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BOOK REVIEWS

Basics of Hebrew Accents. By Mark D. Futato Sr. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2020, 128 pp., $16.99 paper.

At the outset of *Basics of Hebrew Accents*, Mark D. Futato Sr. is clear that the Masoretic system is "complicated and can be perplexing" (p. 13). However, he is also quick to add that readers do not need to have mastered this system "to have a working knowledge that will help in reading and interpreting the text" (p. 14). His work does not contribute an advanced introduction, therefore, nor does it intend to do so; in less than 100 pages, Futato provides students with a very accessible framework for understanding and interpreting the most salient features of the Hebrew accent system.

After a brief introduction that orients readers to the work as a whole, the book contains five chapters, each of which deals with a key introductory component of this topic. In chapter 1, "The Three Jobs of the Accents" are set forth as providing information on the stressed syllable in words, the syntactic relationship between words, and the intonation of words for singing or chanting (pp. 17–30). While all three jobs are briefly outlined, since the second job—that of highlighting the syntactic relationship between words—is most helpful for reading the Hebrew OT, it is the focus of the rest of the book. Chapters 2 and 3 then overview the disjunctive and conjunctive accents in turn (pp. 31–58; 59–66). In each case, summary charts are provided, and ample examples help the reader to gain understanding. In the case of the disjunctive accents, the roles of the major and minor accents are also outlined. Further, while all of the accents are identified in charts, the introductory nature of this book leads the author to focus on only the most prominent half of them in his explanations and examples.

Chapter 4 covers "The Accents and Exegesis" (pp. 67–90). As Futato puts it, while "the accents will not help with all matters exegetical … they do provide an ancient commentary on the syntactic relations of every word in every verse of the Hebrew Bible" (p. 67). By way of example, Futato highlights Deuteronomy 26:5a as a text which modern translations tend to interpret differently than the Masoretic scribes (pp. 81–83). Whichever side one takes on the matter, having access to this "ancient commentary" is a helpful means of awakening interpreters to alternative exegetical possibilities. In this regard, since the accents are indeed an ancient commentary, they are not free from error (e.g., Isa 40:3a, pp. 84–89).

Although the system of accents in "The Twenty-One" is the primary focus of the book, Futato concludes with a fifth chapter, on the most salient features of "The Accents in the Three" (i.e., Psalms, Job, and Proverbs, pp. 91–100). Finally, two appendices on "Determining the Accents in a Verse" (pp. 101–4) and suggestions "For Further Study" (pp. 105–8) round out the book before it concludes with a few pages of bibliography of works cited and a Scripture index.

Since most introductory and intermediate Hebrew textbooks do not contain information on the Hebrew accents, students often leave seminary with no sense of the accents' meaning or significance. Those who subsequently serve in pastoral ministry are not equipped to make sense of them in their study, with the result that *every word* in the Hebrew OT contains information they are ill-equipped to consider. This is also the case for students entering advanced degree work in OT, with the result that they often must play catch-up in order to understand even the basics of this system.

For these reasons, *Basics of Hebrew Accents* is a much-needed contribution. It will serve to equip intermediate Hebrew students with all the information they need to take Hebrew accents into account over a lifetime of Hebrew exegesis for ministry. It is also a much-needed bridge for advanced students of Biblical Hebrew. In their case, it will serve as a framework for studying sections of textbooks that are written at a similar reading level but may approach the topic in a different way. For example, sometimes a beginning Hebrew grammar will provide a brief introduction to this topic (e.g., Garrett and DeRouchie, pp. 273–82), or an intermediate Hebrew grammar will provide a more thorough introduction (e.g., Fuller and Choi, pp. 351–416). With the framework provided by Futato, these authors will become conversation partners and help readers develop their own framework that is less dependent on a single author. Futato's work will also serve advanced Hebrew students as an entry into longer works that deal more with debates in the field, as well as the more complicated aspects of Hebrew accents. In other words, whether the intermediate student is moving out of class and into ministry, or out of master's work and into advanced Hebrew studies, this book is excellent and helpfully fills a gap in the literature. For my part, it is a joy to assign this short, accessible volume to my own intermediate Hebrew students. I only wish this book had been available 20+ years ago, when I was at their stage of learning.

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The Law and the Prophets: A Study in Old Testament Canon Formation. By Stephen B. Chapman. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020, xviii + 412 pp., $55.00.

In *The Law and the Prophets*, author Stephen B. Chapman, Associate Professor of Old Testament at Duke Divinity School in Durham, NC, presents a thorough and insightful treatment of the role and development of the Law and the Prophets in OT canon formation. This volume is a North American reprint of the European edition originally published in 2000 by Mohr Siebeck. This edition adds a postscript and an additional, updated bibliography containing resources published since the original 2000 edition. Otherwise, the reprint contains very few changes, even maintaining the pagination of the original edition.

Following the original Preface and Acknowledgements, Chapman divides the main body of his work into six chapters. The first chapter, "The Question of the Law and the Prophets," provides a thorough review of canonical research begin-

ning with the work of H. E. Ryle of the late nineteenth century, who established what Chapman calls the standard theory (p. 3). This theory maintains the OT was canonized in three distinct stages: first the Law under Ezra, then the Prophets in the third century BC, and then the Writings by AD 100.

Against this theory, Chapman presents his own theory of canon formation in chapter 2, titled "'Density within History': Canon as Theological Grammar." Chapman sees in the canonization of the Law and the Prophets a more organic process in which neither the legal material nor the prophetic corpus held preeminence. Rather, the two collections developed simultaneously with equal authority and with a certain level of canon consciousness guiding and shaping the process. Rather than seeing canon formation as a competition between power groups, Chapman presents it more as the preservation of a range of theological ideals for future generations that bear witness to the fullness of God from Israel's cumulative experience.

Chapter 3, entitled "No Prophet Like Moses? Canonical Conclusions as Hermeneutical Guides," examines two critical passages of Scripture for understanding canon formation: Deuteronomy 34:10–12 and Malachi 3:22–24 [4:4–6]. Because these two passages appear to be late redactional conclusions to their respective collections (the Law and the Prophets), they provide evidence of Israel's theological grammar and canon consciousness at the end point of canon formation. After a thorough exegetical examination of these two passages, Chapman concludes the two endings coordinate both the Law and the Prophets using deuteronomistic language and ideas. This coordination, then, according to Chapman, provides the theological "grammar" for the development of the canon, the two traditions being an "indissoluble unity of tradition and faith" (p. 151).

The next two chapters provide further evidence for Chapman's conclusions. In chapter 4, "The Law and …," Chapman examines further biblical evidence for the coordination and co-development of the canonical forms of the Law and the Prophets, examining other passages from Deuteronomy and Joshua that provide evidence of redactional work and canon consciousness. Chapter 5, "The Law and the Words," presents further evidence to support Chapman's theory coming from the Deuteronomistic History, the Latter Prophets, Chronicles, Ezra-Nehemiah, and Daniel.

The final chapter of the book, "The Pre-Eminence of Torah?," addresses two important questions: "How do we account for the tradition of supremacy of Torah?" and "How does 'the Law and the Prophets' fit into the broader history of canon formation?" In this chapter, Chapman moves beyond Scripture to examine evidence from outside the OT, including the Apocrypha, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and the NT, helping the reader to see how his theory of canon formation fits into the broader picture of canon formation and accounts for the development of the preeminence of Torah within Judaism.

Following the six main chapters of the book, Chapman includes the added postscript, entitled "Twenty Years Later." This addendum covers topics ranging from further thoughts on the writing and preservation of canons to some of the author's reflections on the writing of the original edition to a few notes on the rela-

tionship between the original edition and the reprinted edition. After the postscript, Chapman includes the original bibliography, the additional bibliography, and three indices: Author, Source (Biblical Literature and Ancient Sources), and Subject.

Widely recognized as a landmark study in canon formation, *The Law and the Prophets* is a strong piece of scholarly work. Chapman's challenge to the standard three-stage theory of canon formation is much needed, moving our understanding of this topic forward. Moreover, his organic approach to the issue of canon formation provides a viable and insightful alternative to the traditional approach that future studies must take into consideration. Chapman is both thorough and nuanced in his approach to the evidence, discussing a wide range of passages from the OT and other sources with attention to the fine details and their significance.

However, Chapman's work does have a few drawbacks. On occasion, he presents evidence that is only probable or speculative at best. For example, in his discussion of the Song of Moses (Deut 32), Chapman perhaps too quickly dismisses the absence of second person forms in parts of the Song—evidence that does not support his view. Another drawback of this volume, as acknowledged by the author, is its lack of discussion of the formation of the third canonical portion of the OT, the Writings. The inclusion of such a discussion would provide a complete picture of OT canon formation, but this must be left for future research. These few instances notwithstanding, Chapman presents us with an outstanding work on the development of the canon of the OT Law and Prophets.

Regarding the reprint of Chapman's work, it is good to have a North American edition available, and the added bibliographic material is likely worth the cost of the book. However, the limited changes to the body of the work and the addition of the brief postscript are perhaps a bit disappointing. Regardless, *The Law and the Prophets* by Chapman continues to be an essential volume for those studying OT canon formation. The need for this reprint twenty years after the original testifies to its enduring value.

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The Problem of the Old Testament: Hermeneutical, Schematic, and Theological Disputes. By Duane A. Garrett. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2020, 408 pp., $40.00.

Duane A. Garrett is the John R. Sampey Professor of Old Testament Interpretation and Professor of Biblical Theology at Southern Seminary. He is a formidable scholar whose work spans several decades and every major genre of the OT. In *The Problem of the Old Testament*, Garrett's explicit thesis is that the OT is fulfilled in Jesus Christ and is both authoritative and edifying for Christians (p. ix). In this new work, his goal is "to demonstrate that we can attain a description of the Old Testament that is comprehensive, contextual, and Christian," which he attempts neither with a "presupposition-based" reading of the text, nor by claiming "a superhuman level of objectivity" (p. 10). This is the first installation in a series of

books on the "problem," with other topics such as law, prophecy, and wisdom promised in future volumes.

The book is divided into four parts with thirteen chapters and an appendix. Part 1 summarizes the "problem," which is that Christians reading the OT "do not know how to fully assimilate it to the Christian faith" (p. 3). The problem can be described with three propositions: The OT is hard to define, hard to read, and hard to reconcile with the NT. The core question Garrett attempts to answer is thus: "Is there no way to save the Old Testament's contextual meaning while demonstrating continuity with the New?" (p. 89).

