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# BOOK REVIEWS

*The Origins of Christian Morality: The First Two Centuries*. By Wayne A. Meeks. New Haven: Yale University, 1993, x + 275 pp., $30.00.

Wayne Meeks, continuing his important work on the origins of early Christianity, here moves to the second stage of such formation. Picking up the story after the death of Jesus, he explores how it was that Christian morality developed in the first two centuries. These centuries are admittedly a difficult period to reconstruct with regard to the ethical development of what emerged in the third and fourth centuries as "orthodox" Christianity, but Meeks has made a creditable attempt.

Meeks approaches his subject in several noteworthy ways. He is not concerned to articulate a set of ethical principles by which the early Christians lived, so much as to trace the developing "moral common sense, a set of moral intuitions" (p. 11) that the Christian community came to accept. He utilizes a number of sources in his attempt to arrive at this reconstruction, including a number of texts from the NT and a number of texts, such as the *Shepherd of Hermas* and *Epistle of Barnabas*, that were not included in the canon. All of these he treats in a critical way, reflective of a more sophisticated and necessary form of textual analysis than has often been applied to these documents of early Christianity.

As a result, Meeks has developed a series of portraits of how early Christianity came to view its ethical life. For example, he discusses the important moral consequences of conversion and the resulting effects that this moral stance had upon such categories of life as the city, household and people of God, one's relationship to the world, the development and use of parenetic literature, the rituals that came to be practiced by early Christians as a reflection of their ethical beliefs (e.g. baptism), the confrontation with sin and evil, problems with the human body, varying conceptions of God, and eschatology. Meeks concludes with two chapters that attempt to extend the implications of his analysis. Drawing on recent work regarding the value of story, he summarizes the early Christian stories of a number of the sources that he has consistently drawn upon, including that of Paul and other NT writers but also of those such as the Valentinians. In the final chapter, he tries to establish moral guidelines by which the modern Christian community can live in the contemporary world.

Meeks' volume provides interesting reading, especially in its attempt to integrate the NT texts with noncanonical texts from early Christianity and in its outlining of a set of principles to make early Christian moral reflection relevant for today. Needless to say, many will not take the same view toward these texts that Meeks does, especially when he attributes pseudonymous authorship or late dates to a number of them. Others will not, therefore, wish to conclude similarly regarding the development of early Christian ethical thought. If a number of the sources he cites are placed earlier and seen to reflect more accurately the teaching of Jesus and his earliest followers rather than the thinking of a later Christian community, this may well have implications for how one traces the development of early Christian morality. There is the further difficulty that Meeks takes a view that is more highly influenced by recent work in social-scientific criticism than some might be comfortable with. As a result, his

sense of the overriding importance of community might well need to be adjusted. Nevertheless, Meeks has opened up an area of study that has been neglected in recent scholarship and poses questions that scholars from varying perspectives would do well to pursue.

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*Satisfied by the Promise of the Spirit: Affirming the Fullness of God's Provision for Spiritual Living*. By Thomas R. Edgar. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1996, 283 pp., n.p.

Thomas Edgar's book is primarily, although not exclusively, a response to Jack Deere's *Surprised by the Power of the Spirit* (1993), which I also reviewed in *JETS* (39/1 [1996] 151–152). On the whole my review of Deere was positive, and thus it is salutary to consider the work of Edgar, who champions a cessationist position.

A summary of some of the major features of Edgar's work will help us understand his thesis in more detail. He contends that Deere's understanding of spiritual gifts is rooted in experience rather than Scripture, despite Deere's statements to the contrary. The cessation of the miraculous gifts is supported by the absence of the gift of apostleship today, the witness of history, and the exegesis of Biblical texts. Texts such as Eph 2:20 are cited to show the foundational nature of spiritual gifts. The Church was established by the apostles and prophets, but now that this primary work has been accomplished these gifts are no longer operative. Wayne Grudem's view that the apostles and prophets refer to apostles who were also prophets in Eph 2:20 is disputed with a number of exegetical arguments. Edgar also maintains, contrary to Grudem, that the NT gift of prophecy is an infallible gift and focuses especially on the future. He takes particular aim at Grudem's view that Agabus' prophecies in Acts were flawed, arguing instead that there is no basis for seeing deficient prophecies here.

Edgar takes issue with the idea that the gifts as they are employed today are of lesser quality than the gifts exercised in the days of the apostles. If the gifts of performing signs and wonders are restored today, then they must match the signs and wonders of apostolic witnesses. He concludes that the gifts of miracles and healing played a role during the first generation of the Christian Church. Deere argues that God worked miracles all through history, and thus the notion that there were special periods when miracles were done to validate revelation is bogus. But Edgar responds that many of the miracles cited by Deere are not gifts exercised by human beings at all. They are miracles wrought directly by God and thus are irrelevant to the question of cessation of miraculous gifts. He also maintains that the gift of tongues is in known human languages, and thus modern tongue-speaking is not the same as the Biblical gift. The purpose of the gift was to address unbelievers in their own language, and thus there is no place for personal or private tongue-speaking.

In a brief review it is impossible to demonstrate in any detail the strengths and weaknesses of a work, and thus I must beg the reader's indulgence as I sketch in some of these in Edgar's book. Edgar rightly protests against the tone of some of Deere's comments. Deere criticizes cessationists for arrogance, hardness of heart and for having no Scriptural basis for their position. I believe that Deere was preaching to himself, that a sympathetic reading of his book indicates that he did not intend to attack cessationists personally and that he legitimately sees some potential weaknesses in those who defend cessationism. Nonetheless, his statements do border on overconfidence. Edgar is right in saying that the cessationist position cannot be dismissed so

easily. Deere oversimplifies when he says anyone who studied his Bible alone would not become a cessationist. When I was a new believer, a friend told me to go home and read Acts 2, 10 and 19 and "do" what those passages said. I had never heard of speaking in tongues, and when I read the passages I was puzzled about what he said I should do because it never occurred to me that I could speak in tongues. Since many godly people in the history of the Church who have studied the Scriptures carefully have been cessationists, we must not give the impression that anyone who defends the view is clearly resisting the Holy Spirit. I also believe that Edgar is correct in saying that the gift of apostleship has ceased. Of course noncessationists, such as Grudem, concur at this point.

In my review of Deere I said that he seemed to be right in saying that we reject spiritual gifts because of lack of experience. But Edgar raises a point that has troubled me. Many of the alleged gifts today seem to be at a different level than the gifts in the NT. I was in a meeting in which a Vineyard pastor said that healings of sports injuries, back injuries, and leg lengthenings were common in his church. But he confessed that healings of blindness, lameness, cancer and other organic diseases did not occur. Edgar rightly wonders whether such contemporary healing represents the signs and wonders done by the apostles. Did many in the history of the Church argue for a cessation of gifts precisely because the more notable miracles became increasingly rare and not because they were "against" signs and wonders? When the miraculous gifts began to flag, our ancestors consulted the Scriptures to explain why their experience differed from that of the apostolic generation. They probably would not have offered a theology for cessation if miracles were at the same level as during the age of the apostles. All of this suggests to me (I am not sure Edgar would agree on this point—see below) that the dynamic between Scripture and experience must be carefully considered in working out our position on spiritual gifts and signs and wonders. In any case, both cessationists and noncessationists can (or should) agree that God still heals and does miracles today, even if they disagree on whether all the spiritual gifts are still operative. Disagreement also likely exists over how common such miracles and healings are.

Edgar's discussion on the nature of prophecy is also stimulating. I believe he is correct in saying that Luke did not believe Agabus erred, and his arguments against Grudem's thesis should be carefully considered. More discussion and interaction on this question is certainly needed. Finally, Edgar argues effectively that the gift of tongues is only known human languages. Whether he is correct is debatable, but ongoing open and charitable discussion should help us understand the Biblical text more deeply. It is doubtful, though, that he is correct in saying that the only purpose for the gift was as a sign for unbelievers since in 1 Corinthians 14 interpreted tongues are equivalent to prophecy, suggesting they are for the benefit of believers. Nor is Edgar persuasive in maintaining that the self-edification that occurs when one speaks in tongues (1 Cor 14:5) is negative. Paul merely emphasizes that edification of the body is the primary reason for the gift.

I have some reservations about Edgar's work that I will mention briefly. One of his major complaints is that Deere's view is based upon experience. But Deere proposes a number of exegetical arguments for his position, and thus it is misleading in my opinion to characterize his view as "experiential." Indeed, Edgar disputes Deere's exegesis at a number of points, demonstrating that there is indeed an exegetical foundation for the latter's views. Edgar's explanation of the command to be zealous for spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12:31; 14:1, 39) also strikes me as special pleading. He labors to show that the verb does not mean "seek." But the attempt to distinguish rigidly between "seek" and "be zealous for" seems strained. Nor is it persuasive to say that the command is only given to the Church as a group. Most exhortations in the NT are in

the plural, but it is quite unlikely that we should erect a barrier between the individual and the group on that basis. Finally, a number of texts teach that God sovereignly gives gifts, and thus Edgar concludes that they should not be sought. Such a conclusion collapses the tension between divine sovereignty and human responsibility that informs the NT. God is ultimately the giver of all good things, but it does not follow from this that believers should not seek to be loving, kind, etc., even though these qualities are ultimately gifts of God.

Unfortunately, Edgar's title and some of his arguments give the impression that a desire for greater passion for God is unnecessary since we already have the Spirit. Such a dichotomy is unnecessary. Those who have the Spirit are to pray for the Spirit and Christ to take residence with power (Eph 3:14–19). Nor is it fair to say that those who seek spiritual gifts are going beyond Scripture and only seeking experiences, for noncessationists believe that the very gifts they are seeking are commanded by Scripture. Edgar believes that Mark 16:9–20 is authentic and thus uses it often in his argument. His constant appeal to that text surprises me since most would consider it to be a later addition.

In my own personal journey I have not settled upon a "position" on spiritual gifts. I was initially convinced upon reading Grudem and Deere, but further reflection has raised some doubts. I wonder if Poythress (*JETS* 39 [1996] 71–101) is correct in arguing that contemporary "gifts" are analogous to apostolic gifts but not identical with them. Such a perspective would explain the discontinuity between current gifts and those of the apostles. At the same time, it acknowledges that God still speaks and heals today. In any case, Edgar's book is sure to stimulate debate, and he raises some very important objections to the views of Deere and others. I hope that the debate will rise to a new level, one in which we search the Scriptures more carefully and love those with whom we disagree more dearly.

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*Faith, Obedience and Perseverance: Aspects of Paul's Letter to the Romans.* By Don Garlington. WUNT 79. Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1994, xi + 204 pp., 128 DM.

This volume represents a collection of five previous articles published by Garlington that have been revised. A concluding chapter and an introduction have been added. The book is very stimulating and should be read carefully and seriously considered. The first chapter picks up where Garlington left off in his doctoral dissertation (*The Obedience of Faith: A Pauline Phrase in Historical Context*). He argues that the expression "obedience of faith" (Rom 1:5; 16:26) refers to both the obedience that "springs from faith" and the obedience that "consists in faith." This chapter is a valuable contribution, and Garlington rightly insists that faith and obedience are inseparable in Paul.

Chapter 2 presents the interesting thesis that the robbing of temples in 2:22 should not be understood literally. What Paul inveighs against is the making of the Torah into an idol. Garlington canvasses a number of texts to demonstrate that Israel clung to the law as an idol and used the Torah to exclude Gentiles from the people of God. The former thesis is best supported by Gal 4:3, 8–9. And Garlington follows his mentor Dunn in seeing nationalism rather than legalism as the central point of tension between Paul and his Jewish compatriots. I remain unconvinced by both Dunn's

and Garlington's claim that there was no polemic against legalism in Judaism, and I have interacted with this thesis elsewhere. The main difficulty with the chapter at hand is the contention that robbing temples is metaphorical rather than literal. The proscriptions against stealing and idolatry in Rom 2:21–22 are likely literal, and thus the grounds for identifying robbing of temples as metaphorical seems weak. Moreover in Jewish literature elsewhere robbing of temples is literal (2 Macc 4:39, 42; 9:2; 13:6; *Sib. Or.* 2:14; 13:12; Josephus *Ant.* 16.45, 164; *J. W.* 5.562), and the same sense should be understood here.

The third chapter sketches in the relationship between the obedience of faith and the doing of the law. Garlington opts for the view that the righteousness of God refers to the activity of God rather than merely status (although he does not deny that a new status before God is also involved). The covenantal dimensions of the righteousness of God are also emphasized: His righteousness involves his covenantal loyalty, which is available to both Jews and Gentiles. Garlington makes the provocative statement that Gen 15:6 cannot refer to forensic righteousness in terms of Abraham's conversion since in 12:1–9 he already believed, and this belief was attested by his exodus from his homeland. I believe Garlington is correct in saying that 15:6 cannot be understood as the conversion of Abraham. Most scholars have not even considered the relationship between Genesis 12 and 15, and we stand in debt to the author here. The central thesis of the chapter is also persuasive. Paul is dead serious and is not speaking hypothetically when he says that one must keep the law in order to be justified (Rom 2:13). The implications of Garlington's view are explosive. Paul believed that the law must be kept for participation in eschatological salvation. Such an emphasis on obedience, says Garlington, is hardly works-righteousness, for the good works stem from the "obedience of faith." Garlington emphasizes throughout the book that perfect obedience is not required. What is needed to obtain eternal life is perseverance, and such perseverance has its roots in faith. Faith is not merely a onetime act for believers but must characterize their entire life. Thus justification and sanctification must not be rigidly separated, as Garlington rightly argues in chap. 6. In this concluding chapter he also explores helpfully some implications for the way systematic theology should be carried out. A small disagreement with part of Garlington's exegesis must also be registered. It is quite unlikely that the words "by nature" (*physei*) in Rom 2:14 refer to "the image of God" (p. 53). The term denotes the Gentiles' natural condition at birth.

Chapter 4 is a useful study of Romans 5, particularly the Adam-Christ relation. Garlington rightly emphasizes that the Torah is relativized by Paul, for the law is not the source of life. Two of his claims in this chapter are controversial. (1) He claims that the terms "sin" and "disobedience" in 5:12–19 refer to apostasy. A number of texts are introduced to defend the thesis. Surely NT writers were concerned about apostasy, but I remain unconvinced that the term "sin" has such a specific meaning, although many texts would have to be consulted to defend my own view. (2) The righteousness of believers includes the idea of making righteous, not merely the imputing of an alien righteousness. Obviously this whole discussion is of crucial importance in the history of the Church, but *contra* Garlington righteousness language is forensic in Paul. Some readers of this *Journal* may be quick to brand Garlington's view as Roman Catholic. This would be a serious mistake, for the righteousness of God, according to Garlington, is a gift and received by faith. Thus his view is compatible with those who emphasize that salvation is by faith alone.

In the fifth chapter Garlington follows Dunn in arguing that 7:14–25 refers to Christian experience. The tension between the "already" and the "not yet" is crucial for his interpretation here. This chapter helps one to see that the obedience that stems

from faith is not perfect obedience, according to the author. What is crucial for eternal life is perseverance to the end, even though our obedience is not perfected. Garlington is not afraid to tackle difficult issues, for this chapter is one of the most controverted today and in the history of the Church. In any event Garlington makes a good case for the thesis that Christian experience is contemplated. And the book as a whole is a valuable contribution to Pauline scholarship.

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*Seasons of Refreshing.* By Keith J. Hardman. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994, 304 pp.

This serious study of awakenings, revivals and evangelistic efforts in America is well documented and eminently readable. The reader with some interest in Christian history gains new insights into the renewal movements that flared up in North America from colonial times to the present day. Misconceptions associated with mass evangelism are largely dispelled.

The roots of societal spiritual renewal are traced, and the evolution of God-blessed means utilized by evangelists to the masses are identified. Advance organizers, simultaneous campaigns, and musicians are mentioned as well as in-depth examinations of the preachers. Details overlooked by general histories include: the evangelist who as a boy read over a hundred books on history by the time he was fifteen; the famous American inventor, publisher and diplomat who, having determined not to contribute a penny to an offering at an evangelistic meeting, ended up emptying his pockets of their copper, silver and gold at the conclusion of the message; the pastor-evangelist who typically spent thirteen hours a day in his study; another who crossed the Atlantic thirteen times with crusades in Britain and America; the pastor-scholar thrust into a blatant, anti-God academic environment who was used to turn it into a place of worship, imparting a passion for evangelism in students; the wife who persuaded her young evangelist husband to leave a lucrative career in America's pastime to work with the YMCA at a sixth of his earlier salary; a great awakening that came when gross immorality, rampant outspoken unbelief, and scorning of God and religion were at their worst.

