length in several articles for IVP's *Dictionary of the Old Testament Pentateuch* and his 1991 doctoral dissertation. On topics besides these, however, the interpreter will need to consult other works, many of which go unassessed or unmentioned by McKeown. On the *imago Dei*, McKeown briefly cites J. Richard Middleton's 2005 monograph *The Liberating Image* (p. 280) but otherwise fails to interact with Middleton's exploration of the functional aspects of the *imago* as related to the "creation mandate" of Gen 1:28. On Christian mission, McKeown's assertion that "[n]othing . . . has been written on mission in the OT that compares with the depth of treatment to the NT in [David J.] Bosch's magnum opus" (p. 318) is strangely outdated in light of the 2006 publication of Christopher J. H. Wright's *The Mission of God*. On the use of the *tetragrammaton* in Genesis (cf. Exod 6:3), McKeown argues for a proleptic use of the divine name but only cites J. Alec Motyer's 1959 pamphlet *The Revelation of the Divine Name*, thus ignoring the more recent treatment in Walter Moberly's 1992 study *The Old Testament of the Old Testament*. Despite these oversights, McKeown still provides a useful entrée into the relevance of Genesis for science, ecology, feminist hermeneutics, and canonical development of Genesis motifs.

In summary, McKeown's commentary attempts to do many things but cannot be said to do any of them particularly well. Students may not find citations to the secondary literature they seek, pastors and preachers may struggle with having to flip between the exegetical and theological sections of his commentary for insights on a single passage, and theologians will be disappointed that major theologians (e.g. Calvin, Barth, Pannenberg) are hardly cited within its pages. Unless a reader has a particular interest in tracing thematic threads through Genesis, it is likely that other commentaries and studies on Genesis will be more helpful than this volume. However, it should be noted that the weaknesses of McKeown's work spring not from any lack of scholarly acuity, but more from the inherent difficulty of writing a concise, integrative commentary on Genesis that holistically addresses both exegetical and theological concerns.

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1–2 Kings. By Gina Hens-Piazza. Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries. Nashville: Abingdon, 2008, 407 pp., \$38.00 paper.

Gina Hens-Piazza has written a very readable commentary on 1–2 Kings. She starts with an 8-page introduction that argues these works are story; that is, they are literary works, theological treatises, and history. One of the best parts of this section of the work is an explanation of what is meant by “deuteronomic history.” On the other hand, the length of the introduction lets one know this is not the work to consult for a full discussion of the origin of 1–2 Kings.

Following the introduction, the biblical text is discussed section-by-section, most of which are one chapter long, some being two chapters long. Each of these commentary sections is divided into four parts: a brief introduction is followed by literary analysis, then exegetical analysis, and finally theological and ethical analysis. The commentary as a whole is concluded by a three-page bibliography.

It is clear what this commentary is and what it is not. It is not nor does it intend to be a detailed analysis of the Hebrew text. In fact, I saw hardly a Hebrew term in the work, although the author does on rare occasions refer to the meanings of Hebrew terms (e.g. she notes the NRSV term “confirm” in 1 Kings 1:14 means to “supplement”) and does give transliterated renderings of familiar Hebrew terms such as *shalom* and *shofar*. Thus, while it is clear the author is herself reading the Hebrew text, the basic text being used in the commentary is the NRSV and the target audience is pastors and upper-level university students.

What the commentary is, then, is a close reading of the text, a careful examination of the story. It is a literary reading that looks at the structure of the text. It is a close exegetical reading that not only looks at what is going on in the text, but also at how the various expressions pick up previous events (including those elsewhere in the deuteronomic history) or foreshadow future ones. This is especially important in the beginning of 1 Kings, for the Adonijah narrative clearly picks up on themes of the Absalom narrative of 2 Samuel (e.g. the feast, the arrival of Jonathan with news, etc.). It is also an informed reading, for the author is well aware of the Israel-Judah tensions and the court intrigues of both Judah and Israel, not to mention the relationships between Israel/Judah and other nations and internal politics. Usually this analysis is insightful, but at times Hens-Piazza seems a bit naïve, for example in her finding the site of Solomon’s coronation being “curiously . . . close to” the site of Adonijah’s feast rather than focusing on either the sacred nature of springs or the possibility that Adonijah’s guests were intended to hear the *shofar* announcing Solomon’s accession. And sometimes she pushes parallels a bit far. Is the “not a hair of his head shall fall” of 1 Kgs 1:52 really a dark parallel with Absalom’s hair that killed him? Furthermore, she seems more suspicious of the motives of the “good” characters and more ready to view the “bad” characters as misinterpreted than the author of the original text. So is this close reading not also a reading with a hermeneutic of suspicion, one that questions the surface motivations given by the author of 1–2 Kings? And does this mean the theological analysis has invaded the exegetical analysis without allowing the text to be read on its own terms? In some cases the latter is clearly what has happened (e.g. p. 29). The examples above have been taken from the opening chapters in part because they revise the traditional picture of David and Solomon and thus arouse interest, but could easily be repeated throughout the commentary, for instance in the Hezekiah narrative or the Josiah narrative at the end of the work.

This commentary is, then, also a theological and ethical analysis, although it is not an analysis from within the ethics of the 10th–6th centuries BC, but rather one from within the theological and ethical understandings of the contemporary period. Thus the strife between brothers that brings Solomon to the throne is paralleled to Cain and Abel

and its bloody conclusion. While the author of 1 Kings is certainly far more ambivalent about the Davidic dynasty than the Chronicler, I felt this was more a contemporary analysis than the ethical stance of the text. So long as one realizes that that is not a problem, for the minute one entitles a series "Old Testament Commentaries" one signals that one is reading the works from a Christian or at least a canonical perspective. That perspective is not that of the original authors, who are not around to share their perspective and prejudices. Furthermore, all commentators have their perspective whether they admit it or not. But this also means one needs to remember that theological and ethical analysis is (or at least ought to be) separate from exegetical analysis.

This commentary, then, should be read for what it is. If one wishes a discussion of Hebrew words and structures, one should look elsewhere. If one wishes a pious devotional that looks at the history of the Davidic line as a type of hagiography, one should also look elsewhere. If one wants to look at literary structures, political machinations, and canonical context, and if one is willing to look at authorial evaluations of the motivations and character of his subjects with some suspicion, then this is a fresh reading of the text that will be quite helpful. And the theological-ethical analysis will assist one in bringing these observations into the contemporary context. This work is not a major critical commentary and needs itself to be read critically, but at the same time it can enrich its reader with plenty of insights into the post-exilic view of the world of Israel and Judah in the post-Davidic pre-exilic period.

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Wisdom Literature: A Theological History. By Leo G. Perdue. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007, 415 pp., \$39.95.

This book seeks to fill the void of a theology of wisdom literature (WL) by an established author in the field. Perdue states that the only comprehensive wisdom theology has been written by himself in *Wisdom and Creation* (1994), where he argued that creation was the center of wisdom theology, the unifying factor of all its theological themes. The present work goes beyond his earlier work by not only examining the canonical and deuterocanonical texts (Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes, Ben Sira, and the Wisdom of Solomon), but by also examining wisdom psalms and references to scribes and sages in non-sapiential literature. Perdue also sets the developing theology of wisdom in the context of ANE wisdom and Greco-Roman philosophy, rhetoric, and school texts.

In chapter 1, Perdue notes some of the problems related to WL and sets out his particular approach. Chapter 2 tries to give the reasons why WL has been ignored by major OT theologies by reviewing several major OT theologies (von Rad, Westermann, Eichrodt, Childs, Gerstenberger, Schmid, and Brueggemann). Schmid moved away from a salvation history emphasis and built his OT theology on creation, and other scholars, such as von Rad, Preuss, Clements, and B. W. Anderson, began to examine wisdom itself. However, none of these works provides a comprehensive strategy for identifying and explicating the major features of wisdom theology, a void Perdue's book hopes to fill.

Perdue identifies his own approach as a history of religions approach (HR), which includes the following components: the avoidance of discussing the truth claims of the beliefs and practices examined; the demonstration of similarities between ancient Israel and other religions of the ANE, the examination of all features of a material culture in order to present both the official and popular expressions of religious life; the view

that the Bible is a human document to be critically evaluated as other literature; and a focus on the academy instead of the church. He sets the HR approach over against the approaches of OT theologies that are meant for the church and present the teachings of the Hebrew Bible as theologically relevant. He acknowledges the benefit of the latter approach only after following the HR approach.

The author also stresses the role of imagination to shape the meaning of the sages' world view through mythological metaphors that were common in the ANE. The sages used the metaphors of fertility, artistry, word, and battle to speak of the creation of the world and the metaphors of artistry and birth to describe the creation of humanity. Perdue's thesis is that the central theme of the sages is creation expressed through cultural metaphors. The source of these metaphors is found in the myths of the ANE, and these myths dominate when Perdue explains the texts.

Each chapter that deals with a particular biblical book sets the book in its historical context, reviews the ANE literature that might be important for the book, and then explains the book in light of that historical context and the myths of the ANE. Proverbs is set in the context of Egyptian history and WL in the early part of the first millennium, Job is set in the context of Babylonian history and WL in the context of the exile, and Qohelet is set in the context of Greek history and WL of the third century. Ben Sira and the Wisdom of Solomon are also set in the Hellenistic period, the former in Judah and the latter in Alexandria as a defense of Judaism. In Ben Sira, Torah is identified with wisdom and for the first time a theology of creation is combined with salvation history.

As an example of Perdue's approach, he argues that Wisdom in Proverbs 3 is presented as an ANE goddess of life with the tree of life as a fertility symbol. Woman Wisdom in chapter 8 is a royal goddess clothed in the guise of a mythological queen of heaven (Isis), who possesses the charms of a fertility goddess and the insight of wisdom. She personifies sapiential tradition and God's own wisdom, and also provides order and life. This order and life is connected to justice, which is not based on a theology of the exodus but on creation and providence.

The message of Job is understood in the context of the exile, which raises issues concerning the justice of God and the meaning of election. Myths from Babylonian texts are used to develop a new metanarrative. The dialogues represent different responses to the crisis of exile demonstrating that the fault of exile is not the people but the deity. Throughout the book Job remains defiant toward a God who comes across in his speeches as guilty of injustice and not all-powerful because he has to continue to battle evil. The view that God is a divine tyrant is mitigated by the traditional sages with the addition of chapter 28 and the speeches of Elihu.

Perdue's book demonstrates the hard work of scholarship, but many of his conclusions and the path to those conclusions are difficult for those who approach the WL differently. His advocacy for both an HR approach and an approach that allows for the OT to speak to the church seems dualistic because one must deny with the second approach what is affirmed with the first approach. His reliance on the myths of the other nations to explain the biblical text denies the basic difference in the worldview of Israel over against the other nations. His reading of Job is dependent on the exile as the background of the book. In the final analysis, this book may not be as useful for an audience with evangelical presuppositions because the discussions of certain books are rooted in a particular historical context and the myths of the ANE drive the explanations of the texts. One has to wade through much material to find a gem here and there.

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The Messiah and the Psalms: Preaching Christ from All the Psalms. By Richard P. Belcher, Jr. Fearn, Scotland: Mentor, 2006, 288 pp., \$19.99 paper.

Richard Belcher has offered a helpful book for pastors and students of the Bible to understand better the book of Psalms in a Christian context. The book also helps the reader to understand the larger issue of the relationship of the Old and New Testaments, specifically in terms of the promise and fulfillment of the Messiah. The title is very clear about the main theme of the book. It is an effort to explain the relationship of the Messiah to the book of Psalms. The subtitle also describes well Belcher's particular thesis, namely that Christ can be read in and preached from each of the 150 canonical psalms.

Belcher follows a very clear plan in this book. Chapters 1–3 provide the introductory material. In the first chapter, Belcher describes Luther's christological interpretation and Calvin's historical interpretation of the identity of the "blessed man" in Psalm 1. He does this to indicate the issues involved in properly understanding the role of the Messiah in the book of Psalms. Chapter 2 provides a succinct but limited overview of three approaches to interpreting the Psalms: historical-critical, literary-critical, and historical-grammatical. Although Belcher clearly favors the historical-grammatical approach from among the three, he concludes that all three of these methods fail at some point to understand rightly the role of the Messiah in the book of Psalms. Thus, he follows in chapter 3 with his proposed methodology, which he calls simply, though somewhat redundantly, "The Christological Approach to the Messiah in the Psalms." His method derives from Jesus' statements in Luke 24 that all the OT refers to him. With that, Belcher concludes it is right to read each psalm as a reference, whether directly or indirectly, to some aspect of the person and work of Jesus Christ. In reference to the person of Christ, a psalm might approach him as God or as human. In reference to Christ's humanity, a psalm might speak to his role as prophet, priest, or king.

In the main part of the book (chaps. 4–8), Belcher discusses a broad sample of psalms to ascertain how they speak of Christ in terms of the above mentioned categories of person and work. He uses Brueggemann's division of the Psalter into psalms of orientation (chap. 4); disorientation (chap. 5); and new orientation (chap. 6). Within each category he discusses the psalms according to their genres. He saves the royal psalms for a separate chapter (chap. 7), and finishes this main part of the book with a chapter on the undisputed direct messianic psalms (chap. 8). The final chapter comprises a clear summary and conclusion of the book.

There is much to commend in Belcher's work. His deep respect for the text comes through on every page. His views about the divine authorship of the text are clearly stated at the beginning and are important to his thesis. His clear delineation of the variety of ways to see Christ in the Psalms will be helpful for a Christian reading of the Psalter. The greatest strength of the book lies in its cohesiveness and the treasury of examples found therein. Belcher lays out a straightforward methodology and does not veer from that path throughout the book. Unlike some other introductions to the Psalter, which often discuss only a handful of psalms, Belcher provides a historical background and exegesis for about thirty psalms. With these examples the reader is then able to use Belcher's methodology on any other psalm in the Psalter.

However, I also see several problems or limitations in Belcher's work. First, at times Belcher's attempt to relate a particular psalm to Christ follows a circuitous route, which leaves the relationship so strained that Jesus is no more related to the Psalm than any other Jew at the time of Christ. For example, in Belcher's admittedly difficult messianic connection in Psalm 79, he writes, "As a member of the covenant community Jesus would have participated with the community in lamenting any disastrous community

situation" (p. 71). And again, "As part of the community Jesus could also pray for the sins of the community" (p. 71). If the connection of the psalm to Christ lies simply in the fact that Jesus, as a Jew, would have read the psalm, then in what way can it be said to relate specifically to Christ?

A second and more difficult problem lies in the way Jesus' divine nature is portrayed in the Psalms. Belcher says, "If one accepts the New Testament witness that Jesus is equal to the Father, and therefore is God, then whenever the Psalms speak of God . . . they also speak of the person of Christ" (p. 34). This facile equation of Jesus and God flattens out the distinct roles of each person of the Trinity. Thus, Belcher, in an effort to rightly give the reader some clues about how the divine roles of Jesus could be seen in some psalms, overstates his case by claiming all the divine references in all the psalms relate to the work of Christ.

Despite the shortcomings mentioned above, *The Messiah and the Psalms* provides a good guide for a Christological reading of the book of Psalms. It should be welcome to all who share Belcher's presuppositions concerning the divine authorship of the text. It is useful for pastors wanting to preach from the Psalms, and it would also provide a good textbook for a college or seminary course on the Psalms, Christology, or biblical theology.

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Jeremiah, Lamentations. By Tremper Longman III. New International Biblical Commentary 14. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2008, xvi + 412 pp., \$16.95 paper.

"Believing criticism" summarizes the approach of the New International Biblical Commentary (NIBC) series, wedding "probing, reflective interpretation of the text to loyal biblical devotion and warm Christian affection" (p. xii). These are commendable goals. In this volume of the OT series, Tremper Longman takes up the mantle of commentator as he has with commentaries in other series: Ecclesiastes (NICOT, Eerdmans 1997); Daniel (NIVAC, Zondervan 1999); Song of Songs (NICOT, Eerdmans 2001); Proverbs (Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms, Baker 2006); and Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs (Cornerstone Biblical Commentary, Tyndale 2006).

In his brief, informative introductions (Jeremiah, pp. 3–18; Lamentations, pp. 327–42), Longman supports Jeremiah's authorship of only portions of the Book of Jeremiah (p. 4) and doubts his authorship of Lamentations, though he affirms the traditional Jeremianic authorship of Lamentations is not impossible (p. 330). Following each introduction, he launches into a readable commentary proceeding section by section through both books. Additional notes at the conclusion of each section provide more technical data, including occasional critiques of the NIV's translations (e.g. pp. 65, 136, 362, 378). Throughout his commentary, Longman identifies rhetorical and literary devices (e.g. imagery, word play, metaphor, irony, hyperbole, and sarcasm). Interestingly, he does not identify enallage (p. 64) or merismus (p. 65) by name, although he correctly explains the meaning of the text in these two situations. In addition to his sensitivity to literary aspects of the text, Longman succeeds in revealing the relationship of ANE extrabiblical literature to the text (e.g. Sumerian city laments, pp. 143, 332–34; Lachish tablets, p. 227; Elephantine papyri, pp. 272–73). He offers comments on geography, history, culture, and archaeology when such information aids the reader's understanding of the text.

Readers gain a significant understanding of prophetic literature in Longman's observation that Jeremiah fulfills the role of "a prosecuting attorney" for the Lord's covenants (p. 11). He offers yet another valuable insight by observing that the prophet sometimes depicts judgment as the reversal or undoing of creation (p. 113; cf. p. 51, citing Goldingay, *Old Testament Theology* [InterVarsity, 2003]). On the other hand, Longman occasionally seems to miss pertinent covenant relationships, as in his identification of "snakes" in Jer 8:17 as a metaphor for human enemies (p. 82). Perhaps it is best to interpret the "snakes" as a literal reference to the covenant curse expressed in Deut 32:24.

Holding the text "in the highest regard" (p. xii) leads at one point to Longman's defense of the text against accusations that it perpetuates the fiction of an emptied land following the Babylonian captivity (p. 257). However, that same regard apparently allows him to resort to extensive redaction in some instances (pp. 168, 177) and to ignore God's role in the rewriting of the prophecies that Jehoiakim destroyed (p. 4). In addition, the commentator excludes any examples of *ipsissima verba* in the Book of Jeremiah (p. 6), implying that the text preserves neither God's nor Jeremiah's exact words anywhere.

A welcome aspect of the commentary consists of Longman's provision of helpful explanations for parallel NT references and NT citations (e.g. pp. 43, 92). Perhaps due to his apparent focus on the OT, he refers to Abraham as "the first person titled a prophet" (pp. 74, 101), missing the reference to Abel as a prophet in Luke 11:51–52. In his comments on Jeremiah 23 (pp. 162–66), he overlooks the variety of references to divine revelation and the purpose of prophetic ministry—namely, the prevention and confrontation of sin.

Unfortunately, when citation of resources is involved, Longman never identifies the individual authors of articles contained in *NIDOTTE* (Zondervan, 1997; see, e.g., Longman pp. 96, 146, 366). Equally unfortunate is the absence of any reference to *JETS* articles among his journal citations and recommendations (e.g. pp. 395–99). Omissions include Wallis, "Irony in Jeremiah's Prophecy of a New Covenant," *JETS* 12 (1969) 107–10; Christensen, "In Quest of the Autograph of the Book of Jeremiah: A Study of Jeremiah 25 in Relation to Jeremiah 46–51," *JETS* 33 (1990) 145–53; and Yates, "Narrative Parallelism and the 'Jehoiakim Frame': A Reading Strategy for Jeremiah 26–45," *JETS* 48 (2005) 263–81. (Longman does cite Yates's similar article in *TynBul.*) Such an omission might not seem so important if it were not matched by absence of reference to the more conservative commentaries on Jeremiah and Lamentations (e.g. Harrison, *TOTC*, InterVarsity, 1973; Feinberg, "Jeremiah," *EBC*, Zondervan, 1986).

Regrettably, the Scripture index lacks many of the biblical references cited in the commentary, making the index a weak tool for readers. For example, no reference to Leviticus 26 appears in the Scripture index (p. 405), raising questions about the commentary's adequacy. Thankfully, in spite of the index's failure, however, Longman includes a number of references to Leviticus 26 (pp. 119, 122). Any future revision should include a more complete Scripture index.

Another commentary on Jeremiah and Lamentations, also based on the NIV, is Huey's in *NAC* (Broadman 1993). Longman's commentary excels in both literary analysis and ANE extrabiblical ties. However, Huey is more consistently conservative and far more cognizant of conservative evangelical contributions to the study of both biblical books. Used in tandem, the strengths of each might successfully counteract the weaknesses of the other.

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Ezekiel 21–48: Concordia Commentary: A Theological Exposition of Sacred Scripture. By Horace D. Hummel. St. Louis: Concordia, 2007, xxv + 897 pp., \$42.99.

Horace Hummel's commentary *Ezekiel 21–48* constitutes the second of two volumes on Ezekiel planned for the Concordia Commentary series. The first volume has yet to be published. The planned two-volume set is similar in scope to the two-volume tome on Ezekiel by Daniel Block (*The Book of Ezekiel*, NICOT, 2 vols., 1997–98), yet it eclipses it in size by 689 pages (1515 pp. vs. 826 pp.). Though Hummel's massive volume maintains its own distinctive contribution, in many places it resonates with Block's commentary (vol. 2, 1998) whose publication precedes it by nine years.

Within the introduction, Hummel's commentary addresses the following issues in relation to Ezekiel: (1) Christian Method of Interpretation; (2) Text and Style; (3) Outline and Theological Emphases; (4) Historical Context; and (5) History of Interpretation. Here, a broad outline of content planned for the twin volumes is represented as follows: "Ezekiel's Inaugural Vision and Commissioning" (1:1–3:27); "Prophecies of Judgment against Israel" (4:1–24:27); "Oracles against other Nations" (25:1–32:32); "Oracles of Israel's Eschatological Restoration" (33:1–39:29); "Vision of the New Temple, the New Creation, and the New Israel" (40:1–48:35).

Features that distinguish Hummel's commentary from those of Block and others mentioned below appear in the editorial preface of the Concordia Commentary. The goal of the series is "to enable pastors and teachers of the Word to proclaim the Gospel with greater insight, clarity, and faithfulness to the divine intent of the biblical text." This is based upon the firm conviction that the Scriptures constitute "a harmonious unity centered in the person and work of Jesus Christ." That is, even though Hummel's volume provides an in-depth treatment of the OT text, as does Block's, more emphasis is placed upon the potential christological content, consistent with the Concordia series mission and goal. By contrast, Margaret Odell's excellent commentary on Ezekiel (Smyth & Helwys, 2005) explicitly states that it is part of a non-confessional commentary series whose goal is to bridge the gap between the technical language of scholarship and the average Christian. Since the series focus is on practical issues, little attention is given to Christology.

With regard to its orientation, the Concordia Publishing House is the publishing arm of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, known for its conservatism in that it "fully affirms the divine inspiration, inerrancy, and authority of Scripture as it emphasizes 'that which promotes Christ' in each pericope" (preface). Special attention is paid to the original languages, where each comment is preceded by the fully pointed Hebrew text and provided with a literal English translation. Similarly, Leslie Allen's excellent commentary on Ezekiel (WBC 29, 1990) supplies an unpointed Hebrew text, and Daniel Block's commentary provides transliterated Hebrew text, a feature that is not only helpful for the non-specialist, but is beneficial to the linguist making comparisons with transliterated Semitic languages.

What is particularly unique to Concordia, compared to traditional OT commentary series, is its emphasis on Christology. This conviction is reflected in its statement that "the content of the scriptural testimony is Jesus Christ" as proclaimed by Jesus himself—i.e. "the Scriptures . . . testify of me" (John 5:39). Unfortunately, many OT commentaries of the past have abused this principle by employing allegorical interpretation as an expedient shortcut toward this end. However, that is not the case within the present volume under review. Rather, judicious exposition of the text's Christology is everywhere apparent. Hummel brings with him an impressive array of credentials for OT research. In brief, his exegesis and commentary evince both mastery and skillful usage of the many disciplines necessary to interpret the OT text. Such areas include facility in (1) the

Hebrew language—including comparative linguistics and philology; (2) ANE history, backgrounds, and archaeology—including participation in archaeological digs in Israel; and (3) literary issues—in particular, Hummel untangles many of Ezekiel's difficult images and metaphors and explains their usage within the biblical context in a manner consistent with expertise in ANE backgrounds. That is not to say that his predecessors, referenced above, are in any way deficient in these areas. Rather, it is evident that the present volume benefitted from them, especially the work of Daniel Block who is cited in Hummel's bibliography (p. xxii).

If a comparison is to be made between Block's commentary and Hummel's, aside from the latter's inclusion of christological foci, it would seem that the content, interpretations, and assessments are similar in many respects. But for the sake of readability, Hummel's commentary seems more suited to the average reader. In Block's commentary, the page is often crowded with long footnotes in small print, a feature more appreciated by scholars. Also, Hummel's explanations tend to be less technical. For example, it would seem that Ezekiel's description of Assyria as a "cosmic cedar" (Ezek 31:1–9) would be more readily understood by a non-specialist reading Hummel as opposed to reading Block.

Regarding issues central to dispensationalism and a literal millennial kingdom, Hummel's treatment of Ezekiel 40–48 may prove a disappointment, for he states: "Did God really intend his prescriptions in Ezekiel 40–48 to literally be followed? Do these chapters furnish a plan for a temple that Israel was to build after its Babylonian exile? Or could they be meant for an earthly 'millennium,' a literal thousand-year reign of Christ on this earth, during which time God intends a temple to be rebuilt in Jerusalem with a resumption of animal sacrifices? The biblical answer to all these questions is negative." This is elaborated upon further in footnote 10: "The historic, mainstream Christian view is that the 'millennium' of which Rev 20:1–7 speaks is the present church age, during which Satan is bound so that the Gospel can be spread. Christians on earth have already been raised to new life (cf. Rom 6:1–4) and have begun to reign with Christ. But persecution of the church will continue and culminate before all evil is defeated at the return of Christ. At Christ's Second Coming all the dead will be raised bodily and judged (Rev 20:11–15). All who do not believe in Christ will be damned, and all believers in Christ will enter the new heavens and the new earth, their home for eternity (Rev 21–22)" (pp. 1151–52).