In Part 2, Garrett surveys two inadequate hermeneutical solutions to the problem from church history, first with the Alexandrian and Antiochene schools. The principles associated with these schools show that sound hermeneutical principles of themselves do not lead to an understanding of the OT that is useful and compatible with the Christian faith (p. 90). Additionally, he explains and critiques two schematic solutions (covenantalism and dispensationalism), which attempt to relate all parts of the Bible to the whole, as well as conceptual solutions (canonical and biblical theology), which assert that if we hold to a right conception as to the nature of the OT, we will be able to use it appropriately. Garrett concludes that all of these solutions are inadequate for answering the central question.

Part 3 is Garrett's core proposal. First, he defines a schema for the relationship of Israel and the church that differs from the aforementioned covenant and dispensational theologies. Both the supersessionism of covenant theology and the two-separate-peoples approach of dispensationalism are wrong in Garrett's view. There is one people of God—Israel. The Gentile church in the NT is a distinct entity that, in faith, becomes part of Israel. Theologically, they simply mark two different phases of salvation history (pp. 163ff.).

Second, with this distinction in mind and in concert with his previous critiques in Part 2, Garrett proposes a new definition of the OT. It is "the corpus of Israel's sacred texts written by its prophets and sages. It is composed of two collections: Election Literature and Wisdom Literature. These two are distinct because YHWH's election of Israel is the governing idea of the former, but 'wisdom,' the principles that God built into the world and into the human soul at creation, is foundational for the latter" (p. 170).

By distinguishing Election Literature from Wisdom, Garrett departs from conceptual models that organize the Bible around a single "center." Wisdom is not an alternative, however, but a complement to Election Literature. It is not a separate canon, but a hermeneutical category (p. 166). In Garrett's view, if one is to create a compelling OT theology, one must distinguish between these two (p. 172), especially Wisdom, "which never conforms to anyone's proposed center" (p. 146). More interaction is needed to substantiate this point, and thus Garrett argues in chapters 8–10 that Election Literature is the predominant organizing principle in the OT. Here, the author develops a single idea: Israel is the chosen people of God, first codified with Abraham in Genesis with its attendant promise, or covenant. God's electing purpose, however, is foundational; the covenant is a "secondary matter" (p. 175), "an addendum" (p. 181). The Law, moreover, gives Israel her

identity as God's elect. It is a covenant document but serves to keep Israel separate from the nations and preserve her identity and purity as God's elect (p. 212).

In Part 4, Garrett addresses interpretive problems and solutions that arise as one reads the OT narrative and prophetic material, including an evaluation of allusive patterns in narrative (chap. 10), and a lengthy discussion of the prophetic method in Hosea and Joel. In chapter 11, Garrett expounds on his view of authorial intent and application, adopting a Hirschian model of hermeneutics: "In biblical interpretation, the author's intended meaning is of paramount importance" (p. 327). Further, "For an interpretation to be legitimate … the application ought to correspond significantly to the core message of the work (the author's intended meaning, as best as we can determine it)" (p. 329). This is to say that "the later application of a text ought to hold to the same *trajectory* as the author's meaning" (p. 330). The book concludes with an appendix of bonus material of a forthcoming volume in the series on pre-exilic prophecy.

Two points are worth highlighting in appreciation. First, Garrett notes an obvious deficiency in many current biblical and OT theologies: large portions of the OT do not deal with the supposed "center" or theme an author proposes. This point is mostly evident in Wisdom texts, which is the focus of Garrett's demurral, and where biblical-theological themes often fizzle out. One example is Rendtorff's *Canonical Hebrew Bible*. For all its merits, Wisdom is nearly invisible in the book. Rendtorff does have Wisdom as a "theme" in OT theology, but devotes barely two pages to the topic in a 756-page book, which is a problem Garrett rightly exposes. Other examples could be mentioned, but on the whole, Garrett's objection forcefully demonstrates how Wisdom must be taken seriously as a textual body when working in biblical theology. While *The Problem of the Old Testament* does not offer a comprehensive analysis of Wisdom in context, Garrett promises to address this aspect of the "problem" in a subsequent volume.

Second, attempts at crafting a Christian "metanarrative" deserve critical interaction, which Garrett provides. These attempts are valid when rightly understood, but they are often sloppy and based on grasping only a few lines of prophecy. Garrett would argue that the validity of any supposed metanarrative of this kind, one that spans two different bodies of literature, requires *demonstration*. "It is not enough simply to cite a passage or two and claim from it that the whole Old Testament narrative is fulfilled in Jesus" (p. 254). Garrett's point is acutely perceptive. For example, many authors make leaps in describing a particular biblical-theological theme by covering only material from the exodus, David's reign, and the book of Isaiah before moving on to the NT. This kind of naked exegesis disregards the whole forest for a select few trees. Good scholars must *demonstrate* and not merely *presuppose* that the metanarrative of Scripture corresponds to the actual narrative.

Even with these points of appreciation, I want to push back against three of Garrett's central ideas. First, Garrett maintains that the OT is comprised of two types of literature, Election and Wisdom. However, bifurcating the canon between election texts written by prophets and wisdom texts written by sages is too neat a distinction. Both bodies of texts and the authors intermingle, which contributes to the theological interconnectedness of the OT.

Second, Garrett states that "the theological starting point for the Old Testament is that God chose Abraham" (p. 166), which is to say, the Election Literature. However, Garrett's designation here is merely descriptive, not theological, and neglects the theological starting point of the OT canon—creation. Garrett does not elaborate as to why creation is excluded in his proposal, nor does he interact with the myriad of OT scholars who rightly begin with Genesis 1–2, as the OT itself does. By making creation the starting point of OT theology—rather than election—Garrett would smooth over his sharp distinction between "bodies of texts" in the OT (Election and Wisdom), since creation is a key theological theme in both.

Third, on the Israel-church distinction, Garrett writes, "It is not correct to suppose that Israel and the church are two parts of a generic entity, 'the people of God.' The Bible knows of no such abstraction" (p. 164). Rather, he says that Israel is the one people of God, and in the New Covenant age, believing Gentiles are grafted into the one people, Israel. Garrett explains that Christ's demolition of the dividing wall of hostility (Eph 2:14–15) "does not mean that Israel ceased to be the identity and home of those who know God; it means that *the believing Gentiles came into Israel*" (p. 164, emphasis mine). But surely this is backward, or simply needs clarification. While it is true that Israel is the elect of God and recipient of the promises, the incarnation brings into focus how a believer becomes part of God's kingdom, all the while reshaping one's identity. In other words, because of the person and work of Christ, both Jew and Gentile must come not into Israel, but *into Christ*, the true vine (John 15:1), and the head of the new people of God—the new and true Israel (Gal 6:16). In Garrett's explanation there is no dividing wall, but still a division within the "people of God." Garrett thus neglects to show that by union with Christ, God "has made us both one" which leads to "one new man instead of two" (Eph 2:14–15). Garrett wants to maintain that God's household is specifically Israelite, the "holy people," which now *includes* Gentile Christians, but Paul says that God's household *is* Jew and Gentile together, regardless of ethnic distinctions. The apostles maintain this unity, using the language of Israel's identity to describe *all Christians* as "God's people" (1 Pet 2:10).

Although *The Problem of the Old Testament* is a polemical work at its core (interaction with specific interlocutors is mostly in footnotes), Garrett's thesis rightly articulates the Christian struggle to understand the OT in light of the incarnation. Neither scholar nor student is free to jettison these questions, and readers would do well to listen to Garrett's arguments with patience and appreciation. I strongly recommend engagement with this book for any student of the OT.

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Rebels and Exiles: A Biblical Theology of Sin and Restoration. By Matthew S. Harmon. Essential Studies in Biblical Theology. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2020, 184 pp., $22.00 paper.

This volume is the latest addition to the Essential Studies in Biblical Theology series, a series that introduces central themes in biblical theology. This new book traces the essential theme of exile and restoration through the storyline of the Bible. Harmon treats this theme in eight chapters, four chapters on the OT and four chapters on the NT.

Within his introduction, Harmon broadly defines exile as a displacement that can be physical, geographical, or spiritual (p. 2). With this broad definition, he identifies several points of exile within Israel's history. Chapter 1 highlights Genesis 1–3 as the first critical exile of the Bible that the entire plot of the Bible aims to resolve. Harmon demonstrates how the Abrahamic covenant functions to restore this first exile by promising to Abraham descendants (people), a place to live, and God's presence. Chapters 2–4 shift the focus toward Israel's exile, examining the Mosaic covenant and the cause of Israel's exile within the book of Kings. The author outlines the prophetic visions of restoration in chapter 4, noting how these visions revolve around prophecies about a restored temple, Torah, turf, and throne. These chapters establish the necessary categories to understand exile and restoration within the NT.

In chapter 5, Harmon follows N. T. Wright's central thesis that Jesus's life inaugurates the end of the exile while being careful not to overread this theme within Jesus's life (p. 80). He ties Jesus's healing, his dominion over the demons, and his teaching as signs that he is inaugurating the restoration of Israel's exile. Likewise, Jesus's death functions as a double restoration for Israel's exile and humanity's exile, creating a way for humans to return to the presence of God.

Chapter 7 explores the tension within the Pauline and General Epistles, which paint a picture of humans living with a relationship to God, but who are at the same time still in exile. Finally, Harmon shows how humanity's exile ends with a new heaven and earth, a new Jerusalem, and a new Eden.

In the concluding chapter, Harmon provides seven theological reflections informed by the theme of sin and exile. Unfortunately, these reflections remain general and do not provide the depth they could have. For example, one theological conclusion is that the theme of exile teaches us who God is and demonstrates that God is a gracious God. While this is a profound point, an even more relevant and insightful theological reflection could be that God is a God who sends his children into exile, a point Harmon only mentions in one sentence. However, Harmon's theological conclusions summarize critical insights for those new to biblical theology.

Throughout this volume, Harmon provides helpful theological corrections and insights. Harmon critiques the concept that the gospel records Jesus's sinless life so he could be a proper atoning sacrifice for humanity. While acknowledging the truth of this claim, he shows that there is more to Jesus's life than the procurement of righteousness. Harmon demonstrates that Jesus's life has several links to

OT prophetic visions of exilic restoration. The writers of the Gospels portray Jesus's life as restoring Israel from exile, providing a critical connection between the OT and NT, and offering an essential interpretative lens for the Gospels (p. 93).

Another helpful theological correction that Harmon provides is expanding the definition of exile. His definition challenges a view that sees the exile as only referring to Judah's historical-geographical displacement to Babylon. Instead, Harmon shows how exile becomes a dominant biblical-theological category, useful for understanding the entire Bible. Harmon does not end his biblical-theological exposition at the descriptive level, however, but concludes each chapter with a pointed application, an element often lacking in biblical theologies. His pastoral applications make this book suitable for a small group or classroom setting.