Reading this book will bring a heightened respect for mass evangelism. These mouthpieces for God were serious students of the Bible and keen observers of society as well as deliberate in methodology. For the most part they resisted emotionalism and embraced an ecumenicity that drew the support of pastors and people of many theological persuasions and in a variety of denominations.

No book of this size can mention the many evangelists, deeper-life speakers, and lecturers who crisscrossed the continent holding meetings in urban centers, small towns, and solitary places. These lesser and unknown persons were used by God to keep spiritual fires burning in the lives of Christian people and in the churches. Some were bombastic and abrasive in their criticism of society and even of the churches. Most cooperative efforts focused on the good news of the gospel, the bad news of the unconverted, and the compulsion to outreach.

As I paused to reflect, several elements presented themselves as common to most of the spiritual refreshment episodes in history: (1) a sovereign God who pities his children and grants seasons of revival; (2) a persistent, prayerful people of God; (3) a hunger for a cure to the emptiness and futility of life and the moral decline in society;

(4) suitable servants yielded to God, concerned for the lost, deliberate in approach, cooperative with others, and solidly and boldly Biblical in their communication.

Questions remain: How many awakenings have occurred? Are we in such a situation now, as some say? What is the relationship between revival, personal evangelism, church-based evangelism, mass evangelism, and awakenings?

Let us pray for a worldwide turning to God with resultant blessings in personal, family, community, national and international life. Let us exchange our impoverished state for an expectant reliance on God with deepened prayer and work for the extension of his rule in ourselves and society.

Thanks to the author and those who touched his life that resulted in this worthwhile contribution to the Church.

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*Christianity in South Africa: A Political, Social and Cultural History.* Edited by Richard Elphick and Rodney Davenport. Berkeley: University of California, 1998, xxxii + 480 pp., $50.00/$19.95.

This 25-chapter volume consists of five parts: the transplanting of Christianity (1652–1910); the churches of modern South Africa; Christianity in South Africa subcultures; Christianity and the creative arts; Christianity, power and race. Thirty contributors, chosen because of their scholarship and inside knowledge of the area under study, have written heavily documented and most interesting accounts of early and modern development of Christianity in this history-making part of Africa. There are 1,833 endnotes that point the reader to sources.

I wished for a glossary and an historical time line as an aid to understanding. I found myself looking for definitions and searching back and forth seeking answers to my questions. Citizens of South Africa probably would have little need for this information. The maps were helpful, as was the key to abbreviations used in the text. The photographs contributed.

At times sadness overcame me as I learned of some church-member slaveholders who preferred that their slaves convert to Islam so they could sell them and separate the children from their parents. Baptized slaves posed a problem since covenant theology was patterned in part after Israel as the people of God who should not enslave a fellow Israelite.

The southern African field opened to hundreds of missionaries from scores of mission agencies. The diversity and competition seemed to accelerate Christian conversion and church planting. There was massive Christian growth among Africans in the current century. Settlers and their descendants represent many rooms in the Father's house. Today the African Initiated Churches account for about half of all black Christians in South Africa. Here the sometimes untrained pastors have built small to very large congregations and networks of churches that incorporate Biblical Christianity into an African environment. Women ministers preach and teach in many of the AIC fellowships, while in the historical continental or American missionary-initiated churches women are engaged in fund-raising and diaconate ministries while male leadership is most visible.

While the Dutch Reformed, Anglican, Congregational, Lutheran, Methodist, Pentecostal, Presbyterian and Roman Catholic churches were correctly given much print, I missed references to smaller groups and so-called Christian sects that have achieved

some footholds in this nation. As a newcomer to this aspect of missiology I thought I would find more information on David Livingstone and the other missionary heroes and heroines we heard about in our churches. Not much is said of them because there were thousands of foreign missionaries as well as missionaries from the African homelands who evangelized, planted churches, and started schools and relief ministries in rural areas and later followed their people into the slums and camps in the cities.

I expected to see more of the empire-makers and the mineral kings. As an outsider I link Cecil Rhodes to the subcontinent. He impacted Christianity but not from the inside.

The chapters, while not equal in length, are all worthy of inclusion, and the editors are to be commended for their work. I found the headings of subsections inviting. Some of the black literature reflects their experience: "All of our troubles began with conversion. We accepted conversion embracing God, yet this very God that we embraced, this Bible is pregnant with evil incarnate, held by a man who faces westward" (D. L. P. Yali-Manisi). Happily, the story is not only of Christian land-stealers, slavers and colonial supporting missionaries. The claims of justice that weigh so heavily in the Scriptures worked their way into the consciousness of the people who read the whole Bible and were awakened to their plight.

There is much to learn from this volume. It seems balanced in its treatment. Missionary leaders can learn from this. All of us will be helped and challenged by acquainting ourselves with the history of this diverse nation.

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*Early Creationist Journals*. Edited by Ronald L. Numbers. New York: Garland, 1995, 629 pp., $100.00. *Creation and Evolution in the Early American Scientific Affiliation.* Edited by Mark A. Kalthoff. New York: Garland, 468 pp., $83.00.

*Early Creationist Journals* contains photo-offset reprints of a series of four anti-evolution journals, originally published between 1937 and 1948, inspired by the vision of Seventh-Day Adventist G. M. Price. The grand purpose of Price's "flood geology" was not merely to oppose naturalistic evolution but to insist that a recent, literal six-day creation of all life on earth was both theologically necessary and scientifically plausible. Price's views are of great historical significance, for they found popular expression in Whitcomb and Morris' *The Genesis Flood* (1961), which has sold over 200,000 copies and is still available in Christian bookstores throughout the country. *Early Creationist Journals* opens with a brief, context-setting introduction by series editor R. L. Numbers, professor of the history of science and medicine at the University of Wisconsin—Madison. The journals reprinted in this volume (the earliest of which are difficult to read due to the inexpensive publication process and the poor quality of the originals) primarily served as a platform for Price and his followers. Present in these documents are the intramural debates among six-day creationists and striking evidence of the movement's foundation in Adventism (quotations from E. G. White often adorn the journals' pages). Yet there is little here that is not well summarized in *The Creationists* (New York: Knopf, 1992), Numbers' comprehensive history of contemporary "scientific creationism."

*Creation and Evolution in the Early American Scientific Affiliation* contains reprints of forty-eight items from the early years of what has become the main professional association for evangelical scientists. The volume begins with a useful overview of the

origins of the ASA by Kalthoff, assistant professor of history at Hillsdale College, distilled from his forthcoming dissertation on the organization's history. The first seven reprints are taken from ASA-sponsored books and pamphlets, all originally published between 1942 and 1950. The remaining forty-one items are reprints from the *Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation*, all published between 1949 and 1961. The articles included illustrate very nicely how ASA scientists worked to relate the tenets of evangelical Christianity to particular aspects of science: astronomy, geology, genetics, biology, paleontology, dating methods, and theories of the origins of life in general and of human life in particular. The articles also show how ASA members wrestled with the issues of Biblical interpretation that emerge from the first chapter of Genesis and how they worked to undercut popular acceptance of Price's teachings.

The best document reprint series are invitations to further research. These, however, have more the feel of source compilations for research already completed. The documents in Kalthoff's volume are marginally more useful than those in Numbers', but only because Kalthoff has not yet published his history of the ASA. Neither volume, however, is worth its cost for any but the largest research libraries. Garland's asking prices for the volumes are laughable, given that they are basically clothbound photocopies on high-quality paper. Besides, the entire run of the *Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation* (of which Kalthoff's volume includes but a portion) is available on microfilm at over a dozen research libraries. Because Numbers' collection is essentially an eleven-year run of periodicals that can be found complete in the library of Andrews University, the scholarly community would have been much better served simply by microfilming these periodicals and placing them on deposit in regional service libraries. As to these Garland reprints, most libraries probably should spend their book budgets on something else. Researchers who need them will be able to find them easily enough through interlibrary loan services, since many research libraries purchase Garland's products without ever asking the cost-benefit question.

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*To Glorify and Enjoy God: A Commemoration of the 350th Anniversary of the Westminster Assembly.* Edited by John L. Carson and David W. Hall. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1994, 338 pp., $32.95.

Compilations of commemorative essays and *Festschriften* often have a random quality about them that diminishes their overall value. Not so with this fine book. Indeed, this well-integrated collection of lectures and sermons, originally delivered in September 1993 at the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC) commemoration of the Westminster Assembly, offers historical-theological treasures for both novice and expert in the Puritan tradition, as well as challenging devotional content suited for serious reflection. The book is coherently organized in three sections covering consecutively the history, products, and major themes of the Assembly. The authors are acknowledged scholars of their subject matter.

D. Hall supplies the introductory essay: an historical review of 150 years of "Westminster Assembly Commemorations," useful not only for its survey of lesser-known yet significant bibliography but also for its insights into the decline of Westminster's influence in the mainline churches. Hall also provides two important appendices: One is a recounting of the "Parliamentary Background of the Assembly," and the other is a narrative "Bibliographical Guide" notable for its judicious assessments. Both will serve

as useful aids to all those inspired to pursue a more comprehensive knowledge of the Assembly.

S. T. Logan, Jr., and W. S. Barker, both accomplished students of the Puritans, provide helpful summaries of "The Context and Work of the Assembly" and "The Men and Parties of the Assembly." Logan furnishes a brief discussion of the "historical, eschatological, and ecclesiastical context of the Assembly," while Barker reminds the reader of the diversity of viewpoints (particularly regarding church government and discipline) that were represented in the Assembly, without ignoring its remarkable theological unity. He then considers four representative members of the Assembly (Gouge, Goodwin, Palmer and Gillespie) as models of "godliness and scholarship" for our own day.

R. M. Norris' contribution on "The Preaching of the Assembly" concludes the first major section of the book and will be of general interest to all students of homiletics in the Reformed tradition. In addition to brief comments on the origins, methods, and purpose of the Puritan sermon, Norris offers an intriguing account of the Puritan justification of their textual-applicatory method of preaching.

W. Spear's fine study of Westminster's doctrine of Scripture shows the influence of W. Whitaker on the Assembly's formulations and exposes the inherent weakness (indeed, untenability) of the Rogers' thesis (which insists that the Confession is not inerrantist). D. F. Kelly's discussion of "The Shorter Catechism" contains a powerful argument for the ongoing importance of catechesis in the Church. W. R. Godfrey's "The Westminster Larger Catechism" assesses the much-neglected longer catechism and provides a rebuttal to T. F. Torrance's influential revisionist interpretation of the theology of the Confession in general and the Larger Catechism in particular, countering Torrance's sweeping assertions with solid analysis and textual evidence.

J. R. de Witt reprises the subject of his book *Jus Divinum* in his lecture on "The Form of Church Government," nuancing some of his earlier interpretations in light of R. Paul's *Assembly of the Lord*. I. H. Murray's excellent appraisal of "The Directory of Public Worship" discusses the classic Puritan emphases on the twofold ministry of word and prayer, the inseparable bond between doctrine and worship, the essential religious significance of the Lord's Day, and the supreme need of the unction of the Holy Spirit.

The final section of the book contains three superb sermons preached by J. Boice, J. Nederhood, and E. Alexander at the NAPARC meetings. Their respective topics are, appropriately, "The Sovereignty of God," "The Pre-eminence of Christ, and "The Application of Redemption." J. Adams' afterword details "The Influence of the Assembly."

This volume will be particularly useful to beginners as an introduction to the context and theology of Westminster as well as its subsequent history and influence. The specialist will here find a stimulating apologetic for an ancient and venerable theological tradition. As appropriate reading for pastors, laypeople, students, and scholars interested in increasing their understanding and appreciation of the Puritan legacy, one can unreservedly commend this tome.

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*John Calvin's Exegesis of the Old Testament.* By David L. Puckett. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1995, 179 pp., $17.00.

This volume is part of the Columbia Series in Reformed Theology, intended to address scholars, pastors, and laypersons. The laypersons envisioned by the series must

be very well grounded indeed—but then Reformed churches have generally tried harder than most to produce such people.

Since Calvin nowhere gives a thorough explanation of his exegetical methods, scholars have expressed a wide diversity of opinions on what he intended to do and whether or not he succeeded. Puckett's "approach is based on [his] belief that Calvin reveals his method most clearly in the reasoning he offers for rejecting the interpretations of others" (p. 13). Though Calvin seldom names specific opponents, he frequently criticizes both Christian allegorists, who saw Christ everywhere in the OT, and Jews, who saw him nowhere. Yet he also adopts exegetical insights from both camps.

Because Calvin was committed to understanding the human side of Scripture, he utilized the new tools of humanistic scholarship, including the study of Hebrew and the Jewish commentators, to explain what OT texts meant to their original authors and readers. He was also convinced that the ultimate Author of Scripture is the Holy Spirit. The Bible, therefore, possesses an inherent unity, and it is entirely appropriate to find Christian meanings in OT passages.

How does Calvin harmonize these two approaches to the OT? Though he despises traditional allegorical methods (as practiced for instance by Origen), he recognizes that the authors of Scripture sometimes used extended metaphors, which might be called allegories. (One sticking point with modern dispensationalists is that he regularly interprets prophecies of the kingdom of Christ in an allegorical fashion.) Calvin also recognizes many divinely intended types of Christ, though he insists that the Christian significance of a passage must neither conflict with nor set aside the meaning it would have had for its first recipients. The Christological intention of the Holy Spirit is always an extension or outgrowth of its historical sense. In the case of direct prophecies relating to Christ, Calvin thinks that fair-minded readers ought to see that they reach far beyond any possible OT fulfillment.

This is an important and helpful study for several reasons. First, hermeneutics has rightly become a hot issue in evangelical circles. There is no sense in affirming an inerrant Bible if you can wash away all its uncomfortable parts by applying inappropriate hermeneutical principles. Second, this study helps to narrow the wedge that some scholars have tried to drive between Calvin and his spiritual descendants. In one of his many substantive footnotes Puckett concludes that Calvin's doctrine of inspiration is much more conservative than some scholars allow (pp. 45–47). Third, the extensive footnotes and bibliography, which include both American and European sources, provide excellent help for those who wish further to pursue the topic. Finally, perhaps this study will encourage a greater appreciation for Calvin's commentaries by pastors. I have found that they are nearly always worth consulting, and I often derive more help for sermon preparation from them than I do from modern works.

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*Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics: A Selection with Introduction.* Edited by Helmut Gollwitzer. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1994, 262 pp., $14.99 paper.

Westminster/John Knox Press has done all teachers of theology and all who might in any way be curious about the theo-logical, Christocentric thinking of K. Barth a great service in reissuing Gollwitzer's selections from the ponderous *Church Dogmatics.* As helpful as, say, *Evangelical Theology* or *Dogmatics in Outline* are as texts for courses related to modern trends in theology, there is nothing like the *Dogmatics*

themselves for theological depth and for stirring, enlightening, surprising and sometimes aggravating argumentation. While one might wish that Gollwitzer include more on this or that issue, a thorough reading of the whole will lead not just to general satisfaction with Gollwitzer's overall format but to amazement at his sensitivity to Barth's own thinking and to Barth's own developing concerns. But Gollwitzer has given yet more. His introductory essay, which presents Barth's desire to "follow after" the Word in its historical context, is most helpful.

With Gollwitzer's introduction, most of the first half of the volume is rightly given over to Barth's interrelated and ultimately unitary emphases on the revelation of God and Jesus Christ. Gollwitzer's selections for and under each theological topic are taken from throughout the *Dogmatics*, and they do not necessarily follow the sequence given therein. Gollwitzer skillfully pieces together what inevitably results in a masterful development of Barth's thought. The same applies to sections on "Creation as Benefit," "The Determination of Man," and "Agape and Eros" among others. But for me the inclusion of Barth's (rarely recognized) formative section on "Nothingness," a topic more at the heart of his theological purpose than most realize, is the final positive selling point of this volume.

The effectiveness of this text for appropriate theology classes is obvious. Gollwitzer's multileveled contribution, through and with Barth's own theological expression, has given us, against all odds, a very useful and high recommended book.