Traditional dispensationalists, as well as those holding to an "already-but-not-yet" scheme, may react negatively to these statements about eschatology. However, the same may be said of other in-depth commentaries on Ezekiel, listed above, including those of Block and Odell cited earlier. An exception would be L. E. Cooper (NAC 17, Broadman, 1994) who maintains Ezekiel's vision is both literal and figurative at the same time (p. 114). However, some would say such an approach introduces its own set of difficulties. Though "already-but-not-yet" advocates may receive some consolation concerning Hummel's focus on the near fulfillment of Christ and his church, with the exception of Cooper, the most notable evangelical scholarly commentaries on Ezekiel treated in this review do not go beyond this to accept a future fulfillment resulting in a millennial kingdom. Of course, other venues exist, represented by a plethora of older commentaries and theology books, which may be consulted because they advocate and treat the future aspect.

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Daniel. Reformed Expository Commentary Series. By Iain M. Duguid. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2008, xiv + 236 pp., \$22.99.

Rarely can an author so transparently convey his heart and genuine sentiment as Iain Duguid has done in work on *Daniel* in the Reformed Expository Commentary series. His Christocentric passion and pastoral heart are unmistakably evident throughout the commentary. Dr. Duguid's credentials listed on the jacket of the book say nothing about any pastoral position, but after having read his commentary, it would be no surprise to learn that he was or is a pastor, or perhaps he has partly missed his calling. In any case, this is an excellent resource for sermon preparation.

Perhaps the first thing that is glaringly obvious about this commentary on *Daniel* is its lack of historical-critical data that tends to envelop the study of this much-debated book. There is no introductory material on genre(s); languages; ANE king lists; authorial community; historical discrepancies; canonical placements in Christian and Hebrew Canons; or apocryphal insertions. To my mind this is refreshing. I am not saying such material is insignificant, but what I am saying is that with a proliferation of this material elsewhere, unless Duguid has something new to add to the debate, anything presented is simply summary and needless repetition. Though I have not read anything else in this series—and perhaps it is standard to avoid historical criticism—I believe what this absence communicates is more powerful. The text of *Daniel* is paramount, unclouded by the inundation of the historical-critical issues. This bold move blatantly yet silently screams, “Let the text speak for itself!”

From the very outset Duguid sets the tone of practicality, fluently navigating from biblical history to contemporary application. Furthermore, Duguid characteristically closes the chapters with heartfelt sermonettes, some of which are even quite evangelistic. It is for these reasons and others that I do not recommend this text for scholarly pursuit. To be fair, the series quite explicitly proclaims that its purpose is to serve the church, pastors, and lay teachers. There is no pretense that suggests this is a scholastic approach to the books of the Bible under consideration. Given what it is and for what it proclaims it is intended, it is exceptionally good.

Another point of praise is Duguid's fluid movement from the OT to the NT. The manner of incorporation of both OT and NT does not feel artificial but rather comprehensive and natural. As it should be, we get a biblical picture rather than a Danielic or OT slant on the issue at hand. In keeping with the ambitions of the series, the focus always returns to the crux of the faith, the Lord Jesus.

By way of some constructive criticism, there are a few points to consider. Duguid states several times that Judah was carried off as a fulfillment of a judgment against Hezekiah (p. 7; see 2 Kgs 20:17–18), but I do not think the author of *Kings* would agree (2 Kgs 20:19). True, Hezekiah displayed indiscretion and foolishness, but the end result of exile is blamed on Manasseh (2 Kgs 23:26, 24:3), not Hezekiah, who the author of *Kings* claims was like no other before or after (2 Kgs 18:5). I would go so far as to say that Hezekiah was perhaps the author of the book of *Kings*' second-favorite king behind Josiah.

In general, the references given and interactions with other Danielic commentators are rather sparse. Again, this work should not be held to the same standards that a scholarly commentary should. To his credit, Duguid does indeed quote and refer to some of the more substantial works on *Daniel*, such as Longman, Goldingay, Lucas, Fewell, Baldwin, Lacocque, Keil, Collins, Porteous, and Young. By so doing, Duguid again has done the practitioner a favor by condensing such material into a single and very useful resource. For being a Reformed-oriented commentary, his references to Calvin's notable commentary on *Daniel* are rather scant. Fellow Reformed *Daniel* commentator Tremper

Longman III includes far more comments from Calvin than does Duguid, even though Longman's commentary (NIVAC) is not explicitly a Reformed series.

Duguid's commentary is straightforward, insightful, inspiring, and quite practical. I fully recommend it to all those who find themselves wanting and/or needing to teach or preach on this magnificent and majestic book called Daniel. Duguid has fully apprehended and delivered the very objective of the series: he has spoken to the church in our contemporary times from the pages of Scripture.

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A New English Translation of the Septuagint, and the Other Greek Translations Traditionally Included under That Title. Edited by Albert Pietersma and Benjamin G. Wright. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007, xx + 1027 pp., \$30.00.

The importance of Septuagint studies as a discipline in its own right no longer needs to be defended. The perspective on the Septuagint as the handmaid of Hebrew Bible textual criticism, virtually unchallenged only several decades ago, is no longer the dominant standpoint for conducting Septuagint research. Through the concerted efforts of various devoted scholars, too many to be named here, the Septuagint has established itself as a biblical studies field in its own right, crucially important not only for understanding the history of various textual traditions but also for appreciating its own theological contribution to the text and theology of the NT authors.

Yet, in the ferment of Septuagint research one important aspect has been missing, namely, an adequate and up-to-date translation of the Septuagint in English. As F. Filson remarked more than three decades ago, "[T]he impact of the Septuagint on current biblical scholarship can hardly be adequate when there is no good translation of the Septuagint which presents as nearly as possible what the ancient Greek-speaking Jew and Christian read in their working Scripture" ("Translate the Septuagint," in *Festschrift to Honor F. Wilbur Gingrich* [ed. Eugene Howard Barth and Ronald Edwin Cocroft; Leiden: Brill, 1972] 142). With the publication of *A New English Translation of the Septuagint (NETS)*, Filson's challenge can finally be put to rest, and as a result a renewed interest on a larger, more general scale in the phenomenon of the Septuagint can legitimately be anticipated. Under the chairmanship of Albert Pietersma and Benjamin G. Wright, a group of stellar Septuagintalists offers the English-speaking readership a fresh and timely translation of the Septuagint. The fact that the English translation joins other similar efforts already underway in French (*La Bible d'Alexandrie*) and in German (*Septuaginta Deutsch*) serves as further evidence for the coming of age of Septuagint studies.

The relevant information regarding this translation project is found in the opening section "To the Reader of NETS" (pp. i-xx). Appropriately, the issue of terminology is sorted out first, as the editors clarify their use of the term "Septuagint" throughout the project. While acknowledging the increased reservation that some scholars have for this label, "under the weight of tradition" (p. xiii), the translation committee adopted the term "Septuagint" for the Greek textual tradition of the Hebrew Scriptures and did not replace it with the more accurate and descriptive term "the Old Greek." The introduction offers then a virtual *apologia* for a new English translation of the Septuagint. Noting that the earlier two translations of the entire Septuagint, Thomson (1808) and Brenton (1844), were primarily tributary to the fourth-century manuscript Codex

Vaticanus, in order to justify the need for a new translation, the editors appeal to the important advances in Greek lexicography, the significant expansion of the manuscript data base, and the improved methodology in the recovery of the text of each Septuagint book. Thus NETS aims to provide an English translation adequately “reflecting the Septuagint’s constitutive character and . . . attempting to capture the incipit of history of interpretation of what in time became the Greek Bible” (p. xviii).

Consideration is further given to the profile of the intended reader, “a biblically well-educated audience” with “more than a passing interest in other traditions of biblical literature other than their own” (p. xiv). The most distinctive element of the translation work, and perhaps the most contentious one, is the translation committee’s choice for granting NETS a derivative nature by rooting it in the well-established translation tradition of the New Revised Standard Version (1989). The choice for this synoptic aim for NETS is defended on considerations of both principle (p. xiv) and practicality (p. xv). Consequently, the translators “have sought to retain the NRSV to the extent that the Greek text . . . directs or permits” (p. xvi) but did not allow the NRSV to interfere with faithfulness to the Greek text. The final goal has been a translation that offers a “genuine representation of the Greek, reflecting not only its perceived meaning but also . . . its literary nuggets as well as its infelicities, pleonasm, problems and conundra” (p. xviii).

The Greek text used for the translation is that of the Göttingen Septuagint, where available the unrivaled standard in the field, and Rahlfs’s edition in the other cases. The books are grouped according to the canonical order of the Septuagint: Laws (5), Histories (18), Poetic Books (8), and Prophecies (21), totaling 52 books. The books retain their Septuagint names, at times at odds with their Hebrew correspondent (e.g. 1, 2 Chronicles [MT] becomes 1, 2 Supplements [LXX]). In the well-known cases of books in which two distinct Greek traditions have survived, such as Judges, Tobit, and Daniel, the translators reproduce the text in parallel columns. Included also in the text are the expansions attested in several books of the Greek textual tradition, such as in Esther and Daniel, that have no Hebrew counterpart. Due to its debated integrity, the book *Odes of Solomon* has not been included in the translation, with the exception of the Prayer of Manasses (*Odes Sol.*, chap. 12). As expected, the order of the books in NETS follows the Septuagint arrangement, which exhibits notable differences from the Hebrew canonical order. The books that in the historical development of the canon became known as the apocrypha form an integral part of the volume, reflecting a literary corpus, which, according to scholars such as A. C. Sundberg, constituted the larger Alexandrian canon.

The translation of each book is preceded by a special introduction serving as a useful primer for both the LXX version of that book as well as for its new English translation. While there is no strict uniformity between the topics addressed by each of the translators, the reader will find in each introduction information pertaining to the edition of the Greek text used for translation, the translation profile of the Greek (including the level of literalness, stereotypes, calques, and other special issues), and the NETS approach and choices made in translating the Greek text.

The reader interested in getting a larger perspective on this project will find additional information on its web page <http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/nets>. The supplemental data provided by this site, not least the Statements of Principles, the philosophy of translation, and several forthcoming spin-off projects, help in understanding the real dimension of this important endeavor.

To comment on the NETS translation *qua* translation is not an easy task, since subjectivity plays an important role in assessing the rightness of the translators’ choices when translating a translation. This is especially true when working within the distinct guidelines set for the project. It is fair to say, however, that the translation lives up to the exigencies set by the translation committee and satisfies the expectations of

the readers discontent with Brenton's translation for various reasons. The translation is reasonably rigorous and faithful to its *Vorlage* and recommends itself as a worthy replacement of Brenton's classic.

While I enthusiastically endorse the new translation, there are aspects about NETS that seem to be less than ideal. First, the number of footnotes is not only sparse, it borders on inadequate. Especially in the case of a translation whose aim is "to create a tool in English for the synoptic study of the Hebrew and Greek texts of the Bible" (p. xviii), to fail to include in the footnotes the most notable instances of divergence between the Hebrew and Greek text traditions seems inexcusable. Since most lacunae in the text are usually mentioned, it is difficult to understand why the editors did not mark more of the important divergences between the Hebrew and Greek texts. No one would expect to find a thorough list of divergent readings, which would be an impossible task for the format of the volume. Yet, classical cases such as "my faith(fulness)" of Hab 2:4 LXX for "his faith(fulness)" of Hab 2:4 MT or "his holy mountain" in Ps 2:6 LXX for "my holy mountain" Ps 2:6 MT are too significant to go unnoticed.

Second, the lack of any substantial statement on the issue of canonicity in the volume's introduction appears to be a notable oversight. Granted, the complex issues involved in a thorough discussion of the Septuagint canon could hardly be covered even by a monograph-sized study, so that a definitive word on the issue would not have been expected from this volume. Yet, to fail to allot even minimum consideration to the canon debate is hardly warranted.

Third, another notable lacuna is a theological statement about the importance of the Septuagint for the Christian church. Again, no one would have expected a treatment comparable in size to that of Martin Hengel's *The Septuagint as Christian Scripture* [T & T Clark, 2002] or Mogens Müller's *The First Bible of the Church* [Sheffield Academic Press, 1996]. After all, as asserted earlier, the area of LXX studies is a field in its own right. However, to leave this topic unaddressed completely robs the Septuagint of one of its major theological contributions, since it became crucially important for the development and expression of the NT writings and the theology of the patristic era.

These comments are not intended to diminish in any way the importance of having a new English translation of the Septuagint, and the enthusiasm with which it should be welcome. Hopefully, the projects that will follow, perhaps a diglot^{NRSV-NETS} parallel OT, and the promised series of commentaries on the Greek text, will not leave readers waiting as long as the new translation itself has. All those involved in this admirable project are to be congratulated for their contribution to raising Septuagint studies to the level of intensity and interest achieved by its sister fields of the Hebrew OT and the Greek NT.

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Greek is Great Gain: A Method for Exegesis and Exposition. By William J. Larkin. Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2008, xvii + 352 pp., \$41.00 paper.

The fruit of three decades of teaching exegesis at Columbia International University (CIU) Seminary and School of Missions, this book is written "to equip preachers and teachers to exegete the Greek New Testament with maximum precision and effectiveness so that they can confidently interpret and apply it to those to whom they minister" (p. 1). To that end, Larkin presents "the steps of a comprehensive exegetical method" (p. ix)

that builds on first-year Greek grammar, and, as per the subtitle, adds a link between exegesis and exposition. For illustrative purposes, Philippians is “the primary biblical database” (p. ix).

The book contains a preface, sixteen chapters, an appendix of “Greek Grammar Guides,” and an extensive bibliography. It is chock-full of figures/diagrams (I counted sixty-three), many available as worksheet templates at Dr. Larkin’s faculty page on the CIU website.

Chapters 1–3 are introductory. In chapter 1, Larkin makes a case for the value of “Using Greek in Ministry.” He also lays out “a study pattern” involving a “three-stage exegetical method” (p. 8) of lifelong, immediate, and periodic preparation. Figure 1.2 provides an overview of the method, complete with approximate times for each step and chapter references where each is discussed. The reader/user will find it helpful to refer to this diagram often throughout the book.

Larkin defines key terms and discusses presuppositions about the text and interpreter in chapter 2 (“Definitions and Presuppositions”). The goal of exegesis and preaching is to find the meaning of the biblical text intended by the human author and to apply it to the contemporary audience/culture. In discussing presuppositions he gives a “‘short course’ in hermeneutics” (p. 18), emphasizing, among other things, the full and final authority of the Bible as the inerrant Word of God, the “role and rule of context” (p. 22), the unity and clarity of the biblical message, and the need for the illumination of the Holy Spirit.

Chapter 3 (“Greek Reading and Computer Resources”) presents “a manageable pattern for incorporating on-going study of the language” into one’s schedule (p. 27). This pattern for “lifelong preparation” combines certain keys to maintain proficiency: frequent and extensive exposure, and development of “a fund of knowledge and insight for future preaching and teaching” (pp. 27–28). Planned around a long-range preaching/teaching schedule (outlined in chap. 16), this pattern involves sight-reading the Greek text, with vocabulary and grammar helps, for fifteen minutes a day, five days a week, covering at least five lines in the *UBSGNT*. Translation, parsing, new vocabulary, and exegetical and homiletical insights are recorded on a “Greek Reading/Translation” worksheet (fig. 3.6) for future reference. The chapter has a brief section on computer software for biblical studies and, like the chapters that follow, summaries of resources and procedure discussed.

Larkin presents his exegetical method in chapters 4–15 as “Immediate Preparation.” Immediate preparation includes three “phases”: preparation of the preacher/teacher and the text (chap. 4), exegesis proper (chaps. 5–14), and homiletical/didactic appropriation (chap. 15). Preparation begins with prayer and consecration, then proceeds to a “Finished Translation and Mechanical Layout” (chap. 4) of the text, each of which is recorded on its own worksheet (figs. 4.1–2). The translation/parsing may already be done if the Greek reading program suggested in chapter 3 has been adopted. “Survey” (chap. 5) treats text-critical issues and, from direct interaction with the text, raises questions and makes initial observations about historical, literary, and theological features of the text. Both are recorded on a “Survey” worksheet (fig. 5.1).

“Historical and Literary Analysis” (chap. 6) come next. Historical Analysis includes introductory matters (author, audience, etc.), perhaps already developed during “periodic preparation” (chap. 16), and, from secondary resources, general historical-cultural-religious details as they relate to the passage. Both are recorded on a “Historical Analysis” worksheet (fig. 6.1). Literary analysis involves four steps: context, genre, syntax, and word study. The first two are discussed generally in chapter 6, then in detail in chapters 7 and 8 (“Epistle” and “Historical Narrative and Prophetic-Apocalyptic,” respectively). By syntax Larkin means “Grammar and Rhetorical Features” (chap. 9). He devotes two chapters to word study: “Focus the Meaning” (chap. 10)

involves arriving at the “most accurate definition” of a word (p. 170), and “Illuminate the Meaning” (chap. 11) involves finding examples of contemporary usage to clarify and illustrate. All steps have separate worksheets (see figs. 6.2; 7.5–6; 8.3–5; 9.2–3; 10.2; 11.4). “Theological Analysis” (chap. 12) seeks the abiding message of the text’s meaning derived from historical and literary analyses. The “two lenses” of biblical and systematic theology serve as a check on previous exegetical work. At this stage, “remaining theological and interpretational difficulties” are also identified and resolved. There are worksheets for both “Analysis” and “Difficulties” (figs. 12.1, 3).

In chapter 13 Larkin proposes a two-step “Synthesis” of exegetical results. Here one produces a graphical representation of major and minor points (an “exegetical outline”) and a one-sentence statement of the main thrust of the passage (“biblical coherence”). Figures 13.1–2 are the worksheets. “Interpretation and Application for Contemporary Culture” are defined and discussed in chapter 14. Figure 14.2 is the worksheet.

The third phase of immediate preparation is “Homiletical and Didactic Appropriation” (chap. 15). Here Larkin sketches how to go from exegesis to sermon/lesson. Figures 15.2, 9, 10 provide sample worksheets. In the final chapter (chap. 16), the author outlines “two strategies” of “Periodic Preparation”: advanced planning and in-depth study. Several worksheets for future reference are included.

This book has a number of strengths. If anything, it is comprehensive. All the necessary steps of exegesis are covered, most in considerable detail. Several methodological emphases are noteworthy. Larkin is surely right that careful application is often lacking in many sermons, and thus he carefully explains how to make “Application” (chap. 14). Like few other books on exegesis, Larkin also provides helpful step-by-step instructions for constructing a sermon once exegesis is done (chap. 15). These two chapters may be the most valuable in the book.

The book’s comprehensiveness is, however, also a weakness. The thoroughness of Larkin’s method, as a whole, and of several of his steps, in particular, is just “over the top.” The sixteen worksheets per sermon/lesson are daunting for number and, in some cases, complexity (e.g. mechanical layout). His recommendation to “Illuminate the Meaning” of words by looking up extra-biblical usage is unrealistic and even unnecessary for a busy pastor. His fourteen-year reading schedule, while reasoned and commendable in principle, is likely to overwhelm even the most well-intentioned student/pastor.

The treatment of genres is uneven. Larkin’s discussion of epistles is thorough (but overly detailed at points), as is that of parables. Historical narrative *as a whole*, however, suffers (eight pages). Apocalyptic-prophetic is disappointing and will have limited usefulness for those who are not premillennialists.

Larkin’s method may also downplay the role of theology in exegesis. While he notes the need for “theological exegesis” early on (in chap. 2, for example), he says little about theology until chapter 12 (“Theological Analysis”), and then briefly. Larkin takes pains to circumscribe the role of theology in exegesis; note, for example, his “Qualified Case for a Theologically Guided Hermeneutic” (pp. 204–5). His argument that we arrive at the meaning of the text by historical and literary analyses, then use theology as a check (“the last stop” before synthesis and constructing a sermon; p. 201), almost seems to separate theology from exegesis itself. While one needs to beware of eisegesis, theology seems much more integral to (and inescapable in) the *whole* exegetical process than Larkin seems to suggest. The role of theology in exegesis becomes acute when we consider, for example, the NT use of the OT, especially typological interpretation in the Gospels. Larkin’s repeated emphasis on human authorial intent needs significant nuancing here.

The cost of this paperback (\$41) will hamper its usefulness as a textbook. The editing leaves much to be desired; there are typos, a number of grammatical errors, and the punctuation is inconsistent. The placement of figures/diagrams is often confusing and

disruptive to the flow of thought. All in all, however, Larkin's book is worth a look at least as a reference tool, especially in application and bridging exegesis and preaching/teaching.

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Heaven and Earth in the Gospel of Matthew. By Jonathan T. Pennington. NovTSup 126. Leiden: Brill, 2007, xv + 399 pp., \$169.00.

This work is a revised version of a Ph.D. thesis accepted by the University of St. Andrews, Scotland, in July 2005. The thesis is that Matthew's references to heaven and earth highlight the tension that exists between God and humanity, a tension that awaits eschatological resolution. The thesis seeks to show that "Matthew has developed an idiolectic way of using heaven language" (p. ix). The word "idiolect" usually refers to the language pattern of an individual that differs in some details from all other speakers or writers of the same dialect. The author maintains that Matthew's idiolectic use of heaven language is shown by (1) the intentional distinction in meaning between the singular and plural forms of the word "heaven"; (2) frequent thematic use of the heaven and earth word pair; (3) regular reference to God as a heavenly Father; and (4) use of the phrase "kingdom of heaven."

The difficulty in substantiating this thesis is illustrated by a passage like Matt 19:23–24 where Jesus says to his disciples, "Truly I tell you, it is hard for the rich to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for the rich to enter the kingdom of God." To most interpreters the phrases "kingdom of heaven" and "kingdom of God" seem to be used synonymously in these verses (cf. Mark 10:23–25; Luke 18:24–25). If Matthew saw a difference in meaning between these phrases, these verses would suggest that consistency in usage was not important for him. It is this inconsistency that has left previous attempts to identify a distinctive meaning for "heaven" generally unconvincing to most interpreters. There is something of a consensus by default that "heaven" may be a reverential circumlocution for God. Geza Vermes, for example, thought that Jesus routinely used the phrase "kingdom of heaven," but that it was usually converted to "kingdom of God" as a clarification for the church (*Jesus the Jew*). In the first part of this study Pennington seeks to show the inadequacy of this view. He finds the source of this interpretation in the work of Gustaf Dalman (*The Words of Jesus*) but argues that Dalman was unduly influenced by rabbinical literature that postdates the NT era, a failing also found in the widely used work of Hermann Strack and Paul Billerbeck (*Kommentar zum NT*). Instead of seeing "heaven" as a reverential substitute for "God," Pennington asserts that its use as a metonymy is the more likely explanation for its function in Matthew (p. 36): "There is no doubt that Matthew often uses heaven to refer indirectly to 'God'—in the expression kingdom of heaven, and in texts such as Matt 21:25 ('Is the baptism of John from heaven or from humans?'). But these are clearly cases of metonymy, where heaven refers indirectly to God, not a direct substitution out of avoidance of the divine name, but for rhetorical and theological purpose: to contrast heaven (God's realm) with earth (humanity's realm)."

There are two things in Pennington's statement that raise a question in my mind. First, the saying in Matt 21:25 is also recorded in Mark (11:30) and Luke (20:4). It is a saying that appears in the triple tradition more or less verbatim. There is nothing

distinctive about Matthew's record of this saying, but the reader is not advised of this fact. If one is making a case for the idiolectic use of language, it should be easy to point out that particular wording is peculiar to or idiosyncratic in Matthew when compared to the parallel accounts in Mark and Luke. Pennington routinely does not do this because, not infrequently, there is no difference. This suggests that the word "idiolectic" is an exaggeration. Second, the notion that "heaven" language in Matthew is not reverential but rhetorical probably reflects a false dichotomy. Pennington does offer a disclaimer in a footnote (p. 36, n. 73), affirming that circumlocution and metonymy "are not entirely separate, hermetically-sealed concepts," but the body of the work generally treats these as distinct alternatives when, as the note suggests, they are not. It is unlikely that the reverential substitution of different names for God emerged whole cloth in later rabbinical writing. Threads exist in the OT (Dan 4:23) and apocryphal literature (e.g. 1 Maccabees, where "heaven" appears routinely in place of "Lord" or "God") and may be expected to influence at least some of the references in the Gospels. The meaning of "heaven" in Matthew is probably a "both/and" expressing both a reverence for God and highlighting God's universal dominion.

In fact, the primary tension in Matthew is probably not between heaven as God's realm and earth as humanity's realm but between heaven as God's realm and earth as Satan's realm (Robert Branden, *Satanic Conflict and the Plot of Matthew* [New York: Peter Lang, 2006]). Various texts make it clear that the earth is a realm under the sway of the devil. Not without warrant, the devil offers Jesus the kingdoms of the world in exchange for worship (Matthew 4). Disciples are warned to pray that they may be delivered from the evil one (Matthew 6). The exorcisms of Jesus deliver people from Satan's kingdom (Matthew 12). The "people of the evil one" are sown in the world by the devil right up to the day of separation and judgment (Matthew 13). Only then will the devil be condemned (Matthew 25). This seems to be the primary conflict in Matthew that awaits eschatological resolution. Pennington's contention that "uses of heaven and earth language in a contrastive sense occur only in his Gospel" (p. 72) does not seem to be substantiated by the texts in question. Many (in fact, the majority) of the passages cited as contrastive (p. 72, n. 16) seem rather to be either correlative (5:34–35; 16:19; 18:18, 19), comparative (6:10), or merismatic (28:18).

Pennington also contends that "there is in Matthew's idiolect an intentional distinction of meaning between the singular and the plural" (p. 132), whereby the singular refers to the visible (earthly) and the plural to the invisible (divine) realm. However, there are several exceptions to this pattern in terms of both the singular usage (e.g. 6:20; 18:18 [esp. in comparison to 16:19]; 22:30) and also the plural (24:31) that raise questions about intentionality. It would seem to be a fairly easy distinction to maintain, if indeed, Matthew was interested in doing so. Even more odd, the parallels in Luke and Mark have the plural where Matthew has the singular or the singular where Matthew has the plural, thus apparently reflecting the proposed idiolectic of Matthew more consistently than Matthew himself.