Harmon's work succeeds in providing an accessible introduction to the theme of exile and restoration. He supplies his readers with categories to track the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant and Israel's restoration, necessary for understanding the NT. Non-specialists in the NT will find his NT chapters packed with new insights as he makes recent scholarship accessible. Ultimately, this book introduces one of the major theological themes of the Bible and is perfect for laypeople and students within a church or academic setting.

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The God of the Old Testament: Encountering the Divine in Christian Scripture. By R. W. L. Moberly. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 304 pp., $34.99.

Some things are caught more than taught and, while a textbook on hermeneutics can have heuristic value, it is often through sitting at the feet of an interpreter who nourishes not only our head but also our heart that we further learn the skills of interpretation. In *The God of the Old Testament*, Walter Moberly models what he calls the Christian discipline of "reading as Scripture" as he attempts to set out a non-exhaustive doctrine of God from the OT.

In an introductory chapter, Moberly elaborates what he means by "reading as Scripture." He writes, "I propose to read *the received form* of the biblical text with *a second naiveté* in a mode of *full imaginative seriousness* that probes *the subject matter* and recognizes its *recontextualization into plural contexts* in relation to which I bring to bear *a text-hermeneutic and reader-hermeneutic* and also utilize a *rule of faith*" (italics original, p. 5).

Reading the *received form* of the text, argues Moberly, allows one to glean from the study of poetics, discern theological factors that shaped the text, and engage premodern readers. A *second naiveté* is a concept from Paul Ricoeur that describes when an interpreter has passed through the "desert of criticism" to a "place that is potentially generative of a transformative encounter with God—without abandoning scholarly integrity." By *full imaginative seriousness* Moberly means to enter into the world of the text to "engage existential realities" as one might enter into a movie. To read the Hebrew Bible as Scripture is to acknowledge that the larger theology of

the Christian faith is the proper *subject matter* into which particular studies must be placed. Furthermore, the context for interpretation is no longer the original context, but the canonical context; and the reception of a body of texts as canonical has resulted in their ongoing *recontextualization* as they are reused within the Christian tradition. Because of this recontextualization, a *text-hermeneutic* must be employed to recognize the "semantic potential of the words" and a *reader-hermeneutic* to recognize the new context and that this "change of context can bring a change of meaning." Finally, Moberly uses the term "rule of faith" not in any specific way but merely to express "a set of interrelated moral and theological judgments as to the kind of sense that does, or does not, resonate within a biblical and Christian frame of reference" (pp. 5–10).

In chapter 1, Moberly looks at "The Wise God" who created the world through wisdom as found in Proverbs 8. He argues that "becoming wise is a matter not just of becoming successful and/or wealthy and/or powerful but rather of being attuned to the nature of reality" (p. 33).

The author then describes "The Mysterious God" from the burning bush in chapter 2, in which he seeks to "probe the theological question of the meaning of the divine name" (p. 65). He concludes that the name "YHWH is not meant to explain anything." In other words, it is intended as a mystery, but not in the sense that one lacks knowledge. Rather, it is a mystery in that it is a "reality which is understood to be ever greater the more one enters into it" (p. 78).

In chapter 3, Moberly offers a reading of Psalm 82—in which God enters the divine council in the midst of other gods—to present "The Just God." Whatever religio-historical arguments can be made for the original context of the psalm, it has been recontextualized into the canonical context and thus "not the number of gods but the moral context of their practice is the psalm's concern" (p. 106). Moberly summarizes that God alone is presented as just and "humans are to become like God in how they live and conduct themselves" (p. 119).

Chapter 4 presents a fascinating reading of Genesis 4 to depict "The Inscrutable God." Moberly notes that the text is silent as to why Cain's offering is rejected, and thus the thrust of the text is not on some imperfection in Cain, but on God's seemingly unfair, sovereign prerogative to choose that which he would favor. And so, the lesson is not to avoid "giving-second best to God" but "how to handle life in a world where some are more favored than others" (p. 135).

The story of Naaman in 2 Kings 5 is the setting for Moberly to portray "The Only God" in chapter 5. Regarding Naaman's request of Elisha, he writes, "He worships the Lord on his altar at home and does no more than go through the motions of worship when he is in the house of Rimmon" (p. 189), suggesting that "biblical narrative … can prompt fresh reflection on perennially difficult questions of what constitutes faithfulness" (p. 193).

In the final chapter, Moberly shows "The Trustworthy God" by contrasting Psalm 46, where God is a refuge to his people in the unshakable city, with Jeremiah 7 and Micah 3, which depict God as about to shake the temple in which the people have wrongly trusted. The author resolves the apparent contradiction by arguing that "only those whose way of living embraces God's priorities, so that God's jus-

tice is appropriated by them, can legitimately expect the blessing of God's protecting presence" (p. 217).

For those of us more conservative in our hermeneutic, wary of "plural contexts" and "reader-hermeneutics," Moberly's work moves beyond abstract theoretical discussions and displays a well-reasoned and controlled approach. He explains that the difference between his text- and reader-hermeneutic and those operating with an author-hermeneutic is often semantic (p. 9). While those who argue the need to distinguish between meaning and significance may quibble with or wish to rephrase Moberly's claim that recontextualization changes the meaning, few could dispute and not be enriched by his exegetical conclusions. Even his use of the "imagination" is described as his attempt to "approximate the outlook of the biblical writers" (p. 249), and though not exactly the same, could be compared with those who likewise seek to embrace the interpretive perspective of the biblical authors (e.g., Hamilton, *What Is Biblical Theology?*; Starling, *Hermeneutics as Apprenticeship*; and Keener, *Spirit Hermeneutics*). Therefore, while even I might state things slightly differently, truly "the proof of the theoretical pudding is in its practical eating" (p. 3), and I must confess I enjoyed the feast.

However, one area mentioned but not thoroughly discussed is: what is the interpreter to do if plural contexts appear to exist *within* the canon? For example, Moberly notes that the NT (Heb 11:4, 1 John 3:11–12) provides a moral reason why Cain was unfavored, but his reading of Genesis 4 rests on the silence of Genesis. Should a canonical reading prioritize NT interpretation? Should it harmonize accounts? Or should it let two readings that are not contradictory but certainly divergent stand side-by-side? Moberly does not answer at length.

The God of the Old Testament is an edifying read that also teaches Christians how to relate to God, for "an understanding of God is inseparable from an understanding of what it means to be human" (p. 1). Thus, the book accomplishes what its subtitle states—encountering the divine in Christian Scripture—and for that reason alone it merits serious engagement.

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Misreading Scripture with Individualist Eyes: Patronage, Honor, and Shame in the Biblical World. By E. Randolph Richards and Richard James. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2020, xii + 291 pp., $28.00 paper.

E. Randolph Richards (provost and professor of biblical studies at Palm Beach Atlantic University) and Richard James (pseudonym; cross-cultural trainer and Middle East church planter) have written a book that is a must-read for seminary students, professors of Bible, and a general readership who are interested in a clearer understanding of the background issues of the biblical text. Those trained in the contextual method of interpretation will especially find this book useful. As with the contextual method's exploration of the ANE's impact on our understanding of the biblical text, so the authors seek to show that a proper understanding of

the collective thought in the ANE similarly influences the attitudes and actions of the biblical characters, yielding a better appreciation of a given text's meaning.

The book divides into a preface, an introduction, and a body composed of three parts. The preface and introduction define the issues involved in the study and set its methodology. The methodology properly takes into account the differences between the collectivist thought of "South American, Asian, and most often Mediterranean cultures," while "not suggesting … that these cultures are somehow the same as the biblical world" (p. 9).

Part 1 explores "the deep-level social structures of the biblical world: kinship, patronage, and brokerage" (p. 9). Part 2 examines "some key social tools collective people used to maintain, enforce, and reinforce their social values" (p. 9). These include honor, shame, and boundaries. Part 3 applies "these things to our individualistic lives" (p. 9). To help the reader grasp these concepts, the authors attempt to show how "collective values work in the text" by showing "how they work in some modern collectivist cultures and then in the biblical world" (p. 10). In short, the authors believe that "the more individualists understand the Bible was about collectivist people, the better we will read it," hopefully producing "an 'Aha!'" (p. 10) when reading a biblical text. Overall, this methodology enlightens the reader, demonstrating many new insights to be gained from such an approach.

Even so, there are several issues found in the work that need attention if the work is to be improved. Astute readers will note the following:

First, there seems to be a misunderstanding of the Tetragrammaton in the theophany of Exodus 3. The authors consistently (pp. 163, 212) translate "Yahweh" as "I am." While this definition is common among scholarship, a more precise definition makes the meaning clearer. "Yahweh" actually derives from the third masculine singular of the verb "to be" and means, "He is." The first common singular form is pronounced "*'ehyeh*," and means, "I am." So when Moses asked God (Exod 3:13–14) what he was supposed to say when the people asked who God was, God replied, "I am who I am," using the first common singular form, not the third masculine singular form. This title is descriptive. When Moses asked in effect, "Who are you?," God replied, "I am who I am," that is, "the God who exists," clearly drawing a distinction between Yahweh and other gods. Moses understood, for he explained "all the words of the LORD [i.e., Yahweh]" to Aaron (Exod 4:28). Aaron then "spoke all the words that the LORD [i.e., Yahweh] had spoken to Moses (Exod 4:30)" to the people, who "believed … when they heard that the LORD [i.e., "Yahweh"] had visited the people of Israel and that he had seen their affliction, they bowed their heads and worshiped" (Exod 4:31). So individuals when describing God speak of him as Yahweh ("He is"), while God designates himself "*'ehyeh*" ("I Am").

Second, several times the authors affirm interpretations the biblical text does not substantiate. In their discussion of the Ethiopian eunuch, the authors assert, "The Ethiopian eunuch is so committed that he learns Hebrew. He travels to Jerusalem to buy a copy of some of the Scriptures" (p. 211). Nothing in the biblical text establishes that claim. The eunuch may have been reading from the Septuagint; at least the passage quoted in Acts 8:32–33 derives from the Septuagint of Isaiah

53:7–8. Similarly, the authors assert that the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15) might have been "initially aimed at Peter, who may have been upset that Jesus had invited the local tax collector, Levi, to join the disciples (Lk 5)" (p. 191). Again, there is no basis for this assertion. Later they correct the issue, saying, "Jesus told the parable in response to Pharisees and teachers of the law muttering, 'This man welcomes sinners and eats with them' (Lk 15:2)" (p. 237).

Third, in dealing with the Joseph story, the authors skip chapter 38, though they do deal with it later on its own (pp. 53–55). This might be necessary in order to do the Joseph narrative justice. However, the inspired author put chapter 38 in the position it occupies to split the Joseph narrative for some purpose. What does the text say about collective presuppositions when one reads the Judah-Tamar episode, as written, in the context of the Joseph episode?