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*Inklings of Reality: Essays Toward a Christian Philosophy of Letters.* By Donald T. Williams. Toccoa Falls: Toccoa Falls College, 1996, 275 pp., $14.00 paper.

Declaring that "Christians have always had to wrestle with what reading means," Williams proposes to look at "several key moments in the history of that wrestling in order to uncover the elements of a Christian philosophy of letters, a Biblical view of reading and its place in the Christian life."

He begins by describing how Thoreau, Frost, and Tolkien awakened him early in his life to this: "If I was going to be a philosopher, I would also have to be a poet." He then, curiously enough, examines Augustine's (a *theologian*!) doubts about belles lettres (a short but excellent analysis) and then goes on to Sidney, whose *Defense of Poesy* he calls "the fountainhead of modern Christian poetics" largely because of its emphasis on the conviction that God, the Maker, has made man, a maker, in his own image. He gives no thought at all to Sidney's didactic view of poetry as rhetorical device or to his view that the poet does not "imitate" nature or history, as Aristotle contended, but esthetically creates a work that "lieth not" because "it not affirmeth." He then examines Calvin's *Institutes* to show that Calvin quoted secular writers (Plato, Cicero, Seneca, *et al.*), not because he agreed with them but because "the ancient writers had stated well or memorably the ideas which Calvin is concerned either to propound or to refute." The chapter on John Foxe's long account of martyrs is a surprising inclusion, but Williams adroitly analyzes Foxe's understanding of the historian's "mission, method, and message" to show that a Biblical consciousness enabled him to make his large book into not merely a dictionary of deaths but a critical examination of the meaning of the gospel in history through the depiction of countless martyrdoms. His chapter on the Puritans R. Baxter and J. Bunyan rescues them from unpoetic gloom and prosaic dullness, but it is unoriginal.

The chapter on G. Herbert is the best in the book. Williams shows that Herbert's calling as a poet "is both earlier and more basic than his calling to the ministry." He develops the view that Herbert's poetry, although addressed to God, never forgets the overhearers of these complaints, praises and supplications—the reader. In addition, Herbert's carefully crafted images—taken from the Bible, but also from society—are sharp and graphic, so that just about anyone who is Biblically conscious can understand.

Which introduces not a flaw but an incompleteness in the book. What is the contemporary critic who has no Biblical consciousness to do when he reads Herbert? Or what is he to do if he *is* informed by Christian doctrine and letters—but as he reads Goncharov or Kundera he has no awareness of modern secularism? Williams, quoting J. Edwards, declares that the insightful Christian reader has the advantage: "Their reason was sanctified." Here is the crux of the issue: Williams rightly notes that much of so-called Christian criticism is by critics who merely happen to be Christian; their theology, their beliefs, their faith seem to have no relationship to their methodology or conclusions. His book is drenched with Biblical allusion, belief and creed, and it does indeed provide an exciting wrestling match—with Christian works! So Williams is right, I think, to use the image of God in man the maker as a basis for understanding how and why poets make poems; for a critic to receive the text, however, instead of allegedly creating it he or she needs the doctrine of the incarnation, by which he or she serves the text, attends to it, lives it, without any meanings coming from anywhere except from the text. Then wrestling might produce not just inklings or suggestions but real, whole, tested understanding of both creative artistry and critical response.

This is an excellent book written in clear, clean, crisp prose with orderly argument, balanced judgment, and appropriate documentation. For that reason it deserves a larger audience than it will get from its small college publisher (although we are grateful for their issuing it). The only misreading I discovered was Williams' one-sided judgment that T. S. Eliot thought poetry to be "the expression of feeling and emotion." Of course. But Eliot clearly contended that "poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality." Williams' own poetry, included as interludes between chapters, illustrates the truth of Eliot's dictum.

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*Beyond Liberalism and Fundamentalism: How Modern and Postmodern Philosophy Set the Theological Agenda.* By Nancey Murphy. Valley Forge: Trinity, 1996, 162 pp., $20.00.

The thesis of Murphy's book is that "philosophy of the modern period is largely responsible for the bifurcation of Protestant Christian thought" into liberalism and conservatism (p. 1). Murphy contends that the theological method of both contemporary conservatism and liberalism has been shaped by Enlightenment rationality. A. McGrath, in *A Passion for Truth*, also contends that modern conservative evangelical thought has been shaped by Enlightenment rationality through Scottish commonsense realism, of which it needs to be purged. Murphy, however, goes a step further. In order to respond coherently to the secular challenge, Christians made use of Enlightenment foundational epistemology. However, there were only two foundational responses possible: one based on Scripture, the other on experience. Through this

apologetic beginning, foundationalism crept into the theological structure of modern theology and has resulted in the present bifurcation into conservatism and liberalism.

Foundationalism is a system of knowledge stemming from Descartes, in which knowledge is built on a solid foundation of "indubitable beliefs available to each individual." All knowledge must ultimately be justified by a foundation of belief that cannot be called into question. Murphy argues that foundationalism entered conservative theology through J. Locke, T. Reid (founder of Scottish common-sense realism), and the old Princeton theology. This view follows Locke in claiming that rational proofs for God's existence and for Scripture's being divine revelation establish Scripture as an indubitable foundation of objective facts upon which theology can be built. Foundationalism entered liberal theology as a result of Hume's attack on Locke's rational basis for holding Scripture as foundational. Alternate rational methods, such as historical criticism, emerged in the 19th century to salvage truth in Scripture but were finally abandoned in favor of experience. In liberal thinking, experience serves as an adequate foundation because it is thought to be unchallengeable and universally accessible. With experiential foundationalists, such as Schleiermacher, Scripture becomes the first floor, not the foundation.

Murphy continues her analysis of the two approaches with each view's concept of language, divine action, and relationship with science. The "outside-in" epistemology of conservatives accords with a referential view of religious language (propositions about spiritual realities), divine intervention, and commensurability with science (religious language depicts scientific truth). The "inside-out" epistemology of liberals accords with an expressive view of religious language (symbolic or metaphorical expressions of religious attitudes), divine immanence, and incommensurability with science (religious language only depicts religious truths). In the second half of the book, Murphy develops linguistic holism (speech-act theory) and metaphysical holism (causation from top down and bottom up) as alternatives for the impasse created by the divergent approaches to religious language and by the atomistic/reductionistic view of reality.

Murphy contends that both conservatism and liberalism have failed to live up to their expectations. Just as there is no way rationally to establish the Scriptures as divine revelation, there is no way to establish that a religious experience is an experience of God. The foundations turn out not to be indubitable. Rather, they are "dependent upon the structure they are intended to justify" (p. 90). That is, all philosophical arguments are presupposition-laden, and all empirical data are theory-laden. Murphy argues that the failure of the modern Enlightenment project also spells the failure of modern conservatism and liberalism. She turns to recent developments in postmodern thought to guide the theological task in the next era. By postmodernism Murphy is not referring to the literary deconstructionism of Derrida but to the Anglo-American postmodernism that challenges the underlying assumptions about justifying truth claims and an atomistic view of reality. In place of atomistic foundationalism, Murphy follows W. V. O. Quine's suggestion of an epistemological holism that views knowledge as a supporting web of theory-dependent data that impinges on experience only at the boundaries. Quinean holism is not based on indubitable beliefs or on a foundation-up structure. Rather, it is formed by a web of beliefs that differ only in the distance from the experiential boundary and that interact with neighboring beliefs and eventually with the whole. Murphy argues that "justification consists in showing that problematic beliefs are closely tied to beliefs that we have no good reason to call into question" (p. 94).

Murphy also draws upon improvements on Quine's holism by R. Thiemann and A. MacIntyre. Thiemann "recognizes a historical dimension in the justification of beliefs" and the congruity between belief and doing (pp. 97–98). Thus Thiemann's

nonfoundationalism is located within Christian belief and practice. For Murphy, MacIntyre's epistemology, which she calls "historicist-holism," is the most useful for theological purposes. MacIntyre argues that traditions are shaped by accepting some authority, such as the Bible for Christianity, in which one lives, thinks, and applies to the current situation. Thus tradition becomes socially embodied, and this embodiment contributes to theology along with the formative texts.

What if there is no rationally provable and universally accessible foundation? Does everything collapse into relativism and religious pluralism? Is there no adequate way to discern among rival webs of equally coherent beliefs? Murphy, following MacIntyre, suggests a new approach to apologetics in which one tradition can emerge superior by finding a solution to an epistemological crisis that is in continuity with its tradition and formative texts while its rivals fail to do so. Thus traditions fail "by falling into incoherence" or by acknowledging beliefs that are unable to be justified (p. 108). Even though the justification of a tradition will involve a certain amount of nonlinear (circular) reasoning, it is not relativistic or fideistic in grounding its justification solely from within. Another question conservative evangelicals might raise concerns absolute universal truths. But would an evangelical version of postmodernism need deny the existence of universal truths, or only the possibility of establishing them through rational argumentation?

Murphy's thesis will be problematic for some conservative evangelicals as it reformulates the way in which Scriptural authority is construed. It would call for engaging in a new form of apologetics and rethinking basic assumptions. On the positive side, it does present a fresh start for theology. It aims to bring unity to a fractured Church by dismantling the cause behind theological bifurcation and thereby unveiling a spectrum of Christian beliefs rather than a dichotomy. *Beyond Liberalism and Fundamentalism* is an important book that must be honestly engaged by the wider evangelical community.

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*Many Gods, Many Lords: Christianity Encounters World Religions.* By Daniel B. Clendenin. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995, 189 pp., $11.99 paper.

With *Many Gods, Many Lords*, Clendenin (formerly a visiting professor of Christian Studies at Moscow State University and currently an IVCF staff member at Stanford University) offers a clear yet measured evangelical perspective on the contemporary problem of religious diversity. In the opening chapter, Clendenin provides a helpful summary of the now-standard prolegomena issues for a Christian theology of religions. Included are explications of the three ideal-typical paradigms for constructing a theology of religions: exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism. The chapter ends with a candid statement of Clendenin's two controlling ideas: (1) a "confident optimism" in God's loving and just character that ensures that he will treat all persons fairly, and (2) a commitment to "theological modesty" with regard to his own conclusions.

The second chapter is comprised largely of an exposition and critique of various atheistic interpretations of religions. Here the theories of Comte, Feuerbach, Freud, Marx, and Durkheim come under scrutiny. Clendenin argues that, in contrast to atheism's negative assessment of all religion on one hand and pluralism's "naively optimistic and uncritical" acceptance of all religion on the other, a mediating position of

"Christian realism" is called for wherein human religiosity is viewed as "an ambiguous mixture of good and evil" (p. 58).

In the third chapter, the exclusivist, inclusivist, and pluralist paradigms are further delineated. Representative thinkers and common planks are noted in order to flesh out each of these ideal types. Chapter 4 transitions into an examination of the pluralist paradigm. Here central features of this paradigm—including its historical presuppositions, inherent epistemological relativism, and philosophically questionable approach to religious truth claims—are subjected to an incisive analysis that serves to lay bare a variety of the theoretical shortcomings of the pluralist enterprise. Evaluations of pluralist approaches to Christology, soteriology, and interreligious dialogue round out this searching critque.

In the final two chapters Clendenin moves to the constructive phase of his project, which he roots in the Biblical text. He prefaces this step by stating two guiding criteria: (1) the need to maintain the Biblical tension between hope in God's universal salvific will and the exclusive particularity of salvation through Jesus Christ, and (2) the practical imperative of the great commission. Chapter 5 provides an analysis of the OT perspective on other religions. Scriptural truths regarding the goodness of creation, the effects of fallen humanity, and the ambiguity of human religion set the conceptual stage. Following this, Clendenin weaves a strong statement of God's unique soteriological relationship to his covenant people, Israel, with a sustained emphasis on God's universal salvific will—including his saving designs for pagan peoples outside the bounds of Israel's special revelation. In short, regarding OT pagan saints like Abel, Enoch, Noah, Melchizedek, Job, Rahab, and Ruth, their "knowledge of Christ was the least, but their saving faith was the greatest" (p. 125). Thus, while the term itself makes few appearances here, this chapter clearly implies that the OT contains a very real strand of soteriological "inclusivism."

In chap. 6 Clendenin turns to the NT. He begins by noting that this final chapter does not cover the full range of NT data but rather focuses primarily upon one strand of evidence: the "chronicles of disbelief" regarding the gospel message. Specifically, Clendenin highlights two types of passages imbedded in the NT: (1) those that record various instances where people's response to Jesus' own message is characterized by a decisive lack of faith, and (2) those that describe the persecution, social marginalization, and intellectual scorn heaped upon Jesus' disciples for their proclamation of the "exclusivist message" of the gospel (p. 156).

*Many Gods, Many Lords* serves as a helpful introduction to the problem of religious diversity in the contemporary world and the attendant implications for an evangelical Christian theology of religions. The opening call for "theological modesty" is a welcome Biblical corrective to the highly-charged polemical atmosphere of many current intraevangelical debates on these matters. The strongest line of critique in the book is directed toward the pluralist paradigm. While a few points of caricature crop up along the way (e.g. the charge that "in pluralism it is impossible for the religionist to be wrong" [p. 50] is really not reflective of most pluralist projects and is better directed toward the explicit religious relativist), the critique is generally sound. In the end it effectively reveals that, with regard to the search for a philosophically credible and Biblically faithful Christian theology of religions, the pluralist path is a dead-end street.

Finally, this book extends a number of insights that will prove useful in the construction of an evangelical theology of religions. When it comes to the question of which most troubles the evangelical discussion today—"exclusivism" or "inclusivism"—Clendenin moves cautiously. While the discussion of the OT material seems to ignite an inclusivistic hope, his treatment of the NT serves to tame this same optimism. This

pattern is in keeping with his prior methodological commitment to maintain the "biblical tension" between *universal* hope and the *particularity* of Jesus Christ (p. 119). On the pressing question of what, more specifically, we can expect regarding the possibility and/or extent of salvation for those who have never heard the gospel, Clendenin's response is best categorized as an optimistic agnosticism. Refreshingly, and in keeping with his own call for "theological modesty," this book makes no pretense to being the final word on an evangelical theology of religions. Rather, it serves to warn the reader of several alluring and well-traveled cul-de-sacs, to point instead toward a truly Biblical and evangelical alternative, and to leave the door open for further discussion on specifics.

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*Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics.* By William Lane Craig. Wheaton: Crossway, 1994, 350 pp., $15.99 paper.

In his penetrating essay "Christianity and Culture," J. G. Machen expressed well a concern that needs to be taken even more seriously in our day: "False ideas are the greatest obstacles to the reception of the gospel. We may preach with all the fervor of a reformer yet succeed only in winning a straggler here and there." Therefore evangelicals intellectually engaging their culture and critiquing its flawed philosophies are necessary to promote broader reception of the gospel. This is why evangelism in Europe is so difficult—the Christian worldview is considered false and irrelevant. With this concern in mind, Craig offers us a significant and substantial apologetics book. Utilizing his broad knowledge of recent research and scholarship, he has revised his ten-year-old book on apologetics to give us a much-strengthened and much-needed work, which would make for an excellent textbook in colleges and seminaries.

This is not just another apologetics text. Craig's strengths in philosophy, history and science, as well as his personal experience in evangelism and debates, give this book a breadth and strength that some other apologetics books do not have. Craig emphasizes offensive apologetics (which builds the positive case for Christianity) rather than defensive apologetics (which nullifies objections against Christianity, like the problem of evil). Each chapter gives (1) historical background to the topic of discussion (which most other apologetics books ignore), (2) the development of a Christian apologetic, and (3) a practical application of the material. (Here is one example of application: Although critiquing a noted scientist like S. Hawking might seem presumptuous, the theist can point out that when a scientist shifts to metaphysics, valid criticism may be given by *anyone*, not merely by scientists.)

Craig begins by asserting that the Christian *knows* his faith is true by the internal witness of the Spirit, but he *shows* others that his faith is credible by giving evidence and utilizing tests for truth (logical consistency and experiential relevance). His chapter on arguments for the existence of God gives an excellent and much-needed critique of competing "scientific" models to account for the universe's existence (steady-state or oscillating models) and design (the anthropic-principle/the world-ensemble hypothesis). He rebuts the metaphysics (despite the cloak of "strict science") of leading scientific minds like Hawking and A. Grünbaum.

His chapter on the problem of historical knowledge provides a fine response to postmodern relativism in historical study, and the following chapter on the historical reliability of the NT, contributed by NT scholar C. Blomberg, effectively shows that

the text and historical portions of the NT are reliable and that many of the alleged contradictions in the gospels can be satisfactorily harmonized.