In a study of heaven and earth as a word pair joined by a copula Pennington notes three instances in Matthew (5:18; 11:25; 24:35) and makes some observations regarding the use of this phrase in the first and final discourses and in the phrase, "Lord of heaven and earth," at 11:25. Observing that this designation is not uncommon in biblical and extrabiblical literature generally, Pennington expresses surprise that "God is rarely referred to in this way in the NT (cf. Acts 17:24)" (p. 194). What I find peculiar in this regard is the fact that these three uses in Matthew all have a parallel in Luke (10:21; 16:17; 21:33) that is not mentioned. One gets the impression that these sorts of parallels are not addressed because they might appear to compromise the notion that Matthew's usage is distinctive, the basic argument of the thesis. However, if a case is being made

that Matthew's language is ideolectic, one would think that it would be necessary to compare Matthew with Mark and Luke routinely. Failing to do these Synoptic comparisons ultimately undermines any confidence in the validity of the thesis. Any case worth its salt needs to account for and put on the table all the relevant data. Interpreters serve their subject best by dealing with all the facts, even if it means some readers will decide the matter under investigation requires too many qualifications to be persuasive. In the final analysis, of the four features of heaven and earth language examined in this study, only the phrase "kingdom of heaven" is peculiar to Matthew. That the other themes are related to and compliment this phrase may be the case, but that they are so important to Matthew as to be consistently and distinctively employed seems to go beyond the evidence provided by Synoptic analysis.

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Matthew's Messianic Shepherd-King: In Search of "The Lost Sheep of the House of Israel."
By Joel Willitts. BZBW 147. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2007, v + 270 pp., \$141.00.

Joel Willitts's *Matthew's Messianic Shepherd-King* is a revised version of his 2006 Ph.D. dissertation submitted to Cambridge University under Markus Bockmuehl. The thrust of Willitts's work is to identify the referent in Matthew's twice-used phrase "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (10:6; 15:24). He argues that "the way forward in ascertaining the meaning of [this] phrase is within the trajectory of the Jewish Shepherd-King traditions surrounding King David" (p. 31). Willitts demonstrates this trajectory within ancient Judaism and examines its impact on Matthew's Gospel, specifically in its bearing on Matthew's "lost sheep" phraseology. Willitts perceives and seeks to correct four weaknesses in current scholarship concerning this phrase: (1) a failure to examine fully the phrase both within its Jewish eschatological context and within its Matthean narrative framework, including Matthew's geographical orientation; (2) a tendency to generalize the referent of the phrase as "all Israel"; (3) a tendency to accept a salvation-historical explanation of the phrase that "seems to ignore the political nature of the eschatological expectations surrounding the Davidic shepherd tradition"; and (4) a tendency to assume that Matthew's narrative simply reflects his community's present activity (pp. 28–30). In contrast to these weaknesses, Willitts attempts "to understand the phrase on its own terms within the particularities of the Matthean narrative," not by starting with the Great Commission, as some do, but with the Gospel's beginning. Willitts suggests that this is the most natural way to proceed through the First Gospel (pp. 28–31).

In order to correct these weaknesses and to prove his thesis that the "lost sheep of the house of Israel" refers to an Israelite remnant residing in the former Northern Kingdom, Willitts takes an eclectic methodological approach, including genre, composition, and (Matthean) audience-oriented criticism (p. 221). He furthermore assumes that the goal of the modern exegete should be to read Matthew's Gospel "as it was *intended* to be read [and not from the perspective of the] . . . [Matthean] community" (p. 30, italics his). Thus Willitts distances himself from the reader-response criticism of some scholars.

Willitts divides his book into three parts, each successively and intricately dependent on the preceding. Part 1 (chap. 2) considers the Messianic Shepherd-King motif within its native Jewish context, namely, within the Jewish Scriptures, the DSS, and the

Psalms of Solomon. Willitts concludes that this motif “in ancient Jewish thinking functioned polemically and carried political freight” (p. 90). Polemically, it “was a useful vehicle for some Jewish writers to express both their protest against the present religio-political situation and their idyllic visions of Messianic restoration” (p. 90). Politically, it “conjured up in the minds of hearers or readers . . . hope for national revolution” (p. 92). These conclusions form the “baseline of comparison, as well as a context within which to place Matthew’s composition” (p. 222). In the remainder of his work, Willitts argues that Matthew used this motif within this conventional understanding of it.

In part 2 (chaps. 3–6), the broader Matthean use of the Messianic Shepherd-King motif is discussed. Willitts first establishes the three criteria that he uses to demonstrate the motif’s presence in 2:6, 9:36, and 26:31: (1) the text must contain specific shepherd/sheep terminology; (2) it must occur within a political context that exhibits despair over and/or critique of the leadership of Israel; and (3) it must contain a reference, citation, or direct allusion to a Davidic Shepherd-King prophetic text.

Willitts uses a fourfold procedure to examine each text. First, Matthew’s use of the motif is established via the three above-mentioned criteria. Second, the ancient Jewish sources are analyzed in order to understand how Matthew uses the text. Third, Willitts compares Synoptic parallels in order to recognize noteworthy Matthean emphases. Finally, he summarizes the significance and function of each respective pericope. From this procedure, Willitts concludes that each of these three Matthean texts (2:6; 9:36; 26:31) contains the Shepherd-King motif, resonates with political overtones, and reflects a geographically territorial aspect.

In chapter 6, Willitts examines more closely Matthew’s interest in the land of Israel and argues that Matthew “maintains an abiding hope for territorial restoration” (p. 46). Willitts readily admits that he stands boldly against the current of modern scholarship, which he confesses “will probably strike many as verging on the preposterous” (p. 157). Specifically, Willitts proposes to “make room for a reading of the First Gospel that can envisage the first-century Jewish expectation of a restoration of *Eretz Israel*” (p. 172). He establishes an ancient Jewish expectation of territorial restoration and then examines this motif in the First Gospel, concluding that “Matthew appears to have an abiding conviction about the restoration of the territory of Israel and perhaps envisages Jesus’ Messianic message and movements as an announcement of its soon-coming consummation” (p. 173).

In part 3 (chaps. 7–9), the primary focus of the book’s thesis, Willitts examines the referent of the phrase “the lost sheep of the house of Israel” in Matt 10:6 (chap. 7) and Matt 15:24 (chap. 8). While most modern interpreters view the phrase’s referent to be “all Israel,” Willitts argues that it is the remnants of the “former Northern Kingdom of Israel who continued to reside in Galilee and the northern regions of *Eretz Israel*” (pp. 179, 219). He reaches this conclusion by reading the phrase within “the geographical orientation of the Matthean narrative” and the “Jewish scriptural background of the Messianic Shepherd-King” (p. 219). Willitts offers in chapter 9 a helpfully lucid conclusion that retraces his arguments, articulates his contribution to research, and suggests areas of further research.

Willitts should be commended for presenting an extremely technical but readable argument and for correctly expunging a post-modern reading of Matthew by seeking to understand Matthew’s authorial intent (pp. 4, 30). He is careful not to overstate his case but humbly adheres to appropriate hedging throughout. This monograph is a testament to Willitts’s keen writing abilities and provides a good example to scholars, young and old alike, on how to present a complicated argument well.

Although, as Willitts admits, the Second Temple data concerning the Davidic Shepherd-King motif is “meager” (p. 52), his overall argument is sound and provides

a voice with which later Matthean researchers and commentators must converse. His bold conclusion, which stands against most standard Matthean commentators and theologians (including W. D. Davies and N. T. Wright), that Matthew's understanding of the kingdom of God entails a Northern Israelite territorial restoration, needs more elaboration and substantiation, as Willitts readily admits (p. 173). He does, however, successfully "expose cracks in the consensus view" (p. 158). In light of the affect that this conclusion has on Matthean and biblical eschatology, it will be interesting to see whether subsequent researchers can adequately fill these cracks.

Aside from several minor editorial oversights (pp. 4, 5, 114, 168) and a digression into scholarly objections in the conclusion (pp. 225–28) that raises new issues and perhaps belongs in the book proper, Willitts contributes a lasting mark on Matthean research. Inappropriate for a college or seminary class because of its specificity and technical argumentation, *Matthew's Messianic Shepherd-King* is at home in a Matthean scholar's library.

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Mark: A Commentary. By Adela Yarbro Collins. Hermeneia. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007, xlvii + 894 pp., \$80.00.

Adela Yarbro Collins, Buckingham Professor of New Testament Criticism and Interpretation at the Yale University Divinity School, has written a notable commentary on Mark's Gospel that is characterized by depth of thought and extensive research.

The 125-page introduction covers a number of significant topics: authorship, place of writing, date, genre, Mark's interpretation of Jesus, the Synoptic problem, the audience and purpose for Mark's Gospel, the history of interpretation, and the text of Mark. With regard to authorship, Yarbro Collins takes seriously the title "The Gospel according to Mark" as part of the early evidence. Even if the author did not give the work a title, whoever originally copied and circulated it to other communities likely gave it one that mentioned Mark (p. 2). Yarbro Collins is open to the testimony of 1 Peter and Papias concerning an association between Peter and Mark (pp. 3–4, 101). She is also willing to accept the possibility that Paul's letter to Philemon and the letter to the Colossians serve as witnesses to a relationship between Paul and a Christian Jew named Mark. He may be the same Mark mentioned in Acts and the same person who wrote the second Gospel (pp. 5–6). On the basis of evidence from Mark 13, Yarbro Collins regards the date for the writing of Mark to be before AD 70, although likely in the late 60s, after certain leaders in the Jewish revolt against Rome took on messianic pretensions (p. 14; cf. p. 603). Although she notes that external evidence points to Rome as the place of writing, Yarbro Collins argues that much of the internal evidence points to somewhere in one of the eastern provinces of the Roman empire. She leans toward Antioch as a possible location for the writing of Mark's Gospel, but she recognizes that the evidence is not sufficient to make a definite decision (pp. 7–10, 101–2). Mark, no doubt, had more than one purpose in mind when he wrote his Gospel. Yarbro Collins mentions two. First, Mark intended to reassert and redefine the messiahship of Jesus in light of the presence of messianic pretenders in the Jewish war that began in AD 66. Second, Mark wanted to present the suffering of persecution as a crucial aspect of discipleship in imitation of Christ (pp. 101–2).

Yarbro Collins's discussion of the circumstances surrounding the writing of Mark's Gospel stands somewhat awkwardly next to her comparison of Mark's Gospel to the

books of Moses at the beginning of her commentary. Yarbro Collins states, "Like the books of Moses, Mark is the product of a long process of tradition involving many authors and editors" (p. 1). This statement reads more like an affirmation of a basic principle behind form criticism than as a serious comparison between Mark and the books of Moses. I have my doubts that Yarbro Collins intends to communicate that the Pentateuch was written 35–40 years after the death of Moses by an associate of Joshua (cf. her summary of the Deuteronomistic history on p. 38). Yet if the Pentateuch were written under such circumstances, would it be fair to characterize it as the product of a long process of tradition involving many authors and editors? The same type of question arises when Yarbro Collins describes the relationship between Mark's Gospel and the history of early Christian tradition (p. 94). According to this description, after Jesus' death some of his followers experienced him as risen from the dead. Out of these experiences arose a Jewish messianic movement that grew into the early Christian church. Those who proclaimed Jesus as the Messiah shaped the traditions about him, created new stories, and updated old traditions in light of their ever-changing circumstances. Mark then apparently received these traditions after an extensive process and shaped them into a continuous story of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Yet in light of Mark's early involvement in the Christian movement and his possible association with the first leaders of that movement (not to mention Mark's own role and skill as a writer), is it realistic to portray Mark as a passive recipient and channel of a long process of uncontrolled tradition?

Yarbro Collins's section on the genre of Mark's Gospel is a significant scholarly contribution (pp. 15–43). The question of genre is important, as Yarbro Collins points out, because any interpretation of Mark's Gospel relies to some extent on an "understanding of what kind of text it is and thus what its purpose is" (p. 17). Yarbro Collins explores the basic options for the genre of Mark: Mark as a "gospel" (that is, a new and unique genre), Mark as "biography," and Mark as "history." Although she recognizes the insights of others who take Mark as a unique genre or as a biography, she leans decidedly in the direction of Mark as history. For Yarbro Collins, Mark is an eschatological historical monograph (pp. 18, 42–43). "The author of Mark's Gospel has taken the model of biblical sacred history and transformed it" (p. 1). The transformation comes in part through the influence of an eschatological and apocalyptic perspective in Mark's view of history, with its tendency toward periodization and its notion of a fixed divine plan. Another part of the transformation comes from the influence of Hellenistic historiographical and biographical traditions, including the emphasis on memorable deeds and the increasing focus on individuals, sometimes on a single person.

The main objection against viewing Mark as history has been that a work of history should be concerned with an accurate account of historical information but Mark was concerned with proclamation and his Gospel is full of miraculous events. Yarbro Collins responds by urging caution against the attempt to force modern ideals of historiography on ancient writers and readers. Ancient historical writing could include miraculous events, both direct interventions by deities in human affairs and a more implicit role for divine agency in determining the outcome of earthly events. Ancient history writing did not limit itself only to empirically verifiable data and also found it necessary to use a certain degree of invention to fill in the gaps of the narrative. Therefore the presence of miracles should not disqualify the Gospel of Mark as a work of history (p. 41). Indeed, Yarbro Collins expresses a fair amount of scepticism in her commentary toward the historicity of Mark's account, but that perspective does not keep her from understanding Mark's Gospel as a work of history.

Regarding Mark's own attitude toward the miraculous, Yarbro Collins hesitates. According to Yarbro Collins, Mark may have believed that the mighty deeds of Jesus were actual historical events, or he may have viewed them as figurative expressions of

the role and power of Jesus (p. 41). This latter option leaves the impression that miracles are somehow detachable from Mark's core message about Jesus' role and power. Yet Mark's Gospel is so thoroughly miraculous, from the initial statement on the fulfillment of prophecy to the final resurrection scene, that removing the miracles significantly distorts Mark's presentation of Jesus, both with regard to his messianic role and his Spirit-empowered life. In another place, Yarbro Collins is on more stable ground when she states that the story of Mark's Gospel is told by "one who believes it and in order to persuade others" (p. 1).

The actual commentary on Mark's Gospel fills up nearly 700 oversized pages. Each section of the commentary begins with a translation of the passage along with extensive text-critical notes, often followed by an explanation of the literary context of the passage and its place within the narrative unit. Yarbro Collins normally moves on to a description of the form and tradition history of the passage before working through the text verse by verse. The most distinctive contribution of the commentary is the extent to which Yarbro Collins identifies and quotes literary parallels to Mark's text from other ancient writings. She draws on a wide range of contemporary Jewish, Greek, and Roman works in order to shed light on Mark's Gospel. A few examples may help to convey the breadth of Yarbro Collins's research. According to Mark 1:5, those who were baptized by John were confessing their sins. In her comments on the verse, Yarbro Collins offers an overview of material on the subject of confession, pointing out ancient Assyrian, Babylonian, Hittite, and Egyptian practices, inscriptions from Lydia and Phrygia, a quote from Menander about confession among the worshipers of Isis, inscriptions related to the cult of Aklepios, and texts from Quman (pp. 142–45). Jesus' parable concerning the sowing of seeds (Mark 4:1–9) draws out comparisons to texts from Aristotle, 4 Ezra, Hosea, the Similitudes of Enoch, one of the *Thanksgiving Hymns* from Qumran, Plato, Seneca, *The Law* (a work attributed to Hippocrates), Diogenes Laertius in a statement concerning the Stoics, *1 Clement*, Irenaeus, and the book of Colossians (pp. 242–46). The passage concerning the rich man (Mark 10:17–31) is illustrated through references and quotations from *Psalms of Solomon*, *1 Enoch*, the *Sibylline Oracles*, Philo, the *Berakot* tractate of the Mishnah, the *Damascus Document*, OT texts such as Lev 6:1–7 and Mal 3:5, Sirach, Epictetus, Diogenes Laertius, and 4 Ezra (pp. 475–83). Not every passage in Mark calls for such extensive literary parallels, but it would be difficult to find a passage for which Yarbro Collins does not provide some quotations from ancient sources. In an isolated quotation from a modern source, even the Rolling Stones make an unexpected appearance to lend their support to Jesus' teaching on faith (p. 535)!

Yarbro Collins does not typically argue that the collected parallels had a direct influence on Mark's thinking or on the way in which his work was received by the original audience. More often, the collection of material serves as a general background to Mark's Gospel, with Yarbro Collins noting similarities and differences as a way of sorting out the most likely meaning of Mark's text. However, there are exceptions to this general observation, since at times Yarbro Collins proposes some influence from parallel ideas on either Mark or his audience. Some of the more notable of these exceptions appear in Yarbro Collins's discussions of Jesus' miracle of walking on the water (see esp. pp. 332–30), Jesus' teaching about his death as a ransom in place of the many (see esp. pp. 502, 504), the centurion's confession of Jesus as God's son (see esp. pp. 767–68), and, at least tentatively, Mark's account of the resurrection and empty tomb (see esp. pp. 791–94).

Different commentaries on Mark's Gospel have different strengths. The main strength of Yarbro Collins's commentary is clearly in its extensive description of the general literary background to Mark's Gospel. My initial concern with Yarbro Collins's approach was that the noise of so many parallel voices would drown out the distinctive message of Mark. However, Yarbro Collins manages to look carefully not only at other ancient documents but also at the text of Mark itself. In the end, my concern was

replaced with an appreciation for the years of research that must have gone into this work. Yarbro Collins's commentary will remain an important resource for studying parallels to Mark's Gospel from ancient Jewish, Greek, and Roman literature for years to come.

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The Psalms of Lament in Mark's Passion: Jesus' Davidic Suffering. By Stephen P. Ahearne-Kroll. SNTSMS 142. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, xiv + 239 pp., \$95.00.

In this revision of his University of Chicago dissertation, Stephen Ahearne-Kroll examines the function of the lament psalms in Mark's passion narrative. He argues, in light of the prominence of Davidic Messiah motifs in the passion narrative and the preceding chapters, that it is these psalms and not Isaiah's "suffering servant" to which Mark alludes in order both to justify Jesus' messianic suffering and to challenge God over his role in that distress (pp. 38–39).

Chapter 1 begins with a critical overview of four selected major works (Dodd, Lindars, Juel, and Marcus) before moving to a discussion of various approaches to the NT's use of Scripture and, in particular, the lament psalms. He is critical both of the anachronistic imposition upon Mark of later theological constructs such as "the Righteous Sufferer" and of the supposition of putative trajectories of interpretation (e.g. that they were understood eschatologically) that rest upon too thin and overly extended evidence. He proposes an interactive narrative approach. Each evocation of a given psalm is to be situated in its particular Markan context and read in the light of its rhetorical function within the larger context of the entire psalm, which Mark assumed his audience would both recognize and incorporate (p. 23). Mark can do so because the intended audience—whether Jew or Gentile—would have, either through their Jewish upbringing or through their communal life as believers in Jesus the Jewish Messiah, "some detailed knowledge of Jewish scripture" as well as access to the LXX (pp. 28–29). The chapter concludes with a discussion of the nature and identification of allusions (following Ben-Porat), before noting that, since Mark is in Greek, the LXX Psalms are naturally the appropriate ones to study.

In some ways chapter 2 constitutes the critical move at the heart of the thesis. Of central importance is Ahearne-Kroll's rejection of the form-critical assumption of Gunkel and others that the praise/thanksgiving sections in the lament psalms presuppose an oracle of salvation (p. 45). Not only do such oracles occur only rarely in the Psalms (12:6; 35:3; 91:3–13), but the approach fails to take seriously the psalm's literary integrity. Further, since there is no evidence of a first-century cultic setting, it is inappropriate to expect Mark's readers to invoke a putative salvation oracle to explain the transition from lament to thanksgiving. Instead, the "thanksgiving" section ought not to be seen "as *actual* thanksgiving or praise *after* being heard" but rather as a promise of praise to come "*if* God responds" (p. 50; italics his). They are not expressions of assurance of future deliverance but rhetorical devices to motivate God to act (p. 51). In addition, he argues that by the first century David was not only the assumed author of the Psalms but also that many of them were linked with events in his life. This is important given Mark's presentation of Jesus as the Davidic Messiah.

Chapter 3 applies Ben-Porat's principles—similarities in vocabulary, motifs, themes, and narrative dynamics—to ascertain "simple evocations" of the lament psalms in Mark.

The use of the same psalm in contemporaneous and relatively unrelated literature (e.g. Jewish materials or John) strengthens the possibility of an evocation. Ahearne-Kroll thus concludes that LXX Ps 40:10 appears in Mark 14:18; Ps 41:6, 12 and 42:5 in Mark 14:34; Ps 21:19 in Mark 15:24; Ps 21:8–9 in Mark 15:29; Ps 21:2 in Mark 15:34; and Ps 68:22 in Mark 15:36. Chapter 4 then offers a detailed examination of the four psalms (counting 41–42 as a single unit), arguing that on a rhetorical reading the so-called “thanksgivings” do indeed continue the lament. In seeking to elicit a response from a culpable God who is deeply implicated in the petitioner’s suffering, the petitioner vows future praise if God will act. The “honest” reading is, therefore, one that resists the urge for every psalm to have a happy ending and instead “raises serious questions about the nature of the divine-human relationship and forces . . . an on-going search for answers” (p. 135).

Turning to Mark, chapter 5 discusses the role of David in chapters 10–12. Ahearne-Kroll argues that, while retaining Jesus’ eschatological and messianic character, Mark consistently eschews any militaristic overtones, emphasizing instead the healing associated with a Solomonic son of David (cf. 10:46–52). Ahearne-Kroll is now ready, in chapter 6, to bring his interpretation of the lament psalms to Mark’s passion narrative. After juxtaposing Jesus’ power and suffering, Mark seeks to make sense of them by linking them with the “trying times in David’s life” (p. 167), presenting Jesus as the suffering Davidic Messiah (p. 175). From this perspective not only do they justify Jesus’ suffering and death they also imply that as David did so too Jesus struggles to “understand the meaning of his suffering in light of his relationship with God” (p. 173). David’s challenging of God and his attempts to shame him into action become woven into Mark’s picture of Jesus (p. 169). At the same time, from an apocalyptic standpoint, although the possible evocation of Isaiah 53 in Mark 10:45 imbues Jesus’ death with an atoning element, by the time we reach the passion narrative the lamenting David’s questioning becomes “loud enough to question the need for Jesus’ death” (p. 171). Thus although there are allusions to Isaiah (e.g. 14:61, 65; 15:5, 14, 19, 27, most of which Ahearne-Kroll recognizes, p. 194), the Davidic model best describes Jesus’ situation and offers the added “dimensions of faithful dissent and the search for understanding of God’s will for the one who suffers” (p. 196).

Ahearne-Kroll thus concludes that, while other elements contribute to Mark’s complex picture of Jesus, the density of his appeals to the lament psalms means that Jesus as a suffering king like David is more prominent. Allowing the lament psalms their voice thus opens up a more richly textured reading of the meaning of Jesus’ death. As the literary and theological center of Mark’s story, Jesus’ sufferings can no longer be seen solely as a means of accomplishing an apocalyptic victory, thereby relegating them to a “meaningless stepping-stone along a path that has nothing to do with suffering in the end, only vindication and heavenly glory” (p. 218). There is a reason Mark allocates two entire chapters to Jesus’ suffering. They help us see that Jesus’ resurrection is not in itself a sufficient answer to the deeper question of why God’s Son must suffer. We must allow for a Jesus who goes to his death neither meekly nor willingly but challenging God to answer his cries for help. Jesus’ death is not to be understood as the result of a preordained and unchangeable plan to have the Messiah die. Instead, it is about his witnessing to God’s liberating kingdom even in confusion and even to the point of death. This for Mark is what it means to be Son of God (p. 224).

Ahearne-Kroll has clearly raised some profound, and to some perhaps disturbing questions, including that of the necessity of Jesus having to suffer in order to effect salvation. Unfortunately, Mark seems more concerned to show that it was *Jesus’* suffering that would ultimately bring salvation than to explain the inner logic of that relation. In terms, then, of what Mark does say, there is little question that his presentation of Jesus as the Davidic Messiah shuns traditional militaristic expectations. Similarly,

few would question the use of the laments in part to legitimate Jesus' suffering by drawing attention to a Davidic precedent. There is also clearly an undeniable tension between Jesus predicting his death and his sense of abandonment. Ahearne-Kroll has well reminded us of these matters, especially the last, which is all too easily smoothed over.

Yet other points are likely to raise questions. Ahearne-Kroll has a tendency towards an "either-or" approach that produces underlying tensions. How are we to reconcile inclusive statements that given the richness of Mark's narrative these four psalms are not the key to understanding the meaning of Jesus' death (e.g. p. 215) with assertions that it is these psalms and not Isaiah 53 that best do just that (e.g. p. 171)? Do we read Mark as a unified whole (as Ahearne-Kroll does the psalms) or through selective foregrounding of the lament psalms? Is it many voices or primarily one? If Mark's "voice" from heaven at the baptism can accommodate both Psalm 2 and Isaiah 42, one wonders why he is not equally amenable in his passion narrative. If Mark's Jesus himself employs Isaiah 50 and 53 to explain his suffering and death both in the preceding passion predictions and in the words of institution (14:23), the latter playing a critical interpretative role in the passion narrative itself (see, e.g., most recently Yarbrow Collins's commentary on Mark), why emphasize only the lamenting Davidic Messiah? Might it not be that just as Ahearne-Kroll argues that the so-called "thanksgivings" should be understood in light of the preceding laments so too Mark's use of the lament psalms are to be understood in the light of his preceding Isaianic materials? One wonders, then, if it might not have been more helpful and consistent to explore Mark's rationale in integrating them, showing how the one informs and locates the other.

Another difficulty concerns Ahearne-Kroll's understanding of the rhetorical function of the praise sections. As he recognizes, there is not a single explicit grammatical indicator of conditionality: "*if* you will deliver, *then* I will praise" (cf. p. 102). Neither am I aware of any such conditional pledge elsewhere in the LXX Psalms. On the contrary, we see confidence that *if* the petitioner calls out to Yahweh he will indeed hear (e.g. 93:18, 22; 137:7; cf. 22:4); whereas it is Israel who cannot be relied upon (e.g. 80:9, 14; 88:31–33). This being so, how does the rhetorical argument avoid the charge of special pleading? If the case is not particularly strong in the Psalms, it runs into seriously heavy weather once we turn to Mark. Given Ahearne-Kroll's insistence on a holistic reading, surely one must include Jesus' repeated expectations of vindication in Mark. This is explicit in the three passion predictions (8:31; 9:31; 10:34) and, accepting Ahearne-Kroll's admonition that the entire body of evoked psalms be respected, is implicit in the four LXX Psalm references that appear during Jesus' entry (Ps 117:25–26 in Mark 11:9–10), at the conclusion of the wicked tenants parable (Ps 117:22–23 in Mark 12:10–11), in his final confrontation in the temple (Ps 110:1 in Mark 12:36), and in the climactic trial scene in his response to Caiaphas (Ps 110:1 in Mark 14:62), all of which celebrate Yahweh's past and promised vindications. Whatever else the praise sections might have meant elsewhere, in this context of anticipated and, for Mark's readers, now-known vindication—hermeneutically akin to the hypothetical salvation oracle?—it is hard to see how they could not be read as genuine anticipations of deliverance, even in the midst of suffering.