As stated, this is a "must-read book." Despite the just-mentioned hindrances, it greatly illuminates the collectivist thinking of the ancient world behind the biblical text. The reader who is privileged to read this book will have a much better appreciation of the collectivist thought and a better understanding of the biblical text.

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How (Not) to Read the Bible: Making Sense of the Anti-Women, Anti-Science, Pro-Violence, Pro-Slavery and Other Crazy-Sounding Parts of Scripture. By Dan Kimball. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020, 309 pp., $19.99 paper.

As we begin 2021, we find ourselves in a world that is increasingly anti-Christian, anti-truth, anti-government, anti-this, anti-that. Against this background, Christianity's magnum opus—the Holy Bible—is often misunderstood and misquoted, even among those who claim to believe its words. The lack of solid biblical understanding and worldview daily continues to create havoc in our world. Issues that confront us such as slavery, sexism, racism, and violence create questions for Christians and non-Christians alike. When God's Word is interpreted incorrectly, horrible damage is done. The Bible has been used irresponsibly by many to justify atrocious things throughout history. Misunderstood Bible verses have been taken out of context to create mocking memes.

Dan Kimball has written a surprisingly approachable and orthodox work on hermeneutics and apologetics to help answer some of these objections. The author builds the proper case that understanding context and observing good principles of hermeneutics help Christians, and others reading the Bible, to find its intended meaning. Properly understanding and applying God's Word transforms not only its adherents, but also the world in which they live.

Throughout the book, Kimball shares stories of conversations he has had with Christians and non-Christians as they struggle with difficult passages of the Bible. He is correct that too many in the church are not even aware that the Bible contains these verses. They have no answers to the questions that skeptics, antagonists, and people of faith have about these topics and the verses that are often

twisted to promote the idea that Christians are ignorant and naive. This is a reminder of why the expository preaching of God's Word is so important to the Christian church. Believers need to be exposed to these issues and taught how to respond and think about the objections that are raised to Christianity. From the pulpits and in Sunday school classrooms and discipleship groups of the Christian church, we must systematically and effectively address these difficulties so that God's people "may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Tim 3:17, NKJV).

Kimball divides his work into six main parts. At the end of each section, he provides a helpful summary of the section's content. He argues, "If we study these difficult passages, we will be better prepared when we hear or read them, and this is not only for our own sake, it affects our responsibility to accurately represent Jesus. We need to sharpen our thinking so we are able to help others when they have questions about the Bible" (p. 297). In the beginning chapters, Kimball presents an introduction to key hermeneutical principles and provides an approachable broad-stroke story line for the Bible. He argues that understanding the original time, culture, and audience helps twenty-first-century readers understand often misunderstood biblical texts.

Four key principles that provide the foundation of Kimball's apologetic are as follows: (1) the Bible is a library, not a book; (2) the Bible was written for us, but not to us; (3) never read a Bible verse; and (4) all the Bible points to Jesus. He identifies several verses that are often taken out of context and isolated to disprove Christianity or cast derision upon it. He then provides approachable solutions to the difficulties of the passages throughout the book. In general, the chapters and issues he discusses are balanced well with broad brush strokes of the issue. He does not delve in depth into most of the issues he addresses. I am sure that this is in part due to the nature of the book and its intended audience, but will leave many wanting more, which a good book should do. The book would serve well as a supplemental text to an introductory course on hermeneutics or apologetics. Pastors and laypeople alike would find the work helpful in identifying and beginning to think about some of the objections non-Christians have regarding the Bible. It would also help them to see some passages that cause problems for believers. People in the pews are asking and wondering about these issues. A "for further study" section at the end of each part of the book would have been an excellent idea. The prologue indicates that there are such listings on Kimball's website.

Kimball deals with several issues in the book, including violence in the OT, science and the Bible, slavery, women, and the exclusivity of the Christian faith. As he points out in the beginning of his book, "No Christian should be afraid of or ignore difficult questions" (p. 9). Kimball addresses these issues with biblical support and reasoning. After reading the book, readers will be able to have intelligent conversations about these difficult topics.

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The Return of Oral Hermeneutics: As Good Today as It Was for the Hebrew Bible and First-Century Christianity. By Tom Steffen and William Bjoraker. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2020, xxx + 357 pp., $42.00 paper.

This book proposes a dramatically different way to approach and teach the Bible than is commonly taught in the West—one the authors describe as "oral hermeneutics." Tom Steffen and William Bjoraker introduce concepts that may be more effective in many situations than today's typical methods. They present strong arguments that are enough to shake up the categories of a Western-trained Bible student! *The Return of Oral Hermeneutics* deserves serious attention.

Steffen spent over fifteen years with New Tribes Mission (now Ethnos 360). The tribespeople he worked with are primarily oral learners who found it hard to grasp his Western literate style of teaching. Eventually, Steffen and his colleagues found that Bible-*story*-based teaching was very effective. Bjoraker had a missionary ministry to Jews. They were not very receptive until he tried oral storytelling. He reports, "My Jewish friends loved it! It is the best approach I have ever discovered for engaging Jewish seekers with the word of God" (p. xxii).

Having witnessed the success of Bible-story-telling on the mission field, the authors present the concepts with academic rigor and suggest they also might be useful in the Western world. They mention groups such as "Simply the Story" that are seeing good results in the United States with this oral style of teaching.

What are Steffen and Bjoraker doing that is different? They are focused on *narrative* sections of the Bible. They found that Bible stories are not just for children. They discovered that *telling* Bible stories encouraged adults to relate to God's word, picture the events, interact with them, evaluate what was happening, and even apply lessons in their own lives. In short, laypeople are seriously *engaging* with the Bible!

To demonstrate what they mean by this unfamiliar concept, the authors bracket the book in chapters 1 and 9 with two examples of biblical storytelling and interpretation in an interactive group environment. They use these examples to demonstrate how "oral hermeneutics … provides relational listening and responding in the immediate give-and-take of discussion, including questions of clarification raised in the process of interpreting, thus *ensuring satisfactory explanation and understanding*" (p. 46, emphasis mine). Steffen and Bjoraker observe that the Western style of teaching by telling *assumes* "satisfactory explanation and understanding," but does not ensure it.

The central portion of the book elaborates and explains the big ideas of oral hermeneutics. For those trained to interpret the Bible in the Western literate culture (the authors call it "textual hermeneutics"), the notion of oral hermeneutics can be a difficult one to grasp. The book gives descriptive distinctions between the two. "Textual hermeneutics tends to focus on fixed documents, preferably the earliest Hebrew and Greek manuscripts, grammatical analysis, lexical tools" (p. 15), and is usually done alone in a study environment. "Oral hermeneutics, on the other hand, tends to focus on the communal oral telling, demonstration, discussion, interpretation, repetition, and application of the biblical grand narrative and all the smaller stories that compose her" (p. 16). Oral hermeneutics is done in a group.

Obviously, most Bible stories occur in the narrative portions of Scripture. Drilling down into narratives, the authors introduce the idea of "character theology." The focus here is on the conversations, actions, and choices made by Bible characters and what can be learned from them. This style of study places a premium on "character thinking." In contrast to typical Western "critical thinking" with its focus on ideas, "character thinking" cultivates the ability to "read, discern, and decipher people and relationships" (p. 207), specifically in Bible stories. Character thinking is something the Philippine tribespeople understand, but Westerners can understand it also.

One implication of the oral hermeneutics/character thinking approach is that the role of the teacher changes. "As a storyteller-facilitator, one is still a teacher, but the teaching style shifts. We shift from the lecture mode, which can often devolve to a mere download of cognitive information, to a facilitator of discovery-learning mode" (p. 59).

Steffen and Bjoraker see a special place for the metanarrative, the Grand Story of the Bible. They state that "no story or passage can be interpreted accurately or fully if taken out of context of the grand narrative of Scripture" (p. 113). Again, they point to the Bible metanarrative as a way to "fight the fragmented understanding of Scripture so prevalent in the West today" (p. 129).

While strongly promoting oral hermeneutics approaches, the authors are careful not to throw out Bible study and presentation methods developed over hundreds of years. Instead, they advocate oral hermeneutics as an additional concept—another tool in the toolbox for Christians.

When would a person use oral hermeneutics? Steffen and Bjoraker raise a thought-provoking concept that "hermeneutics is determined by genre" (p. 239). They would say that their oral hermeneutics is much stronger for narrative literature than is traditional textual hermeneutics. However, they would acknowledge that textual hermeneutics may work better for other genres.

The topic of oral hermeneutics is broad. While Steffen and Bjoraker address many facets of the subject, there remain some questions and issues, perhaps for their next book.

Given that most of the explainers/interpreters of oral hermeneutics have little to no theological training, the biggest concern for many textual hermeneutics practitioners would be how to keep the novices from running off the rails. The authors did discuss the importance of the metanarrative in proper interpretation. Their storytelling demonstration in the first chapter illustrated the storyteller gently correcting an errant student by pointing him back to the text. However, the reader is still left with the question, "Beyond the leader's orthodoxy and diplomacy, what are the guardrails?" More work needs to be done here.

Regarding the concept of metanarrative, the authors mention its importance in several places, helping, among other things, to provide a big-picture orientation and doctrinal consistency. Steffen presents his own version of a brief metanarrative. What is missing is an example or discussion of how to connect the metanarrative to the individual stories. Chapters 1 and 9 provide ideal opportunities for such an example. Even though the authors express valid concern about the fragmentation

of the textual hermeneutics approach, oral hermeneutics as presented seems to have its own version of fragmentation in that dozens or even hundreds of stories are still disconnected.

My overall conclusion is that Steffen and Bjoraker make a strong case for adding oral hermeneutics as an additional tool for the Bible teacher. They provide a variety of thoughtful and convincing arguments. They provide helpful examples. They support their arguments with considerable research and extensive footnotes. Oral hermeneutics is a very effective communication method to explore biblical stories. It is a valuable contribution to engage the postmodern audience with the Scriptures. Going forward, oral hermeneutics should have a place in the discussion of how to communicate the Bible most effectively.

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Exodus Old and New: A Biblical Theology of Redemption. By L. Michael Morales. Essential Studies in Biblical Theology. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2020, xiii + 207 pp., $22.00 paper.

For many Christians, redemption refers to salvation from sin as accomplished through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This definition is not ultimately incorrect, but it lacks theological depth and largely ignores the unity of God's purposes across history. Thankfully, in *Exodus Old and New: A Biblical Theology of Redemption*, L. Michael Morales, Professor of Biblical Studies at Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, offers a more robust understanding of redemption as seen through the lens of Scripture's exodus motif.