Craig's chapter on the self-understanding of Jesus makes clear that C. S. Lewis' trilemma of Jesus as "Lord, liar, or lunatic" must be abandoned in light of recent NT scholarship and the publicity of the Jesus Seminar. However, contemporary historical scholarship cannot ignore Jesus' self-understanding as God's unique Son, his claim to act and speak with divine authority, and his claim to determine people's destiny before God.

Showing his greatest strength, Craig finally summarizes the three main lines of argument for the bodily resurrection of Jesus: (1) the fact of the empty tomb, (2) the resurrection appearances, and (3) the origin of the Christian faith. (For a scholarly expansion on these arguments, see his *Assessing the New Testament Evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus* [Edwin Mellen], which is undoubtedly *the* definitive work on the subject in the English language.)

In light of the breadth and depth it offers, Craig's book deserves wide readership. It is both rich and enriching, and I enthusiastically recommend it.

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*Systematic Theology: Doctrine* (Vol. 2). By James W. McClendon, Jr. Nashville: Abingdon, 1994, 536 pp., $24.95.

With *Systematic Theology: Doctrine*, McClendon has brought to fruition the long-awaited second leg of his prospective three-volume work. Herein McClendon's purpose is to present the "(ana-)baptist vision" of what the Church must teach if it is really to *be* the Church in *present* circumstances, and thereby to make clear the communitarian view of authentic Christianity. With this vision as hermeneutical key, McClendon seeks to give holistic expression to theological reflection in a way that is truly evangelical, i.e. gospel-speaking in current thought modes. As a result, Scriptural, historical and contemporary modes of theologico-philosophical thought play formative, constructive and substantial roles in this work.

*Systematic Theology: Doctrine* is a remarkable, interesting and thought-provoking treatise on the faith of the Church from a consciously baptistic vantage point. It is noteworthy for its relative respect for earlier theological views that have stood outside the stream of the radical Reformation. It is especially remarkable for the apparently disparate elements that McClendon endeavors to bring together in forming his unitary vision of the Christian conversionist-discipleship way, the way that follows Jesus Christ. His baptistic vision partakes much, one way or another, of (e.g.) the theological-eschatological emphases and methods of Pannenberg and especially Moltmann, of Latin American liberation theology, and most prominently of narrative-theological methods (of which he is something of a founder), as well as the historical-theological-communitarian concerns of the anabaptist tradition.

Apart from an important opening chapter, "What is Doctrine?", and a closing chapter, "An Essay on Authority," the work literally unfolds in what appears at first to be an economic Trinitarian manner: 1. The Rule of God; 2. The Identity of Jesus Christ; 3. The Fellowship of the Spirit. But, like the "trinitarian" appearance of Tillich's *Systematic Theology*, this reflects a kind of "trinitarian" movement of God but is *not* reflective of Trinitarian relations to, in and for the world in any classical theological sense. Herein, following Moltmann, McClendon finds it necessary to, so to speak, be-

gin with the "end," the reign or kingdom of God. There is much to commend this approach because the various theological elements only truly find themselves, in and of one another, as clearly observed in God's ultimate purpose, especially as grounded in the *telos* of God's kingdom. Thus outcome is set as methodologically prior to process in the "already and not yet" of the experience of the Christian community. "The New in Christ" (McClendon's replacement for the usual Christian emphasis on "salvation") precedes "Creation and Suffering" and "The Saving Cross," etc., in order to give theological expression to the narrative of the redemptive story of God for us.

There is *much* to appreciate in this volume, which McClendon has long and painfully labored to produce. Though reflecting a scholasticism of its own, this theological essay works continuously to break free of all the timeworn theological compartmentalizations and thereby to try to bring radical reformational fresh air into the Church's discourse. McClendon's handling of classical theological loci, such as kingdom, sin, reconciliation, salvation, etc., for all its relative brevity, gives a distinctive call to the Church to approach the elements of "God," "Kingdom" and "Redemption" in Scripturally perspectival ways (like the facets of a gem) instead of in logico-sequential ways, which often lose the Biblical dynamism of the reality involved. This can be observed in a concentrated way in his approach to sin and salvation via ("catechetically" altered or developed) conceptual-language clusters, terms that together reveal an aspect of the larger notion of the "new in Christ." Also, McClendon's vision of community, and the role of theology as the teaching of the faith in community, is a much needed formative element in the evangelical theological task.

But some of these strengths as formulated by McClendon are also found to be at the heart of many of my gravest concerns. Let me mention but a few. The decisive and formative role given to contemporary thought forms and the constructive role given to the individual believing community in the theological task lead to the relativizing of all theological outcomes, a product seen in an extreme in Schleiermacher. While all theologizing falls short and is in need of constructive criticism, it is the pursuit of the objectively given truth of God. McClendon is very willing to give equal weight to the ontological Nicene and Chalcedonian theological outcomes and to the historicist theological denials of the nineteenth century. Both are regarded as but developments in Christian theology, and both are largely overthrown in favor of his own narrative-immanentalist expressions. Upon such relativistic historical-theological bases McClendon speaks of the overthrow of the doctrine of original sin. Instead he will refer regularly back to the Scriptures as *somehow* authoritative in giving content to our theological expression. The Jesus story is regarded as the conjunction of the story of God's self-giving and of human reception and response. In his story, the story of the risen Jesus, we are said to be confronted with God's own authoritative claim upon us. This seems to be simultaneously a shift of Chalcedon from the man Jesus to the story and a renewed use of the Bultmannian Jesus, who is raised into the *kērygma* as the power and presence of God to each hearer (though McClendon may well believe in an actual, historical resurrection). His affirmation of the divine in relation to Christ and the appropriateness of Thomas' "My Lord and my God" (p. 290) *appears*, in the larger argument, not wholly dissimilar in principle from D. M. Baillie's "God was in Christ." This may underestimate McClendon's intention, but it arises from his ambiguity.

All of this is not easy to detect, and McClendon's ambiguity on the classical theological questions/issues/doctrines is pervasive—reflecting in part his *proper* unwillingness to give easy and one-sided answers to the profoundest elements at the foundations of the Church's faith. Yet there are indicators that McClendon does not want to be clearly understood at a number of critical theological junctures, and his narrative approach and ambiguous use of terms and phrases are effective tools to

steer readers around his own conclusions and to direct them into a "new way" of thinking out the issues. His expression of the doctrine of the Trinity is a fair case in point. He repeatedly belittles the classic Christian creeds in outmoded Harnackian terms as alien Hellenistic impositions on Christian thought. Also God's Triunity has little formative and substantial place in McClendon's theology, and what he does say *seems* to portray an evolving, modalistic God who is to be regarded "as Father" in this respect, "as Son" in that respect and "as Spirit" in another. These are reckoned as ways of referring to "God's active presencing." He occasionally uses Barthian Trinitarian insights only to lose the heart of the point and, in the end, the Trinitarian basis of all redemption, of all theology, of all the kingdom—indeed, of all community in Christ. As McClendon finally puts the matter, the Trinitarian doctrine is "an encoding of the biblical narrative of God," apparently a unitarian or modalistic God whose story must be told in aspectival triplicate.

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*Our Triune God: A Biblical Portrayal of the Trinity.* By Peter Toon. Wheaton: BridgePoint, 1996, 271 pp., n.p. paper.

There are at least two ways Toon's new book on the Trinity is especially significant: in its treatments of "precise language" and "inclusive language" regarding formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity.

Throughout history those who have portrayed the Trinity in its Biblical sense engage in the "delicate balancing act" of avoiding the two extremes of modalism and tritheism. Tritheism or Arianism, according to Toon, is not as much of a threat today as modalism or Sabellianism. In other words, the modern Church is more influenced by the ancient heresy of Sabellius than of Arius, although the Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons, for example, continue to perpetuate Arius' denial of the Trinity.

Whereas the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity makes a distinction (of persons), Arianism makes a separation (of nature) and modalism a conflation (of persons). That is, the Trinitarian formula is "plurality in unity": three persons (*hypostaseis*), one nature (*ousia*); the Arian three persons, three natures; and the Sabellian one person, one nature. While imprecise language can lead to the distortion of polytheism (Arianism/tritheism) rather than to Biblical Trinitarian (mono)theism, the greatest danger today, Toon points out, is pantheism or panentheism stemming from Sabellianism/modalism. While, in the past, modalism emphasizing transcendence alone resulted in deism or unitarianism, Toon argues that imprecise and/or inclusive language regarding the Trinity now leads to a modalistic overemphasis on immanence resulting in pantheism or panentheism.

Toon sees a subtle correlation between the modern emphasis on individualism and current indications of modalism and pantheism in the Church, or at least in some of the people in the Church. Individualism, which makes everything equal, ironically blurs the line of distinction between any two given individuals in the one creation. Modalism results from not distinguishing the three persons in the one Creator. Pantheism follows with no distinction between creation and Creator. This is the attack from within the Church as a result of imprecise language.

For example, whereas traditionally the NT name of God includes the repeated definite article to emphasize the three distinct persons ("God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit"), today the articles often are left out, which, Toon claims, opens the

door to the possibility that only one person (in three modes or with three names) is being referred to ("God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit"). This corresponds to the famous Granville Sharp rule (1798) in Greek in which the presence of more than one article in a series of nouns signifies that the nouns refer to different individuals. The ETS constitution, incidentally, lacks the articles in its (doctrinal basis) statement on the Trinity but makes up for it by inserting the word "Trinity": "God is a Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit."

The attack from without, or outside the Church, Toon contends, comes from feminist theology and is "a crucial part of a larger attempt to dismantle the received linguistic structure of Christianity" (p. 21). Toon refers to the "inclusivist" linguistic crisis, in which grammatical gender in language is erroneously equated with human (physical) sexuality in life, as if the latter is no more important than the former (p. 22). Just as there is "holy order" within the Trinity and yet equality of divine persons "in terms of essential being," so are there order and equality in the creatures that the Creator made male and female (p. 240). Moreover "the content of what Fatherhood [or Sonship] means is wholly revealed"—even though the words used in naming the divine persons are taken from human language (p. 147).

Toon is to be commended for his courage to do the politically incorrect, right thing and to make the case for the "need for precise language" and the "rejection of inclusive language" (pp. 236–241) in the effort toward deeper understanding and worship of the "Blessed, Holy, and Undivided Trinity."

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*Unmasking the Cults.* By Alan W. Gomes. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995, 93 pp., $4.99 paper.

*Unmasking the Cults* is one volume of sixteen in the *Zondervan Guide to Cults and Religious Movements.* It is broken up into six sections. For ease of use, all six sections have headers at the top of the odd pages. The headers—which function as a "you are here" map—include the titles of all six parts with only the appropriate one highlighted. All sections are written in outline form for brevity and include (except the statistics section) concise answers for Christians to use.

Part 1 tackles the question "What is a cult?" This section not only defines the word "cult" but also anticipates objections to the definition and gives possible answers. Part 2 gives general statistical estimates for the number of cultists worldwide and includes specific membership, growth rate, literature distribution and financial holdings for Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses. Part 3 deals with theology. Here Gomes briefly explains some cultic beliefs on the Trinity, salvation, the life and work of Christ, exclusivism, the end times, Biblical interpretation and terminology, and the authority of Scripture. The sociology section, part 4, makes up the largest part of the book—33 pages. Gomes carefully navigates the limitations of social science interaction as he adequately dissects the areas of cultic brainwashing and its sociological characteristics/practices, whether real or imagined. Parts 5 and 6 deal with "Why Do People Join Cults?" and "Keeping People Out of the Cults" respectively. These sections offer helpful insight into the social evangelization of cultists and practical tips for keeping others from joining cults.

There are two things, however, that I think need to be corrected. The first has to do with Armstrongism (the Worldwide Church of God). Future editions of *Unmasking*

*the Cults* should include updated information on how the Worldwide Church of God has swung to orthodoxy, thus separating it from its founder. Second, I take issue with Gomes' statement that "all Christian denominations—whether Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, or Protestant—agree on the essential core." Most evangelicals consider the doctrine of justification a core doctrine. But the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox do not maintain the Biblical doctrine of justification—which in a nutshell is defined as salvation by grace alone through faith alone on account of Christ alone. Recently a number of books have been written that demonstrate Gomes' statement to be false: *Faith Alone* by R. C. Sproul; *Roman Catholics and Evangelicals: Agreements and Differences* by N. Geisler and R. Mackenzie; *Protestants & Catholics: Do They Now Agree?* by J. Ankerberg and J. Weldon; and *Roman Catholicism: Evangelical Protestants Analyze What Divides and What Unites Us* with J. Armstrong as general editor.

On the whole, Gomes' book will serve the Christian community well. It is a very useful, compact reference guide to some basic cultic mind-sets and beliefs.

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*Baptists around the World: A Comprehensive Handbook.* Edited by Albert W. Wardin. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995, xxxii + 474, n.p.

Wardin has put together a concise encyclopedia of Baptist history and statistical information. This marks the first time that such a worldwide study of Baptists has been attempted. As D. Lotz writes in the foreword, it is "a quick reference work to give a bird's eye view of Baptists in every conceivable geographical area of the world" (p. xxviii). The *Handbook* gives information on 180 members of the Baptist World Alliance as well as many other independent and separatist Baptist groups. It not only treats the countries where there is a significant Baptist presence such as the United States and England but also others like Israel, Vietnam, Yemen, Turkey, Bosnia and French Guiana, where there are only a handful of churches. By referring to all known Baptist bodies, many of which are in the Two-thirds World, this *Handbook* seeks to remedy some of the deficiencies of past histories. Wardin hopes that this "volume will be useful in introducing Baptists to each other and the public at large . . . [as well as help Baptists] in developing fellowship, in encouraging intercession for each other, and in the promotion and study of missions" (p. xxxii).

The *Handbook* begins with two brief introductory chapters, one on Baptist identity and the other on Baptist expansion and mission. The first chapter mentions not only those principles that make Baptists a group distinct from other Christians but also some concerns and contentions among Baptists. In this chapter Wardin states that one of the greatest threats to a distinct Baptist identity is the propensity of newly formed Baptist churches to establish themselves without "Baptist" in their name. In the second chapter Wardin gives a brief history of Baptist growth from the eighteenth century to the present. He notes that presently 23% of Baptists live outside the British Isles and North America whereas only 4.5% lived outside of these areas in 1852. He also notes that there has been significant Baptist growth since World War II with an estimated 37.3 million Baptists around the world, 75% of whom are in the United States.

The rest of the *Handbook* gives the historical and statistical information concerning Baptists of every country in which they are presently found. Wardin has set these countries under one of five geographical divisions: Africa, Asia/Oceania, Europe/Eur-

asia, Latin America/Caribbean, and Northern America with further regional subdivisions to enable the reader easy access to information. (There is no subject or person index.) The histories of each country, though brief, do include the most relevant information, including pertinent political history, Baptist magazines published, seminaries and schools founded, and missions started. At the end of each history there are brief but useful annotated bibliographies to facilitate further study. Some of the contributors to the history sections include such men as D. Bebbington, G. Rawlyk, R. Pierard and B. Shelley (approximately 75% of the histories were written by Wardin). The statistical information for each country in most cases is an up-to-date listing of all known Baptist groups with each group's church and person membership figures. At the end of every subsection a list of Baptist and Baptist-related missions is given for each country including the year of entry.

Other features of the *Handbook* include maps showing the countries in which Baptists are presently found, a time line of Baptists in the United States, a distribution of Baptists in the United States by region and state (listing each group, its membership and churches), and Baptist world statistics by continent and by country.

This *Handbook* contains a wealth of historical and statistical information for anyone interested in Baptist studies. It is a must reference work for every seminary or religious studies library. It will prove to be a helpful reference for Church historians, theologians, pastors and laypersons interested in Baptist history and its presence in the world. I also recommend it for anyone interested in surveying what the Lord has done through Baptists in the world, past and present.

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*Savior or Servant: Putting Government Back in Its Place.* By David W. Hall. Oak Ridge: Kuyper Institute, 1996, 399 pp., $23.95/$18.95.