Even so, Ahearne-Kroll has made an important contribution to Markan studies by drawing our attention to Mark's correlation of a Davidic Messiah Jesus with what the first century probably understood as Davidic lament psalms and the sense of despair and betrayal expressed therein. He is also right to note the undercurrent of questions raised by Jesus' suffering. Further, his opening dedication to his suffering and now deceased father indicates that this is no mere academic exercise but is born of confronting very real and difficult personal questions. I want to respect and honor that. Nevertheless, it seems to me that there is more to Mark's story. Jesus' Davidic suffering, while not at all to be minimized, is for Mark also redemptive. Similarly, while the

confusion and pain cannot and must not be ignored, Mark's message of hope, his gospel, is that it was both preceded and followed by the confidence and the realization of deliverance and vindication.

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The "We" Passages in the Acts of the Apostles: The Narrator as Narrative Character. By William Sanger Campbell. Studies in Biblical Literature 14. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007. xii + 150 pp., \$19.95 paperback.

Campbell has written a brief, suggestive, but ultimately unsatisfactory account of the "we" passages in Acts. A revision of the author's Ph.D. dissertation at Princeton Theological Seminary under Beverly Roberts Gaventa, the work suffers from a failure to consider the significance of some recent secondary literature, to confront some of the major critical questions surrounding the passages in question, and to offer a plausible and defensible alternative interpretation based in the ancient evidence. The author had plenty of space to do all of these, as the text of the book without appendixes is just 91 pages.

The author introduces the topic with a survey of the four major categories of proposals regarding the "we" passages. This chapter, like many of the others, trades upon a number of unproven assumptions. For example, Campbell simply accepts that there are three "we" passages (Acts 16:10–17; 20:5–21:18; 27:1–28:16), while acknowledging that there are others who argue for four or five. Campbell spends the most space on proposals regarding the author- or source-as-eyewitness in the "we" passages. He traces the author-as-eyewitness proposal back to Irenaeus but then quickly abandons it to pursue the source-as-eyewitness proposal. Here he notes the early contributions of Mayerhoff, Harnack, de Wette, Baur, Zeller, and Norden. In the last half of last century, he notes only Cadbury, Dibelius, and Haenchen, before quickly closing with brief mention of Wehnert and Thornton, two scholars whose views merit much further discussion in a literature survey such as this. His discussion of fictional and literary conventional proposals is even briefer, treating only Bruno Bauer, Robbins, and Plümacher. Proposals not adequately discussed in these sections include, among others, those by Conzelmann, Tannehill, Kurz, Hemer, and Porter. Discussion of some of these proposals, especially recent ones, might have opened up more avenues for Campbell to consider among the traditional solutions. Instead, he wishes to move beyond these proposals to his own—adopting what he calls narrative criticism, he wishes to see the "we" narrator as a character in Acts, replacing Barnabas as Paul's companion to draw attention to Paul's actions and accomplishments.

In the first chapter, Campbell puts forward his understanding of narrative theory and reader-response criticism. In an odd move, he eschews narratology and focuses upon narrative criticism as an aid to understanding his text, rather than developing theories about it. After noting requisite reservations about equating ancient and modern literary expectations (is it fair to say that literature is "by nature an unstable entity"? p. 16), Campbell exalts the constructive role of the reader in creating texts, drawing his inspiration from Stanley Fish. However, his use of Dan Brown's *Da Vinci Code* in support of the view that readers do not always share communal reading expectations does not make his point. Campbell clearly goes too far in his readerly attitude, as his own further exposition makes clear when he moves immediately to defining narrative, especially in terms of Chatman's description of participants. Campbell facetiously rejects the distinction between narration "of" and "in" the story, because he wishes to retain the narrator

as a character, especially the narrator of the “we” passages. This chapter raises many interesting issues, but the treatment is altogether too brief and does not coordinate the several different literary-critical hypotheses introduced.

The second chapter is concerned with grammatical person. After using the New York Public Library’s writer’s guide to define grammatical person (!), Campbell brings the works of three ancient historians into discussion with Acts—although he is quick to say that he does not accept Acts as historiography, thereby calling into question his ancient parallels. He notes the use of the third person in Thucydides, Polybius, and Josephus, as well as noting instances of first person in the narrative. He discovers this especially in Polybius, where he identifies the use of “event-level intermittent first-person plural narration” (p. 44). Unfortunately, Campbell fails to prove his case, as a study of appendix B reveals (see below).

Chapter 3 describes the characters of Paul and of Barnabas. Campbell argues that Barnabas is the one character who is depicted as a constant and useful companion and supporter of Paul, until they separate in Acts 15 before starting the second missionary journey. Campbell’s treatment, while interesting, tends to idealize Barnabas in relation to the Christian community, thus setting up his next chapter in terms of the characterization of the “we” source.

In chapter 4, Campbell describes the “we” character. He sees this “we” character as the replacement for Barnabas, but an equally reliable and supportive figure. It is here that Campbell flounders significantly. The parallel with Barnabas is not well established. There are numerous differences, including the frequency of appearance of the character (Barnabas appears regularly once introduced, while the “we” character goes entire chapters without appearing); the intensity of presence of the characters (Barnabas plays an active role virtually throughout his appearance in Acts, whereas the “we” character is not dominant in relation to Paul); and the level of activity of the characters (Barnabas was the lead character until replaced by Paul, whereas the “we” character usually interweaves his activities with Paul’s). In his emphasis upon the “we” character, Campbell also neglects to draw out other differences between the “we” passages and the rest of Acts, including differences in the portrait of Paul. The Paul of the “we” passages, I believe, is more understated in terms of the depiction of divine guidance and certainly less of a miracle worker than seen elsewhere.

Campbell concludes with an endorsement of the “we” character as a vital part of the narrative of Acts. He also includes two appendixes. The first responds to “frequently asked questions” about Acts. This is a hodgepodge of topics not directly related to the topic of the book—such as Paul’s apostolicity, Paul’s conversion, the Hellenists of Acts 6, Philippi as a city, and “plan of God” theology—and does not clearly fit within it.

The second appendix is clearly of direct relevance, as it provides the Greek text and English translation of passages from Thucydides, Polybius, and Josephus in supposed support of Campbell’s findings in chapter 3. I am unconvinced by the examples that he marshals, including those in Polybius. Besides Polybius clearly defining who the first-person uses refer to (e.g. 1.1.1), a feature not found in Acts, there is no set of examples in Polybius or any of the other historians—if these historians can be compared to Acts, according to Campbell’s own definition of the nature of Acts—that comes close to being similar to the usage in Acts in terms of the frequency of occurrence of such passages within their respective authors, the frequency and density of “we” usage within a given passage, the nature of the episodes, and the roles they play within the larger narrative.

Whereas Campbell hints at some potentially useful ideas, his major hypotheses regarding the use of the “we” character and support for such usage within Greek historians clearly remains unproven.

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The New Perspective on Paul. By James D. G. Dunn. 2d ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008, xi + 539 pp., \$36.00 paper.

In 1982, James D. G. Dunn coined the term “The New Perspective on Paul” (NPP) to describe what has become a defining movement in the academic study of the apostle Paul. A recognized proponent of the New Perspective on Paul, Dunn offers readers this collection of twenty-two essays that he has authored over the last quarter century. As this compendium’s title suggests, each of these essays addresses some aspect of the New Perspective on Paul.

This work provides a service to readers by gathering many previously published journal articles and chapters into a single volume. Two essays, however, are new. The last essay, “Philippians 3.2–14 and the New Perspective on Paul,” is an exegetical reflection on a passage that has figured importantly in NPP discussions. The introductory essay, “The New Perspective on Paul: whence, what and whither,” is Dunn’s extended effort to explain the origins of the New Perspective on Paul, to respond to critics, and to advance the discussions surrounding the New Perspective on Paul.

Dunn visits two interrelated questions throughout this introductory essay (see pp. 16–17): To what, in first-century Judaism, did the apostle Paul object? What, for Paul, is justification by faith apart from the works of the law?

In reply to the first question, the Protestant Reformation stressed that Paul objected to the prevailing Judaism of his day because it was a religion of merit. This is why, in answer to the second question, justification is through faith alone and not by works of the law. Justification is grounded entirely on the work of Jesus Christ for sinners. It is not grounded, even in part, upon the activity of the person seeking justification.

Following Sanders, Dunn affirms the “basic graciousness” of first-century Judaism (p. 16). For Dunn, post-Sanders NT scholarship may never again responsibly articulate the difference between first-century Judaism and Christianity along the lines of law versus grace. It is therefore impossible to label Judaism a “legalistic” religion (p. 96, see also pp. 66–68).

What does Dunn mean when he claims that first-century Judaism was basically gracious? Adopting Sanders’s covenantal nomism as a description of the prevailing religion of first-century Judaism, Dunn argues that there existed a “creative tension” between election (“covenant”) and obedience (“nomism”) in Judaism (p. 70). Different groups at different times emphasized “grace,” while others at other times emphasized “nomistic obligation.” Both elements were legitimately at home in Judaism and existed in “symbiotic” “inter-relationship” with one another (p. 69). Dunn appears to understand “grace” to have a certain priority over “obedience” in this relationship, but he does not specify the relationship of grace and obedience in first-century Judaism with any precision (p. 68, esp. n. 281). Dunn is clear that Paul did not break with first-century Judaism on this point. Instead, Paul’s letters should be seen as “part of an intra-Jewish dispute on how the balance of covenantal nomism should be played out” (p. 70, n. 285).

To what, then, did Paul object in first-century Judaism? Dunn finds the answer to this question in Paul’s phrase “the works of the law.” Unlike the Protestant Reformers, Dunn does not understand “works of the law” to concern an individual’s attempt to merit justification by obedience to the precepts of the law. “Works of the law” reflect, rather, Jewish Christians’ efforts to impose the entirety of the Mosaic legislation on the church as the continuing divine standard for Christian living. Paul objects to the “works of the law” because God has not required of Christians a Jewish lifestyle, only “faith in Christ” (pp. 25–27). They are objectionable because they create an unnecessary barrier of division between Jews and Gentiles, the “refusal of one group of Christians fully to accept another group of Christians” (p. 32). The “works of the law,” Dunn insists, are not merely a “few

'boundary markers'" (p. 17). They are, rather, the "Jewish way of life, including the distinctively Jewish way of life" (p. 27). Paul, however, does not object to "works of the law" because they are the efforts of persons to merit justification but rather because they set the boundaries of the identity of people of God in the wrong place.

What, then, does Dunn understand justification by faith to be? Dunn does not wish to be heard restricting the doctrine to mere sociology (p. 29). While justification concerns the identity of the people of God, it also concerns the salvation of the individual (p. 30). Dunn speaks of both "initial justification" and "final justification" in describing Paul's teaching on the doctrine (p. 49). Dunn understands Paul to speak of "initial justification" in Rom 4:4–5. In "initial justification," Abraham is counted righteous quite apart from his own "faithfulness in obeying God's commands" (pp. 47–48).

What does Dunn mean by "final justification"? Dunn claims that the "final justification" of the believer takes place at the Day of Judgment. "Final justification" has reference to the believer's obedience. In this respect, "initial" and "final" justification correspond to the "grace" and "obedience" axes of covenantal nomism (p. 73). This raises the question of what role one's obedience will play at the Day of Judgment. Dunn suggests that Paul and first-century Judaism are much closer on this question than many have supposed (p. 88). He declines to follow the Protestant Reformation in specifying the believer's works as strictly evidential at the Day of Judgment (p. 87, n. 367). Instead, Dunn parts ways with the Reformers by affirming that the believer's works are part of the basis of God's declaring the believer righteous at the Last Day. Referring to Rom 2:6–11, he claims that "Paul's theology of justification by faith alone has to be qualified as final justification by faith *and* by works accomplished by the believer in the power of the Spirit" (p. 88).

To be sure, it is not that Dunn sees no place for an "alien" or "imputed righteousness" in Paul's doctrine of justification (p. 85). The problem is that Dunn understands the work of Christ for the believer and the work of the Spirit in the believer coordinately to ground the believer's justification at the Day of Judgment. Paul, followed by his Reformation interpreters, certainly affirms that the justified believer obeys the commandments of God by the power of the Holy Spirit. Paul explicitly denies, however, that the believer is in any way justified because he obeys the commandments of God by the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom 4:4–5). Any apparent concord between the Reformers' doctrine of justification and Dunn's "initial justification" is vitiated by Dunn's "final justification."

This raises a final point. Dunn is concerned to stress that he does not understand the New Perspective on Paul to "refute or replace some or any 'old perspective,' but [to] complement other perspectives" (p. x; see also pp. 18–23, 88). In so doing, he is trying to rebut "the belief that the new perspective repudiates the foundational character of justification by faith" (p. 22).

Dunn's own work, however, demonstrates the fundamental incompatibility of the Protestant Reformation and the New Perspective with respect to Paul's doctrine of justification. Dunn claims that Paul and first-century Judaism were essentially agreed on the gratuity of salvation. For Dunn, this means that both Paul and his Jewish contemporaries understood a person's obedience to provide at least part of the basis of his justification. It was precisely this position, however, that the Reformers correctly understood Paul to repudiate when he affirmed that a person is justified by faith and not by works of the law. On the doctrine of justification, Dunn and the Protestant Reformers cannot be harmonized. Only when this fundamental point is recognized can genuine progress in debate take place.

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Pistis and the Righteous One: A Study of Romans 1:17 against the Background of Scripture and Second Temple Jewish Literature. By Desta Heliso. WUNT 2.235; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007, xiv + 292 pp., €59.00 paper.

This study is a revision of the author's doctoral dissertation, written under the supervision of Max Turner of London School of Theology (with additional study at Kings College, London, and Brunel University). As the subtitle indicates, this book offers a thorough examination of Paul's important statement in Rom 1:17: "For in it (i.e. the gospel) the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'But the righteous one will live by faith.'" This verse, of course, has proved to be crucial in the church's understanding of Paul's letter to the Romans and no less in the conversion of Martin Luther. Heliso undertakes an examination of this passage, seeking to determine whether the recent "christological" interpretation of this passage is to be preferred over the previous "anthropological" view. The christological interpretation, championed by A. T. Hanson, Ian Wallis, Richard Hays, and Douglas Campbell, understands "the righteous one" of Rom 1:17b to refer to Christ. The anthropological view understands "the righteous one" to refer to a generic believer. In the end, Heliso cautiously argues that the christological view is plausible and "internally coherent," though it is not without its problems.

Chapter 1 of this study examines the existing interpretations of Rom 1:17, comparing, in particular, the traditional (Lutheran) "anthropological" view versus the more recent "christological" views. Then, in chapter 2, Heliso moves to an examination of Hab 2:3–4 (cited in Rom 1:17b) and its many textual traditions. The author concludes this chapter by suggesting that, while it is impossible to know which textual tradition Paul was working from, it seems clear that he was being deliberately ambiguous by not explicating to whose faith (Christ's or a generic believer's) ἐκ πίστεως refers. Chapters 3, 4, and 5 examine in great detail the individual constituents of Rom 1:17. Heliso devotes significant space to the meaning of δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ ("righteousness of God") and the referent of ὁ δίκαιος ("the righteous one"). While Heliso is confident that the "righteousness of God" refers to the cosmic saving power of God and not to a gift of righteousness given to humans, he is much less confident that "the righteous one" is referring to Christ. At the end of the day, whether "the righteous one" is Christ or a generic believer "must depend on our exegetical reading of ἐκ πίστεως in relation to the πίστις Χριστοῦ construction in Galatians and Romans" (p. 164).

Regarding πίστις Χριστοῦ, the author devotes nearly 40 pages to his discussion and ends up with a *via media* approach (pp. 200–42). So, for instance, in Gal 2:16 πίστις Χριστοῦ refers to "the faithfulness of Christ" as his obedient death, while the following verbal phrase ("and we have believed in Christ") "is an acknowledgement of God's justifying or saving act through or on the basis of the faithfulness of Christ" (p. 241). This certainly seems to lean heavily toward a christological reading of πίστις Χριστοῦ, since no one would deny that the anthropological response is captured by the verbal phrase. Yet Heliso is not willing to say that *all* of the ἐκ πίστεως phrases refer to Jesus' faithfulness, even though he believes that the phrase is a shorthand for πίστις Χριστοῦ.

This book is a good contribution to the ongoing debate about various soteriological issues in Pauline studies. I anticipate that this book will receive much consultation from scholars and students who wish to (re-)examine Rom 1:17 as an interpretive lens for understanding Romans. The book is also a clear indication that scholarly interest in the phrase πίστις Χριστοῦ is not slowing down, since this book is one of three monographs published in 2007 by Mohr-Siebeck alone that deal extensively with this issue (see Benjamin Schliesser, *Abraham's Faith in Romans 4: Paul's Concept of Faith in Light of the History of Reception of Genesis 15:6* [WUNT 2/224] and Karl Friedrich Ulrichs, *Christusglaube: Studien zum Syntagma πίστις Χριστοῦ und zum paulinischen Ver-*

ständnis von Glaube und Rechtfertigung [WUNT 2/227]). Since many scholars recognize that the meaning of “the righteous one” in Rom 1:17 is crucial for the πίστις Χριστοῦ debate (e.g. Francis Watson, Douglas Campbell), Heliso’s study will be a welcome addition to the discussion.

While I enjoyed the book in light of its topic, there were a few disappointing features. One, while the author is very cautious, he may have been too cautious. At the end of the study, all we can walk away with is that, on the one hand, the anthropological understanding of Rom 1:17 (and πίστις Χριστοῦ) is not impossible, but also not without its problems. On the other hand, the christological view is possible, though not without its problems either. Both views, at the end of the day, are possible. While I appreciate the author’s caution and honest evaluation of the evidence, perhaps he could have let the issue percolate a bit longer in his thinking before publishing the book. Second, clarity is not always achieved. It sometimes seems like the author is thinking out loud, weighing the strengths and weaknesses of each view, yet not totally convinced of either view. Third, the book has quite a few editorial mistakes. While they do not affect the author’s argument, they do strengthen my impression that the dissertation was sent to the publisher prematurely.

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Recovering Paul’s Mother Tongue: Language and Theology in Galatians. By Susan Eastman. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007, xiv + 206 pp., \$25.00 paper.

“The medium is the message”—this contemporary truism gains traction in Susan Eastman’s argument. As hinted in the title of her book, *Recovering Paul’s Mother Tongue*, Eastman is most interested to explore the maternal metaphors in Galatians as they shape Paul’s message. She draws on Ursula Le Guin’s commencement address at Bryn Mawr College in 1986, specifically Le Guin’s contrast between father, mother, and native tongues. The mother tongue is one of relationship, emotion, and expression of personal experiences. Such communication renders the speaker vulnerable, and it is precisely this vulnerability and multi-directional communication that Eastman discovers in Gal 4:12–5:1. Paul’s mother tongue is not Greco-Roman but Jewish, learned from the prophets and apocalyptic writings.

Eastman tackles one of the more puzzling passages in the Pauline corpus, Gal 4:12–5:1, with solid arguments and perceptive insights. She begins with questions about motivation and sustaining change over time: how does Paul encourage his congregations to live out their gospel faith, especially since it involves suffering? She wrestles with the complexities of continuity and discontinuity in the histories of Paul and his auditors as they reflect on the apocalyptic inbreaking of God into history through Christ. Paul’s maternal metaphors underscore his authoritative, not authoritarian, message.

In her opening chapter, Eastman introduces two issues foundational to her argument. First, she examines the problem of continuity with the past as it impacts the reality of new creation in the present. The apocalypse of Christ, as Eastman describes Jesus Christ’s advent, has for some interpreters rendered the past individual history of Paul and others irretrievable and unreachable. Eastman critiques this position by noting both a theological and an anthropological continuity. She argues the gospel creates a new history by affirming God’s call in one’s past; moreover, it opens a new future grown within the redeemed community. Second, she concentrates on Paul’s maternal metaphors, not as mere vehicles, but as the cargo itself that communicates the gospel

message of freedom. Metaphor denotes without comprehensively defining reality; it points beyond itself to unseen truths. Eastman protests that attempts to translate metaphor into abstract, precise language eviscerate its fullness and power to express human religious experience and theological claims.

Mimetic transformation as enjoined in Gal 4:12–20 is the focus in chapter 2. She argues convincingly that Paul's call for imitation is a "reordering of the mimetic hierarchy" (p. 29). The key is that Paul has become as they are, even as he asks that the Galatians imitate him. Moreover, both Paul and the Galatians imitate Christ; thus Paul is not the ultimate standard against which the Galatians judge themselves. Her analysis of continuity with the past plays an important interpretive role: Paul has become like the Galatians precisely in his experience of living in the present evil age, which he describes as his former life in Judaism. The reciprocal relationship generated as Paul became like them best replicates the freedom and sacrifice of Christ's work. Paul's relationship with the Galatians is not hierarchical and static but fluid, because Christ is moving in their midst and within their suffering. Divine initiative is not abstract but expressed in the flesh-and-blood relationship between Paul and his churches.

Eastman continues this line of thought in chapter 3, but now from the angle of apocalyptic and suffering. Paul distinguishes himself from the agitators in the Galatian churches by identifying himself with Israel's prophets. Like Jeremiah, he tightly weaves his *bios* with his message. Again, both the Servant of the Lord (Isaiah 49) and Paul suffer as an integral part of their message. Perhaps most important, Eastman argues that God's speech and the prophet's can be so interwoven as to make God's anguish and the prophet's indistinguishable. Both the prophets and Paul use their mother tongue in expressing grief, yet their cries are best understood as native tongue, achieved when the public father tongue is joined with the private mother tongue. Eastman claims that the mimetic relationships evidenced in the texts are not unidirectional, since the prophets and Paul speak for God and also for the people. Nor should the relationship Paul advocates with the Galatians be seen as hierarchical, since Paul represents the crucified Christ, not the resurrected Lord.

Having established the importance of suffering, the apocalyptic voice, and the non-hierarchical mimetic relationship Paul desires with the Galatians, Eastman turns to an in-depth discussion of Paul's maternal metaphors in chapter 4. She reiterates that a metaphor joins a reality that is at once both near and also far off. Paul's metaphorical declaration that he experiences labor pains resonates with his apocalyptic thought and subverts dominant social patterns, including gender hierarchy. Eastman identifies Paul's pains as the wounds he suffered as an apostle embodying the crucified Christ, while the distant point of the metaphor reflects both God's apocalyptic suffering, in which Paul shares, as well as God's power to bring forth and nurture his people.

In chapter 5, Eastman explores the second maternal metaphor (Gal 4:21–5:1), using as her interpretative lens Isa 54:1, which summarizes the stories of the barren woman and Jerusalem. The central claim of Paul in this allegory is not that the Galatians should cast out the "slave woman" (4:31) but that they should stand firm in their freedom (5:1). By focusing on the barren woman (unnamed so as to help the Galatians write themselves into this story), Paul highlights the full strength of God working in human weakness. Chapter 6 expands on the images of the allegory as Eastman describes Hagar's typological family tree in contrast to the family tree rooted in the Spirit. As the barren woman moved from her position of desolation to abundance, so, too, the community in the Spirit will move from their present suffering to the abundance of the new Jerusalem through God's power. Eastman suggests that "maternal metaphors convey radical reversal of values, and a promise of nurture and sustenance" (p. 177).

Eastman concludes that Paul uses his mother tongue to maintain and develop a multi-directional, non-authoritarian, and emotional relationship with the Galatian

churches, which motivates them to imitate Christ by continuing in the Spirit. The two maternal references highlight significant aspects of the gospel message: its transforming and sustaining power. Paul presents an “embodied proclamation” (p. 183) that necessitates communication in his mother tongue, expressed in his scarred body, his history with the Galatians, and his experience of being in Christ.

Eastman has done a masterful job in anticipating readers’ questions and even playing devil’s advocate with her theory. She is conversant with the major theories of interpretation in Galatians and has applied current thinking on metaphor and its place in discussions of gender. Her book is a revision of her dissertation, and so in a few spots it feels like she is citing authorities at length instead of promoting her own views, but this is a minor fault. She offers two useful indices of general subjects and Scripture and ancient sources.

Eastman’s close attention to the distinctive place of maternal metaphors in Galatians should further the conversation beyond the simplistic conclusion that Paul’s use of maternal images must erase gender hierarchies within the church. She pushes the conversation to consider how these metaphors express “not Paul’s representation of a transgendered community, but a transgendered image of God” (p. 113).

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St. Paul’s Ephesus: Texts and Archaeology. By Jerome Murphy-O’Connor. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2008, xxi + 289 pp., \$29.95 paper.

In this “sister volume” (p. xiii) to his earlier *St. Paul’s Corinth: Texts and Archaeology* (3d ed.; Collegeville: Liturgical, 2002), Jerome Murphy-O’Connor, longtime Professor of New Testament at the École Biblique of Jerusalem, has once again played the travel guide to an important center of early Christian activity—this time, the city of Ephesus. In the book’s first and major section (Part 1: The Ancient Texts; pp. 1–180, 246–58), Murphy-O’Connor gathers scores of references made to the city by ancient authors (twenty-six authors total, ranging from Herodotus [b. 484 BC] to Dio Cassius [b. AD 160]) and judiciously comments on each, making St. Paul’s Ephesus seem not quite as ancient as the nearly two millennia gap on the timeline might suggest. These references are organized by author—the authors by genre (historians and poets/novelists) and, in contrast to his other volume, alphabet (following Strabo’s “introduction,” pp. 5–37)—and each is presented in English translation (usually Loeb). (The reader will be gratified to know that Luke passes muster [barely, cf. pp. 94–95] and is listed among the historians.) Quite helpfully, each author is introduced by a short biography, and many of the commentaries are comprised of intricate archeological details relating to the reference’s subject matter and of cross-references, both to other, previously-mentioned texts and to the NT (e.g. Strabo’s *Letter* 65 and Jesus’ statements in Mark 11:17 pars.; see p. 25; cf. pp. 37, 57, 71, 121, 122, 126, 129, 146, 152, 171, etc.). These latter details (along with the subject index; pp. 269–79) work to supply the composite picture and summary of relevance otherwise lacking as a result of Murphy-O’Connor’s inductive approach (cf. p. xiii). Thus, the end result is a nicely comprehensive and not infrequently interesting (see e.g. the baptized and celibate lion; p. 157) recreation of this first-century city (esp. her magnificent temple) and her storied history.