The introduction and first chapter set the stage for the rest of the book. Morales outlines the threefold structure of the exodus story, using Dante Alighieri's *Divine Comedy* as an illustration: the departure from bondage in Egypt (*Inferno*), Israel's consecration at Mount Sinai (*Purgatorio*), and Israel's arrival in the land of Canaan (*Paradiso*). According to Morales, through this exodus pattern God establishes "a paradigm, the pattern, for understanding the salvation of all his people, including Israel and the nations, through Jesus the Messiah" (p. 5). The historical exodus from Egypt prefigures the new exodus accomplished through Christ's resurrection, which reverses humanity's exile from Eden by restoring us to God. The remainder of *Exodus Old and New* is divided into three parts that unpack this rich imagery in more detail.

Part 1, "The Historical Exodus out of Egypt," focuses on the account of the exodus as recounted in Scripture. The book of Genesis anticipates the exodus through narratives such as Abraham's brief sojourn in Egypt and his near sacrifice of Isaac. Then, the rest of the Pentateuch recounts the exodus proper, which is ultimately intended to reveal God to the world and not merely to deliver the Israelites from Egyptian bondage. Morales characterizes Egypt as symbolic of Sheol and death, and the Israelites' departure from Egypt therefore represents a resurrection of sorts. This depiction is reinforced by the creation imagery found in the account

of the Red Sea crossing: God's defeat of Pharaoh and Egypt symbolizes his conquest of the serpent, known elsewhere in Scripture as Satan.

Morales sees Passover as central to the significance of the exodus. At the heart of the paschal ritual is the notion that Israel's emergence from Egypt required a ransoming from death, accomplished through the shedding of blood. The Passover, furthermore, set in motion an exodus-like journey into God's presence that parallels the procedural order of Israel's sacrifices: "In the Passover deliverance, the lamb's blood served to ransom and purify Israel [i.e., the purification offering], which led to Israel's consecration to God at Mount Sinai [i.e., the whole burnt offering], a new relationship that was confirmed and experienced as a covenant meal [i.e., the fellowship offering]" (pp. 96–97). Coupled with the Day of Atonement, then, the sacrificial system ritually reversed humanity's expulsion from Eden.

Part 2, "The Prophesied Second Exodus," investigates the second exodus foretold by the prophets. Like the first exodus, this exodus would lead to a new relationship of consecration by covenant and new life in the land with God. However, unlike the first exodus, it would also include an inward, spiritual exodus. Morales outlines five elements anticipated by the prophets in their proclamation of the second exodus: the glory of Yahweh's name, a new David, Elijah's preparation for the advent of Yahweh, the outpouring of Yahweh's Spirit, and resurrection. He further argues that the key figure behind these elements is the servant of Isaiah's Servant Songs. Morales connects this figure with an eschatological Moses-David figure—the culmination of hopes associated with the prophet like Moses and a Messianic king—as well as with Yahweh himself.

Part 3, "The New Exodus of Jesus the Messiah," explores how Jesus fulfills these hopes in the NT writings. Focusing primarily on the Gospel of John, Morales shows how Jesus's crucifixion as the Passover Lamb brings about the reversal of humanity's exile from Eden. Then, he argues that Christians experience the second exodus through the gift of the Holy Spirit, who renews creation and brings us into God's household, and Jesus's resurrection, which makes the new creation a reality.

Exodus Old and New is an outstanding book. Its prose is clear and engaging, which makes it accessible and easy to read, and nearly every page contains some fascinating insight. The book's most important contribution, though, is its masterful demonstration that the various portions of Scripture can be united in the exodus motif. By defining redemption in terms of the exodus pattern, Morales significantly advances our understanding of the doctrine of salvation and offers a true biblical theology of redemption. He compellingly exposits the unity of God's purposes throughout history and shows that what Christ accomplished through his resurrection cannot be understood apart from the OT.

As would be the case with any book, readers will not always be convinced by the author's argumentation. Some of the intertextual connections he makes are intriguing but less certain than others (e.g., Pharaoh's morning wading in the Nile characterizes him as a mythical reptile, in keeping with the Bible's serpent slaying motif [p. 59]), and sometimes Morales portrays the exodus motif so broadly that it seems it can encompass just about anything. Such, however, are the risks involved

in the task of biblical theology. Even in instances of disagreement the reader will find much fascinating and thought-provoking material.

In short, I highly recommend *Exodus Old and New: A Biblical Theology of Redemption*. It is written accessibly and engagingly without loss of theological depth, and it masterfully traces the exodus motif through both the OT and NT. Both layperson and scholar alike are indebted to Morales for providing such a captivating and compelling exposition of the biblical doctrine of redemption.

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Where Was the Biblical Red Sea? Examining the Ancient Evidence. By Barry J. Beitzel. Studies in Biblical Archaeology, Geography, and History. Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2020, 163 pp., $25.99 paper.

Almost from the time of the exodus itself, debate as to the location of the Red Sea has abounded. Every commentary of Exodus and every history of Israel and the Middle East has had to wrestle with it, the bout leaving now two principal candidates standing: The Red Sea of today that forms an inlet between Egypt and the Sinai Peninsula and the Gulf of Aqaba/Eilat to the east between the Sinai Peninsula and Saudi Arabia. A hint of "political exegesis" enters the fray at this point, with contenders for each of these options creating "evidence" to make the biblical narrative fit.

Beitzel is especially useful at this point, but this is just one of the contributions made. The author's special strengths in geography, topography, and cartography, to say nothing of his command of the classical languages and deep investigation into ancient written and non-written sources, are evident throughout.

Much of the author's case, however, is a systematic contention with two predecessors who have written widely on the subject: Glen A. Fritz (*Lost Sea of the Exodus,* Geotech, 2016) and Michael D. Oblath (*The Exodus Itinerary Sites,* Lang, 2004) Though, admittedly, these two have held the field for the past twenty years or so, their presuppositional foundations regarding the historicity of the exodus event as it plainly reads in the biblical texts undercuts to a great extent their objectivity and hence their credibility. Perhaps too much attention has been paid to them here; since the playing field has different rules, neither Beitzel nor his opponents can win the game.

Leaving this caveat, the overall presentation is a masterpiece of devout scholarship. Charts and graphs abound, making crystal clear the author's developing conclusion that the Yam Suph (Red Sea of Exodus) is indeed the site marked now by the Suez Canal, that is, to the east of the African coast. Beitzel also demonstrates an astounding grasp of the classical literature on the subject. He deals in detail with advocates of the Persian Gulf location such as Livy, Eutropius, Eusebius, Plutarch, and Theophrastus. The Gulf of Aden was at first chosen as the Red Sea site by the eminent Herodotus (2.8), but he altered his viewpoint later and proposed the Gulf of Suez (2.158).

There can be no doubt that Professor Beitzel has offered us a *tour de force*, perhaps an irrefutable argument for the traditional—and biblical—position that the Red Sea of Moses and the Israelites, the very one Yahweh parted through his servant Moses, is now marked by the Suez Canal. One can only wish other evangelical scholars could reach the high plateaus of Green, Allis, Young, and Harrison as Beitzel has done. Congratulations, Barry.

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Christ's Psalms, Our Psalms: Study Resource. Edited by Peter H. Holtvlüwer. 4 vols. Carman, MB: Reformed Perspective Press, 2020, 1785 pp., $70.00 set.

This four-volume commentary on the Psalms is a serendipitous discovery, written by Canadian Reformed pastors, and is an absolute delight to read. The commentary was written by sixteen different pastors, missionaries, or professors, all in the Canadian Reformed Church; their names are all listed at the beginning of volume 1 (p. ix) and their commentary on each psalm is signed. The editor is well aware of the many fine commentaries on the book of Psalms published in the last forty years, but this one attempts to fill a "gap" (his word) by "drawing lines from the psalm to the Saviour Jesus Christ" (p. xii). The work, which the publisher calls a "Study Resource," is specifically aimed at "Christian parents and schoolteachers, or church elders, deacons, and pastors" and "is designed to provide all such students of Scripture with an explanation that unfolds the psalm's meaning in its original context, shows how it foreshadows Christ, and then bridges the distance to today's believer by suggesting meaningful application" (p. xiii). Volume 1 covers Book I of the Psalter (Pss 1–41); volume 2 covers Book II (Pss 42–72); volume 3 covers Books III and IV (Pss 73–106); and volume 4 covers Book V (Pss 107–150).

The introduction to the book of Psalms is 51 pages long, written by Peter Holtvlüwer, the general editor. In it, he first introduces the reader to the Study Resource; this introduction includes a brief explanation of the work's Christ-centered focus, the chapter template (more on that below), and a survey of psalm types (genres), with a long excursus devoted to the "Imprecatory Psalms."

Second, Holtvlüwer introduces the reader to the book of Psalms as a whole. Here, he discusses the Psalter's "general characteristics" (e.g., the five-book structure, sub-groupings, its wisdom flavor, etc.); the Psalter's story (a helpful survey of contents dependent on Futato's work, that Psalm 1 introduces the purpose of the book and Psalm 2 its message); psalm titles and authorship (Davidic authorship is accepted); David as Israel's teacher (i.e., the role he plays as Israel's shepherd-king); a brief discussion of technical terms; and some comments on the nature and importance of the Septuagint. The forty-eight endnotes (three pages) indicate that Holtvlüwer is aware of contemporary scholarly discussions, but he is not fixated on them. The reader will not find extensive interaction with scholarly periodical literature, for example; rather, the endnotes are explanatory in nature or cite standard and reputable works in the field.

The real contribution of the set is the collection of sixteen headings that guide the commentary on every psalm, a sort of chapter template:

- "Author and Purpose" asks some historical questions about who wrote the psalm and why the author wrote it.
- "Setting" asks questions about the historical context (if known) and any other historical issues the psalm may raise.
- "Type & Structure" is a traditional discussion of genre and a suggested outline.
- "Poetic Elements" offers an analysis of the various literary devices (parallelism, acrostic structure) used in the psalm as well as figures of speech (simile, metaphor, synecdoche, merism, etc.). This is a helpful heading since the topic was not discussed in the introduction.
- "Placement within the Psalter" is a most welcome heading because far too many commentaries continue to focus only on literary genre and not literary context and flow of the Psalter's structure. The commentators regularly discuss the psalm's location in the macro-structure of the Psalter as well as its relationship to adjacent psalms.
- "Key Words" is an explanation of terms of special importance to each psalm. Words in bold are also explained in the Glossary at the end of volume 4.
- "Unusual Words or Expressions" are listed and explained within the context of each psalm.
- "Main Message" steps back from the details of the psalm and asks what the author's basic point is.
- The treatment under "Christ Connection," despite boasts of being a central concern, are often restrained; the method appears to be not so much "Let's find Jesus in this psalm," but "How should we read this psalm from a New Testament, post-Cross/post-Easter perspective?" So, to take Psalm 46 as an example, the theme of "The LORD of hosts *is with us*" connects to Jesus as Immanuel (Matt 1:23); the theme of God as "a very present help in trouble" connects with Jesus as our means of approaching God (John 14:6) with confidence (Heb 4:16); finally, the river flowing out of Jerusalem brings to mind the theme of water as spiritual refreshment, as in Revelation 22:1–2, John 4:14 (Jesus at the well with the woman of Sychar), and John 7:38–39.
- "Old Testament Links" mentions any allusions or quotations (in either direction) within the OT.
- "New Testament" does the same with the NT; any quotation or clear allusion to the psalm is explained, as are any other themes or teaching.
- "Confessional References" is the only heading that may be considered unusual (though still helpful to some readers); here, the authors note any reference to the psalm in the Three Forms of Unity (Belgic Confession, Heidelberg Catechism, and Canons of Dort). "The aim is to point out what doctrine is taught in or supported by the text of the psalm cited in

the confession" (p. 11). By my count, only about one third of the psalms actually had any comment here.