In this work, Hall has produced another of his politically and Biblically conservative treatises on the role of government from a Reformed perspective. As with his previous works, this book maintains that because the statist models of government as presently practiced have failed, a Biblically-based set of norms for government should be considered by our policy makers. But this is *not* a theonomistic work, though some of its ideas run parallel to theonomistic thought. Foundational to the entire work are three assertions: (1) God, who created the state, has also revealed how it should operate, (2) the Creator of the state knows best both how it works and its limitations, and (3) "the most helpful ally the state can have is a strong, biblically-based church, living out the fullness of the gospel in word and deed" (p. 7).

Hall begins with a fairly thorough overview of the Biblical record regarding the role and limits of government. This nearly 150-page portion of the work begins in Genesis and unfolds the various types and responsibilities of government from the smallest unit (the family) to the rule of the Roman government in NT times. A separate chapter on the issues raised in Romans 13 ends the Biblical presentation. The next 150 pages are an historical review of the major Christian theologians and philosophers who dealt with the role of government. Included are Constantine, Augustine, Calvin and Locke, as well as moderns such as Barth, Niebuhr, Thielicke and Moltmann. The book ends with what might be the most interesting part as Hall considers and answers a series of questions presented in an almost catechetic fashion. Woven into this well-done question-and-answer format is a subheading, "The Pervasiveness

of Ideology." At this point readers who might be as uncomfortable as I was with some of Hall's assertions and hermeneutic are reminded of the obvious source of this tension: Each theological system implies an ideology that significantly affects the adherent's outlook on matters concerning the role and limits of government. Thus, as with many divisive issues in modern theology, the answers to questions lie with the root hermeneutic and related theological grid through which the questioner strains the information. While this is an obvious statement, readers too often fail to account for this vital key when issues are discussed. A mild caution is in order here, however, as Hall tends to over-generalize when he makes his observations by presenting theological systems that differ from his own with a less than mainstream outlook. Consequently, some competing systems are presented in their most extreme form. Even so, irrespective of most people's theological grid, application of OT covenantal government policy and structure is at best uncomfortable and often perilous. Hall's work is no exception to this rule as in some cases structures revealed specifically to the people and times of the covenantal nation of Israel are held up as the normative model. Further, a few either extra-Biblical restrictions or outright errors are present, such as the assertion that Lev 20:11–21 prescribed the death penalty for polygamy.

Hall's decision to cover so much material and so many thousands of years of governmental practice, philosophy, and policy provides this book's main strengths and weakness. As strengths, Hall gives the reader some frame of reference, some poignant questions to consider, and some empirical data supporting his three main assertions from every era and genre of Biblical study as well as throughout the history of the Church. While the reader may not agree with the observations Hall makes, the reader must grapple with the questions and model Hall proposes if a Biblical outlook is the goal. As a weakness, Hall's overarching argument is sometimes lost in the din of the many particulars he lists as he works his way through each era. A myriad of government policies, philosophies, and practices are treated in this fashion, creating a shotgun effect. A well-aimed rifle, such as Hall's *Welfare Reformed*, would have more effectively presented his case.

Overall, Hall's work provides an excellent starting point in a "post-statist" discussion. On the whole, the strengths of this work well outweigh the weakness and make it one that people who are concerned with the believer's role in and reaction to government will want on their shelf. Hall is to be commended for asking tough questions and then attempting to provide Biblical answers.

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*Hurrying Toward Zion: Universities, Divinity Schools, and American Protestantism.* By Conrad Cherry. Bloomington: Indiana University, 1995, 359 pp., $24.95.

The past decade has seen a number of excellent books about religion and higher education—the best by G. Marsden (*The Soul of the American University*) and J. Pelikan (*The Idea of the University*). However, none of them does specifically what this book does, which is to explain "the Anglo-American Protestant vision that inspired the founding of the schools examined in this book" (p. x). These schools were the five non- or interdenominational divinity schools at Chicago, Harvard, Vanderbilt and Yale, and Union Theological Seminary in New York City, and six Methodist schools: Boston University School of Theology, Candler School of Theology at Emory Univer-

sity, Claremont School of Theology, Drew Theological School, Duke Divinity School, and Perkins School of Theology.

All of these seminaries are (or were) related to huge and "mainline" universities, and Cherry chronicles their foundings and histories with accuracy and fidelity. It is all here—the visions, the personalities, the mistakes, the conflicts, the changes. The boards and faculties of these schools hoped that the Protestant faith and religious vision embodied in the curriculum and professors would be the unifying focus and the animating principle that would synthesize all the other branches of learning. After carefully tracing the development of these schools, Cherry concludes that "no unit on the academic landscape has been capable of unifying these major subcultures and their hundreds of specialties. Certainly the divinity school, as it has been surpassed in power and influence by other university programs on most campuses, has enjoyed no opportunity to serve as a unifying force within the multiversity" (p. 287). Yet he also declares that "for all its misguided triumphalism and imperialism, the Pan-Protestant vision of divinity education led to unbiased scholarship, the integrity of the life of the mind, and the scholarly explanation of the unusual" (p. 298). Why, then, has he written this history, since he contends that "too many features of the vision are now obsolete, too many of the original strategies proved to be ineffectual, too many changes in higher education and in American culture as a whole have worked their effects during the last hundred years for the history to dictate the future" (p. 300)?

Because, he says, we have learned from the history of these schools, and therefore in the future we should not "hurry toward Zion" but perhaps sing our song in a strange land both plangently and prophetically. This book should be required reading for the boards, presidents and faculties of denominational schools, independent seminaries and university divinity schools, for it gives us a judicious, fair-minded history of how things developed to our present situation. It has been a bumpy ride, and Cherry is an historian *par excellence* as he recounts in winsome and crisp prose what has happened.

I profited much from Cherry's account of how things proceeded from W. R. Harper's original vision that "the specialized studies of religion in divinity schools was to be a major strategy for expanding the influence of Protestantism into broad reaches of American culture" to our present situation in the multiversity where "the vision of William Rainey Harper and other founders needs to be examined for both its unrealistic expectations and its energizing power. Both the misgivings and the inspirations of hindsight can be pertinent to building for the future" (p. 300).

A pastor who has never studied at a university to scrutinize and account for his faith and calling, and a professor at a university divinity school who has never pastored so that he might discover what the passibleness or impassibleness of God or the compossibility of enclitical entities mean in human life—both should read this book.

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*The Fire in the Equations: Science, Religion, and the Search for God.* By Kitty Ferguson. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994, 308 pp., n.p.

I have read a number of books on the philosophical and religious implications of modern science. This is one of the best, but like the statue in Nebuchadnezzar's dream the head of gold rests on clay feet.

Ferguson does an excellent job of summarizing the assumptions, limits and conclusions of modern science. She begins with a discussion of how we see things. We may think of a chair (1) as a common-sense object, (2) as a collection of elementary particles and empty space (the physicist's viewpoint), (3) as an image in our individual minds, or (4) as it is in itself. This analysis leads to one of the central themes of the book: What is real, and what is the nature of ultimate reality? These questions are not just for theologians and philosophers. The great physicists of our century—Einstein, Bohr, Hawking and others—have been almost obsessed with them.

Ferguson provides a summary of modern cosmology for the nonscientist that is, in some respects, clearer than Hawking's *A Brief History of Time.* There is a nod toward superstring theory; a bit more than that for the theory of evolution; and adequate, but not extensive, introductions to quantum mechanics and to chaos and complexity theory.

Throughout the book the author asks three fundamental questions. First, are the theories of twentieth-century science sufficient to explain the origin of the universe and our own existence? Second, if these theories are true, do they exclude the possibility of belief in God? Third, if God does exist, what kind of being is he, and how much does he interfere with the orderly workings of nature? Like the scientific aspects of the book, these philosophical issues are handled clearly and fairly.

However, when I finished the last page of the book I was somewhat disappointed. On most of the crucial issues Ferguson argues herself to a standstill. She clearly shows that modern science does not exclude the possibility of God's existence, but the God-hypothesis is not essentially stronger than other major contenders for the grand title of First Cause—contenders such as Hawking's no-boundary proposal, Guth's idea that the universe arose from a quantum fluctuation in empty space, or the notion that mathematical consistency has forced the existence of this particular universe. These discussions can be praised for avoiding the all-too-common error of Christian triumphalism. (Some Christians claim that every new discovery constitutes absolute proof that God exists, or they invoke conspiracy theories to explain why their pseudoscience is not widely accepted.) Still, I think it is possible to make a stronger case than Ferguson does. The heavens might not prove that God exists, but they do declare his glory (Ps 19:1).

Other kinds of evidence for the existence of God do not fare much better. There are brief but inconclusive summaries of the ontological and moral arguments for God. Ferguson notes that the Biblical picture of the world provides an explanation for the moral ambiguities of history, but this is more a hint than an argument. There is one kind of evidence, however, that Ferguson seems to find compelling: religious experience. She argues that many people (from different religious backgrounds) claim to have encountered God. Scientific objectivity ought to compel us to take their testimony seriously even if we have never had a similar experience. One notable omission from her discussion of evidences is the historical testimony to the resurrection of Christ. Granted, a thorough study of this subject was probably beyond the scope of the book. But a brief outline would have been helpful.

Ferguson's ability to explain difficult scientific and philosophical concepts and her fair-mindedness are the major strengths of the book. Her inclusiveness, her doctrine of Scripture and her all-too-vague hints at what she actually believes are its major weaknesses.

One further point: Eerdmans ought to drop the confusing format of printing only chapter titles at the top of every page and only chapter numbers in the endnotes.

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*Moral Choices: An Introduction to Ethics.* By Scott B. Rae. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995, 253 pp., n.p.

This book joins recent publications in Christian ethics that are meant to help students think through contemporary moral issues. The temptation, for both author and student, is to bypass the more difficult work in theory in order to get to the interesting (often explosive) issues at hand. Rae offers a balance. Chapters 2–5 focus on theory, discussing Christian ethics, major people and theories in the history of ethics, and a procedure for making ethical decisions. Chapters 6–12 address various contemporary ethical issues: abortion, reproductive technologies, euthanasia, capital punishment, sexual ethics, war, and "legislating morality."

Rae's style is very readable, and the content is presented in such a way that it should appeal to students and others who want an introduction to ethics. His chapter on making ethical decisions offers practical, common-sense guidelines that will interest many readers. Further, the discussions of various issues will be of interest to most readers, and Rae gives some helpful case studies and facts.

The chapters on ethical theory, especially summaries of major thinkers and systems in the history of ethics, provide useful introductions to the topics and offer some important insights. For instance, in his chapter on major figures in the history of ethics Rae notes that moral authority has long been conceived of as being either immanent (deriving from human beings) or transcendent (external to human experience) and suggests how this basic dichotomy functions in contemporary ethical debates. In addition, he points out that the end result of ethical reasoning is often derived from the questions one asks, something that is not often recognized in contemporary ethical deliberation.

There are some shortcomings, however. First, some positions are not adequately represented, as when Rae dismisses absolutism as not being "an attractive or realistic position to hold," driving people to relativism. "It is better to see morality on a continuum, with absolutism at one extreme and relativism at the other" (p. 89). Setting aside the value of Aristotle's golden mean (virtue being the middle ground between opposing vices), surely there are some who believe that a well-reasoned absolutism is an attractive and realistic position to hold (and can even be integrated with the virtues of compassion, kindness and love!). Indeed many Christians hold to some form of absolutism, even if the absolutes are minimal and cautiously defined.

Second, for students wanting to do further research on particular topics the bibliography at the end of each chapter is quite brief. More problematic is an occasional failure to provide adequate citations, such as references given for secondary rather than primary sources in footnotes, statistics (which the reader should find helpful) for which a source is not provided (e.g. p. 205), and quotations that do not cite a specific source (e.g. on Luther, p. 70).

Third, and in my view most problematic, Christian ethics is presented in a truncated manner. In the chapter entitled "Christian Ethics," after discussing OT and NT ethics the focus is upon divine command and natural law. These are important, but there must be more. As with many treatments of Christian ethics, little is said of the transforming power of the gospel for our moral life. Rae's emphasis seems to be on a philosophical approach to ethics, which is influenced by his Christian commitment. Yet at times it is difficult to ascertain what is distinctly Christian about his approach. When raising the questions that are essential for any account of ethics (p. 13), it is unfortunate that at least two that are central for Christian ethics are missing: "What does God require of people?" and "What relation does the gospel have to our moral choices?"

This shortcoming is apparent in some of the chapters on contemporary issues. For instance, the chapter on reproductive technology offers a critique that is not primarily theological. The most extensive analysis in that chapter concerns surrogacy, and the focus is primarily on legal, constitutional and practical issues. Surely the gospel gives us a better standpoint than these from which to analyze such issues (and even contribute to the public debate!).

These shortcomings aside, Rae's book should prove useful as an introductory textbook for college students and as a resource for pastors and others who have a limited background in ethics. It should, at least, be included in any bibliography on Christian ethics from an evangelical viewpoint.

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*The Southern Baptist Convention and the Judgment of History: The Taint of an Original Sin.* By E. Luther Copeland. Lanham: University Press of America, 1995, xvii + 179 pp., n.p. *Southern Baptists and American Evangelicals: The Conversation Continues.* Edited by David S. Dockery. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1993, xiv + 242 pp., n.p.

If recent tensions within the Southern Baptist Convention have done nothing else, they have rekindled interest in denominational history. Predictably, this spate of new inquiry is prone to generate both heat and light. Such is the case with Copeland's *The Southern Baptist Convention and the Judgment of History: The Taint of an Original Sin* and *Southern Baptists and American Evangelicals: The Conversation Continues* edited by Dockery.

In the first case it is obvious that Copeland is not pleased with recent trends in Southern Baptist life. Yet the Convention's problems run far deeper than fundamentalism, and he concludes that contemporary denominational woes stem from Southern Baptists having been on "the wrong side" of the slavery issue.

This book suffers from a host of problems, not the least of which is Copeland's reductionistic thesis. Even worse, the author shows little indication that he has mastered basic historical facts. Despite his two-page description of slavery, Copeland apparently does not understand that most Southerners (about 75%) did not own slaves. Neither does he appear to understand that patriarchal family structures were common in nineteenth-century America—even in the north!

Of course it could be that Copeland's failure to master basic historical facts stems from his ignorance of southern historiography. How can anyone discuss southern race relations intelligently without mentioning Woodward's *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, Williamson's *The Crucible of Race* or Smith's *In His Image, But . . .* ? Likewise, with the notable exception of P. Kolchin and a few articles, Copeland has not read much about slavery since Stampp's *The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Antebellum South* (1956). Indeed had Copeland read E. Foner's *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863–1877*, he might have seen that many African-Americans left white churches and built their own, not because they were forced out of white churches but because they finally enjoyed a measure of self-autonomy.

Copeland's point that racism continues to plague Southern Baptists is well taken. But his shaky grounding in historical evidence and weak historiographical underpinnings result in a book that is heavily biased and based more on stereotype than

history. The title, *The Southern Baptist Convention and the Judgment of History*, is misleading; the text reads more like the judgment of E. L. Copeland.

At the opposite end of the heat/light spectrum is Dockery's excellent work. In 1983 three Southern Baptist seminary professors published *Are Southern Baptists Evangelicals?* J. Garrett said yes, E. Hinson said no, and J. Tull said the question was open for further inquiry. Dockery's work is a collection of sixteen essays by some of America's leading Southern Baptist and evangelical scholars. These essays prove that Tull was right: The extent to which Southern Baptists are evangelical is still open for debate. Moreover, these thought-provoking essays underscore the inherent problems with religious labels and nomenclature.

This work is divided into four sections, the first of which, "Searching for Identity," sets the tone for most of the book. When Garrett, Tull and Hinson explored their denomination's relationship with evangelicals they quickly learned that defining evangelicalism was both crucial to their project and exceptionally difficult. While nearly all of the book's 17 contributors acknowledge their indebtedness to G. Marsden for conceptualizing evangelicalism around "denominational" and "card-carrying" types, conceptualization and definition are two separate matters. One can readily appreciate S. Grenz' candor in "Baptist and Evangelical: One Northern Baptist's Perspective" when he notes that while he cannot define it scientifically, he knows evangelicalism when he sees it—or senses it. The essays in this volume suggest that Grenz is not alone!