In the book’s second section (simply Part 2; pp. 180–245, 258–68), Murphy-O’Connor moves from Ephesus to *St. Paul’s Ephesus*. He begins with an imaginative account of Paul’s initial impressions of this great city, especially in light of the latter’s

familiarity with the architectural splendors of first-century Jerusalem (pp. 183–200). Here Murphy-O'Connor also usefully reflects on the logistics of early Christian gatherings in light of two excavated houses found in an upscale neighborhood in Ephesus (pp. 192–97). Following this, Murphy-O'Connor presents his reconstruction of Paul's Ephesian ministry, a ministry that began with his arrival in AD 52 (p. 201) and ended with his final contact in approximately AD 64 (p. 244). (Those familiar with Murphy-O'Connor's earlier work or patient enough to check the endnotes of this volume will recognize this reconstruction to be largely based on his earlier work.) In this reconstruction, Murphy-O'Connor explains that Paul's time in Ephesus was largely spent enveloped in conflict. On the one hand, Judaizers, ultimately from Jerusalem (p. 212), were sent by Antioch to re-Judaize the churches Paul had planted on his so-called first and second missionary journeys (i.e. Galatia, Philippi, Thessalonica, and Corinth; pp. 213–14). On the other hand, some in Ephesus, not happy with Paul's unearned authority, were doing their best to ensure Paul's stay was anything but pleasant (pp. 222–25). This is to say nothing of the growing unease of the Ephesian government, something that resulted in temporary detainment (p. 220) and, later, considerable danger (pp. 242–43).

There is, of course, much to say for Murphy-O'Connor's textual and archeological compendium and for (and against) his historical reconstruction. However, since the latter is considerably more controversial and more explicitly relevant to biblical studies, a couple points of critical assessment are in order.

First, Murphy-O'Connor's reconstruction, despite its creativity, simply outstrips the evidence. To be sure, as with a good bit of historical work, not least *ancient* historical work, Murphy-O'Connor seeks to make a handful of texts tell a story they were not precisely designed to tell. Thus, he employs a hypothesis that (at least, ideally) ties together the various details—in this case, the contents of letters written by Paul ostensibly during this time—while simultaneously being suggested by those very details. Where Murphy-O'Connor's reconstruction runs into difficulty, however, is when his hypothesis requires less probable readings of available evidence on the basis of other non-existing evidence.

Here let me tally four such instances: (1) Murphy-O'Connor suggests that the letter to the Philippians was written to prepare the church at Philippi for the "imminent" arrival of Antiochean Judaizers (p. 216), even while, on the face of it, only Phil 3:2–4:1 deals explicitly with external opponents. He is able to do this by further suggesting, against the manuscript evidence, that Philippians first circulated as three separate letters (with 3:2–4:1 being the first missive; p. 216).

(2) He suggests this occasion for Philippians, even while noting that if these Antiochean Judaizers were retracing Paul's steps, we would have expected Thessalonica and Corinth to have received similar warnings. To resolve this tension, Murphy-O'Connor suggests, again, despite the manuscript evidence, that either (a) Paul originally instructed Philippi to share its letter with these other churches and this instruction was omitted in the present form of the letter or that (b) Paul wrote letters to these churches that were simply not collected into our present canon. (Granted, he also suggests that an imprisonment could have prevented Paul from writing these warning letters. However, as he also notes in another place, Paul could be quite prolific behind bars [cf. p. 202].)

(3) He suggests that the Antiochean Judaizers infiltrated Corinth following Paul's writing of 1 Corinthians, even though there is no explicit refutation (nor mention) of these Judaizer's theology in 2 Corinthians. Murphy-O'Connor does admit that the Judaizers had apparently adjusted their tack, turning largely personal in Corinth, in part, perhaps, because of the sympathy such *ad hominem* would have received in a church that just recently was derisively scolded by its founder (pp. 237–39). Still, to maintain that these were indeed the same Judaizers who had harried Paul in Galatia and Philippi, Murphy-O'Connor insists that Paul did deal with their theological attacks, only not in

any of the extant evidence. Instead, they were confronted in person (by Paul, p. 240, and especially by Titus, p. 242) and in a lost letter (p. 241).

(4) Murphy-O'Connor suggests that Ephesians was originally occasioned by conflict—this time by a conflict similar to what we find in Colossians—even though our present letter shows no signs of this. To explain this omission, Murphy-O'Connor again appeals to a text tradition that does not exist, arguing that the editor who was responsible for the present form of Ephesians “excised from a letter to the Laodiceans everything that evoked” that specific situation (p. 231). In sum, while all historical hypotheses fill in gaps, one that reads available evidence against its grain as a result of created evidence is a precarious form of historiography to say the least.

Second, the picture Murphy-O'Connor paints of Paul (to say nothing of Scripture) is implausibly negative, not least in making Paul out to be something of an arrogant hot-head. Paul, we are told, “resented Apollos” (p. 205); responded “vicious[ly]” to and was “unnecessarily harsh” with opponents (pp. 223–24); was given to “temper tantrum[s]” and “intemperate outburst[s]” (p. 224); “betray[ed] a willfulness that could not bear to be thwarted” (p. 225); would not have “admitted even to himself that the guidance he gave [the Corinthians] might have been susceptible of misinterpretation” (p. 237); “simply wanted to lash out and punish,” “hurt,” “crush,” and play a “cruel intellectual game” with the “Spirit-people” at Corinth (p. 238); and could be “brutal,” “intemperate,” and “inappropriate” (pp. 238–39, 245). Transparently, such a negative picture helps Murphy-O'Connor’s reconstruction (as it provides a rationale for some of the supposed ubiquitous conflict). However, it does so at the expense of the character of the greatest of early Christian missionaries. Surely one who enjoined the Corinthians to “follow [his] example, as [he] follow[ed] the example of Christ” (1 Cor 11:1; cf. 4:16, NIV; cf. p. 225) or who instructed Timothy that church leaders were to be “kind to all,” “not quarrelsome,” and “patient when wronged” (2 Tim 2:24, NIV—a letter Murphy-O'Connor implies is Pauline, p. 245) would have lacked something much more than a dash of integrity were Murphy-O'Connor’s portrait correctly drawn. In fact, on Murphy-O'Connor’s reading, one is at a loss to explain why the church ever affixed *St. to Paul* in the first place.

These criticisms notwithstanding, *St. Paul’s Ephesus* is, to be sure, first a compendium of useful texts and artifacts, vividly illuminating a city of tremendous importance in early Christianity. For at least this reason, the book will reward careful reading, and the author is to be warmly thanked.

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Cosmology and Eschatology in Hebrews: The Settings of the Sacrifice. By Kenneth L. Schenck. SNTSMS 143. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, xi + 220 pp., \$95.00.

Schenck analyzes Hebrews using a rhetorical-narrative approach pioneered by Richard Hays (*The Faith of Jesus Christ: An Investigation of the Narrative Substructure of Galatians 3:1–4:11* [Scholars Press, 1983]). Thus, according to Schenck, the author of Hebrews and his audience shared the common early-Christian narrative of the saving work of Christ. However, the author has “retold” this story in terms of Christ’s high priesthood in order to address the need of his hearers. He based this retelling on items already present in the Christian narrative, such as Christ’s sacrifice, his intercession, and his fulfilling of Ps 110:1 and Ps 8:4–6. He used the Melchizedekian priesthood of Ps 110:4 and cosmic speculation about the tabernacle to reshape the story for his purposes. Both the hortatory and the expository parts of Hebrews reveal the need

addressed by this rhetorical reshaping. The former shows that the hearers were in danger of surrendering their commitment due to lassitude and persecution. The latter suggests that the author thought this danger best averted by demonstrating how Christ's atonement had fulfilled the old covenant and established the new.

Schenck describes the temporal setting of Hebrews' story in chapters 3 and 4 and the spatial setting in chapters 5 and 6. The story begins with the purpose of God for humanity and is developed using the two ages of apocalyptic or eschatological thought. This story also involves movement from the created, temporal, visible world to the eternal, heavenly realm. In chapter 7 Schenck summarizes his earlier argument by recounting this story as retold by Hebrews. He concludes with appropriately tentative suggestions as to the situation, author, and recipients for whom this story may have been relevant. It is possible that Hebrews was written to Gentiles in Rome whose Christianity had a strong Jewish flavor. They were discouraged by the destruction of the temple, the ill favor now shown to the Jews through whom they had become Christians, and the rejection they themselves faced. Schenck is careful not to force Hebrews into an apocalyptic, Philonic, or other mold. He is correct in his assertion that Hebrews draws its eschatological elements from early Christianity. He shows care in letting each text determine the religious and social background of its language and thought.

Schenck's understanding of tabernacle symbolism is central to his interpretation. From an eschatological perspective, the holy place stands for the old covenant, under which there was no access to God, and thus for the old age. The most holy place stands for the new covenant, which offers access, and thus for the new age. He also believes that the author of Hebrews has made use of cosmic speculations about the tabernacle: the holy place represents the created world, and the most holy place the eternal world. Thus the tabernacle identifies the old age and the old covenant with the created world, and the new age and the new covenant with the heavenly world. The drama begins with God's purpose to bring human beings from the temporal world into "glory." This "glory" is also described as eternal "rest," the heavenly homeland, the eternal city, and the "unshakable kingdom." It is life in the eternal world with God. God's purpose was blocked by death and opposed by the devil, who exercised the power of death. The old covenant, especially in its priesthood and sacrificial system, could do no more than anticipate the solution to this problem in Christ. The time of the old covenant was "Act I" of the drama as retold by Hebrews. "Act II" has two "scenes." The first scene is the climax of the drama when Christ takes on the mortality of humanity and by his high priestly sacrifice overcomes the devil, thus enabling humanity to enter God's presence. In the second scene Christ will return and God will remove the temporal order, so that all his people can enter fully and finally into the heavenly realm of his presence. During the present time the old covenant, the old age, and the material world overlap with the new covenant, the new age, and the heavenly world.

One can glean various helpful insights from this clearly written book. Nevertheless, Schenck's argument has several serious flaws. The most fatal is his use of the two apocalyptic ages to explain Hebrews' story. Hebrews does not conceive of an age dominated by evil followed by an age of salvation. The time before Christ was an age when God "spoke" establishing a covenant and calling out a people. This "old age" offered an inadequate, yet anticipatory and even prophetic, means of salvation, now fulfilled in the "new age" by the adequacy of Christ. Thus the time of the old covenant does not overlap the age of the new covenant. The old covenant that was "near to disappearing" (8:13) when God issued the new covenant prophecy through Jeremiah has come to an end with its fulfillment in Christ. The narrative of Hebrews is not structured by an age dominated by evil followed by an age of salvation. Hebrews' time line is based on the three 'speakings' of God—of old in various ways (especially at Sinai), now through his Son (1:1–4), and finally at the last judgment (12:25–29).

A second fatal flaw in Schenck's argument is his assertion that Hebrews identifies the holy place of the tabernacle with the earthly created world and the most holy place with the heavenly eternal world. Hebrews never uses the holy place as a symbol of the created world. Even the most holy place showed that there was no access to God under the old covenant (9:1–10). The closest Hebrews comes to such speculation is the use of the Levitical high priest's entrance into the most holy place as a foreshadowing of Christ's entrance into "heaven itself" (9:24).

Schenck's forced attempt to make these associations has led him to suggest that redemption is redemption from the temporal created world and from mortality—despite the emphasis Hebrews puts on cleansing from sin. Although, according to Schenck, the created world is not evil, it must be removed at the judgment because it prevents humanity from coming into God's presence. This interpretation envisions the future world as inhabited by disembodied "spirits" (12:23) and leaves no room for the resurrection of the dead, in which the author of Hebrews most certainly believed (11:35).

Schenck makes several key assertions without exegetical defense. For instance, he asserts that heaven is the "space" where Christ performs his sacrifice and that the "veil" of Christ's flesh must be "removed" (10:20) to provide entrance into heaven. Schenck denies the obvious affirmations of the Son's pre-existence in the "poetical" assertions of chapter 1. He then depicts the Son as God's "logos" or "wisdom," who brings the world to its intended end—though he admits that evidence for such a conception is very tenuous.

Finally, we can agree with Schenck that priesthood is metaphorical. However, the author of Hebrews is not merely using the old priesthood as a convenient metaphor to adapt the significance of the basic Christian narrative to the needs of his hearers. Hebrews understands Christ to be the true High Priest, whom God anticipated by establishing the old priesthood. Priesthood is a metaphor intrinsic to who Christ is. Without this conviction Hebrews would lose its intended rhetorical effect. Unfortunately Schenck's book is marred by misunderstandings of both the cosmology and eschatology of Hebrews.

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The Saving Righteousness of God: Studies on Paul, Justification, and the New Perspective. By Michael F. Bird. Paternoster Biblical Monographs. Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2007, xviii + 230 pp., £19.99 paper.

Michael Bird, an Australian Baptist who teaches at Highland Theological College, Dingwall, Scotland, declares himself "a card carrying Calvinist" (pp. 1, 183). Whereas many co-defenders of reformed orthodoxy consider the "new perspective on Paul" to have launched a broadside against the core of Protestantism, the doctrine of justification by faith, Bird plays the peacemaker, integrating insights of the "new perspective" with Pauline soteriology as understood in the reformed tradition. In showing how these strangers could be bedfellows, he is largely successful.

Saving Righteousness is a set of thematically related essays, not a tight monograph with a focused problem and method. Its heart consists of four independent and reworked journal articles (chaps. 3–6, pp. 40–154), to which the author has added two fresh opening and two closing chapters, with a select bibliography on the "new perspective." Although the eight chapter titles stand in a logical order, inevitably the book's genesis makes for a few repetitions and inconsistencies, and the organizing principles of the author's

thought lie behind its literary face. Since it reflects on three decades of scholarship, readers familiar with the debate may be better placed to appreciate it than those seeking a first introduction.

Bird aims to bring together “reformed *and* ‘new’ readings of Paul” (p. 1). He couches this polarity in pairs of contrasting terms: forensic/covenantal, vertical/horizontal; later chapters speak of people’s “standing before God”/“group membership” (p. 29), of “apocalyptic eschatology”/“covenant theology” (p. 30), and of “personal soteriology”/“corporate identity” (p. 34). All these “needless dichotomies” (p. 34) can be transcended if both elements are “appropriately described and weighed” (p. 1).

Chapter 2 lays the groundwork by taking positions on controverted sub-issues related to the “Riddle of Righteousness.” Righteousness is conformity to an ethical norm, but the norm is integral to the divine covenants, so that righteousness cannot be dissociated from a covenantal framework (pp. 10–12, 35–39; contra M. A. Seifrid). The “righteousness of God” (δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ) is God’s commitment (subjective genitive) to the world and to his people (pp. 12–16; Käsemann, Stuhlmacher). Yet the verb “justify” (δικαίωω) is strictly forensic (pp. 16–18), not as such bringing about the new creation; otherwise antinomian misunderstandings of Paul’s gospel would never have arisen (cf. pp. 110–11, citing Seifrid). Believers’ justification depends not only on Jesus’ death, but squarely on his resurrection, interpreted (following W. Künneth, D. M. Stanley, M. Barth, R. Gaffin, and Seifrid) as the actualization of Jesus’ own status as just (1 Cor 15:17; Rom 4:25; 1 Tim 3:16).

Chapter 4 offers Bird’s most distinctive proposal: that the concept of “imputation” be refined to “incorporated righteousness.” Nowhere does Paul explicitly say God imputes Christ’s righteousness to others (siding with R. H. Gundry, Seifrid, S. Hafemann, and N. T. Wright, against J. Piper, pp. 65–70). The classic proof texts (Rom 4:1–25; 5:18–19; 1 Cor 1:30; Phil 3:8–9; 2 Cor 5:21) mean believers are counted righteous by virtue of incorporation into the risen and justified Christ (pp. 71–85). Imputation remains a valid category for systematics (pp. 70, 87).

After a judicious assessment of what is good and bad in the Sanders-Dunn-Wright trend (chap. 5: “. . . Beyond the New Perspective”), the longest chapter of all (chap. 6) demonstrates to opponents of the new look how Galatians 2–3 and the whole of Romans enmesh Paul’s gospel precisely in the Jew/Gentile question of his day. Chapter 7 asks how to reconcile justification by faith with a judgment according to deeds. Bird acknowledges a future horizon of justification (Rom 2:16; 3:30; 5:19; 10:9–10; Gal 5:5) but adopts the traditional reformed line that its sole ground will be Christ’s redemptive work to the exclusion of fruit of the Spirit, good deeds being evidential of faith-union with Christ, which alone saves. To the recap is appended an Excursus (pp. 183–93) eloquently exhorting reformed conservatives to embrace and profit from N. T. Wright despite some questionable stances on Wright’s part (note esp. Bird’s criticisms of Wright on p. 74 n. 69, p. 84 n. 114, p. 103, and p. 146 n. 109).

From the central tenet that “union with Christ will always mean union with others who are also in Christ” (p. 136) derive many correct statements of the relationship between the soteriological and the ecclesiological aspects of justification. Post-Sanders scholarship all too often mistakes the social “context” for the theological “content” of the doctrine or reduces its “purpose” to confirming Gentiles in the covenant (p. 32), yet rightly fastens on the Jew/Gentile problem as the “matrix for the *development* of” Paul’s outlook (p. 107). Undoubtedly regard for Jew-Gentile unity “constitutes the socio-rhetorical glue that binds Paul’s epistles to their historical context” (p. 153). Who, therefore, would dispute that the sinner’s justification is “intimately intertwined” with membership of the covenant people (p. 141; cf. pp. 113, 140)?

Yet if “the vertical, forensic, and soteriological” is “foremost and primary” (p. 152 n. 130), as it surely is, can we ever coherently elevate the horizontal dimension to Paul’s

“controlling” concern, as Bird occasionally does (pp. 109, 119)? Does Bird forget the true priority when he once equates being justified with entrance into the covenant community (i.e. on p. 55—a view for which he rightly takes the “new perspective” to task, pp. 75, 151) or when he makes justification, not only both soteric and social, but indeed “equally” so (p. 152)? Given that forensic justification and ethnic inclusivity are inseparably concomitant (as are justification and sanctification, p. 111), do we not confound things distinct if we say the former “includes” the latter (p. 139) or that covenant membership “is intrinsically bound up with the justifying verdict itself” and is “an event embedded within justification and not simply its sequel” (p. 152)? Are not these formulations too indebted to the “new perspective”?

Most problematic is the chapter on imputation. That union with Christ is the basis for believers’ sharing his righteousness was recognized by Luther (e.g. on Gal 2:20 [Lectures, 1535], WA 40.1, 282–88), Calvin (e.g. *Inst* 3.11.1–2, 10), and the cream of their theological heirs, not least H. Ridderbos (*Paul*, pp. 166–69, 174–78). Who exactly, then, allegedly construes imputation as “an isolated gift without relating it to Paul’s Christ-centered theology” (p. 65), a gift “somehow abstracted from Christ and projected onto” believers (p. 85)? Certainly not Piper; his phraseology of “connectedness” to Christ is substantively indistinguishable from Bird’s “incorporated righteousness,” in spite of the false wedge Bird seeks to drive between the terms (p. 79). In addition, how does “incorporation” improve on “imputation,” which is, after all—Bird’s protests notwithstanding (pp. 2–3, 70, 85)—good Pauline usage, as Bird himself knows in a better moment (p. 74)? At least Bird’s corporate stress lends cogency to his rebuttals of the shrill “new perspective” charge that imputation entails an individualizing of soteriology (pp. 118–19, 148). Might Bird’s reticence about imputation have in view a like straw man?

Space fails for entering into the wealth of sharp exegetical observations about such cruxes as Rom 2:13 (pp. 158–78), Rom 10:3 (p. 100, but cf. p. 150), Gal 2:11–14 (pp. 125–36), and many more. Michael Bird’s *Saving Righteousness* offers a retrospect on advances and blunders of the “new perspective,” digested by a mind that also values and conserves the essential gains of the Reformation. For this service he deserves our gratitude.

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New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ. By Thomas R. Schreiner. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008, 990 pp., \$44.99.

A flurry of large, helpful NT theologies has appeared in just the last few years (e.g. Matera, Strecker, Schnelle), including several by evangelicals (Marshall, Thielman, Helyer). Tom Schreiner has now joined the project, with a distinctive arrangement of material that is part biblical and part thematic. Eschewing the approach of Guthrie in 1980 who began with all of the standard categories of systematic theology and then looked at each NT author’s or book’s contribution, as well as the more recent prevailing approach that seeks to hear the distinctive voice of each separate book, Schreiner creates categories that resemble key systematic topics and follow conventional sequence but also that, he believes, emerge more directly from pervasive themes that unify the NT. Then he looks at one or more books’ dominant and distinctive contribution to those topics, author by author or corpus by corpus. Schreiner is convinced that this approach is needed in order to counter the reigning liberal practice of pitting one part of the Bible against another and to demonstrate the overarching unity of the various documents.

The first sentence of the introduction discloses the book's thesis. The unity of the NT involves seeing its "God-focused, Christ-centered, and Spirit-saturated" nature, "but the work of the Father, Son, and Spirit must be understood along a salvation-historical timeline; that is, God's promises are already fulfilled but not yet consummated in Christ Jesus" (p. 23). Schreiner then sketches the main ways in which this is prepared for by OT background and then appears in the Synoptic Gospels, the Johannine literature, Acts, Paul, Hebrews and James, 1–2 Peter and Jude, and Revelation. As the book unfolds, depending on the importance and detail of a given topic in a given part of the NT, he may treat each Gospel separately, put Matthew and Mark or Luke-Acts together, and subdivide the Johannine literature and the other non-Pauline epistles further.

Overall, the volume falls into four main parts. First comes "The Fulfillment of God's Saving Promises: The Already-Not Yet," subdivided into chapters on the kingdom of God in the Synoptics, eternal life and eschatology in John, and inaugurated eschatology outside the Gospels. Part 2 is the longest, on "The God of the Promise: The Saving Work of the Father, Son, and Spirit," with ten chapters, the first and last of which treat, respectively, God the Father and the Spirit in the entire NT. In between, eight chapters look at various aspects of the person and work of Christ categorized either according to christological titles, a particular corpus, or a main constituent element of Christology. The final two parts ("Experiencing the Promise: Believing and Obeying" and "The People of the Promise and the Future of the Promise") again contain only three chapters each and are divided exclusively topically.

Schreiner explains that he wrote the first three drafts of the book (!) without explicit reference to secondary literature, though obviously he draws on a distinguished publishing career in which he has become intimately familiar with much of that literature. Only afterwards did he go back and insert documentation and interaction with scholars, mostly in the footnotes. The text clearly discloses the fruit of this method. The wording is clear, discussions succinct, and biblical references compendious. On countless occasions one becomes aware of exegetical alternatives that Schreiner could have discussed only if he wanted to double the length of an already massive tome. While one usually gets at least some sense of why he has chosen the positions he has, even then there are occasions when one finds mere assertion rather than argumentation.

On main issue after main issue and on the vast majority of the more minor topics, I find myself in full agreement with Schreiner's exegesis and synthesis. His approach is strongly affirming of the accuracy of the text of Scripture, moderately Calvinist, mildly complementarian, non- (but not anti-) charismatic, non-dispensational (while holding out a future for *ethnic* Israel), and posttribulationist. As the author of a major Pauline theology and a commentary on 1–2 Peter and Jude, he often writes on those corpora in a bit more depth and with greater command of the topics and the literature. His appreciation of the major themes of James, conversely, may be the weakest part of the work. By deriving categories from what the Bible itself emphasizes, he produces thorough treatments of the use of the Law as fulfilled in Christ in the NT age, of social ethics—including money matters, marriage and divorce (and children), gender roles, government, and slavery—and of the typological use of the OT in the NT, particularly in Matthew, areas often overlooked or at least given short shrift in such studies.

On recent theological debates, Schreiner regularly takes a judicial, mediating position. The new perspective on Paul is largely right in its reconstruction of first-century Judaism (as noticeably different from medieval Catholicism) but overly restrictive in limiting the "works of the Law" to badges of national righteousness or explicit legalism. Jesus may or may not have implied "end of exile" as the unifying theme of his mission and message, but he certainly announced victory over sin and Satan rather than Roman occupation in ways that did not enchant a majority of his countrymen.

Occasionally, even the very thorough, up-to-date reader can learn new possibilities from Schreiner's exegesis. With Pennington, "kingdom of heaven" (vs. "of God") in

Matthew may stress the kingdom's heavenly origin and its contrast with earthly ways. With Gathercole, pre-existence can be found not just in John but in the Synoptics—from the transfiguration, being linked with angels, the Johannine thunderbolt, his divine “sentness” (including sayings about why he has “come”), his recognition by demons, and his heavenly Son of Man sayings. Schreiner is also fully abreast of recent works by Hurtado and Bauckham that otherwise seem not to be influencing NT theology as much as they should on emerging binitarianism and then Trinitarianism without any compromise within Jewish monotheism. The missional nature of much of the NT is also appropriately stressed, in keeping with several recent important studies. Schreiner additionally recognizes the sociological rather than the theological problems afflicting the Corinthians' celebration of the Lord's Supper.

Occasionally one senses a significant lacuna. For example, nothing from the highly influential liberal school of “permanent eschatology” represented by Crossan, Borg, and Funk appears anywhere, nor do these prominent authors make Schreiner's detailed bibliography or index even once. Yet German liberals of a generation ago, frequently refuted already, still appear as foils to the truth. The form of single predestination represented so ably by Cranfield's Romans commentary is altogether missing, even in what Schreiner “refutes.” That salt in the beatitudes provides a distinctive “tang and taste” (p. 685) rather than acting as a preservative ignores both the historical reality of salt's main function and the fact that the quantities of salt needed to preserve meat effectively for even short periods of time mitigated against it being a flavor enhancer. The evidence for tongues outside of Acts 2 as a quite different form of non-linguistic verbal utterance is barely noted. Much more minor is the accidental appeal to the expression “*knowledge* of Christ Jesus” as a purported illustration of an objective genitive with the noun “faith” (p. 575)!