- "Scriptural Themes" summarizes any doctrinal contributions the psalm makes to twelve different themes: Creator/Creation; God's Sovereignty; God's Kingdom; God's Covenant (of grace); God's Grace; God's Church; Antithesis; Man's Depravity; Justification; Sanctification; Mission/Outreach; Other.
- "Application" distinguishes between application for the Christian and for the congregation.
- In "Occasions for Use," the commentator suggests appropriate situations for the psalm to be used.
- "Questions for Further Study," which rounds out the headings, helps facilitate a given psalm for Bible study groups.

The benefit of such a rigorous structure is that it helps mitigate the possibility of uneven commentary, which is certainly a possibility when there are sixteen different commentators! Moreover, the template helps readers quickly find a specific area of interest.

Volume 4 concludes with a glossary (28 pages), a bibliography (8 pages), a Scripture index, and a Select Subject index, which is really an index to the "Scriptural Themes" in heading 13 (above).

This commentary set on the book of Psalms is a usable and practical set that will be a great help to the general evangelical student of Scripture, but especially to those who regularly use the Psalter in worship and teaching. The Reformed and Anglican traditions come readily to mind, but anyone studying the Psalms will find this commentary set helpful.

Finally, kudos to the publisher! This set of four hardback books, over 1,700 pages of commentary, is superbly bound and is available from the publisher for the quite affordable price of $70.00.

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History and Eschatology: Jesus and the Promise of Natural Theology. By N. T. Wright. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2019, 343 pp., $34.95.

In *History and Eschatology*, Wright argues that our modern enlightenment worldview is just a revival of the ancient philosophy of Epicureanism. This view has seriously affected our theology and exegesis by separating heaven and earth, and by separating past, present, and future, thereby affecting our understanding of human nature.

The solution is found in the philosophy of critical realism as applied to history and supplemented by what Wright calls an epistemology of love. The epistemology of love, which seems to be the opposite of a hermeneutics of suspicion, approaches our original sources sympathetically, trying to understand them and their culture on their own terms without filtering them through our modern cultural

biases. The epistemology of love refuses to reject ancient Jewish modes of thought simply because they are ancient, only to replace them with modern versions of ancient Epicurean or platonic philosophies.

When applied to Second Temple Judaism, we find a worldview in which heaven and earth overlap and interlock and where there is no separation between natural and supernatural. Wright understands "the Temple as the microcosmos disclosing God's ultimate purposes for the heaven/earth world; the Sabbath as the advance foretaste of the Age to Come; and humans constituted by the Image-bearing vocation" (p. 219). Wright sees "creation itself … as a vast Temple, a heaven-and-earth structure in which God would dwell and in which humans would reflect his image" (p. 256). The Tabernacle and Temple "were signposts to a new creation, confirmed as such when they were refashioned around Jesus' resurrection" (p. 256). These signposts of Tabernacle and Temple were a foretaste of God's ultimate intention to fill the earth with his glory.

Wright identifies seven features of human life which he calls "vocational signposts," which are common to various cultures and ages. These signposts are Justice, Beauty, Freedom, Truth, Power, Spirituality, and Relationships. They are broken signposts because they have all been distorted or perverted down through the ages. Just as Jesus taught the disciples on the road to Emmaus to look back and see that Scripture pointed to him, Wright insists that looking back from the resurrection and using an epistemology of love, we can see that these broken signposts all pointed to the cross where "the downward spiral of human despair meets the love which was all along at the heart of creation" (pp. 244–245).

Wright repeatedly insists that Second Temple Jews and early Christians did not believe in the imminent end of the world, but in the transformation of the world. As people created in the image of God—a functional image in which humans are God's agents tasked to carry out the Creator's purposes—the Spirit calls and equips the church to carry out God's purpose, which is to fill his world with his glory. This task involves engaging in justice, healing, liberation, and the arts and sciences. It affirms that "creation matters … so it's worth putting it right rather than leaving that task to others" (p. 268).

Wright is a theological giant from whom I have learned an enormous amount. In *History and Eschatology*, I very much appreciate Wright's insistence on taking history, Jesus, and the resurrection seriously and integrating them into natural theology. In fact, I found this book to be creative, often profound, and very thought-provoking; but, at the same time, I found it to be difficult to read and frustratingly confusing.

If I understand Wright correctly, the purpose of the church is to be the vehicle by which God transforms the world, repairing the broken signposts of Justice, Beauty, Freedom, Truth, Power, Spirituality, and Relationships. Wright says the church's mission is "aimed at transforming rebel idolaters into restored image-bearers through whom God will find his permanent abode among humans in the 'new heavens and new earth'" (p. 268). Wright repeatedly insists that the gospel was never about the end of the world (which he calls a modern myth) or about saving souls so they can go to heaven—which Wright seems to believe is more of a Pla-

tonic notion than a biblical one. It is about transforming the world. This book almost seems to be a theological foundation for a new social gospel.

Although Wright mentions postmillennialism, he never mentions the premillennial belief that the Bible does not predict the imminent end of the world, but the coming kingdom of Christ on earth! Wright's arguments against the imminent end of the world, therefore, seem to apply much more to amillennialism than premillennialism. Nevertheless, Wright's proposal seems to be in direct opposition to those who would see the mission of the church, not about transforming the world, but primarily about calling people to repentance and personal faith in Christ.

As just a few examples, Peter's sermons on Pentecost and in the Temple in Acts 2 and 3 were not about calling people to transform the world but to repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of their sins. Peter's message to Cornelius in Acts 10 was not about how the centurion should use his influence to restore broken signposts, but that everyone who believes in Jesus "receives forgiveness of sins through his name." In Acts 26, when Paul stood before King Agrippa, Paul summarized his ministry by saying, "First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and to the Gentiles also, I preached that they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds." Many, perhaps the vast majority, of biblical scholars and theologians see the mission of the church in the NT as being about calling people to repentance and personal faith in Christ, and not about transforming the world's social structures. It seems unwarranted, to say the least, for Wright to assume (as he seems to do) that all those who disagree with him have just not understood Second Temple Judaism on its own terms as well as he does.

So, what ultimately happens when believers die? They inherit the kingdom, of course! In my view, Wright is correct that the gospel is ultimately not just about dying and going to heaven. The kingdom in Isaiah is an earthly kingdom. The New Jerusalem in Revelation comes down from heaven to earth. But it is not clear to me what Wright thinks has happened to all the believers who have died in the meantime. Perhaps he thinks they just remain dead until the final resurrection. I don't recall him even discussing Paul's assertion that "*to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord*" (2 Cor 5:8, cf. Phil 1:22–23). Paul seems to teach that when we die, we do not just remain in the grave but go immediately to be with the Lord—at least until he establishes his kingdom on earth. But to be absent from the body and present with the Lord is what many believers think of when they talk about dying and going to heaven. This is at least a fair reading of Paul and one that deserves more than Wright's almost mocking dismissal.

Aside from all this, Wright's "vocational signposts" (Justice, Beauty, Freedom, etc.) seem to me to be a bit arbitrary. For example, I'm not sure freedom or truth has been particularly valued in many cultures. And even looking back from the resurrection, it is not entirely clear how the broken signposts pointed forward to the cross, aside from the fact that "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God."

In fact, Wright seems to admit that his view is something new that no one has seen before. He writes that his idea of Temple cosmology and Sabbath eschatology

were not grasped by the later church (p. 183). Asserting that the Sabbath was a weekly celebration of creation, he admits that not even those in Jesus's day may have seen it this way (p. 168; cf. 175, 176). He mentions how the church has either forgotten or not fully understood what the Gospels were really saying (p. 118). Thus, while Wright has some very creative and valuable insights, it appears that he has developed a theory which, by his own admission, no one has fully seen before. I am reminded of a former professor who once warned that when someone finds something in the Bible that no one has ever seen before, that may be because it is not really there!

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The Gospels as Stories: A Narrative Approach to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. By Jeannine K. Brown. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020, xiv + 210 pp., $21.99 paper.

At many seminaries, courses on exegetical method focus almost entirely on the didactic material found in the NT epistles. Often missing from the curriculum is instruction on how to interpret the narrative literature found in the NT Gospels. Think of Jeannine Brown's work on *The Gospels as Stories* as the course you likely missed in seminary. The book helpfully provides an introduction to narrative criticism and to certain crucial methodological issues related to the study of Gospel narrative, in particular the study of plot and plotting, character and characterization, intertextuality, and narrative theology. Brown proves herself to be a worthy teacher for this course of study, carefully balancing theory and practice, explaining complex concepts with engaging illustrations, and summarizing large amounts of data with understandable charts.

In the first chapter, Brown explains how narrative criticism helps to overcome certain problems that have often beset interpreters of the Gospels, problems that she summarizes as amalgamating (reconstructing a harmonized story of Jesus that ignores the distinctive contributions of each Gospel writer), atomizing (dissecting the text into small passages and then treating each one as a stand-alone unit), and allegorizing (using the narrative details of the Gospels as metaphors for our own present-day experiences). By way of contrast, narrative criticism examines each individual Gospel as a whole and focuses on the final form of the text rather than on the various stages in the historical process by which the Gospels were produced. By examining each Gospel as a whole, it is possible to concentrate on the overall narrative shape of the Gospels and the ways in which narrative features communicate meaning. Such an approach also allows interpreters to understand the details of any particular episode within the context of the broader narrative and what that narrative conveys about Jesus's identity and mission. In addition, narrative criticism has emphasized that the NT contains four narrative portraits of Jesus and that something is lost by reconstructing a single harmonized story. Each Gospel writer has a contribution to make.