The second and third sections of the book, "In Dialogue" and "Beliefs and Practices," explore the differences and similarities between Southern Baptists and evangelicals. J. Carpenter's "Is Evangelical a Yankee Word? Relations Between Northern Evangelicals and Southern Baptists in the Twentieth Century" is an outstanding essay. Carpenter skillfully explains differences between Southern Baptists and evangelicals with an eye on America's changing religious landscape throughout the twentieth century. R. Melick, Jr., "Southern Baptist Responses to American Evangelicals: An Alternative Perspective," thoughtfully notes that evangelicalism is not a static entity. In fact evangelicalism has proven to be extremely adaptable. It can be understood neither in terms of what it once was nor exclusively on what it appears to be today. Melick's point is well taken, seeing that certain of the Southern Baptist essays in this volume reflect a tendency to see evangelicalism and fundamentalism synonymously. By contrast, the evangelical authors occasionally appeared to see evangelicalism as something approaching a denomination unto itself. This is doubtless one of the major sticking points separating Southern Baptists and evangelicals.

The final section, "Further Reflections," contains Garrett's thoughtful "Are Southern Baptists 'Evangelicals'? A Further Reflection." Unfortunately it also contains Hinson's "One Baptist's Dream: A Denomination Truly Evangelical, Truly Catholic, Truly Baptist." Hinson's essay is little more than a diatribe against J. Falwell that scarcely addresses the major issues pertaining to either Southern Baptists or evangelicals. This section also contains R. Mohler, Jr., "A Call for Baptist Evangelicals and Evangelical Baptists: Communities of Faith and a Common Quest for Identity." Mohler contends that whatever evangelicalism might be, abandoning denominationalism would not be wise. Consequently he maintains that Southern Baptists have the opportunity to "reclaim a distinctive Southern Baptist evangelicalism" that would protect Baptist distinctives while seeking common ground with the larger evangelical community. This is necessary, he says, if Christians intend to mount a counterattack against modernity. Despite their numerous points of disagreement, Mohler's point may well be one upon which both Southern Baptists and evangelicals can agree.

In the last analysis, the overall quality of these essays is outstanding. An index would have been very helpful, and the bibliography is too scant to be of much use. But this work possesses that rare quality that makes it sufficiently readable for a general audience and yet suitable for academicians.

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*Defending the Faith: J. Gresham Machen and the Crisis of Conservative Protestantism in Modern America.* By D. G. Hart. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995, 227 pp., $16.99.

Actual events are never as simple as history's memory of them, as this biography demonstrates. Hart's engaging portrait of a much-maligned (or -heralded, depending on one's circle) figure from Presbyterianism's past—besides being a delight to read—is a valuable corrective to any simplistic recollection of America's fundamentalist/modernist controversy earlier in this century.

The familiar outlines are all here. Machen, the brilliant NT scholar whose works were appreciatively reviewed even by those far to his left; the Presbyterian Church, the hotly contested battleground for accommodationists on the left and traditionalists on the right; America of the Scopes trial; Christianity's truth claims; Enlightenment-influenced scholarship.

What does Hart add that is new? Actually, the answer lies in two directions. First in importance, Hart provides insight into the intellectual and cultural ambience of the 1920s, locating Machen in the general stream of his time. Hart's early twentieth century is peopled with comfortable advocates for and dissatisfied detractors from the Victorian sensibilities of the previous century. Among the former we find the religious modernists and evangelical moderates, both of whom—though to different degrees—were willing to accommodate faith to the exigencies of the times, be they scholarly or ecclesiastical, while nevertheless leaving the sentimentality and moralism of Victorian culture largely intact.

Among the detractors we find Machen criticizing the prevailing latitudinarian optimism with a stiff, clear-eyed Calvinism that gave no ground. But we also find a group on the left, secular intellectuals like H. L. Mencken and W. Lippmann, who found the faith of the emerging mainline Protestant consensus lifeless and hollow. Hart points out that Mencken and Lippmann both pointed to Machen as an example of the genuine article, beside whose theology the reimagined Christianity of the day was found wanting.

Hart helps us to see that although Machen's response to modernism fits in with the general fundamentalist reaction of the times it was distinct as well. He was an adamant Calvinist, with no desire to fuzz creedal convictions in order to unite with others on the right; a Biblical literalist, who nevertheless embraced the methodology of modern Biblical scholarship; a conservative, who did not oppose the teaching of evolution but who did oppose Bible reading and prayer in public schools (and Prohibition!); and, to tie the two points together, although he joined other fundamentalists in excoriating liberals for compromising with modernism, at many points his views were closer to well-known, modernist intellectual secularists.

Hart covers Machen's family influences and schooling, his emergence as a conservative scholar, his mounting alienation from and troubles with the Northern Presbyterian Church, his splintering off from this body—leaving Princeton Seminary to found Westminster Theological Seminary, and ultimately founding a new denomination, the

Orthodox Presbyterian Church, in 1936. Hart concludes with a brief but helpful overview of Machen's enduring influence after his untimely death on January 1, 1937.

The work is highly recommended for anyone with interests in American Church history, Presbyterianism, and fundamentalism—as well as for those concerned about the roots and prospects of present-day evangelicalism. Lovers of biography will also find much to appreciate.

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*Divine Discourse: Philosophical Reflections on the Claim that God Speaks.* By Nicholas Wolterstorff. Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1995, x + 326 pp., $59.95.

It is rare that any really new ground is broken in the interminable debates over the nature and trustworthiness of Scripture. In *Divine Discourse*, Wolterstorff manages to plow several previously untouched hectares by noticing that divine *discourse* has almost always been subsumed under the topic of divine *revelation.* But while obviously related, the two ideas are by no means identical. Calling on J. L. Austin's distinction between *locutionary acts* (like uttering sentences or writing book reviews) and *illocutionary acts* (the acts we perform by means of locutionary acts—like asking, commanding, promising, threatening, asserting, etc.), Wolterstorff recognizes that, if God somehow speaks in Scripture or elsewhere, a lot more than revealing is going on. Promising, for example, is distinct from revealing that one has promised. So Wolterstorff asks questions like "What is the nature of these speech acts? Could God perform them? Could he do it by inspiring Scripture? If he did, what would be the relationship between God's discourse and that of the human authors through whom he presumably spoke? Could we discern such speaking by God in such a way that we would be entitled to believe that we have been addressed by him? If so, how?" And so on.

At least two parts of Wolterstorff's analysis make a positive contribution to the debate. First, how can we defend the idea that God speaks in a book when our age doubts profoundly that even people can? In academia, almost all interpretation has become a *performance* by people who believe that the author's meaning is neither recoverable nor even relevant to the process of interpretation. Against Ricoeur and Derrida, Wolterstorff demonstrates brilliantly that interpreting texts to discern the speech act intended by the author is not only legitimate but possible—indeed, not only possible but unavoidable even by those who interpret texts in an attempt to prove that authorial-discourse interpretation is an illusion. Though he does not bring out the point, his analysis reveals deconstruction for what it is: the ultimate form of epistemological rebellion against the meaning structure built into the universe by God. It is hermeneutical lawlessness, the refusal of all restraint that is the essence of sin applied to texts.

Second, his analysis of how texts by one person can become the medium of the discourse of another is helpful. The words of a messenger, a secretary, an ambassador, or a person I have never met but decide to quote—all can become in essence *my* words in different ways, words that convey promises, commands, or assertions made by me even though the words themselves were composed by others. I might dictate every detail of a letter or leave its style and even content largely up to the discretion of my secretary, but when I *sign* it, the words count as mine and are mine. This range of possibilities, from dictation to commissioning to appropriation, apply to different genres and passages of Scripture in different ways, and it could still be appropriate to call the whole the Word of God.

These considerations are obviously relevant to any understanding of inspiration and could be used to strengthen and nuance an evangelical doctrine of inspiration. Unfortunately Wolterstorff does not affirm inerrancy and thinks the discourse appropriated for God's speech in the gospels might be something like historical fiction. Wolterstorff's style is unnecessarily labored and jargon-laden, and the discussion is sometimes so technical that only trained philosophers will be able to follow it. That is unfortunate, for it would be a shame for pastors or other theologians to continue to discuss the issues surrounding the doctrine of inspiration without some of the insights this book provides.

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*The Battle for Hell: A Survey and Evaluation of Evangelicals' Growing Attraction to the Doctrine of Annihilationism.* By David George Moore. Lanham: University Press of America, 1995, 103 pp., n.p. paper.

Moore has summarized (somewhat briefly) a number of important issues regarding a Biblical doctrine of the fate of the lost. He defines key terms and surveys those whom he refers to as "evangelicals who object to the doctrine of hell" (S. Travis, J. Wenham, J. Stott and C. Pinnock). Some might charge Moore with equivocating the term "hell" with the traditional view of eternal conscious punishment, for the evangelicals he surveys insist they have not rejected the doctrine of hell but rather the traditional view. Although I agree with Moore's understanding of hell as eternal conscious punishment, it would have been helpful if he had acknowledged that such evangelicals themselves believe they continue to hold to a doctrine of hell.

Much of this text evaluates Pinnock's theological journey and the conclusions to which he has come on the fate of the lost. Pinnock's belief that Greek philosophy played a formative role in the concept of the immortality of the soul is mentioned by Moore, but Moore fails to critique Pinnock's dangerous statement that the NT writers "surrendered entirely to Hellenism" (implying doctrinal contamination in the first century; see *Theological Crossfire*, p. 220).

Moore argues that the eternal conscious punishment view is the traditional one and that the burden of proof lies with those who challenge it. Moore discusses the annihilationist argument from the Greek term for "destroy" (although he fails to notify the reader that 1 Cor 3:17 uses a different term), concluding that "destroy" can mean lost or wasted rather than annihilated. Destruction, he points out, is only one image used to portray hell. Other images seemingly overlooked by writers like E. Fudge (such as punishment, privation, exclusion, or banishment) do not naturally lead one to conclude that the wicked shall cease to exist.

Moore discusses other common objections to the eternal conscious punishment view (such as the issue of eternal punishment for finite sins) as well as the problematic texts (for the annihilationist) of Matthew 25, Revelation 14, and Revelation 20. Moore might have done more to defend the traditional doctrine of man's immortal soul, in my opinion.

Emotional challenges to the eternal conscious punishment view are discussed, and Moore helpfully considers the issue of man being in the image of God, the corresponding "beastlikeness" of unregenerate man, and the doctrine of man's depravity.

Stylistic peculiarities, as well as grammatical infelicities (comma splices, wrong cases of nouns, etc.), detract a bit from Moore's presentation. Occasionally he over-

footnotes—a temptation, it seems to me, to bolster one's argument by unnecessarily citing other scholars. There are also several occasions where he documents secondary rather than primary sources for his data.

His last two chapters briefly treat the challenge of modernity (Moore says nothing about the challenge of postmodernity), the failure of Christians to focus on the afterlife, the lack of preaching on judgment, discordant views of evangelical scholars, and misunderstandings about hell that he asserts all contribute to the attack on the traditional view. Moore calls the Church to a Biblically-informed compassion for the lost, challenges pastors to proclaim the whole counsel of God (including topics like sin and hell), and warns Christians of the dangers of alternative views on the fate of the lost. Moore's concluding bibliography provides much help for those who wish to study this difficult doctrine for themselves.

I recommend this text as an important overview of this critical issue of belief.

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*A Preface to Theology.* By W. Clark Gilpin. Chicago: University of Chicago, 211 pp., n.p. paper.

This book, which seeks to provide a foundation and methodology for theology, is remarkable for several reasons. First, it uses W. Lippmann's *A Preface to Morals* (1929) as a model for reflection upon the role of theology in the postmodern world. Lippmann's book was shattering because he relentlessly and accurately described what the "acids of modernity" had eaten away. Morals, metaphysics and models for traditional living and dying had faded away for thoughtful persons, "for they are no necessary part of the government of the universe." And even though Lippmann flatly stated that the liberals had yet to answer J. G. Machen's still formidable *Christianity and Liberalism*, Gilpin seeks to use Lippmann at least to raise, if not to answer, the question: "What do theologians do?"

Second, Gilpin carefully traces the history of theological reflection in this country, which he says has moved from "catechetical inquiry" in colonial days, when a young man would read theology and Bible under the guidance of an established minister, through "synthetic inquiry," in which theological study was "the articulation of plausible relations between Christian teaching and other interpretations of the modern world," to "critical inquiry," in which contemporary experience is employed to formulate and define theological issues and beliefs. His discussion of these developments is accurate, fair and comprehensive without bogging the reader down in superfluous detail.

Third, Gilpin concludes by attempting to marry Lippmann's view that "events" have a "dignity" that stirs the human community with "prospects" that give us the sense of being "an actor in a great and dramatic destiny" to W. James' conviction that "the obvious outcome of our total experience is that the world can be handled according to many systems of ideas." The world, according to James, is "the strung-along and flowing sort of reality which we finite beings swim in . . . in the sense that life, experience, concreteness, immediacy, use what words you will, exceeds our logic, overflows and surrounds it." Thus as theological study has developed among three publics—Church, academy, and nation (and these three emphases have occurred more or less chronologically)—the theologian, at least in the university and college religion

department, becomes more and more a "public intellectual," and therefore "the proper vocation for theologians in America is to align themselves with other university disciplines in their regard for the public good."

What does all this mean? There is nothing here about the glory of God, the redemption of the world (except to recall that J. Edwards believed in it), the question of sin, the nature of revelation; and so we conclude that at the University of Chicago the spirit of Matthews, Meland, Foster *et al.* is still very much alive. Tillich, whose last days were spent there, himself argued that experience is not the source of knowledge of God but the medium or expression of Biblical revelation, Church history, and the history of religion. The public—either at the university or the golf club—does not seem to be stimulated about these issues. As G. Marsden has written, Christian scholarship is considered to be a sect at such places. If God-talk has become meaningless, as L. Gilkey once argued (also at the University of Chicago), it is not clear that such a preface to theology as Gilpin presents will gain the attention of those not already so inclined. Lippmann movingly described our predicament in 1929—and it was not primarily the fall of the stock market. It was that modern man's experience was an empty crater after the bombs of secularism had fallen. Gilpin wants to climb into the crater to see who is alive and then perhaps climb out with a remnant that is left. We wish him well.

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*The Domestication of Transcendence: How Modern Thinking About God Went Wrong.* By William C. Placher. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1996, xii + 222 pp., $20.00.

In *The Domestication of Transcendence*, Placher proposes a critical retrieval of certain aspects of traditional Christian theology. His purpose is to extricate orthodox theology from a series of seventeenth-century theological, philosophical, and methodological corruptions. Placher finds at the heart of this revolution an increased confidence in the ability of human reason to understand the divine as well as a heightened reticence to accept mystery as a theological category. The resulting quest for theological certainty, quantification, and categorization led to what Placher calls "a domestication of God's transcendence"—a deplorable state from which contemporary theology has yet fully to recover.

Placher presents Aquinas, Luther and Calvin as a "control group against which to measure modernity's innovations" (p. 3). Despite their differences, Placher contends that each of these premodern theologians maintained the radical "otherness" of God, distrusted the ability of human language accurately to describe the divine being, and did not refrain from ascribing to mystery that which revelation did not clearly disclose. To this end, Placher asserts that Thomas' "Five Ways" were never intended to be proofs, "if that means exercises in reason outside the context of faith" (p. 24). He also points to Luther's rejection of logical argumentation as a means to attaining knowledge of God and to Calvin's misgivings about going "beyond the limits to which God's word itself extends" (p. 53).

Unlike their premodern epigoni, scholars in the seventeenth century began to replace the absolute qualitative difference between God and man with a disparity that was only relative and quantitative. However, since God was reduced to "one thing in the world alongside other [things]" (p. 182), philosophers and theologians felt the need

to explain where God fit, not only in cosmological views but also in the practical sphere of human moral effort and salvation. Questions regarding God's being, such as the nature and extent of God's perfection, as well as matters of God's action, such as the veridicality and verification of the workings of God's grace, received increasing philosophical attention.

As a corrective to these seventeenth-century corruptions, Placher suggests a renewed emphasis on God's radical transcendence, a heightened humility about the applicability of human language to God, an increased aversion to ontotheology, and a return to a robust Trinitarian theology. As a consequence, he suggests that Christian scholars cease to accept the burden of theoretical theodicy—an enterprise that inevitably leads "thoughtful, decent folk to morally unacceptable conclusions" (p. 204).

The project Placher has undertaken is not an easy one. It requires facility in numerous disciplines as well as an understanding of broad ranges of history. Because of the scope of this project, historians will no doubt be dissatisfied with the broad generalizations Placher is forced to make. Philosophers, by comparison, might decry the lack of supportive argumentation. Despite these factors, Placher has done an impressive job of outlining an important theological revolution in the seventeenth century.