Despite a growing body of theological literature outside the German-Anglo-American trajectory, distinctive Majority-World perspectives have not affected the composition of this book, nor has African-American or feminist or other minority Western perspectives. How long white American male evangelicals can continue to do this and still hope to be taken seriously by anyone not sharing all four of those descriptors remains an interesting question. Schreiner does, however, have several very sensitive discussions of why the NT is not anti-Semitic in some of the places that it has been perceived to be precisely that.

Schreiner's work arose out of teaching this material at college and seminary level for years, so that its widest appeal will no doubt be as a textbook. Indeed, when I heard this work's publication was imminent I looked forward to assigning it to my NT theology classes, waiting as I had been for a true update of Ladd that worked with the Johannine and Pauline corpora together, rather than tediously separating off every epistle individually and not adequately synthesizing the main themes that unite those corpora, as most recent NT theologies do. Unfortunately, Schreiner's arrangement prevents the reader from readily discerning the major distinctives of, say, Mark, James, or 1 Peter; so I will continue to have to assign material from several different textbooks to accomplish what I believe to be the equally important objectives of the discipline—recognizing *both* the dominant *and* the distinctive contributions of each biblical author or corpus. Still, the book will function as an outstanding reference work, while the reader who perseveres in reading it cover-to-cover will find it encyclopedic in its coverage and yet at times even devotionally inspiring due to its consistent immersion in the very words of Scripture.

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Ancient Gnosticism: Traditions and Literature. By Birger A. Pearson. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007, xvi + 362 pp., \$25.00 paper.

Written in clear prose without footnotes and a minimum of translational or technical terms, Birger A. Pearson's *Ancient Gnosticism: Traditions and Literature* is clearly geared to the reader who is wading into the murky waters of ancient Gnosticism for the first time. As such it holds considerable promise both as a primer and as a classroom text. However, with this promise, there are also some pitfalls. As I summarize Pearson's volume, giving more in-depth attention to certain chapters in order to substantiate my overall point, I hope to convey my own sense of its possible uses and limitations.

Pearson begins in chapter 1 by asking "What is Gnosticism?" This has been a highly controverted question over the years. Some, following the lead of Michael Williams's *Rethinking Gnosticism* (Princeton University Press, 1996), have sought to do away with the category of "Gnosticism" altogether: the term, so it is argued, is an unwieldy and unhelpful construct foisted upon historiographers by those who were least sympathetic to the so-called Gnostic cause. Others are content to use the term, properly defined, but cannot come to an agreement as to the movement's historical origin. Still others, historians and theologians alike, grant the usefulness of the term "Gnosticism" but disagree as to its defining features.

So, when Pearson attempts to take up a question as deceptively simple as "What is Gnosticism?" the informed reader is not quite sure whether to grimace or to let out a sigh of relief on discovering that the author simply cuts through such turbulent eddies. For Pearson, these ancient movements under review can be (1) usefully subsumed under the heading of "Gnosticism" (p. 8); (2) characterized by a variety of features, including anthropological and cosmological dualism (pp. 12–15); and (3) historically tied to a heavily Platonized Judaism (pp. 15–19). While, personally, I am sympathetic with the broad outlines of this appraisal, a number of my colleagues would take exception. This is not to say that anyone *could* write a book on Gnosticism that would garner universal approval on such points. Yet perhaps more needs to be said regarding the nature and contours of the debate. As the text stands, the neophyte at *Gnostica* would have little idea that there is even a debate at all.

Following a fair-minded review of heresiological reports as preserved by the major heresiologists (Irenaeus, Hippolytus, and Epiphanius) in chapter 2, the author takes up in chapter 3 Sethian Gnosticism, equivalent in the author's mind to "Classic Gnosticism." Here the reader is treated to—among other things—a helpful outline of a Gnostic cosmogony, a tantalizingly brief mention of the *Gospel of Judas* (which was probably "discovered" no sooner than the author was sending his manuscript to the publishers!), and an interesting discussion of the *Apocryphon of John*. While Pearson recognizes the *Apocryphon of John* as betraying pre-Christian and Christian stages of redaction, its significance in providing important evidence for Gnosticism's pre-Christian origins goes unmentioned. This omission is quite in keeping with the book's "nothing but the facts and the primary texts" approach, but here again is an example where, without the compass of the scholarly discussion, there is no map on which to locate the various data. There is, in other words, too little indication as to why certain texts are (or are not) deemed significant.

The subsequent chapter (chap. 4) is my favorite. Here Pearson digresses from consideration of texts and movements in order to reflect on how the Gnostics interpreted scriptural tradition. Here it is the author's contention that "the basic Gnostic myth cannot be understood or accounted for at all without taking into account its background in biblical and Jewish writings" (p. 102). What follows are an examination of some nine motifs and figures from Genesis (e.g. the serpent, Sophia, Cain, Seth) that are further developed in Gnostic thought. The chapter is helpful for several reasons. First, here,

for the first time in the book, we are led to think of Gnosticism as a hermeneutical phenomenon. Sadly, while most Gnostic historians (somehow thinking, I suppose, that real historians are only after the *Sitz im Leben*) are content to leave such angles to the likes of literary critics like Harold Bloom, Pearson appears to see this element as distinctively Gnostic. Whether or not one agrees with this point (I, for one, agree), Gnostic reinterpretations of Scripture are one of the most intriguing features of the movement. Second, simply by putting together this list of reconceived scriptural narratives, Pearson sheds light on a number of questions the Gnostic newcomer is bound to ask: "What's all this about Seth and Cain?" or "Wasn't the snake supposed to be the bad guy in the Bible?"

As for the remaining chapters (5–12), space forbids a full review and critique. In chapter 5, which is well written, we have what is perhaps the most lucid and cogent descriptions of Basilides in print. Chapter 6 deals with Valentianism (unfortunately with inordinate dependence on Thomassen's 2006 monograph). Chapters 7 and 8 provide a competent and once again clear account of, respectively, "Three Principle Systems" and those Nag Hammadi texts that are (as yet) without a socio-historic home. Chapter 9 takes up Thomas Christianity (unfortunately with inordinate dependence on DeConick's 2005 monograph). (It is nothing short of staggering that given the vast amount of literature dedicated to *Thomas* over the past half century, only DeConick's book, which has received little palpable reception over the few short years it has been on the shelf, should be the only "Suggestions for Further Reading" entry under "Thomas Christianity.") Chapter 10 provides a helpful introduction to Hermes Trismegistus and Hermetic Gnosis. Chapters 11 and 12 take up Mani and the Manichaeans, respectively—areas that I am not competent to assess. The book closes with an epilogue on several Gnostic movements active today in North America.

It is striking that even though scholarship has now had some three score years in which to study the Nag Hammadi codices, a treasure trove of Gnostic literature, the broad movement recognizable as ancient Gnosticism remains a source of puzzlement. If this is how it is for experts, how much more impenetrable is the world of Basilides and Valentinus to the lay audience? It is to this world that that *Ancient Gnosticism*, much to its credit, provides a user-friendly entrée. As a reference work or as a basic introduction (upper undergraduate or graduate level), this book will certainly come in handy. At the same time, although we do need books like this, we also need to remember that books of this nature, largely innocent of scholarly engagement, can be misleading in their own way. While this is perhaps as close as one will get to a minimally interpretive introduction to the important figures and primary texts of Gnosticism, this is also Gnosticism as Pearson sees it. Whether or not one agrees with his assessment, sometimes, even in an introduction, it is more important to relay the right questions than to provide the right answers.

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Truth with Love: The Apologetics of Francis Schaeffer. By Bryan A. Follis. Wheaton: Crossway, 2006, 206 pp., \$15.99 paper.

Francis Schaeffer is hard to classify. He is that rare sort of leader that is equal parts scholar and practitioner, and his impact has therefore been felt both through his published work as well as through the outreach he began at L'Abri to those disaffected by the institutional church. Anyone attempting to faithfully reckon with such uniqueness has to engage in a balancing act, emphasizing both Schaeffer's concern for ideas and his

love-centered practice. Follis manages this admirably, weaving together lucid analysis of Schaeffer's arguments as well as passionate descriptions of his ministry at L'Abri. As he succinctly notes, "for Schaeffer *how* apologetics was conducted was as important as *what* was being said" (p. 89), and he succeeds in presenting both aspects of Schaeffer's ministry.

Follis's knowledge of Schaeffer's corpus is impressive. He draws not only upon his published works, but also on recorded lectures, unpublished papers, and personal interviews with those who worked with Schaeffer at L'Abri. The result of this thorough scholarship is that while those unacquainted with Schaeffer will be given an excellent introduction, the seasoned reader will also find much that is new. Particularly useful for the latter is Follis's careful attention to detail. He several times notes significant ways unpublished material casts light on published work and even engages in a text-critical comparison of the first and second editions of the *God Who Is There*. Given the usefulness of this work as a reference, the editorial choice not to include indices is regrettable.

Follis engages in both a constructive and a polemical task. On the one hand, he develops a picture of *Schaeffer's apologetic* and its application at L'Abri; on the other hand, he offers an *apologetic for Schaeffer* to his critics. The first task involves both a theoretical discussion of the historical antecedents (chap. 1) and logical form (chap. 2) of Schaeffer's apologetic, as well as stories describing his application of this method in his work at L'Abri (also chap. 2). The second task involves defending Schaeffer against those who maintain either that he was too influenced by rationalism (chap. 3), or that he was not rational enough and embraced a form of presuppositionalism (ch. 4).

While the chapters indicate relative emphases, it is difficult in practice to discuss such loci in isolation from one another. For instance, Follis often delimits aspects of Schaeffer's method in the context of engaging his critics or through returning to an analysis of his historical influences. Thus, rather than analyzing the book chapter by chapter, I will follow a distinction made by Follis, critically probing first Follis's account of Schaeffer's "method" before turning to an appreciation of his "message" (p. 59).

Follis is interested in situating Schaeffer's work in terms of the two central Reformed schools of apologetic methodology that influenced him during his time at Westminster Theological Seminary: the "Princeton" school exemplified by B. B. Warfield (reflected in the work of J. Gresham Machen), and the "Dutch" school exemplified by Abraham Kuyper (reflected in the work of Cornelius Van Til) (pp. 29–30). Follis's central thesis regarding Schaeffer's methodology hinges on his description of these schools. He argues that Schaeffer's apologetic combines "elements of both traditions" (p. 108) in a synthesis. While quite critical of attempts to pigeonhole Schaeffer (p. 128), he finally concludes that if Schaeffer's method must be defined, it has affinities with what he terms the "verificationist" synthesis of the two schools (proposed by E. J. Carnell, an apologetics professor at Fuller Seminary contemporary with Schaeffer). For Follis, this synthesis, rather than either Van Til's Dutch presuppositionalism or the contemporary evidentialist heirs of the Princeton tradition, best characterizes Schaeffer's approach.

In outlining the two schools of Reformed apologetics in terms of their impact on Schaeffer, Follis contrasts them based on their epistemology and method. Epistemologically, the Princeton tradition maintains that reason can provide some stable knowledge of humans and the world despite the noetic effects of the fall. On the basis of such common knowledge, the believer can engage with the unbeliever in "rational arguments or apologetics" (p. 27). By way of contrast, the Dutch tradition maintains that the noetic effects of the fall are total; thus, the unbeliever cannot grasp *any* aspect of the world truly. On this basis, it concludes that "no one [can] achieve a knowledge of God through rational argument" (p. 29). For Follis, a difference in method flows from this difference in epistemology. On the one hand, the Princeton approach maintains that one can appeal to "neutral facts" (p. 109) that believers and unbelievers have in common,

issuing forth in “evidentialist apologetics” (p. 108). The Dutch approach, on the other hand, recognizes a “unity in knowledge” (p. 108) that requires one to challenge the foundational beliefs of an unbeliever, issuing forth in “the presuppositionalism of Van Til” (p. 108).

Follis explains Schaeffer’s synthesis on the basis of these distinctions. For Follis, Schaeffer’s apologetic is an appropriation of the Dutch emphasis on presuppositions coupled with the Princeton emphasis that reason can provide a common ground that allows believers to have discussions with non-believers. At this point in his analysis, Van Til takes center stage as a foil against which Follis delineates Schaeffer’s synthetic approach. He notes that Van Til and Schaeffer are in fundamental agreement in their critique of evidential apologetics and in the emphasis they place on presuppositions (p. 109). Yet, lest one be tempted to call Schaeffer a presuppositionalist, Follis notes that a “crucial difference” exists between them (p. 109). Van Til stands in fundamental continuity with Kuyper and the Dutch school in believing that there is no common ground upon which believer and unbeliever can have a conversation. In his approach, notes Follis, “you have to require the non-Christian to presuppose God before you can have a meaningful discussion with him” (p. 109). Schaeffer, on the other hand, stands in fundamental continuity with Warfield and Princeton in believing that the common ground provided by reason allows one to have meaningful discussions with unbelievers before they change their presuppositions. So Follis notes, “in contrast to Van Til, Schaeffer was using presuppositions as an argument for the existence of God” (p. 111).

After comparing the original and revised editions of *The God Who is There*, Follis makes a strong case that Schaeffer’s fear that Van Til left no room for believers and unbelievers to communicate together caused him to avoid identifying with presuppositionalism. Developing further this distinction, he argues that rather than treating presuppositions as “axioms” that cannot be discussed (p. 111), Schaeffer understands them as “hypotheses” that are open to validation (p. 115). By hypothesis, Follis means that Schaeffer treats the truth of revelation in his discussion with unbelievers as one explanation among many that cannot “rise above rational probability” nor enjoy “demonstrable certainty” (p. 117).

We are now in a position to summarize Follis’s account of Schaeffer’s apologetic approach: Schaeffer enters into dialogue with unbelievers, uncovering the basic hypotheses that they use to explain reality while at the same time allowing them to ask questions and probe Christianity. He then shows unbelievers that their hypotheses cannot adequately account for the world, particularly for the things they most value (thus his emphasis on presuppositions; i.e. the Dutch approach). After laying this groundwork, Schaeffer demonstrates that the hypothesis of Christian revelation provides a more probable explanation of the world (thus his appeal to reason; i.e. the Princeton approach).

Much is excellent in this account, yet there are two significant problems: (1) Follis’s historical description of Van Til’s relation to Kuyper and Warfield is mistaken; and (2) his inference from this description—that Van Til and Schaeffer have distinct understandings of what constitutes a presupposition, which allows the latter but not the former to reason with unbelievers—is incorrect. A repair of Follis’s historical account illustrates that Schaeffer and Van Til cannot be distinguished in this manner, and suggests another interpretation of their relationship.

Follis presents Van Til as agreeing with Kuyper (against Warfield) that believers cannot have a rational discussion with unbelievers until the latter change their presuppositions. Interestingly, while Van Til portrayed Kuyper as holding this position, he carefully distinguished himself from it: “It is impossible to hold with Kuyper that the Christian and the non-Christian principles are destructive of one another and to hold with Warfield that they differ only in degree. . . . For myself I have chosen the position

of Kuyper. But I am unable to follow him when from the fact of the mutually destructive character of the two principles he concludes to the uselessness of reasoning with the natural man" (Greg Bahnsen, *Van Til's Apologetic: Readings and Analysis* [Phillipsburg: P & R, 1998], 604; emphasis in original). Van Til agrees with Kuyper that belief in God is epistemologically decisive (its effect on human knowing is not a matter of degree, but influences how each fact is perceived). Yet, crucially, he refuses to infer from this that it is impossible to reason with unbelievers.

Why does Van Til part ways with Kuyper on this point? The reason is that while he emphasizes that there is an absolute *epistemological* difference between believers and unbelievers, he just as emphatically maintains that both believers and unbelievers are created by God, placed in his world, and restrained by his common grace, so that *metaphysically* they have everything in common: "Neither party [Van Til here refers to himself and a critic he is addressing] denies the fact of the existence of common ground. The question pertains to the *nature* of the common ground. The present writer has repeatedly asserted that metaphysically believers and unbelievers have *all reality in common*. The unbeliever and believer are, alike, image-bearers of God. Together they operate in the God-created and Christ-redeemed world. . . . No man can escape the call of God which confronts him in his own constitution as well as in every fact of the world that surrounds him" (ibid., 420; emphasis original). Thus, for Van Til, unbelievers are in an awkward existential situation. They recognize the truth of God's revelation; indeed, they cannot escape it (it is implanted within them as image bearers and testified to by every facet of creation). Yet at the same time they struggle to suppress it. On the one hand, living in God's world and created in God's image, natural people will often implicitly acknowledge certain truths of God's revelation. Indeed, they must do this to even function in God's world at all (which is why unbelievers appreciate the virtue of friendship, love their spouses, etc.). Yet, on the other hand and at the same time, they will not acknowledge the source of such truth, that it bears testimony to God. Further, they will pick and choose which aspects of the truth to which they will submit, autonomously accepting certain aspects which suit their interests while denying others that would require them to submit to their Creator.

This creates a tension: Unbelievers accept particular truths—what Van Til called "borrowed capital"—yet deny the source of such truths (God's revelation). For Van Til, it is the purpose of the apologist to point out this tension, reasoning with unbelievers by showing them that they cannot account for such "borrowed capital" coherently unless they acknowledge the truth of God's revelation. In sum, Van Til affirms—citing his agreement with Warfield—that all humans have a certain knowledge of God (termed above *metaphysical* commonality), while affirming with Kuyper that humans suppress this knowledge, though never perfectly or completely (thereby creating an *epistemological* antithesis). This tension in unbelievers provides the basis for a rational apologetic conversation.

Van Til's apologetic, then, is more nuanced than is sometimes realized and provides an account of commonality that allows believers to have conversations with unbelievers who have different presuppositions. Thus it seems preferable to avoid associating Van Til in an unqualified way with Kuyper. Furthermore, contrasting Schaffer and Van Til, as if only the former allowed rational conversation with unbelievers, is misguided. A more precise contrast might note that while both Van Til and Schaeffer give an account of how rational discussion is possible, their accounts of the ground of this possibility differ. Van Til claims that a precondition for such conversation is the truth that God's revelation is known by all with *certainty*, whereas Schaeffer (at least on Follis's account) believes that its precondition is that one must treat revelation as a hypothetical explanation that can only be confirmed or denied with relative *probability*.

If believers may reason with unbelievers on either account, is it really necessary to introduce the idea that revelation is a hypothesis that can only accrue probable confirmation? There are problems with this that Follis does not acknowledge. For instance, it is only because God's revelation is certain—because he has revealed himself to humans in a way that is “plain to them” and that has been “clearly perceived” by them, so that they are “without excuse” (Rom 1:19–20)—that the apologist can be sure that unbelievers necessarily sense a discontinuity between what they know to be true and their own suppression of this truth. That is, the certainty of God's revelation both in humanity and in every facet of creation is that which grounds the tension that exists within unbelievers. By way of contrast, probabilism (to the extent one acknowledges it as a real possibility), far from being a precondition for an honest discussion with unbelievers, actually *undermines* the possibility of such discussion precisely because it holds out the possibility that unbelievers can in fact live more or less consistently with their own understanding of the world.

Beyond this, Schaeffer's account itself requires Van Til's emphasis on the certainty of divine revelation. As Follis notes, a central tenet underlying Schaeffer's apologetics is that “no one can live logically according to his own non-Christian presuppositions,” precisely because “he is faced with the real world and himself” (pp. 40, 109). According to Follis, Schaeffer began by asserting that *most* people could not live consistently with their presuppositions, but his ministry led him to this more emphatic *no one*. Yet this emphatic assertion, given it is surely meant earnestly and not hyperbolically, requires more than a probabilistic account of validity. Thus, while Follis may be right that Schaeffer was not an inconsistent presuppositionalist (pp. 114, 115), he also certainly could not have been a consistent verificationist. Such quotes from Schaeffer illustrate that in *practice* if not in *theory*, he was not, after all, very far from Van Til.

This does not get the Van Tilian off the hook. It is telling that, on Follis's account, Schaeffer's theoretical deviation from Van Til was motivated largely by his perception of a deficit in the *practice* of Van Tilians: They used their method to refute and distance themselves from unbelievers instead of sharing their table with them in hospitality. There is no doubt that this aspect of Schaeffer's critique still rings true. Despite our disagreements, Van Tilians such as me cannot allow discussions of methodology to distract from the crucial importance of Schaeffer's life as both a prophetic rebuke and a challenging example to us. Careful method is important, but if we do not humble ourselves and learn from his practice, our talk about method becomes nothing but “a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.” Particularly, we need to recall again Schaeffer's willingness to embrace those disaffected by the institutional church and his practice of radical hospitality toward the physically and spiritually needy. Consider the following excerpt from Follis: “Speaking of Christian young people from very comfortable families who lacked a sense of spiritual reality, Schaeffer said that if they “saw their parents opening . . . their homes at expense to their furniture and rugs, if they were told to pray not merely for the lost out there somewhere, but for specific people whom they knew sitting at the table in their own home, the unreality could be gone” (p. 160). This challenge to practice hospitality and costly love toward those outside the church still rings with prophetic relevance. In a climate where evangelical orthodoxy has been grouped by popular cultured despisers such as Richard Dawkins and Thomas Friedman together with violent fundamentalism, Schaeffer's emphasis on the importance of “love as the final apologetic” (p. 58) becomes not merely a biblical imperative but a practical necessity. Follis's work thus serves as a timely propedeutic, introducing a new generation to Schaeffer's balanced yet radical embrace of orthodoxy and orthopraxy.

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The Future of Justification: A Response to N. T. Wright. By John Piper. Wheaton: Crossway, 2007, 240 pp., \$17.99 paper.

Perhaps the most pressing contemporary debate over justification is whether one can *justify* reading yet another book on the New Perspective on Paul. At the outset, it should be noted that this book by John Piper is not oriented toward the academic scholar. Piper writes as a preacher worried that too many evangelical congregants and pastors have become, to their detriment, either puzzled or persuaded by N. T. Wright's writings. While he lauds Wright as "a remarkable blend of weighty academic scholarship, ecclesiastical leadership, ecumenical involvement, prophetic social engagement, popular Christian advocacy, musical talent, and family commitment," in his judgment, "what he has written will lead to a kind of preaching that will not announce clearly what makes the lordship of Christ good news for guilty sinners or show those who are overwhelmed with sin how they may stand righteous in the presence of God" (p. 15). Indeed, "as it stands now, it [Wright's view of justification] will bring great confusion to the church at a point where she desperately needs clarity" (p. 24). Thus, Piper hopes readers will come away less inclined toward "Wright's retelling of the story of justification" (p. 16) and, conversely, more inclined toward the traditional Reformed view: "The future of justification will be better served . . . with older guides rather than the new ones" (p. 25).

Piper first cautions against the method of reading the NT in light of its historical context. Without a rebuttal of Wright's method, which is unique to him (see his *New Testament and the People of God* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992]), Piper warns that "[s]weeping statements about worldviews in first-century Judaism are precarious" (p. 36). He lists three potential errors: interpreters could (1) misunderstand the sources; (2) assume a NT writer has those sources in mind when he does not; and (3) misapply the meaning of first century ideas.

Whether Piper merely wants to call attention to the fact that mistakes can be made or intends the stronger claim that the NT should not be read in light of first-century data is unclear. He leaves the impression that the latter is the case, an impression only reinforced by his general neglect of Wright's appeal to canonical-historical arguments. This notion is further confirmed by Piper's sentiment that more illuminating than the first century is the Reformation reading: "My own assessment of the need of the church at this moment in history is different from Wright's: I think we need a new generation of preachers who are not only open to new light that God may shed upon his word, but are also suspicious of their own love of novelty and are eager to test all their interpretations of the Bible by the wisdom of the centuries. . . . [T]here is in our time a profound ignorance of the wisdom of the centuries and a facile readiness to be 'fresh' [a clear reference to Wright's recent work on Paul, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005)]" (pp. 37–38). This is one of Piper's primary concerns, that Wright is more confident in new readings than the classic Reformation interpretation. Note Piper's earlier comment: "My temptation is to defend a view because it has been believed for centuries. His temptation is to defend a view because it fits well into his new way of seeing the world" (p. 17).

Having characterized his opponent as "explicitly energized by finding 'new' and 'fresh' interpretations of Paul" (p. 37), Piper moves to demonstrate that "Wright's approach has not been as illuminating as it has been misleading, or perhaps, confusing" (p. 38; cf. p. 24). Note the word "illuminating." Piper recognizes that those who find Wright convincing do so because they take his reading of Scripture to have more explanatory power than the traditional Reformed view. Piper hopes to show that while Wright's reading may be captivating, it actually makes reading the text more difficult and thus the Reformed interpretation should be preferred.

The first attempt at response, chapter 2, serves more to clear the air of common evangelical misreadings and mischaracterizations of Wright's views (e.g. the Steve Chalke book endorsement). In chapter 3, Piper considers Wright's claim that it is nonsensical to think of the judge (God) "imputing" his righteousness to the defendant. Once again, Piper chooses to point out Wright's tendency toward innovation: "If Wright is correct here, then the entire history of the discussion of justification for the last fifteen hundred years—Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox—has been misguided. . . . This is a remarkable claim to make about church history. But Wright is ready to play the man" (p. 60).

Piper contends Wright's controversial understanding of God's righteousness as covenant faithfulness "stays at the level of what divine righteousness does rather than what it is" (p. 62; cf. p. 73). Highlighting the verbs, he remarks that Wright "defines God's righteousness by saying that it *keeps* covenant, *judges* impartially, *deals* properly with sin, *advocates* for the helpless" (p. 62, italics original). The argument of his earlier book, *The Justification of God* (Baker, 1993) is enlisted, and after brief discussion of key passages (Isa 48:9–11; 43:25; Ps 79:9; Ezek 36:20–23; 2 Tim 2:13), Piper concludes in familiar ways, that God's righteousness "consists most basically in God's unswerving *commitment to preserve* the honor of his name and *display* his glory" (p. 65, italics added; quoting *Justification of God*, p. 119). He briefly notes places in Romans that suggest that Paul shares this definition.

On this basis, he avers "when Wright sets up God's law-court scene in such a way that the righteousness of the Judge and the righteousness of the defendant cannot be the same, he has done something artificial." By defining "the righteousness of God merely in terms of the actions of the Judge, not in terms of his deeper attribute of righteousness," Piper concludes, "Wright has set things up in a way that makes it [imputation] look nonsensical" (p. 71).