Brown also takes time in the first chapter to introduce some of the basic interpretive concepts within narrative criticism. For example, Brown explains that narrative critics regularly distinguish between the story and discourse of a narrative (pp. 11–14). The story is the "what" of the narrative, the settings, events, and characters that make up the plot. The discourse is the "how" of the narrative, the sequence and pacing of events, the various means of characterization, the narrator's point of view, and the use of different rhetorical features such as irony. The distinction is important, because how a story is told shapes what the story means.

The remainder of the book proceeds two chapters at a time. Each pair of chapters introduces a particular narrative feature in the Gospels, with the first chapter highlighting methodological issues and the second offering an example of narrative study in practice. Chapter 2 examines how the Gospels convey the overall plot of their stories through the selection and sequence of various episodes and through the Gospel writer's own individual style of storytelling. Chapter 3 looks at the distinctive plotline of Luke's Gospel by walking through the major sections of the book and showing how the selection and arrangement of material in each section carry forward the overall plot and the important themes of the book. Chapter 4 analyzes how people are characterized within narratives, including historical narratives such as the Gospels. Brown primarily understands characterization in terms of relationships. We come to know the people in a Gospel through the relationship of a character to the narrator, to other characters, to the reader, and to narrative features like plot, setting, and theme. Chapter 5 traces the storyline of the disciples as a character group in Matthew's Gospel. Matthew's portrayal of the disciples is intriguing, since Matthew encourages the reader's identification with the disciples through an initial positive characterization but then also later forces further reflection through an increasingly negative characterization of the disciples. As the narrative continues, the disciples badly misunderstand Jesus and show little faith. Chapter 6 introduces the subject of intertextuality, in order to show the extent to which the Gospels rely on the OT and the extent to which they are invested in connecting the story of Jesus with Israel's story. Chapter 7 unpacks two examples of intertextuality in John's Gospel, the portrayal of Jesus as the Passover lamb and the use of Genesis 1–2 in developing the motif of creation's renewal through Christ. Chapter 8 demonstrates how plotting, characterization, and intertextuality come together to create narrative theology or narrative theologizing—that is, how the Gospel writers theologize as they narrate. Their theology is not separable from their narrative; rather it is borne along by the story of Jesus. Chapter 9 explores theology proper in Mark's Gospel, which Mark conveys through his portrayal of God, a portrayal that is complicated by the indirect way in which God often appears in Mark's narrative.

At times, I found myself wishing that I could ask further questions. How might foreshadowing and echoes—common literary patterns in the Gospels—influence narrative sequence and the temporal reading experience of plotlines? From a methodological standpoint, how can an interpreter recognize when readers should identify with characters or distance themselves from them? In what way is Brown's rather maximalist approach to OT allusions and OT echoes in the Gospels compatible with the emphasis in narrative criticism on narrative as an act of com-

munication? In other words, how do the Gospels imply a reader capable of recognizing implicit OT echoes with limited or no verbal links to specific OT texts? How might studies on point of view, especially ideological point of view, help with discerning the narrative theology of the Gospels? None of these questions are intended as criticisms of the book. Brown's book serves as an introduction to a narrative approach to the Gospels, not as an exhaustive treatment. Indeed, one of the signs of a good book is that it leaves readers with a sense of "wanting more."

Here is one final observation. Brown's book lays out her narrative approach to the Gospels without a defensive attitude. At its earliest stage, narrative criticism arrived in Gospel studies as an uninvited guest. At the time, historical questions dominated Gospel studies, especially questions related to the history behind the text, that is, questions about the original events themselves and about the process by which the traditions concerning those events came to be gathered into the Gospels. Narrative criticism, with its focus on the final form of the text and on literary issues related to the overall narrative, seemed to be interrupting the conversation and asking all the wrong questions. As a result, earlier works on narrative criticism were often defensive in tone, arguing for the right to speak and to make a contribution. Brown's work lacks that apologetic tone. One reason is simply that over time narrative criticism has become an accepted and respected method within Gospel studies. Brown also points out that narrative criticism has proved itself to be capable of changing and adapting in response to critiques (pp. 16–18). According to Brown, narrative criticism has grown in its ability to address the social and historical context of the Gospels and the role that these realities should play in interpreting the text. The Gospels assume an audience that possesses the necessary linguistic and cultural awareness of the first-century historical context to be able to understand the text and to fill in the gaps left by the narrative itself. Narrative critics have also sought to work with the formal features of ancient narrative more generally in order to be careful not to impose modern narrative categories on ancient texts. In light of such changes in method, Brown is able to present a more mature and less confrontational form of narrative criticism.

Brown's book, *The Gospels as Stories*, serves as an excellent introduction to understanding and appreciating the Gospels more fully as narrative texts. As Brown points out, the four Gospel writers are, in fact, four storytellers who have each developed a complex and compelling narrative portrait of Jesus the Messiah with the hope of captivating and transforming their readers (p. 19). Brown's book is a helpful guide to a valuable task, the task of understanding the complex and compelling story of Jesus according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

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Jesus and the Forces of Death: The Gospels' Portrayal of Ritual Impurity within First-Century Judaism. By Matthew Thiessen. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020, xii + 241 pp., $39.99 paper.

Recent years have seen a surge of interest in exploring the Jewish context of the NT writings. Matthew Thiessen's *Jesus and the Forces of Death* makes a significant contribution to this growing body of literature by focusing on an issue that was of great importance in early Judaism but is often neglected by contemporary readers of the NT: ritual purity.

The introduction to the book asserts that although many scholars now affirm the Jewishness of Jesus, they often go on to qualify that affirmation by suggesting points of distinction between Jesus and first-century Judaism. Ritual purity frequently features among these points, and some scholars caricature Jewish concerns about purity as if they provided a foil to Jesus's openness and compassion. Contrary to such claims, Thiessen proposes, "The Jesus of the Gospels only makes sense in light of, in the context of, and in agreement with priestly concerns about purity and impurity documented in Leviticus and other Old Testament texts" (p. 8).

Chapter 1 explains the conceptual scaffolding upon which the rest of the work is built. Here, Thiessen points out that purity and holiness are separate concepts. To be holy is to be for special as opposed to common use, while purity is a matter of one's state in relation to certain contaminants that could render one impure. Contrary to the caricature of the purity system as uncompassionate, "it was a protective and benevolent system intended to preserve God's presence among his people, a presence that could be of considerable danger to humans if they approached God wrongly" (p. 11). Thiessen further suggests that there are two kinds of impurity: moral impurity (which is avoidable and caused by actions) and ritual impurity (which is unavoidable and caused by natural substances). The ritual purity laws, Thiessen claims, provided means for the removal of specific instances of impurity. Some Jewish apocalyptic writings, however, envisioned a future time when the world would undergo a radical transformation, and the Gospels' depictions of Jesus belong within this framework: "The Gospel writers depict Jesus as being divinely equipped to deal with the actual sources of impurity.… The Jesus of the Gospels is the holy one of God, a man who embodies a contagious power or force that is opposed to and ultimately destroys the powers that create impurity and death" (p. 20).

The second chapter addresses the context in which the Gospels place Jesus, noting the ritual significance of John's baptism and the observance of purity regulations by the families of John and Jesus. The following five chapters then deal directly with the Gospels' depictions of Jesus in relation to purity issues. Thiessen covers the topics of *lepra* (a range of minor skin conditions, not "leprosy"), genital discharges, corpse impurity, impure spirits (demons), and the Sabbath. Each chapter is constructed from a similar template, although not every element appears each time: (1) an explanation of the relevant OT laws; (2) exploration of parallel ideas or conceptual developments in ANE, Greco-Roman, Second Temple, and rabbinic literature; (3) studies of the relevant texts from the Gospels; (4) a survey of Jewish

antecedents or parallels. In each case, Thiessen concludes: "The Jesus of the Gospels is a Jesus who seeks to observe the Jewish law and who provides legal defenses of his actions on the basis of the Jewish law" (p. 173).

The final chapter draws together the central themes of the book. Thiessen claims that the Jesus of the Synoptic Gospels does not reject the Jewish purity laws but rather opposes the forces that cause impurity: "Jesus addresses the sources of impurity themselves: *lepra* is removed, irregular genital discharges are healed, corpses are revivified, and impure *pneumata* are exorcised and destroyed" (p. 180). Thiessen ultimately links this to prophetic promises regarding the overcoming of human mortality, suggesting that the eradication of mortality entails the end of all ritual impurity. This reveals the significance of Jesus's encounters with impurity in the Synoptic Gospels: "each of these encounters functions as a foretaste of what the authors believed Jesus ultimately brings to those who follow him: the annihilation of all the forces of impurity through the gift of eternal life" (p. 184).

Thiessen also includes an appendix on Mark 7:19 addressing the laws about pure and impure food. Contrary to the typical interpretation, which sees here a challenge to the validity of the food laws, Thiessen suggests that the issue in view is only whether or not unwashed hands defile kosher food.

Three primary virtues of this book should be highlighted. First, and most importantly, the central thesis of the book is persuasive. Thiessen makes a compelling case for the claim that the Jesus of the Synoptic Gospels took ritual purity seriously and worked to destroy the sources of impurity, not to discredit the concept of purity. Second, a central agenda of the book is to combat anti-Judaism in NT scholarship, and Thiessen effectively highlights ways in which rhetoric intended to promote the compassion of Jesus has unfairly disparaged Jesus's Jewish contemporaries. Third, each chapter provides a trove of information from ancient sources, and this gives the reader a real sense of the pervasiveness and significance of beliefs about ritual purity. Contrary to the assumption that Jewish views of ritual purity were an exception to the default view that no such thing existed, Thiessen effectively demonstrates that Jewish views were simply one variant of common beliefs about purity in the ancient world.

A few features of the book leave one with lingering doubts, and some would have benefited from further development. For example, the chapter on *lepra* focuses primarily on Mark 1:40–42, and Thiessen argues for the textual variant "being angry" in place of "feeling compassion" in Mark 1:41. Jesus becomes angry, Thiessen then posits, because of the man's question about Jesus's willingness to heal him: "The man's uncertainty angers Jesus because Mark thinks it is absurd that anyone would harbor doubts about Jesus's view of ritual impurity" (p. 59). Even if one follows Thiessen in adopting the minority reading, it appears that here the overall agenda of Thiessen's book may have seeped into his reading of Mark.