There is clearly much of value in Placher's book. Indeed much of what Placher says provides a much-needed corrective to theologies that denigrate the need for and possibility of divine revelation, as well as those that display an untoward overconfidence in the ability of humans to grasp the Infinite. However, I have reservations about the general philosophical direction of Placher's corrective measures. For example, I believe that Placher's comments on theodicy reflect a false dichotomy between theoretical and practical aspects of theistic belief. While it is Placher's opinion that a theoretical theodicy "answers the trivial questions and ignores the important ones" (p. 206), I see no reason why theoretical theodicy must preclude more practical (or pastoral) approaches. Although a purely cognitive answer is not sufficient to deal with the existence of horrendous evil in this world, to refuse to acknowledge the impact of evil as a powerful and irreducibly cognitive atheological argument is equally wrongheaded.

At the heart of Placher's proposal is an understanding of religious language that "enables us to say something true [of God] while not understanding what we mean" (p. 196). While it seems that Placher desires to accept the validity of revelation as well as a realist conception of religious doctrine, I am unsure if his doctrine of religious language is suitable to the task. More specifically, I wonder what it means to reject the possibility that human language denotes anything ontologically interesting about God while simultaneously affirming God's existence, self-revelation and goodness. Even if problems of self-referential incoherence could be avoided (i.e., Is it possible to affirm that we know nothing about God's being?), I wonder how one might go about providing justification for such a project.

Two final comments. At times in this book Placher seems to be reading a postmodern epistemology into premodern theologians. However, I am not convinced that the premodern's acknowledgment of God's transcendence entails, or even suggests, anything like the assumption of the fundamental ambiguity of all knowledge. Lastly, in the course of his discussion on divine revelation Placher comments that contemporary philosophical theologians claim that "they can make no sense of [divine revelation]" (p. 185). While this is true to a degree, it is certainly not universally true. I refer the reader to one notable (and valuable) counterexample: N. Wolterstorff's *Divine Discourse: Philosophical Reflections on the Claim that God Speaks* (Cambridge, 1995).

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*The Inside of History: Jean Henri Merle d'Aubigné and Romantic Historiography.* By John B. Roney. Westport: Greenwood, 1996, 214 pp., n.p.

In this revision of his doctoral dissertation, Roney has provided valuable insights into the nature of the historical profession during the nineteenth century. In his analysis of the life and work of the famed Genevan historian J. H. Merle d'Aubigné (hereafter referred to as Merle), Roney shows how Merle merged the movements of evangelicalism and romanticism. Merle was first a pastor and later, in 1832, president and professor of historical theology at the Ecole de théologie de Genève, until his death in 1872. This institution was a product of the Réveil movement, and although it was never a large school (it had only 65 students in 1865) it was influential in preserving traditional, essential doctrines and making them applicable to changes in the Reformed church.

Writing in an era following over a half century of war and revolution, nineteenth-century historians saw the Reformation as one of the most important starting points for the rise of the modern world. Merle's own methodology upheld the idea of divine providence as a guiding force throughout history and illustrates human ability to transcend the natural world. Merle credited his mentor, A. Neander, for his approach of combining the internal and the external aspects of history. In addition, Merle admired the approach of the Roman Catholic bishop, J. B. Bossuet, for integrating the concept of the active work of God throughout the history of human experience.

Following the romantic tradition, Merle composed his historical writings in a popular style that almost resembled a historical novel designed to capture the drama of the past. Merle attempted to portray the emotions of individuals, in contrast to L. von Ranke's relatively colorless and critical style. Merle stressed the theme of the struggle between good and evil, in which the hero makes a major contribution to human progress. In times when Christianity flourished, society achieved a higher degree of progress and prosperity.

According to Roney, Merle's methodology was both popular and academic. In fact Merle's writings reached a wide audience, which reflected the popularity of the romantic style. His vivid portraits of the personal feelings of key individuals at times resembled the historical novel in the tradition of Sir W. Scott more than a typical, historical narrative. Merle maintained that this approach provided a better sense of the wholeness of history than a more arid repetition of facts and figures.

According to Merle, the purpose of history is to show how the universal, eternal reality helps us to understand the world around us. He also followed a "great individual" approach to history and believed that key people were most reflective of the spirit of their times. The Reformers of the sixteenth century were especially important because they modeled the ultimate witness of the faith in spite of the fear of persecution of exile. Furthermore, the Reformation was a key step in the movement toward liberty, which he defines as a "moral force" for political and religious reform. The Christian faith is, therefore, the foundation of the modern world and of democracy. It is interesting that Merle gave more credit to Calvin than to Luther for the development of democracy. Merle did not argue, however, that democracy existed in any developed form in the sixteenth century. Only its seeds existed.

In his exaltation of the Reformation, Merle was openly partisan and critical of the papacy. He viewed the papacy as more a secular than a religious institution because of its history of political involvement. Merle favored the separation of Church and state and saw papal influence as foreign interference in the affairs of state.

Merle desired to combine sacred and secular history into a coherent whole. Although he openly revered the Reformation as one of the greatest eras in human history, he did not abandon critical skills in evaluating historical sources. He did advocate the

elimination of polemical interests that might color the historian's perspective. His desire for Roman Catholics was to provide religious toleration and freedom of worship within the Reformed world. So his own biases were not directed against Roman Catholicism but rather against what he considered to be the abuses of the Roman pontiff.

Roney has provided fresh insights into the nature of nineteenth-century historiography. Merle is a particularly interesting case study because of his adherence to both romantic and evangelical perspectives. My only criticism is that, at times, Roney seems to make excuses for Merle's excesses, especially when he crossed the line between objective history and historical narrative. Certainly Merle took significant liberties in his placement of dialogue in the mouths of historical figures. Roney, however, rightly points out that this does not mean that Merle lost all objectivity. On the contrary, he brought history to life and ultimately to a wider audience.

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*Dispatches from the Front: Theological Engagements with the Secular.* By Stanley Hauerwas. Durham: Duke University, 1994, 235 pp., $24.95.

In this work Hauerwas has compiled a collection of thoughts that together call once again for a reexamination of the very core of what it means for the Church to be Church in the world. The title of this book seems ironic in light of Hauerwas' own pacifism. However, as he makes clear, the type of engagement that he expects Christianity to have with the secular necessitates a challenge to the very presumption of order surrounding us in the western social context. We are in the midst of a war, though we are unable to recognize it as such because we have learned to believe that religion is but a sociological phenomenon that occupies the peripheral or the imaginary. "Liberalism emasculated Christianity in the name of societal peace" (p. 17), rendering its grip on moral conscience impotent in the wake of social progress. But Hauerwas believes such progress is a misnomer. What has been overthrown in its wake is not only the ability to live according to the virtues that once marked Christian identity. The very identity itself has been surrendered. Christians now not only *will* not live meaningful lives; they *cannot* live lives of virtue because the liberal agenda has reduced all such meaning to the whims of individual preference, limiting the parameters of Christian discourse to the democratic exchange we call pluralism.

Hauerwas wishes to call the Church back to its senses by stripping away the facade of social acceptance, revealing a Church that is being killed by the "democratic policing" of its power to save and to change those who are called to be Christian. But as he cuts deeper into the union of Christianity and democracy, he finds a Christianity that is enamored with the promise of power awaiting those who can disseminate their message in a medium appealing to the masses. By making Christianity a "knowledge" rather than a life, Protestant liberalism believes it has succeeded in maintaining its position as ruler over society. What it fails to see is that is has become simply another subject in the kingdom of democracy, prostrating itself before the throne of individual self-interest.

The solution to this problem is found only by confronting Christians with the stark necessity to live up to their calling to be the Church. As Hauerwas states: "To be saved is to be engrafted into a body that reconstitutes us by making us part of history not universally available. It is a history of real people whom God has made part of the kingdom through forgiveness and reconciliation. Only a people so bodily formed can survive the temptation to become a 'knowledge' in the name of democracy" (p. 106).

Perhaps this epistemological shift (though Hauerwas would be unwilling to call it that) explains the appeal of his using children and the mentally handicapped as the measure of how well the Church is fulfilling its call to be in the world but not of it. As he states: "Yet the more emphasis that is placed on belief, particularly for individuals, the more the mentally handicapped are marginalized" (p. 183). How well the Church can include the mentally handicapped into its very identity as Church is a mark of whether it is accomplishing the task of living as a Christian community. Using this moral gauge as a standard of measure for the reality of the Church's faithfulness, Hauerwas compels the Church to draw back from prostituting itself before the rationalism of the Enlightenment. In the end, Hauerwas must maintain that the Church is a locus of particular practices that are peculiar to its being Church. Only then can it possibly hope to refute the plague of rationalizing its existence and free itself from the bonds of democratic justification.

Anyone who has read Hauerwas in the past will probably not find a significant amount of new material in this work. Many of the themes he rehearses here can be found in several of his other works. This is especially the case with this work, because it is primarily a collection of essays written for diverse purposes. However, familiarity and a certain amount of disjunction between the chapters do not diminish the effect of this work. Hauerwas' flamboyant style and his passion for the Church still make his work captivating, drawing the reader into his discourse.

Some questions still remain for Hauerwas' readers to consider. My first question relates to Hauerwas' description of the Church as a "truth-telling community." I want to ask "What is the truth?" But I get the feeling that the more pertinent questions are "Who is the truth?" and "Where is *he* to be found?" Hauerwas certainly cannot be describing some notion of truth as distinct from the One who called himself "the Truth." Were that the case, we should then worship that notion of truth rather than Jesus. But does the truth reside finally in the community of the Church, or is the Church a mere reflection of the Truth? Perhaps the answer to this question might provide Hauerwas a way to include in his thought the ingredient that has remained somewhat glaringly absent: the person and work of the Holy Spirit.

A second question must be raised regarding the epistemological shift that marks much of more purely narrative theology. Though Hauerwas is likely not interested in doing epistemology, at least not in any traditional (post-Enlightenment) sense of the term, he nevertheless does rely upon a specific way of knowing which story is the right story of which Christians ultimately should want to be a part. Christianity is rightly believed by the community that finds its story rooted in the life, death and resurrection of Christ. But there still must be a way of evaluating and identifying which community is rightly to be called Christian. Certainly Hauerwas does not wish to say that we are really all Christians, with some needing a bit more change than others. However, does not the fact that Christians and non-Christians are to be made aware, or at least to become aware, of the narrative called Christian imply a sense of objectivity destructive to the very epistemological presuppositions on which narrative is founded?

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*Truth Is Stranger Than It Used to Be.* By J. Richard Middleton and Brian Walsh. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1995, 250 pp., n.p.

Middleton and Walsh have collaborated previously on a worldview book entitled *The Transforming Vision*, in which they set forth a distinctive Christian perspective

based on creation, fall and redemption that answers the questions everyone asks: "Who am I? Where am I? What is wrong? What is the remedy?" Here they are interested in demonstrating that truth for the postmodern mind is no longer true. Correspondence and coherence theories of knowledge and truth do not work because reality itself is now no longer "out there" but "in here" as a construct of our mind. Thus "both epistemologically (in terms of what we can know) and morally (in terms of what is right), reality isn't what it used to be" (p. 29).

If even the given is a construct of our conceptualization, then their previous worldview book will mean little to the postmodern consciousness. While liberalism permitted a plurality of worldviews and personal beliefs there were always public truths, and the Christian could make his case the best he could. Today, however, everything is private. There are no public or universal truths. Everything is a product of language and social relationships, including the Christian message. How then is the Christian community to share the "gospel truth," remembering that "truth is sought and found only in community" (p. 5)?

Not only reality, but the self is also deconstructed so that "persons exist in a state of continuous construction and reconstruction" (pp. 52–53). Only by rooting our story in God's creational intent is there meaning and the possibility of both objective and subjective truth, i.e. reality "out there" and "in here." This is no totalizing metanarrative. Beginning with the exodus, Middleton and Walsh attempt to demonstrate that "the story the Scriptures tell contains the resources to shatter totalizing readings, to convert the reader, to align us with God's purposes of shalom, compassion and justice" (p. 107). An attempt is made to develop a creational and covenantal epistemology that will be an alternative to the naïve realism of modernity and the radical constructivism of postmodernity because a "biblical understanding of creation order roots us in a moral universe in which there is normative direction for human life" (p. 162). Questions remain as to the priority and authority of the canonical text in their narrative approach, but Middleton and Walsh are helpful in enabling the Christian community to reflect on the necessity of an answer, if not a full-blown apologetic, to the postmodern ethos.

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*Reasons of the Heart: Recovering Christian Persuasion.* By William Edgar. Grand Rapids: Baker/Hourglass, 1996, 126 pp., n.p. paper.

Edgar stands in the Reformed tradition of presuppositional apologetics. The doyen of Westminster apologists, C. Van Til (under whom Edgar studied), insisted that human thinking was not autonomous but rather dependent on (presupposed) the self-revealing Triune God. Edgar's avowed purpose is to enlarge the presuppositionalist net to include not only the epistemic foundations of thought but also the various dimensions of personal and spiritual selfhood. He senses that the contemporary situation poses new challenges for apologetics. Taking his cue from Pascal, Edgar argues that successful apologetics must now involve not only rational demonstration but also the total person's "reasons of the heart." As the center of personal and spiritual life, the heart both integrates human cognition, affection, and will and serves as the seat of God-consciousness. The ultimate goal of presuppositional apologetics is the Christian conversion of the total person.

Central to Edgar's presuppositionalist approach are four principles or starting points: the *point of contact* with the unbeliever's existential condition; the *disclosure*

to the unbeliever that their presuppositions cannot resolve their predicament; *homecoming*, the presentation of the cure of the gospel in Jesus Christ; the *matter of plausibility*, correlating the gospel solution with the psychological, social and cultural situation of the unbeliever so as to secure assurance and build faith. Some examples are provided to demonstrate how these principles work in various apologetic endeavors: as in the "religion is an illusion" charge, which is shown to be reversible in disclosure; as in religious pluralism, wherein human religiosity is evidence of the helplessness that only homecoming can heal; as in the mystery of evil, which is resolvable only in the atonement of Christ; as in religious doubt, best dealt with as faith seeking understanding. The responses portrayed in these instances border on the cliché, but they do exemplify the varieties of the heart's reasons in any turning.

Edgar has accurately prescribed the task of apologetics in our postmodern, postrationalistic age. The result may be startling to not a few contemporary defenders of the faith. While it could be said that he stretches the meaning of classical apologetics, it is better to view this work as the necessary retrieval of the Biblical concept (the proposal is Biblically defended in two chapters). Edgar-style apologetics turns out to be a spiritual activity of the highest order. Centered in the worship of God, it demands that traditional apologetics be transformed into Christian witness and lifestyle evangelism—the living out and articulate defense of the faith aimed at persuasion and conversion. There is little to be criticized in a book that calls the Church into passionate engagement with the unchurched for the sake of the gospel.

*Reasons of the Heart* is a tract for the times addressed to the broader evangelical community. Edgar's writing is lucid, and philosophical and theological concepts have been adequately translated for the broader audience. *Reasons of the Heart* belongs in church Bible-study groups and undergraduate courses in apologetics, evangelism, and Christian witness. It should also be considered as supplementary reading at the graduate level.

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*Formation of the Christian Biblical Canon.* By Lee M. McDonald. Peabody: Hendrickson, 1995, 340 pp., $19.95 paper.

McDonald attempts to show that the OT and the NT as we know them were collected and canonized in a gradual process under the influence of Church usage and authority long after the books were written. He argues that questions of which "fringe area" books belong in the Bible are like questions of millennialism, sign gifts, inerrancy vs. "infallibility," etc., and should not affect Christian unity and faith in Christ (pp. 131–132).

In the OT field he begins with the assumption that the present threefold division of the Hebrew Bible is early. He holds that the Law (five books) was generally accepted around 600 BC and the Prophets (eight books) about 200 BC. Note that he dates Daniel as Maccabean and argues that this explains its not being among the Prophets. In all this he follows many OT critical scholars. Most of these have held that the third division, the Writings (presently 11 books), was fluid until after the rabbinical discussions of Jamnia in AD 90. McDonald goes further and says that the content of the Writings was gradually settled for the Jews during the second century and that Christians never agreed on the content of the Writings. He says there were no early lists of such books. He can say this only by explaining away the witness of Josephus (AD 90) to a definite canon of five books of Law, 13 of Prophets and four of Hymns and

Precepts. Also he tries to negate the list of Melito (AD 170), which is just like our list except that Esther is strangely omitted.