That Piper thinks Wright lacks an adequate metaphysical view of God becomes clearer in chapter 4 when he claims Wright "does not seem to come to terms with the fact that the judge is omniscient" (p. 73). Without criticizing Wright's configuration of the Jewish law court, nor giving an interpretation of the first century understanding of it, Piper asserts "everyone in the first century would agree that in a courtroom where the Judge knows everything and is just, there can never be a case where there is a discrepancy between the truth of the charge and the truth of the verdict" (pp. 73–74). Piper seems to be assuming first-century Jews acknowledged something like the following syllogism: if God judges according to his knowledge, and if God knows all, then his verdict must match the reality (see p. 77). Indeed, Piper merely states: "An omniscient and just judge never 'finds in favor' of a guilty defendant. He always vindicates a claim that is true [read: the actual state of affairs]" (p. 76).

Piper also notes Paul's use of *logizomai*, which is defined as "reckons," "counts," or "imputes." This definition is defended, not by lexicographical evidence, but by the fact that in Romans Paul is dealing with "moral" righteousness, not simply a covenantal "status" (citing Rom 3:10–12), a point verified by "the entire history of the church" interpreting this passage as concerning either God's "imputation" or "impartation" of his righteousness (p. 77).

After a hiatus from the law court and righteousness issues (where he contends that if the gospel does not concern one's personal salvation or justification, as Wright maintains, then the gospel is not good news for sinners), Piper returns to his response, this time focusing on the eschatological dimension of justification. Piper asks: "What is the basis or ground of justification—in the present and at the end" (p. 103)? He answers that the "flow of the argument in Romans 2:6–16," which he takes to be the lynchpin in Wright's purported argument for future justification on the basis of works, means the seeming affirmation of justification by works (v. 13) cannot be used as a "defense for justification by works" (p. 110). Piper then surveys a few key Reformation documents

(e.g. the *Augsburg Confession* and the *Thirty-Nine Articles*) to redress Wright's contention that the Reformation doctrine of justification undermines the role of works in the Christian life.

Yet Piper is not entirely sure that Wright actually believes in a works-based doctrine of justification, calling his position "ambiguous" (p. 117) and admitting that there "are a few places where he speaks in a way that sounds like the more traditional Protestant view of works confirming the authenticity of faith and union with Christ" (p. 119). Piper also acknowledges places where Wright sounds like he holds the Reformation view of imputation. So in chapter 8 he advances the much milder claims that Wright needs to be clearer and more precise. Concerning imputation, Wright seems only to be missing "the middle element" in the Reformed view because "he does not believe that the New Testament teaches that Christ's perfect obedience is imputed to us" (p. 125). In effect, this chapter illustrates how Wright's corpus leaves unanswered questions for those working with the categories and interpretations of Reformed theology.

After setting forth Wright's understanding of the similarities between Second Temple Judaism, particularly the Qumran community, and Paul in chapter 9, Piper tackles Wright's utilization of 4QMMT in chapter 10. Piper begins by questioning Wright's reading of the document, simply stating: "A more natural reading would seem to be that the words 'in that you have done what is right' signify the meaning of the righteousness that will be reckoned to the obedient sectarian, namely, simple obedience to what the law requires" (p. 149). He then raises a spiritual possibility: ethnocentrism and legalism are guilty of the same spiritual self-righteousness. Thus, Piper's critique of Wright is that he ignores the fact that "you do not have to articulate full-blown Pelagianism to be guilty of self-righteousness in relating to God" (p. 151). Piper returns to the custom of examining Paul's description of his pre-conversion life as well as Jesus' characterization of the Pharisees in the Gospels, concluding that "it seems to be a historical fantasy to portray the pre-Christian Saul or his later opponents in Galatia as true lovers of God who had drunk from the fountain of divine grace and who therefore genuinely followed the Torah out of heartfelt gratitude to God" (p. 155).

Despite hesitating in chapter 8 over whether Wright is in fact at odds with the Reformed view of imputation, a more skeptical Piper returns in the final chapter to once again prove exegetically that imputation is soundly biblical and that Wright transgresses the traditional view. Whereas before Wright's definition of righteousness as "covenant faithfulness" was said to be "too narrow" (p. 68), here God's righteousness "does not mean covenant faithfulness" (p. 179).

Piper first rehearses the claims of chapter 3, and then asks what would happen if we preached Wright's view. For the answer, he quotes Wright seemingly saying that Paul esteems his missiological accomplishments over Christ's obedience and atoning death. "This is where preaching will go in the wake of Wright's influence," says Piper (p. 166), implying that we will cherish our works over Christ's.

To combat this, Piper recounts in condensed form some exegetical points from his book *Counted Righteous in Christ* (Crossway, 2002). He then expounds 2 Cor 5:21. The main point is that Wright mistakes this verse to be about Paul's ministry of reconciliation whereas it is actually about how reconciliation happens, for which imputation seems the only explanation. This chapter is ultimately a cumulative case for imputation as the only way to make sense of certain Pauline arguments.

Piper's pastoral concern for the church as it faces potentially spiritually harmful redefinitions of the gospel and justification is laudable. His hesitancy to attribute to Wright anything he does not think entirely accurate, his defenses of Wright against common misconceptions and caricatures, and his willingness to considerably revise his work after receiving an 11,000-word response from Wright (p. 10) are exemplary. Moreover, in my judgment Piper has successfully disproved Wright's more careless statements

(e.g. the gospel is not about how one is saved or does not have to do with justification). Piper has also nicely foregrounded the spiritual advantages of the Reformed perspective. Finally, Piper is at his best when he is making pastoral arguments such as the reduction of the gospel to the announcement "Jesus is Lord" is not particularly good news, ethnocentrism is as equally self-righteous as legalism, and the vagueness in Wright's writings makes for difficult preaching.

As a book intended to demonstrate that Wright's interpretations actually confuse the reading of Scripture whereas the Reformed positions are more satisfying, it struggles to succeed, often having the opposite effect. For starters, following Piper's argumentation is frequently frustrated by his tendencies to progress through the material in unobvious ways, postpone definitive discussion to later chapters (e.g. pp. 40, 80), assert his position without substantiation (e.g. pp. 40, n. 5, 73–77, 149), be redundant (e.g. the overlap between chapters 2–4 and 11), and begin arguments only to determine they are finally irrelevant or inconclusive (e.g. pp. 44, 54–55, 75). All of this makes it difficult to discern between the actual arguments and where Piper was just poking around.

While some may worry whether Piper gives a coherent and accurate account of Wright, I wonder whether there is a coherent Piper in this book. In chapter 8, he sounds as if he is questioning whether the problems he raised in earlier chapters are really problems, but ambiguities, areas Wright could easily clarify without much modification of his views. Piper becomes restrained, saying he only "thinks" Wright is saying X, he is "unsure" about Wright's position, or Wright is "unclear." He even ends with a "hopeful affirmation of common ground" (p. 131). But in the final pages the more skeptical Piper reappears to conclude that Wright is innovative, incorrect, an instigator of false preaching, and purveyor of a "double tragedy." I confess befuddlement over which sentiment is more representative.

Obviously, Piper's indecisiveness lies behind the seemingly hair-splitting declaration: "My conviction concerning N. T. Wright is not that he is under the curse of Galatians 1:8–9, but that his portrayal of the gospel—and of the doctrine of justification in particular—is so disfigured that it becomes difficult to recognize as biblically faithful" (p. 15). But, and this is important, by hesitating to place Wright firmly opposite the Reformed tradition, Piper effectively calls into question one of the almost omnipresent themes of this book, namely, that Wright stands more on the side of innovation than on the side of the "wisdom of the centuries."

Piper's exegetical argumentation often comes up short, at least when meant to be an alternative to Wright's. To begin with, Piper's initial case for imputation ends up invoking a logical argument about what follows from the fact that the Judge is omniscient: "God is omniscient, and so his findings in court always accord with reality" (p. 77). But it should be pointed out that imputation suffers on this logic as well, for imputed righteousness is an *alien* righteousness.

I admit confusion over the conclusions Piper drew from his distinction between his and Wright's definitions of God's righteousness. First, it was curious that Piper employed the argument of his *Justification of God* and yet did not as much as mention Wright's critical review of that work (N. T. Wright, "Review of John Piper, *The Justification of God*," *EQ* 60:1 [1988] 80–84). More importantly, despite his promise to the contrary, Piper still defines "what God's righteousness is" by recourse to "what divine righteousness does" (*commitment to preserve and display his glory is still economic rather than metaphysical description*). The difference, then, lies more simply between Wright's definition of righteousness as God's commitment to the covenant and Piper's definition of righteousness as God's commitment to his glory.

Why are these two definitions sharply distinguished by Piper? Could not a strong biblical case be made that God's commitment to his glory is economically manifest by his faithfulness to the covenant that he himself established? After all, God's very "name"

is bound to his covenant. By not attending to the relationship between God's glory/name and the covenant, Piper leaves the impression that the two are unrelated.

On this point, it is interesting how much of Piper's case requires defining certain terms apart from the covenant—sin (p. 67), righteousness (pp. 64, 68, 71), the charge (p. 77), and justification/imputation (p. 71). Such seems oddly at odds with the Reformed tradition Piper wishes to defend; Wright comes out more covenantal than Piper!

It seems deeper, more determinative matters of difference between Wright and Piper, then, concern the nature and scope of the covenant and how such is adjudicated, that is, the dynamics of the covenant courtroom. Wright understands the covenant to be the postlapsarian terms of divine-human relationship. According to Wright's reading of Scripture, the covenant was established to deal with sin and is the means by which God redeems the world. The law court, therefore, serves the covenant relationship, and so "righteousness," "sin," the "allegations," and "justification" have covenantal reference. For Wright, the covenant has a cosmic scope; for example, covenant renewal means new creation. Moreover, as to ultimate justification, the devil's claim against God's people is overturned through the covenantal courtroom: Satan, as the great accuser of Israel, charges Israel (and the world, because Israel represents the world), the defendant, with covenant infidelity (unrighteousness). YHWH, the covenant judge, is able to justify/vindicate Israel/humanity on the basis of the covenant fidelity of Christ who, as Messiah (and the Second Adam), is Israel's/humanity's representative. Piper does recognize some of this (pp. 44–45, 53–55), but he does not refute this paradigm, only finding (based on what I believe is a misapplication of Wright's position) that it leads to "terminological confusion" (p. 54). In fact, both Piper's interpretations and his criticisms largely ignore the import and implications of Wright's paradigm. On the one hand, I suspect that this has led to misapplications of Wright's definitions (e.g. pp. 40–41, 68) and is why Wright worries Piper has not fully understood him (see: <http://trevinwax.com/2008/04/24/trevin-wax-interview-with-nt-wright-on-surprised-by-hope/>). On the other, it is interesting to track all the places where Piper reverts back to abstracting the covenant from justification. For example, note his comment on the accusation against sinners: "[T]he charge that has brought us into court is: 'None is righteous, no, not one' (Rom. 3:10). Which means: 'No one does good, not even one' (Rom. 3:12). This is a statement about our moral condition" (p. 77). Piper here loses sight of the fact that on Wright's reading our moral status is determined and judged on the basis of the covenant. When Wright says righteousness language is about "covenantal status," he is *not* denying that it is the language of morality but only concluding (on the basis of an OT theology of the covenant) that morality is discerned and judged by covenantal status. So here, as throughout, Piper is not engaging Wright's actual views and is arguing a case that ignores the heart of the debate.

Without attending to the more fundamental disagreement about the nature of the covenant, Piper's exegetical arguments function more like indirect rather than direct challenges, just providing an alternative reading as if it on its own devastated Wright's configuration of the covenant-courtroom relationship (e.g. pp. 62–71, 167–74). But if Wright is correct about the covenant and how biblical language is related to it, then much of Piper's exegesis would not stand. Thus readers are given an alternative interpretation rather than a definitive case against Wright. And the alternative will not be as illuminating simply because whereas Piper tends to focus on texts in isolation, Wright connects and explains a larger portion of canonical and historical data.

Indeed, Piper's exegesis lacks canonical and historical depth when compared to Wright's and is thus less explanatory. Piper focuses on the face value of the text, with little consideration of how larger canonical themes/trajectories and the historical context bear on understanding key terms and topics. Readers thus face the persistent question of whether what seems most natural to Piper is just that, a reading more controlled by

a contemporary Reformed evangelical pastor's mind than the original Jewish mindset. Piper is right to say that of the utmost importance in interpretation is "understand[ing] what the authors originally intended to say—not what they can be made to say by later reinterpretation" (p. 34). But his rather surface level engagement with texts provokes the question of how his interpretations penetrate that original horizon.

It seems, then, that more than the nature and scope of the covenant, the deepest divergence between Wright and Piper is methodological. To begin with, it is unclear whether Piper has grasped how Wright's appeal to the historical context works. Can it really be characterized and so easily dismissed as "sweeping," especially without qualification of that charge (e.g. p. 40, n. 5)? At its best, it is controlled by OT thematic trajectories in their historical context which give rise to Jewish hope. These trajectories are then further understood in light of their being focused and developed by the expectations of first century Jews. This is the context in which the NT and Jesus must be understood and indeed can be understood, according to Wright.

Wright's method enables him to find large continuity amongst both the canon and Second Temple literature, be more sensitive to how certain passages were critical for the Jewish worldview, and understand how the NT authors were addressing and interacting with specific topics and themes. Piper's method, by contrast, is more expository, lacking this breadth, and thus the canonical connections he draws appear arbitrary. His exegesis is also historically underdetermined. When compared to Wright's, Piper's interpretations are likely to be perceived as shallow. Regarding Piper's caution against Wright's approach, it appears as if he is assuming some (narrow?) version of the Reformation principle of Scripture as self-interpreting. He should have made this clear. Instead, he issues a vague warning that will seem inadequate in light of the sophisticated methodological arguments found in the opening pages of Wright's *New Testament and the People of God*. And because Piper has not shown specifically that this approach falters, still more replaced it with an alternative, readers have no reason to prefer him to Wright.

In the final analysis, Piper helpfully calls attention to the spiritual and pastoral problems with certain statements made by Wright. His exegesis has raised questions that may prove problematic, but his argumentation is insufficiently substantiated and positioned against Wright to be conclusive. For one attracted to the comprehensiveness and explanatory force of Wright's *canonical* and historical reading of Scripture, Piper's more bare bones, *expository* exegesis will not be compelling. This is not to say Piper is wrong, only that this book does not convincingly demonstrate the inferiority of Wright's interpretations.

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Contextual Theology for Latin America: Liberation Themes in Evangelical Perspective.
By Sharon E. Heaney, Paternoster Theological Monographs. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2008, xx + 292 pp., \$39.00 paper.

Sharon Heaney is convinced the main reason for the many misconceptions about Latin American evangelical theology is that it is relatively unknown in the West. But after Heaney's work, in which she "sets out to systematise the thought of key Latin American evangelical theologians, making it accessible to an English-speaking audience" (p. 1), there is no longer any excuse to plead ignorance. She achieves this by presenting the thoughts of five of the most representative evangelical scholars from Latin America:

C. René Padilla from Ecuador, Samuel Escobar from Peru, Emilio Antonio Núñez from El Salvador, Orlando Costas from Puerto Rico, and J. Andrew Kirk from England, but who worked and lived in Latin America during the 1970s, the time period Heaney studies. Heaney uses two main criteria for her selection of these five people: they were founding members of the Latin American Theological Fraternity, and they were engaged directly with liberation themes. Her portrayal of evangelical theology from Latin America as “vibrant, biblical, coherent, wholeheartedly evangelical, and sensitively contextual” (p. 250) leaves the reader with a longing to learn more about the subject matter.

Heaney weaves history, cultural analysis, and theological prowess to present an impressive picture of what has happened south of the Rio Grande in the Christian community, both Roman Catholic and evangelical. In a creative way, Heaney compares the parallel developments of liberation theologies and evangelical theology, showing the common context but at the same time the important differences between the two. In my own research, I found that those whom Heaney calls “evangelical” are considered “liberationists” in many religious circles in the North Atlantic countries. I hope her clear and painstaking explanation removes, once and for all, those unfounded opinions. After a brief historical presentation of both Roman Catholic and evangelical traditions in Latin America, Heaney compares the methods, hermeneutics, Christology, ecclesiology, and missiology of evangelicals with that of liberationists and concludes, “in contrast to the theology of liberation, Latin American evangelical theology considers Scripture to be the point of departure for all theological discussion” (p. 124). Later she affirms that on such fundamental doctrines like humanity, sin, liberation, salvation, conversion, and the kingdom of God, “there are distinctions that cannot be overcome” (p. 155). Heaney also finds that “Latin American evangelical theologians provide a *via media* for Latin American Christology” (p. 181).

However, Heaney not only describes but also presents some important observations on the subject matter. First, she points out the need for an improved and wider dissemination of Latin American evangelical thought both inside Latin America and internationally. She calls for a translation program of many of the key works that are available only in Spanish, something I wholeheartedly support. This would be a major global contribution. Second, Heaney finds appalling the fact that the theologians she presents “underestimate the significance of their contribution in the past and therefore fail to systematise their work” (p. 253). The void is noticeable because Heaney’s is the only “systematic theology” available on the topic. Third, Heaney presents a challenge to the new generations of Latin Americans to continue theologizing because society’s changes bring new issues to consider and engage. She mentions, for example, the need for a theological reflection on subjects like the role of women within the family and the church, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, globalization, and sexuality and sexual ethics. Quite an agenda for the younger theologians! Finally, Heaney recognizes the danger that evangelical nominalism poses to theology in Latin America. She rightly sees a decline in church growth because the new generations of evangelicals have grown up “within an evangelical subculture where belonging depends more on certain behaviour and adherence to social regulations than to personal conviction” (p. 254).

In spite of Heaney’s well-done research, I found a few lacunae both in content and sources. I agree with her premise that talk about evangelical theology in Latin America must be done in dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church because the latter remains the main religious force in the region. However, she overlooks the fact that Roman Catholicism in Latin America is not only a religion but also a culture. Even non-religious Latin Americans would identify themselves as “Catholics.” Roman Catholicism has provided many elements that have shaped the general Latin American ethos and worldview, and it continues to have an influence. Therefore, when talking about Roman

Catholicism in the region, the distinction has to be made and clearly explained, whether reference is being made to religious Catholicism or cultural Catholicism. This distinction is quite hard to understand for those who, like Heaney, view Latin America from a distance without understanding the nuances one has growing up in the region. Such differentiation would have helped her explain some of the elements—for example, the lack of reference to the eternal consequences of sin, a synergistic doctrine of salvation, no mention of repentance, and neglect of the significance of the death of Christ—of liberation theologies, which evangelicals criticize more strongly. These themes, along with others, reflect a mixture of Latin American Catholic popular culture and belief and should not be treated only as doctrinal issues.

Another fact she overlooks is the powerful influence of dispensationalism on the majority of evangelicals in Latin America. Historically, dispensationalism has been the most predominant theology in Latin America. It is still the leading trend in most of the denominations and is the view held by most people in the pew. Therefore, many of the theological emphases and themes held by the people Heaney includes in her book were directly or indirectly aimed at the teachings of dispensationalism. For example, until the 1970s the hermeneutical approach was mainly monochromatic, closely following the dispensational school. The theologians presented in Heaney's book were the first ones who broke that spell, presenting and defining other hermeneutical horizons, an accomplishment of vast proportions. Also, the futuristic emphasis of dispensationalism on a literal millennium contrasts with the interest of these Latin American theologians on the implications that the kingdom of God might have today. Discussion on this theme continues even in this new century. Had Heaney contrasted the evangelical theology she introduced with dispensationalism, she would have had many more reasons to show its relevance.

The five theologians Heaney studies are not the only representatives of Latin American evangelical theology. They have been the most prolific and creative writers, making research on them easier. But Latin American evangelical theology has had other trends and is not as unified and clear cut as it is presented in this book; in reality it is more like a denominational kaleidoscope. Heaney would have benefited from Diememme E. Noelliste's dissertation, "The Church and Human Emancipation: A Critical Comparison of Liberation Theology and the Latin American Theological Fraternity" (Northwestern University, 1987). Noelliste covers much of the same ground though with a different methodology. Another significant dissertation on the subject is Pius Franz Helfenstein, "Evangelikale Theologie der Befreiung. Das Reich Gottes in der Theologie der 'Fraternidad Teologica Latinoamericana' und der Gängigen Befreiungstheologie, ein Vergleich" (Basel University, 1991). Overall, however, this is a valuable work, and I pray Heaney's book will encourage researchers to make known to the English-speaking world other important areas of Latin American evangelicalism. It is still a virgin field of research.

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How Africa Shaped the Christian Mind: Rediscovering the African Seedbed of Western Christianity. By Thomas C. Oden. Downer's Grove: InterVarsity, 2007, 204 pp., \$19.00.

Thomas Oden's *How Africa Shaped the Christian Mind* is born of ecumenical concerns that are both historical and political. The project arose out of his work on the *Ancient*

Christian Commentary on Scripture and his subsequent involvement as director and editor for the Center for Early African Christianity (<http://www.earlyafricanchristianity.com>). This work serves the Center as an initial foray into the basic thesis of the primacy of African influence in early Christianity and as a research plan and sourcebook for further scholarship. From a historical perspective he argues that the spiritual and intellectual vitality of early Christianity flowed north from Africa into Europe. Politically, Oden hopes to promote a *ressourcement* for modern African Christians who are often divided racially, geographically, and ecclesiologically.

Oden begins his work with a substantive introductory chapter that clearly states his primary thesis that "Africa played a decisive role in the formation of Christian culture" (p. 9). His claim that the impact of the African teachers mentioned in his work (Augustine, Athanasius, Clement, and Tertullian, among others) have never been adequately studied sounds quite odd until one reads more closely. It is not that these figures have lacked such study (as a brief perusal of Oden's bibliography will attest) but that they have not been studied or recognized as Africans. He is right in asserting that the common perception of such North African Christian intellectual giants is that these individuals were more Greek or Roman than African. Herein lies the crux of the issue. Oden wishes to reclaim these individuals for Africa and to demonstrate his thesis, thereby laying a foundation for viewing Christianity as an indigenous African religion.

In order to accomplish this goal, Oden spends a significant amount of time defining various terms in this introduction. He argues that the "Christian mind" (by which he means "the history of literature, philosophy, physics and psychological analysis" found within the Christian worldview) is based in large part on ideas and literature from Africa; thus, the "Christian mind" is ultimately a product of the "African Mind" (p. 10). While his use of the term "African Mind" is here clearly cultural, his use of the term "Africa" throughout the rest of the work is specifically geographical. He defines "African Christianity" as "all the early forms of Christianity in the first millennium in the four billions of square miles of Egypt, Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco" (p. 13). The difficulty with this geographical description is the complex nature of the various cultures found on the continent in the first millennium, cultures that included the "Nilotic, Berber, Libyan, Numidian, Nubian, Ghanaian, and others" (p. 16). One begins to wonder how one can speak so generically of an "African Mind" in the midst of such multiplicity. Nevertheless, the same charge could be made against speaking culturally of European Christianity, but Oden is quick to define "Europe" geographically as well.

The remainder of the introductory chapter is used to point out the importance of Africa as one of the three great land masses of the ancient world and to show the centrality of the sees of Carthage and especially Alexandria which, according to its traditional association with Mark, held pride of place on the African continent. Oden argues for the development of a consistent "ecumenical consensus on exegesis, doctrine and liturgy" that bound the disparate communities and cultures of Africa together into one voice (p. 23). To demonstrate this, however, Oden points out that much research remains to be done and that this research must take into account both the written traditions of the north and the oral traditions of the south. The goal of such work would be to present Christianity as part of the indigenous religious atmosphere of the African continent.

Following this introduction the work is divided into two parts, the first of which deals with Oden's primary thesis that Africa served as the "seedbed" of Western Christianity. The first chapter deals with the difficulties of research in modern Africa, including linguistic challenges and tenuous political situations, as well as modern scholarship's neglect of Christian historical and archaeological sites in the region. In this respect there is certainly a story worth telling that waits to be discovered in the sands of Africa.

Oden then proceeds in his second chapter to outline seven ways that African Christianity contributed to the Western Christian tradition. These seven fountains from Africa are: the anticipation of the European university, exegesis of Scripture, basic Christian dogma, conciliar patterns, spiritual formation within monasticism, Neoplatonic philosophy, and the application of skills such as rhetoric and dialectic to Christianity. Some of Oden's arguments for these seven elements are stronger than others. For example, he builds a strong case for the influence of such African interpreters of Scripture as Origen and Tyconius (through Augustine) on the later exegetical traditions of the church. Also strong is his argument regarding the way in which African councils foreshadowed and provided language for the later conclusions of the broader ecumenical councils. Oden's assertion of the importance of African monasticism for later European developments cannot be doubted, although one does get a sense that the intricate direct dependency hinted at is more than can be adequately substantiated. This is the major difficulty with this section of the work and is endemic to all such works that seek to establish a research plan.

Chapter three of Part One contains what is in my opinion the most important argument for Oden's thesis; indeed, it should have been placed at the very outset of the work. In it he seeks to answer the question of how Africa should be defined. I have already pointed out that his definition is geographical, but here Oden tackles the question that Western Christians, for good or for ill, are sure to ask: Just how African was Augustine or Origen or Athanasius? By what criteria should they be defined as products of Africa rather than products of the Greco-Roman world? Oden describes this question as "odd" and born out of a "fairly recent Western intellectual prejudice" (p. 63). He argues that these individuals ought not to be classified as Africans based on ethnicity or skin color but on their appropriation of African culture and concepts. He points to close association and deep respect between these individuals and Punic and Berber cultures, as well as to potential family connections. Also important for this argument is his assertion that many of the early exegetes used images and metaphors borrowed from ancient Pharaonic religion, images such as eternal life and spiritual ascent (presumably among others that are never mentioned). Although I have no doubt that skillful exegetes will borrow from their surrounding culture elements that will help them communicate the truth of the biblical witness, the specific images mentioned here seem very basic to Christianity and shared by Christians inside and outside of Africa during the earliest centuries of Christianity. Oden then revisits his argument for a close connection between African and Irish monasticism. He points out that this connection "can be seen visually in crosses, funerary objects, décor, calendars and art forms" while admitting that the link has not been established "textually" (p. 76). For all his railing against modernism in this chapter, one wonders why his historical methodology remains so strongly attached to written texts rather than these visual "texts" that deserve to be read just as authoritatively. In the end, however, Oden largely ignores this cultural question despite its importance. If one wishes to demonstrate the "African mind" of these early Christians, one must first lay out a groundwork, tentative as it may be, for what a distinctly African Christian culture of the first few centuries entailed. Though this may be possible, Oden does not accomplish it in this work.

The final two chapters of Part One speak to the importance of Oden's task. In chapter four he outlines the wide divide between Orthodox, Coptic, and Catholic communities of North Africa and the largely Protestant forms of Christianity in sub-Saharan Africa. He rightly argues that both are heirs to the depth of insight and spiritual maturity of early Christianity on the continent. In chapter five, Oden returns to the failure of traditional European scholarship to take seriously the oral traditions of African Christianity. Here he makes a strong and enlightened call for paleographic and historical inquiry into these neglected sources. He believes that such scholarship will demonstrate

that Christianity, with its continual presence in Africa of over a millennium, rather than being incompatible with African traditional religion, is itself an indigenous African religion.

Part Two, entitled “African Orthodox Recovery,” is a pastoral reflection on the need for the kind of research programs outlined in the work. In chapters six and seven Oden notes the explosive growth of Christianity in Africa over the last few decades and the threat of political instability in the region. He points out that in Africa, as in other parts of the world, there is a renewed intellectual interest in religious questions and a growing disenchantment with the answers provided by modernism. The place of Christianity in Africa and ultimately in the world is at a crossroads. Oden seems to believe that the “African orthodoxy” established in synods and councils, and later refined through years of persecution under the Romans and the Muslims, if adequately nourished through a new appreciation of its roots, may provide the way to renewal in the face of the moral relativism of postmodernism (or, as he would prefer, ultramodernism). It is from within this context that Oden calls for a new, more chastened form of ecumenism. He desires an older, evangelical ecumenism devoted to orthodoxy and classical exegesis under the influence of the Spirit.

Chapter eight of the work describes what this ecumenism would look like. Based on “African orthodoxy” and marked by both rigor and love, it would move in the Spirit to speak moral truth to a relativistic world. Eschewing the minimization of dogma, it would emphasize a central *rule of faith* and examine Scripture according to the *analogy of faith*. Such ecumenism would “transcend materialism” in both a physical and a spiritual way, recognizing in the spirit of Augustine that the city of God is not of this world. What Oden calls for is an ecumenism that is ecumenical in the original sense of the word: A church that is united in one Spirit, one faith, and one hope and that is not confined by geographical, linguistic, or racial boundaries.

One aspect of this hope is the subject of Oden’s last chapter: the possibility of reconciling the often tense political situation between Christians and Muslims in Africa. Oden’s hope and prayer is that a better understanding of the history of Christianity in North Africa and the incorporation of Christian ideas in Islam will lead to peace and respect between the religions in Africa (and, for that matter, throughout the world). It is for this peace, and for the millions of Christians in Africa suffering from religious persecution, HIV-AIDS, and displacement from home, that he calls the church to pray. A helpful appendix recounts the revisionist program of the Early African Christianity Project and its call for new scholarship. The aims of the Project are: the translation and publication of key texts; the encouragement of African scholars to work on their own Christian tradition; and the promotion of awareness of this tradition for the Christians of Africa and the world.

The work contains a forty page chronology of Christianity in Africa that covers the first millennium. It is most helpful as it reaches into the period following the Muslim conquest of Africa, because much of this material is neither widely known nor widely available. The chronology is primarily literary in nature but does include some pertinent political and cultural events. Although there is little new information given (with the exception of some interesting postulations such as the classification of second-century texts—the *Apocryphon of James*; the *Gospel of Mary Magdalene*—as African and “non-Gnostic” (p. 160), and genealogical traces of Egyptian names among the saints of Ireland), the form in which the information is contained provides a helpful source for the reader seeking to examine Oden’s thesis more closely. Regretfully, the functionality of the literary chronology and the book as a whole is hampered by the absence of an index. The book does have a significant bibliography that contains the most seminal research on early Christianity in Africa as well as works on the topic from traditional African scholars, many of which remain sadly unknown in the West.

Though clearly designed for a broad audience, *How Africa Shaped the Christian Mind* will prove to be most helpful for new scholars interested in Oden's claim of Western Christianity's dependence upon Africa. Established experts in the field of early Christian history will sometimes find his assertions overly tentative and at other times too brash. All readers will be frustrated by the lack of footnotes referencing sources that could substantiate his claims. Many will find the work too ecumenical for their liking and as such will miss its call for us to discover that much of what we hold most dear was first formulated and refined on the African continent.

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Death by Love: Letters from the Cross. By Mark Driscoll and Gerry Breshears. Wheaton: Crossway, 2008, 272 pp., \$19.99.

Mark Driscoll and Gerry Breshears wrote this book with the purpose of making "otherwise complicated truths [about the accomplishments of Jesus' death on the cross] understandable to regular folks so that their love for and worship of Jesus would increase as they pick up their cross to follow him . . . [and] serving . . . Christian leaders who bear the responsibility of teaching and leading people" (p. 9). Specifically, they hope to bring about this understanding by means of relating the doctrine of the atonement to every day life, helping "to ensure that the cross remains at the crux of all that it means to think and live like Jesus" (p. 10). Thus, while this book bears on the doctrine of the atonement and the contemporary questions surrounding it, its primary emphasis is on integration: helping us to bridge the gap between doctrine on one hand and matters of everyday life on the other. The preface and introduction set forth some of the foundational material, the twelve chapters each relate one aspect of Christ's saving death to a specific person's questions and problems, and a brief appendix offers some suggestions for further reading. Each of the main chapters of the book concludes with a section answering common questions pertaining to that chapter's content.

The preface sets forth four central truths concerning the cross which are of great significance for the character of the book as a whole. First, the authors contend that "the cross is a multi-faceted jewel" (p. 10). Acknowledging the diversity throughout Scripture and the history of Christian doctrine when it comes to explaining the effects of Christ's death, Driscoll and Breshears seek to honor this diversity, considering each of these effects, inasmuch as they are rooted in Scripture, to be complementary facets of a jewel. They further warn that the rejection of or overemphasis on any one of these aspects comes with a significant cost in terms of our understanding of Christ's saving work. Second, "the cross is not a pagan jewel" (p. 10), meaning that "the only way to faithfully interpret the New Testament metaphors regarding the atonement is to understand their origination as not coming from pagan culture but rather coming from the revelation of the Old Testament" (p. 11). Third, this jewel is "mounted in the setting of Jesus' work in history," demanding a fuller appreciation of the saving nature of Jesus' life, resurrection, and exaltation to complement our understanding of his death (pp. 11–12). Fourth, the cross is that jewel which decisively reveals the love of God. Together, these four central truths provide the theological basis underlying the rest of the book.

In the introduction, Driscoll and Breshears offer a summary treatment of the jewel of substitutionary atonement whose facets they exposit in the ensuing chapters. This summary offers an extended narrative permeated with theological reflection, portraying and explaining many of the events and details surrounding the horrific nature of Jesus'

death. A meditation on Jesus' seven last words is also included. This theological narrative serves to establish the main tenets of what the authors see as the crown jewel of atonement theology: penal substitution.

Each of the twelve main chapters begins with a brief account of an acquaintance of Driscoll's, summarizing a certain aspect of that person's life that deeply reflects his or her need for a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. The bulk of each chapter is in the form of a letter to that person, relating a "facet" of the cross to the specific need. In this way the authors relate themes such as justification, expiation, reconciliation, and ransom to such every-day issues as demonic oppression, rape, hatred, and adultery. Given the pattern of the book, I will focus my attention on just one of these chapters that will serve as a representative for the others.

In chapter three, Driscoll tells the story of Luke. Just before the birth of their first child, Luke's wife confessed the adulterous relationship she had had with one of his good friends prior to their recent conversion to Christianity. Driscoll helps us to feel Luke's rage and the blood he sought, and then guides us into the heart of the matter: Luke's righteous anger is but a token of what God feels in his relationship with his adulterous covenantal partner. This idea serves as the basis for an account of how God deals with sin in faithfulness to his justice, taking us on a survey of Scripture with a special emphasis on the Old Testament and the book of Hebrews with their theme of covenant. Tying the chapter together, Driscoll affirms that in fact the blood Luke craved has been shed, encourages Luke's relationship with his wife, and focuses Luke's attention on how he ought to think about his former friend. Throughout the chapter, Driscoll integrates the marriage covenant with the covenantal relationship between God and his people in a provocative and beautiful way.

The decisive strength of this book, which makes it worth any challenge that might be brought against it, is the following: By properly contextualizing evils in light of a relationship with God, the book seeks to demonstrate how the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ have the power to address the most horrific evils we ourselves can commit or suffer. Without pretending to be a complete treatment of the atonement, this book fills in a significant gap in atonement studies—the move from doctrine to practice—and it does so by clearly speaking of both God's love and his wrath, as well as the sin and pain in our own lives and in the lives of those in our churches and neighborhoods. One thing stands out with excellence and clarity: the atonement provides us with the resources to address the pain and sin in our lives, placing it in the context of the sin we all have before God and its resolution in the vicarious substitution and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Several aspects of the book which at first appear to be possible lines of criticism do not in fact turn out to be so. First, it could be said that the book is overly sensational. Admittedly, Driscoll takes some liberty in telling the story of Jesus' death, but this does not seem to get out of hand. Another sensational aspect is the particularly heinous sins, such as rape and child molestation, with which the book deals. Balancing such a tendency, however, is the chapter Driscoll writes to his son—one to which many pastor's kids such as me will relate. The point is that the atonement deals with every kind of sin, even if some of the more memorable chapters are the ones in which the story is more shocking.

A second criticism could be that the letters are too aggressive and confrontational, and that they will not work for many people. As Driscoll himself indicates, many of these letters come only in the context of a close pastoral relationship, and he nowhere indicates that letter-writing is the only or even preferable means of pastoral care. More importantly, precisely in their aggressiveness and bluntness, the letters exude a love and compassion that is truly remarkable. A third criticism which will likely come to mind for

theology students is that Driscoll makes use of other doctrines without substantiation. To this I can only respond that pastoral theology is a complicated business and the book is best appreciated as an attempt to bring the atonement to bear on the realities of life. With this focus, peripheral theological issues can remain precisely that: peripheral.

I will conclude with two more significant critiques. First, one could critique the book for its Reformed perspective and accompanying overemphasis on penal substitution. The Reformed standpoint is evident in the selection of the aspects of the atonement and in the recommended reading in the appendix (the books listed are almost exclusively Reformed in nature). The overemphasis on penal substitution, a related issue, creates a tension in the book. In the preface, the authors speak of a many-faceted jewel, but in the introduction they specify the crown jewel as being a penal substitutionary account of the atonement. I would contend that penal substitution is indeed a facet of that jewel, which is itself the event of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Such a modification would justify the inclusion of every chapter in this book while opening the door more widely to the theological insights of those writing before the Reformation (which are scantily noted in this book) as well as some of the non-Reformed emphases currently under consideration. Given the tone established in the preface, this criticism amounts to a modest though significant alteration that the authors themselves could embrace without in any way undermining their laudable commitment to penal substitution.

Finally, I note with some dismay the final section of the appendix: "Unhelpful Books on the Cross." First, the list is so short as to be unhelpful. Second, while the criticisms levied in the brief annotations may in fact be valid, the more pressing concern is whether the authors demonstrate Christian charity by offering such harsh criticism without substantial engagement. Critique and even condemnation are certainly admissible, but these comments are so brief as to be one-sided and in all probability misleading. Without extensive engagement, the authors would have done better simply to offer a list of books with which they have substantial disagreement.

In sum, *Death by Love* is an excellent and vital project that the church must seek to develop and expand so as to bring the power of God's saving work in Jesus Christ to bear upon the sin and pain in people's lives. This vision alone makes the book worth reading, not to mention the excellent manner in which Driscoll and Breshears go about fulfilling their task. It offers a particularly salutary approach to complement the many academic books currently on the market.

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Virtue and the Voice of God: Toward Theology as Wisdom. By Daniel J. Treier. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006, 278 pp., \$30.00 paper.

The title of this volume is most apt. Daniel Treier, associate professor of Theology at Wheaton College, has endeavored to more effectively bring together "virtue," classically speaking—or, better, *phronesis* (practical reason)—and the Word of God in the Bible, read and understood by the church *as Scripture*, whereby the whole of the church's theological task, within and without, may be properly regarded again as wisdom (*sapientia*) in our contemporary setting. To this end, Treier has engaged both metatheology and theology in the service of the many-sided practical-critical nature of theology as wisdom. He engages directly and in depth the contested issue of the nature of theology in relation to the academy in terms of "public" truth and in terms of the

ongoing debates about the nature, directions, and tasks of theological education; thus, the meaning of Christianity as *paideia* (enculturating transformation) in relation to the church, wherein and to which theology ought to be directed and related as wisdom and unto wisdom. Many, seemingly disparate, elements from classical and classical Christian notions of wisdom are studied afresh: *techne*, *scientia*, *paideia*, notably, too, *sophia* (in relation to Jesus as *Sophia*) and especially *phronesis*, are assessed and interpreted in relation to Christian formation and, to that end, the central role of Scripture and hermeneutics (specifically, theological interpretation of the voice of God in Scripture) in and for the church. All of this is consciously and emphatically set within a robust, dynamic trinitarian framework, especially the effective, directive, formative, unifying work of the person of the Holy Spirit past, present, and future. But while Treier acknowledges that while in one sense a few are called as leaders and teachers of doctrine specifically (and for theological studies more broadly, these often are critically engaged with “public” or academic settings), yet he is concerned to overcome the modern split between academic theological education of the few and the many of the church, regarding theology as an every member calling within the participative relation of all members to the Word of God and the God of the Word in Christ and by the Spirit. Truly, it is a major interest of Treier’s to overcome or to heal the destructive dichotomies that have arisen, especially since the onset of modernity (e.g., public truth/Christian doctrine; *sapientia/scientia*; practical/theoretical). Indeed, the central Christian affirmation of the doctrine of the Trinity and the perichoretic relations within God and economically outside of God, ground and finally unify all of these many critical elements.

Treier’s argument develops through three major sections, each reflective of the three crucial terms in the title. Part One deals with the much debated nature of theological education and the often conflicted relations between the academy, the church, and the need for Christian formation. Here he aims to develop wisdom as a unifying concept in dialogical relation to current debates about the nature of theology led by Edward Farely, Charles Wood, David Kelsey, and Reinhard Hutter (often propelled by the influential, much debated work of George Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*). Having thus “set the table,” Treier beautifully embodies his later formative focus on theological interpretation of the Bible as *Scripture* by means of an extended theological interpretation of wisdom, concluding with an emphasis on theology as an every (Christian) person engagement in communicative praxis. From this Christian interpretation of wisdom, however, the natural question arises whether, in the context of modernity’s notion of truth as “public” and universally shared, theology’s status is as a “public” authority with truth status. Throughout the work Treier is emphatic that Christian theology is not something merely private and/or subjective. It has “public” substance and engages in such at scholarly levels. Yet, again, his clear aim is that Christian theology be what it is first and foremost, that is, knowledge of God in Christ and by the Spirit in and by Scripture. Treier will not let it become distorted into something else by playing the Enlightenment game by Enlightenment rules. For that reason, post-critical approaches to truth (as more holistic) become important to Treier’s argument.

In Part Two, Treier develops the nature of theological interpretation as a varied movement and as a faithful approach to Christian truth in keeping with *fides quaerens intellectum* and as the crucial outcome of and means toward *sapientia*. Like Part One, this is carried out in dialogue with prominent voices, especially Stephen Fowl. Broadly, the hermeneutical-theological movement that espouses theological interpretation does not seek eradication of established interpretive-exegetical methods *per se*, though many of those methods developed from modernity’s instrumentalist presuppositions. But the hermeneutical-theological movement is often critical of critical methods. Treier explains that this movement raises questions about how Christian *phronesis* (practical reason)

can cohere with academic commitments to purely public pursuit of truth, and so public sharing of truth claims. But then the emphasis is on how to fit the integrity of the Bible *as Scripture* (the authoritative, written Word of God) over and in formative relation to the church, and the dynamic, ever present, illuminating ministry of the Holy Spirit, who (as grounded in his past work of inspiration) now powerfully leads God's people in community to develop Christian virtues via those very Scriptures. In the following chapters, Treier wrestles (especially in relation to Fowl) with the obvious tension that ensues from an emphasis on the Christian reading of the Bible *as Scripture* (in community and so in terms of the *regula fidei*) and the (critical) use of critical biblical scholarship. In the process, Treier makes clear the integrity and the faithfulness of theological interpretation.

Part Three develops clearer connections. First, and so important for the argument, is Treier's connection of theological interpretation of the Bible as divinely authoritative Scripture (with the regulative role of the *regula fidei*) to a postcritical understanding of rationality, thus rightly arguing against modernity's outmoded, rationalistic form of objectivity and public truth in favor of that more whole-person/holistic, manifold notion of truth. Of course, in a pluralist context that opens up everything to (at best?) the many-sided/dialectical relations found within Western culture. Yet Treier carefully nuances and delineates this in a way whereby truth-as-truth is still truly meaningful. The last chapter brings relative finality to earlier preliminary processes of interpretation, effecting unitariness (unity in distinction) to the two major elements previously developed: (1) the nature of theology as wisdom, the integration of *techne*, *scientia*, *paideia*, and the like under the integrating, multisided notion of Christian *phronesis* (practical reason), centered in Jesus Christ as the true *sophia*; and (2) theological interpretation of the Bible as Scripture, all integrally related to, grounded in, and effected by the perichoretic relations in and redemptive effects of the triune God, from the Father, in Jesus Christ and by the Holy Spirit. Therein, theology is always both task and content, a "faith task" given to the church community, each and all, in relation to the world, while accounting, too, for theology's social locations in relation to (post)critical reason.

This is a theologically substantial, carefully and tightly argued book that is much needed. This is a work that ought to have wide readership, especially in seminaries and by all engaged in the varied (and, as a result of this work, more interrelated) theological disciplines. As such Daniel Treier's contributions to the church's theological task in *Virtue and the Voice of God* are numerous. Here are but a few. He helps to set the current theological task of the church more effectively within its historical developments, the debates surrounding such developments, and the church's responsibility therein (especially the effects of scholasticism and/or modernity in the separation of *scientia* from *sapientia*). I found the distillation of the current discussion regarding the nature of theology, especially the theological task in relation to the church as a whole and to vocational theological education, useful—and this is not an area that normally catches my attention. I was awakened more to the need to pursue such meta-theology.

Moreover, Treier is effective in clarifying and developing theology's active relation between theory and practice, each informing the other. Christian practices must hold together the *sophia* and *phronesis* dimensions of Christian teaching, for that teaching that "makes wise unto salvation" encompasses the whole of living by the power of the Spirit, leading us into the Jesus way of life. Performance, then, is at the heart of theology and central to theological interpretation of Scripture. So while we must decide how conceptual forms function in theology, theology is "not a discrete practice *per se*, but is performed within a host of Christian practices as people engage in communicative action (praxis) concerning God as people seek to live wisely" (p. 97). Yet this is not mere

activity versus truth content. Rather, theology is “meta-discourse,” that is, because of its central reference to God, theology embraces and is thus formed within the variety of resulting communicative practices. Treier is also right on the mark in his analysis and criticisms of the Enlightenment’s/modernity’s narrow rationalism as it affected and distorted the church’s view of theology, especially the assumptions foundational to historical-critical biblical interpretation and the church’s claim to know God in Christ by the Spirit (in and by Scripture). I need to mention, too, how Treier won me over to his careful analysis, integration, and development of the various Greek senses of wisdom/reason/knowledge, and then (emphatically) the very biblical, Christian, Christ-centered, Spirit-engendering forms of these unitary, interrelated virtues of and for the Christian life. Treier has shown me why the replacement of (separated) *scientia* by an integrated *sapientia* or *phronesis* is not merely arbitrary and cultural but biblical and crucial to the church’s holistic theological task in Christ to itself and the world.

I should mention also the fact that, contra an element of one of the endorsements on the back cover (Ellen Charry), Treier does not deny that Scripture reveals to us the truth(s) of God in Christ and by the Spirit. He has, I think, proper concerns with elements of Protestant scholasticism, but Treier clearly affirms the identity of Holy Scripture as the written Word of God. He is rather a chastened propositionalist.

Yet I do have some constructive concerns. The first may relate to the very tightly argued form of Treier’s argumentation. It seemed often that I would come to the conclusion of a paragraph and it would not be readily apparent how that conclusion was fully drawn. It was as though a crucial transition sentence had been removed, or that there was “insider information” that I was not aware of because I had not read a particular source. Still, in the overall development most of these did become clear. Second, within discussions regarding modern notions of *scientia* and the problem of Enlightenment objectivity, Treier did not appear to properly distinguish modern, outmoded, Newtonian, absolutist notions of objectivism from post-Newtonian (e.g. Einsteinian) recognitions of proper objectivity and the need to know any object in the way it discloses itself to be. Indeed, as Thomas Torrance has shown, it is faithful objectivity by which we are to know God as he has given himself to be known in Christ by the Spirit. Thus objectivity *per se* seemed to be mishandled at times.

Third, it is not clear that Treier’s formative use of post-critical rationality and its far greater openness to what could be considered true (in contrast to the narrow, more critical, empirical notions of rationality associated with modernity) is used because, in fact (excuse the expression), it is more true to the nature of this issue, or because its *ad hoc* usage usefully fits Treier’s direction. I think perhaps the postcritical, more holistic approach/approaches do rather parallel the multisided nature of the biblical approach to wisdom, but this was not clear. Fourth, Treier’s careful weaving together of the various necessary aspects of Christian wisdom (*paideia*, *sophia*, etc., especially the *sapiential/scientia* re-integration, all under the broad notion of *phronesis*) is likewise not fully clear. Is this unity-in-distinction relation under *phronesis* (and that as needfully linked with theological interpretation) a hypothesis or proposal, something clearly espoused in Scripture (theologically interpreted), an ideal for which we disciples of Christ are to aim together as the body of Christ, or a partial reality that needs clarification for more effective pursuit? Perhaps in a sense it is all of these.

I almost had a further concern, or more an encouragement to Daniel Treier, that he ought to ground and frame his proposal more emphatically, indeed systematically, in and from that central Christian doctrine, the Trinity, thus reflecting on the perichoretic relations of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit within the Godhead, and economically to and for the world in creation-redemption, as that which, in Christ and by the Spirit, the communion of saints ought to mirror as we fulfill our theological task. But then, in the last chapter, Treier made all such quite explicit. I suspect the answers to even

these concerns are already at least implicitly (if not explicitly) present in this most excellent work. It is highly recommended to all engaged directly in our common theological task.

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Conversing with Barth. Edited by John C. McDowell and Mike Higton. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004, ix + 234 pp., \$29.95 paper.

The fourth book in the *Barth Studies* series edited by John Webster, George Hunsinger, and Hans-Anton Drewes continues the series' commitment to exploring underappreciated aspects of Barth's theology. *Conversing with Barth* is a collection of eleven essays by various American and British scholars interested in harnessing Barth's theology as a resource for contemporary theological dialogue. The book thus has a two-fold aim. Negatively, the authors seek to vitiate the popular conception that Barth illegitimately isolates his theology from other forms of discourse and is, therefore, not a useful theological conversation partner. Positively, the book attempts to demonstrate Barth's value for contemporary dialogue by drawing on his theology as a resource for interacting with a variety of issues.

In the introductory chapter Higton and McDowell set the tone for the book by presenting a convincing argument for the conversational openness of Barth's theology. Rather than viewing Barth's theological commitments as precluding significant dialogical interaction, they contend that his commitment to identifying and articulating his own theological location actually enables a more vital and significant engagement with alternate views. This combination of theological particularity and conversational openness thus serves as the model upon which the other essays in the book operate. John Webster follows with an essay on Barth's often-overlooked interaction with historical theology. Focusing largely on Barth's *Protestant Theology*, Webster demonstrates Barth's serious commitment to careful, and often generous, conversation with prior theologians. That historical theme continues in two other essays that address Barth's theology in dialogue with Hegel and the possibility of a theologically located apologetics (Graham Ward), Calvin's understanding of justification and sanctification (George Hunsinger), and the use of figural imagination by Auerbach and Dante (Mike Higton). Most of the other essays focus on placing Barth in dialogue with modern theologians—theological parallels between Barth and von Balthasar (Ben Quash), Donald MacKinnon's notion of the tragic in relation to eschatology and hope (McDowell), Robert Jenson's theological methodology, and John Howard Yoder's pacifist criticisms of Barth's views on just war (David Clough). The final two essays take a more topical approach—Barth's view of culture (Timothy Gorringer) and the ever-troublesome question of the sufficiency of Barth's pneumatology (Eugene F. Rogers, Jr.). In a very brief afterword, David Ford expresses his appreciation for this volume and its demonstration of Barth's usefulness for contemporary conversational theology.

Although the essays in the book are uniformly well written and engaging, there is some level of unevenness. The two shortest chapters in the book, those by Gorringer and Ward, are also the weakest. Gorringer's chapter makes some interesting comments about Barth's early view of culture, but ultimately this contribution is too brief (by far the shortest chapter at only thirteen pages) to be more than merely suggestive. Ward's essay usefully points to a degree of cultural openness in Barth's theology and the possibilities this presents for Barth's theology, but it unaccountably presents Barth as

rather naively unaware of his own cultural situatedness. This essay is also weakened by a somewhat strained reading of Barth's theology, possibly occasioned by Ward's apparent desire to establish an interpretation of Barth that would support his own emphasis on Christian apologetics. By contrast, the introductory essay and Webster's study of Barth as a historical theologian are excellent and should be required reading in any course on Barth's theology. Among the other essays, Hunsinger's stands out as particularly useful for understanding Barth's soteriology in relation to Reformed and Lutheran perspectives, McDowell presents probably the most creative and interesting essay as he engages the tragic in relation to eschatology and Christian hope, and Rogers presents a surprisingly helpful essay in explaining Barth's occasionally restrained pneumatology.

Definitely not an introductory work, *Conversing with Barth* requires broad familiarity with Barth's theology and systematic theology in general. With the exception of the first two essays, this book will probably not be useful for introductory courses or students just beginning their Barth studies. I highly recommend this book, however, for anyone who wants to pursue Barth's theology at a more advanced level. Additionally, this book can usefully serve as a guide and model for those who are not as comfortable with Barth's thought but are interested in how to engage conversationally with some prior theologian in a manner that remains sensitive to his or her theological concerns and historical particularities but is, nonetheless, of vital significance for the modern theological situation. While the book will rightly appeal primarily to Barth scholars, theologians with other interests may well find it useful.

Conversing with Barth is a significant contribution to contemporary Barth studies. Presenting an important argument against unfair characterizations of Barth as a theological isolationist and demonstrating a useful model for theological conversation, these essays should be a part of any Barth library.

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