As to the NT canon, he holds that at first there was no "Christian" Scripture. The word of Christ was what had a "scripture-like status" from the beginning (p. 143). He claims that *1 Clement*, the *Epistle according to Barnabas* and Ignatius regard Jesus as authoritative and his words, when they were written, as Scripture, but the NT books in general were only slowly becoming Scripture (pp. 145–146). He admits (p. 148) that Polycarp in his *Letter to the Philippians* (2.1) classifies Eph 4:26 as Scripture along with Ps 4:4. But McDonald dates this work at AD 140–155 toward the end of Polycarp's life instead of the usual date, AD 117, held by Bruce (*Canon of Scripture*, InterVarsity, 1988, p. 122) and Westcott (*Canon of the NT*, Macmillan, 1889, p. 39).

Other evidence for the NT is glossed over or postdated. He does not admit 2 Pet 3:16 or 1 Tim 5:17 (quoting Luke 10:7). He says the NT canon was open; neither Irenaeus nor any other early author left a list. Actually the list of the Muratorian Canon is usually put at AD 170, but he, following Sundberg, puts it at AD 350–375 (p. 212). Even when he quotes the Muratorian Canon he claims that it excludes Hebrews and James—which is quite an argument from silence, since the list is incomplete at both the beginning and the end. Other such examples of tortured evidence could be given.

He admits that apostolicity was the test of the early Church, but claims that it was wrongfully applied (in accepting Hebrews, 2 Peter and the pastorals and some others). He doubts if orthodoxy was a good test, for he thinks there are contradictions between the books: For instance, Paul's substitutionary atonement does not match Luke's gospel (p. 233). As to inspiration as a test, he suggests that the same Spirit speaks today (p. 256).

He feels that the persecution under Diocletian (AD 303) and the demands for handing over the sacred books helped to develop a canon, but the extent of that canon was not everywhere agreed upon. Indeed his conclusion is that 2 Peter, the pastorals, Jude, and possibly Hebrews and Revelation do not clearly belong to the canon of truth and that we should, like the ancients, use some of the noncanonical books and the gifts of the Spirit as equal in value to the historic canon (p. 246).

Detailed answers to McDonald's position would take too long. My *Inspiration and Canonicity of the Scriptures* (rev. ed., A Press, 1994) considers most of them. Also R. Beckwith's *OT Canon of the NT Church* (Eerdmans, 1985) and F. F. Bruce's *Canon of Scripture* deal much more carefully than McDonald with the historical testimony. In the OT the numerous appeals to the law of Moses from Joshua to Nehemiah are given no weight by McDonald, due to his debt to OT higher criticism. The reference to Jeremiah in Dan 9:1 is of no value to one who believes that Daniel was written about 165 BC. The many references of Jesus to the law and the prophets are claimed to refer to only the first two Talmudic divisions of the OT. This is pure assumption. He doubts Josephus' value as an historian, though archeology has supported his witness in several details. These sacred books, Josephus says, every pious Jew would die for. This sounds like a closed OT canon.

As to the NT, actually, the early Church apparently did not have a list (before the Muratorian Canon) but it did have a principle: What was apostolic was accepted. The proliferation of books falsely attributed to the apostles in the second century shows that the criterion for acceptance was apostolicity. The Church did not choose from a lot of books. It carefully added to the admittedly apostolic books those others that they were convinced on adequate grounds were also apostolic.

McDonald dissolves the Bible's unique place as the very Word of God and gives us a good book with a hodgepodge of data and variable values. It might be said that his conclusions could be received if put in the right focus. Apostolicity *was* an adequate criterion of the early time and it did give us our Bible, rightly including 2 Peter, Hebrews,

the pastorals and Revelation. Later, antiquity was indeed helpful, because apostolicity could not then be so easily checked, but obviously a late writing could not be apostolic. Finally, the consensus of the Church was a good principle in Augustine's time when direct information was less available than even what we now have because of new discoveries. With the discoveries of the NT papyri and the OT Dead Sea Scrolls, along with archeological and historical information, we can be assured that our OT is what Christ and the apostles used and that the NT was the product of the apostles and their helpers. But McDonald does not see it that way.

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*Christian Cyberspace Companion.* By Jason D. Baker. 2d ed. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997, 250 pp., $15.99 paper.

With the impact of cyberculture upon the evangelical Christian community, Jason Baker's provision of a guide to the basics and configurations of the electronic environment for applications in mission and ministry is a welcome addition to the literature. Attempting to address the novice user and to a lesser extent the experienced online searcher, Baker seeks to present the issues and strategies for effective and efficient use of the electronic resources available to the Christian community.

After a brief introduction to the "New Frontier," which lauds the possibilities of cyberculture for Christians, Baker proceeds to answer "FAQs" (Frequently Asked Questions) gleaned from lists posted on the Internet. Most of the questions are introductory in nature, and experienced searchers will most likely find them too elementary. However, the addition of the FAQs is an improvement from the first edition (1995) and should have been expanded to include more advanced FAQs.

The bulk of the text is a practical "how-to" approach to assist the novice Christian cyberspace user to access and retrieve pertinent information via the Internet. Subjects covered include TCP/IP (Transfer Control Protocol/Internet Protocol), WWW (World Wide Web), FTP (File Transfer Protocol) and IRC (Internet Relay Chat). A selective glossary, which has been updated since the first edition, assists the reader in identifying the numerous acronyms and vocabulary of cyberspace. The discussion of commercial online services and Internet service providers is necessarily restricted to the major companies, but comparative information on Christian resources, proprietary information and pricing is very helpful.

Certain editorial changes from the first edition may be questioned, considering the novice user is the primary audience for whom the book is intended. For example, condensed discussions of Christian bulletin boards and USENET groups should be expanded with step-by-step instructions. Similarly, Telnet, FTP and Gopher, while needed less frequently, nevertheless deserve detailed treatment to be practically useful. The chapter on "Tourist Attractions" gives detailed descriptions of selected Web sites and "Netiquette" provides courtesy rules and shorthand jargon for online communication. "Publishing on the Web," however, lacks sufficient detail to help actually write HTML (Hypertext Markup Language) programs apart from purchasing recommended software. Expanding Appendix B ("HTML Quick Reference") to include more detailed instructions related to publishing on the Web would correct this deficiency.

The added discussion of the "Internet Red-Light District" is to the point, but should refer the reader to broader moral and ethical discussions such as Douglas Groothuis' *The Soul in Cyberspace* (Baker, 1997), Jeffrey Zaleski's *The Soul of Cyberspace* (Harper-

Edge, 1997) or David Lochhead's *Shifting Realities: Information Technology and the Church* (World Council of Churches, 1997). In fact, the entire book would be strengthened by further documentation and a suggested reading list. To his credit, however, Baker provides numerous references via Web sites with URLs (Uniform Resource Locators) that are interspersed throughout the text. The outstanding Christian Internet Directory with URLs is highly commendable, and the latest updates are provided at the *Christian Cyberspace Companion* Web site (http://bakerbooks.com/ccc or http://www.goshen.net/). One only wishes that annotations for the sites in the directory had been provided as in the first edition.

*Christian Cyberspace Companion* contributes to the literature of evangelical Christianity and the electronic environment by providing a more detailed introduction than Quentin Schultze's *Internet for Christians* (Gospel Films, 1995). For experienced users engaged in scholarly research, however, Patrick Durusau's *High Places in Cyberspace* (Scholars, 1996) is clearly the better choice. For comparison see the Highplaces Web site (http://scholar.cc.emory.edu/scripts/highplaces.html). Many may find Baker and Durusau together as the best way to cover the cyberworld for the Christian community.

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*Civilizations of the Ancient Near East.* Edited by Jack M. Sasson *et al.* 4 vols. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1995, xxxii + 2966 pp., $449.00.

This is a breathtaking publishing and scholarly accomplishment. For the first time, a comprehensive reference work is available that presents the state of the discipline for the study of the vast and increasingly complex and amorphous "ancient Near East." It is modeled after Scribner's *Civilizations of the Ancient Mediterranean: Greece and Rome*, the monumental 3-volume work that appeared in 1988. It combines aspects of several standard reference works known to Biblical scholars, such as *The Cambridge Ancient History* and *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*. However, its focus is different from that of either of these and its scope far broader (but both of these include materials not found in the present work, as well).

This work is divided into 11 parts. In vol. 1 are (1) "The Ancient Near East in Western Thought," (2) "The Environment," (3) "Population" and (4) "Social Institutions." In vol. 2 is (5) "History and Culture." In vol. 3 are (6) "Economy and Trade," (7) Technology and Artistic Production" and (8) "Religion and Science." In vol. 4 are (9) "Language, Writing, and Literature," (10) "Visual and Performing Arts" and (11) "Retrospective Essays." The editors state that the first and last parts serve to bracket the work with essays on the impact of the ancient Near East on ancient and modern western cultures, and that the rest of the essays follow a natural sequence (p. xxxi). "History and Culture," the largest category (and in many ways the closest to the heart of the entire endeavor), is deliberately placed somewhere other than the beginning, reflecting the editors' desires to make this a true multidisciplinary work, with history (and, to a lesser degree, culture) not being allowed to dominate the work as it has in so many studies of antiquity.

The work's broad scope is evident from its major divisions, but even more so from the titles of its individual essays. Very generally, each part covers its subject matter by considering Egypt, Mesopotamia, Iran, Anatolia and Syro-Palestine, in that order. Thus, for example, one can find essays in part 4 ("Social Institutions") on "Private

Life" for four of the five areas (one is missing for Iran/Persia), or in part 5 ("History and Culture") on "The History of . . . : An Overview" for all five areas. In between is a wealth of more specific essays on the history of each area—for example, in Egypt, "Builders of the Pyramids," "The Middle Kingdom in Egypt" or "Pharaoh Ramesses II and His Times." Also, in each part there are essays particular to certain times or places that have no counterparts elsewhere—for example, "The Kingdom and Civilization of Kush in Northeast Africa," "Central Asia and the Caucasus in the Bronze Age," "Midas of Gordion and the Anatolian Kingdom of Phrygia" or "Private Commerce and Banking in Achaemenid Babylon."

The general chronological limits of the work extend back to the beginning of the third millennium BC, with the origins of writing in Mesopotamia and Egypt, and down to Alexander the Great's conquest of Persia in 330 BC, although there are exceptions even to these broad limits in both directions. The geographical limits include primarily Egypt, Syro-Palestine, Mesopotamia, and Anatolia, and, more peripherally, Iran, the Arabian Peninsula, Northeast Africa and various oft-neglected Aegean and Anatolian cultures.

These limits are unremarkable to almost any Biblical scholar today, but it should at least be noted that the work self-consciously avoids being a "Lands of the Bible" tool. Civilizations, topics and time periods that are both mentioned and not mentioned in the Bible are covered with equal interest. The editors and contributors clearly reflect the dominant late-20th-century desire in the secular academy to avoid any specific Bibliocentric interest. The Bible is often referred to and used as a source, but it is clearly peripheral to the bulk of the endeavor here (and it is not often trusted when it *is* referred to). One essay—but, revealingly, only one—is devoted to a topic for which the Bible is the primary source: "Ahab of Israel and Jehoshaphat of Judah: The Syro-Palestinian Corridor in the Ninth Century." Otherwise, the Bible's materials are dealt with under such categories as "Ancient Syria and Palestine," "Canaan and Ancient Israel" or "Canaanite and Hebrew Thought."

A glimpse into how this work interfaces with the Bible can be found in the essay on "*The Hymn to Aten*: Akhenaten Worships the Sole God." Akhenaten was the 14th-century BC Egyptian king often mentioned in connection with Moses and Biblical monotheism. This ten-page essay includes an original translation of the hymn, followed by an excellent exposition of it, under two major headings: (1) "Content" (with subheadings "Introduction" and "The Attributes of God") and (2) "Style" (with subheadings "Descriptive Power" and "Tone"). The author, John L. Foster, writes in a clear, engaging style himself, and he clearly is impressed with this hymn. He writes, "[I belong] with those who find *The Hymn to Aten* one of the most remarkable documents in all of ancient Egyptian history—and, indeed, in all of the ancient world" (p. 1754). He devotes almost three full pages to ten "attributes of God" found in the hymn, including "God is one," "God is the creator of the universe," "God is Alpha and Omega, the span of Time," and so forth. Nowhere in the body of the essay is the Bible or the Biblical God mentioned, however. Parallels to the Bible are mentioned, but they are dealt with in two boxes, one entitled "*The Hymn to Aten* and Psalm 104" and "Moses and Egyptian Monotheism." In both boxes, Foster is fairly restrained, slow to draw any significant connections between the hymn and material in the Bible. This restraint for the most part is commendable, given the parallelomania that has been far too prevalent in the past. However, evangelicals will be unhappy to see that Foster gives Akhenaten a place in history but is reluctant to do so for Moses: "Akhenaten was, of course, a historical personage. . . . Moses, on the other hand, is a figure of tradition and legend whose historicity is not proven" (p. 1760).

The work's list of contributors is a "Who's Who" of first-rank scholars of the ancient Near East. It is a diverse group. The editors state that the contributors' average age

is the mid-to-late forties, 20% are women, and they come from 16 countries and five continents (pp. xxviii–xxix). This group gives the work its authoritative stamp, guaranteeing the work's place as the standard reference tool on the topic for decades to come. The contributors have written synthetic essays that generally reflect the scholarly consensus on their assigned topics, but the editors have given them generous leeway, so that most essays reflect the scholars' individual perspectives on the material, as well. In many cases, the essays go beyond being overviews or syntheses and materially advance the discussion of the question(s) at hand.

From a planning perspective, the work is distinctive in several ways. For one thing, the editors chose to commission only one essay per contributor (for a total of 189), even though many of the contributors obviously have the expertise to have written multiple essays. This was in keeping with their philosophy of making this a multidimensional, multiperspectival work. Also the work was produced in the astonishingly short time of six years after the project was first discussed. (The assignment of one essay per contributor undoubtedly aided in this regard.)

Another distinctive feature of the work is its extraordinarily lengthy index, running to 148 pages. Its usefulness (and limitations) can be illustrated by reference once again to Akhenaten. There is no essay dealing solely with him, as there are, for example, for other kings in Egypt and elsewhere (e.g. Ramesses II in Egypt; Sargon of Akkad and Naram-Sin, Shulgi of Ur, Hammurabi, Esarhaddon, Nabonidus in Mesopotamia; Darius I in Persia; and Khattushili III in Anatolia). However, one essay has Akhenaten's name in its title—"*The Hymn to the Aten*" (in Part 7, "Religion and Science," and mentioned above)—and one deals with his capital city: "Akhetaten: A Portrait of Art of an Ancient Egyptian Capital" (in part 5, "History and Culture"). These are both listed alphabetically in the index in boldface type, indicating that they are full-blown essays listed also in the table of contents. Also, "Akhenaten, king of Egypt" appears as a separate entry in the index, with 27 entries under his name, as does "Akhetaten (Amarna)," also with 27 subentries. The entries under "Ahkenaten"—such as "accession of," "in art," "Aziru of Amurru and," "concept of God," "Freud on," "religious revolution of," "technical and scientific innovations," "tomb of, funerary figures"—point the reader into many different articles in the work on this king, not only the two just mentioned. In fact, these two articles are limited in their focus: The first is an essay on the literary composition most clearly embodying Akhenaten's "monotheism" and the second focuses on Akhenaten's capital city (known also by its modern name of Tell el-Amarna), not the king per se. For a full picture of Akhenaten in history, including scholarly judgments about his lasting influences in Egypt and elsewhere, one must consult various articles, using the index. Unfortunately, no entry under "Akhenaten" specifically directs the reader to the hymn, this king's most famous work. One might stumble upon it by looking up Akhenaten's "concept of God" or by thinking to look under "Hymn," but this particular indexing omission is unfortunate. Nevertheless, the index is enormously helpful and should be used extensively by those wishing to research specific topics.

This is an extremely useful reference tool on the ancient Near East that will serve several generations of students and scholars. It is a work I sorely wished had existed twenty years ago, during my own graduate-student days. I recommend it to anyone needing authoritative, in-depth information about almost any aspect of ancient Near Eastern life, reflecting the state of the discipline in the secular academy in the late 20th century.

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