In a few cases, Thiessen neglects to explore the meaning of a statement that one could imagine being posed as a challenge to his argument. For example, one is left to wonder what Thiessen makes of Jesus's statement that the man healed of *lepra* is to show himself to the priests "for a proof to them" (Mark 1:44), which some have interpreted as criticism of the temple. Similarly, Thiessen says very little

about Jesus's claim that the Son of Man is "Lord of the Sabbath" (Mark 2:28). Although Thiessen persuasively argues that Jesus's Sabbath controversies are typically debates about how to observe the Sabbath rather than whether the Sabbath ought to be observed, this claim appears to go beyond the halakhic reasoning to which Thiessen compares Jesus's Sabbath arguments. Furthermore, Jesus's statements in the debate about the Sabbath in John 5 (which Thiessen ignores, despite including points from John in some chapters) do not sound at all like halakhic reasoning about the relative importance of laws (e.g., "My Father is still working, and I also am working," John 5:18).

Another underdeveloped point is that Thiessen often identifies the power that effects healing as Jesus's holiness, linking this to the description of Jesus as "the holy one of God" in Mark 1:24. The Gospels, however, never explicitly describe Jesus's healing power with holiness terminology, and Thiessen's definition of the word "holy" when it is applied to human agents suggests that the phrase 'the holy one of God' simply describes Jesus as one set apart for God's special use. Perhaps Thiessen has in mind traditions from the Jewish Scriptures that describe God's holiness as a consuming power, but in that case, more explanation would have been helpful as to why the power of holiness now destroys the causes of impurity rather than the impure people who encounter this power and also how the presence of God's holiness in Jesus relates to God's presence in the temple.

These complaints, however, relate more to questions of detail than the central argument. With respect to the latter, Thiessen has done us all a great service in illuminating the theme of ritual purity in the Gospels. This study provides a powerful challenge to some long-held assumptions, and its impact will be felt for years to come.

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The Gospel of the Son of God: An Introduction to Matthew. By David R. Bauer. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2019, 392 pp., $38.00 paper.

David Bauer shares with the reader his understanding of Matthew's Gospel, honed over years of teaching and writing. The first section provides matters of "orientation," beginning with genre. Bauer sketches the range of historical views, from comparing Matthew with modern biography, to assuming the Gospels to have no true antecedents, to the present consensus of Matthew as ancient biography. Bauer provides his analysis, highlighting eighteen areas for comparison (e.g., title, characterization, style), and concludes that Matthew coheres with ancient biography in fifteen of the eighteen categories. After highlighting the value of identifying Mathew's genre for what it is not (e.g., lectionary, teacher's manual), Bauer suggests that Matthew as *bios* points to the "absolute centrality of Jesus in it" (p. 21), a wider audience than a single Matthean community, and implications that Matthew be read in a single sitting and as historically reliable.

Bauer specifies his interpretive approach (chap. 2) by reviewing methods applied to Matthew over the past 200 years. He begins with historical criticism, which he limits to historical Jesus study rather than its typical inclusion of tradition, source, form, and redaction criticisms. He then addresses source and form criticisms and redaction criticism, which he highlights as contributing a helpful focus on the evangelists as authors. Bauer introduces narrative criticism as an important resource, describing how key elements of the discourse level (implied author, implied reader, point of view) contribute to understanding Matthew. Bauer mentions only briefly additional contemporary methods under the category of "advocacy criticisms" (e.g., feminist and postcolonial criticisms). Bauer concludes by detailing his inductive approach, which attends to the whole book in its final form with awareness of historical context, to structure and intertextuality, to narrative-critical analysis coupled with judicious use of comparison with Mark and Luke, and to Christocentric interpretation.

In chapter 3, Bauer addresses historical issues and offers tentative conclusions. Because his text-centered approach provides significant insight into Matthew's message, Bauer does not despair the lack of firm historical conclusions (pp. 93–94). He holds to the two-source hypothesis, but his approach is to study Matthew on its own terms, while noting its emphases from comparative work with Mark and Luke. Bauer concludes that the author of the Gospel is a Jewish Christian; knows Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek; has scribal training; and used a collection of sayings associated with the disciple and tax-collector, Matthew. Bauer understands the implied reader as an "index" (Kingsbury) for the Gospel's audience, concluding that the audience is at odds with the Jewish people and with Pharisees in the post-Easter context. They likely continue to be involved in the Jewish community (e.g., synagogue participation) but also have their own "ecclesial structure and identity" (p. 76). Bauer suggests a date of writing between 65–85, with a provenance of Syria.

Bauer (chap. 4) guides the reader through the varied proposals of Matthew's structure (e.g., geo-chronological, concentric, conceptual), noting the influence of the proposal based on narrative and discourse alternation (e.g., the five-fold formula at 7:28–29; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; 26:1). Given Matthew's biographical nature, Bauer finds persuasive Kingsbury's three-fold structure (signaled by the formula at 4:17; 16:21). Bauer visualizes his construal of Matthew's structure (fig. 4.4) and highlights numerous additional structural relationships (e.g., comparisons, contrasts, repetitions).

In the book's second part, Bauer walks through Matthew by section: 1:1–4:16; 4:17–16:20; and 16:21–28:20. For each, he provides a close, coherent reading of Matthew's text, emphasizing structural features that guide interpretation. In 1:1–4:16, he identifies these key themes: (1) reliable witnesses to Jesus—angels, Magi, John the Baptist, the divine voice, and the narrator; (2) the use of *seven* fulfillment quotations to indicate fullness; and (3) the central motif of divine Sonship, emphasized in the genealogy and at 1:18–25; 2:15; and at 3:17.

In 4:17–16:20, Bauer traces the movement from Jesus announcing the kingdom (4:17–11:1) to the reactions of acceptance (the disciples) and rejection (Jewish crowds and leaders) (11:1–16:20). He emphasizes the connection of Matthew 5–

7—Jesus's "word of teaching"—to the miracles of Matthew 8–9—Jesus's "word of deliverance" (p. 176), and the extension of that ministry to the disciples' mission (Matt 10). Bauer accents the "repudiation" of the kingdom message by the Jewish crowds and leaders, in contrast to Jesus's disciples who rightly confess Jesus to be Messiah and Son of God (14:33; 16:16).

Exploring 16:21–28:20, Bauer points to Matthew 16:21 as a crucial narrative turning point, providing the first of three passion predictions (cf. 17:22–23; 20:17–19). In 16:21–20:34, Jesus's vocation of self-denial that will lead him to the cross corresponds to the imperative that his disciples take on a similar vocation (16:24), both within their community (18:1–35) and in relation to others (19:1–20:34). As Jesus enters Jerusalem, his role as divine Son is accented, even as he critiques and announces judgment on the Jewish leaders and temple. Bauer includes the Jewish crowds in Jesus's judgment since "they are under the tutelage of such leaders" (p. 207). This judgment culminates in Matthew 23–25, with Jesus's predictions of the temple's destruction and his *parousia*. Bauer identifies three storylines in the Passion Narrative, alternately highlighting the disciples, Judas, and the religious leaders. He notes that women often "outperform" the disciples in the work of discipleship and that Matthew emphasizes Jesus as Son of God at his trial and crucifixion.

In the final section, Bauer turns to theological reflection. He explores Matthean Christology via titles (Son of God, Son of David, Christ, and Lord) and other categories employed (e.g., teacher, Servant of Yahweh, "God with us"), giving attention to the Gospel's narrative contours for discerning what each contributes to Matthew's multifaceted Christology. He highlights Son of God as the primary Christological facet. In chapter 10, Bauer points out routine inattention to Matthew's theology proper in scholarly discussion and seeks to fill this gap with a focus on the Matthean vision of God's transcendence and imminence, the ways God enters history in the narrative, and what the reader learns about God's attributes; e.g., God is good and is also judge.

Bauer discusses Matthew's eschatology and notes the evangelist's inaugurated eschatology coupled with the horizon of the "end of the age" (the kingdom's already and not yet). Bauer highlights Jesus's role in fulfilling Israel's history, so that ethnic Israel is displaced as God's people, with the church consisting of both Jews and Gentiles. Bauer understands the basis for final judgment in Matthew to be faith and righteous works, with these being deeply interconnected. Bauer reads Matthew as illuminating both degrees of reward and degrees of judgment at the consummation.

Bauer's final chapter addresses discipleship—Matthew's shaping of the implied reader "through the total impact" of the Gospel (p. 310). Bauer explores 4:18–22 as a key discipleship text, from which he traces the following discipleship characteristics: Jesus as initiator of discipleship and having authority over disciples, the cost of following Jesus, the importance of mission for disciples, and the church as the community Jesus builds and of which he is the center. Bauer concludes the chapter with an extended discussion of the mission of Jesus's disciples.

A key strength of the book is the thorough and coherent reading of Matthew which Bauer provides. The three sections of the book, while addressing the distinct

areas of history, literature, and theology, are held together by Bauer's clear vision of Matthew's structure and messages. Bauer is a master of inductive method, so much so that his inductive approach extends to his writing. For example, in addressing key historical issues, he walks through the evidence carefully and judiciously, waiting to share his conclusions until the end of these discussions. By that time, the reader has a good sense of the scholarly discussion and so where to place Bauer's own perspective within it.

Bauer knows and represents the history of Matthean scholarship. The conversation partners represented in his citations demonstrate a thoroughgoing interaction with scholars of the first Gospel (with almost 500 bibliographic entries), and not limited to the English-speaking world. A shortcoming involves limited interaction with diverse voices that have become more prominent in Matthean scholarship. For example, the bibliography includes less than ten female authors of Matthean works (and only three from the last twenty years).

One motif in the book is a negative assessment of the Matthean Jewish crowds. Bauer frequently conflates the portrait of this group with the negative portrayal of the Jewish leadership (e.g., pp. 70–71, 206). For example, Bauer claims that Matthew portrays Jesus withdrawing from the crowds at 14:13; 15:21; and 16:4 (p. 187), when in each case Jesus withdraws from controversy with (Jewish) *leaders*, and in the first two instances (and 12:15), he withdraws to minister *to the crowds*. Bauer concludes that Matthew envisions Israel's destruction because of "Israel's murderous rejection of [God's] Son" (p. 283). A more nuanced portrait of the Jewish crowds distinguished from the Jewish leadership has been offered by Matthean interpreters, such as Carter, Levine, and Brown and Roberts.

David Bauer, in his knowledge of and facility with Matthew, gives scholars and students a comprehensive view of Matthew's Gospel read holistically and on its own terms.

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Sermon on the Mount: A Beginner's Guide to the Kingdom of Heaven. By Amy-Jill Levine. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2020, xxiii + 131 pp., $16.99 paper.

Amy-Jill Levine is no stranger to the scholarly world. She has written prolifically for the scholar and layperson, and even dabbled in children's literature. She currently holds the position of University Professor of New Testament and Jewish Studies and Mary Jane Werthan Professor of Jewish Studies at Vanderbilt Divinity School and College of Arts and Sciences. In her most recent offering, Levine takes on a set of texts dear to her own heart.

Sermon on the Mount: A Beginner's Guide to the Kingdom of Heaven begins with a rhetorical question: Who wants to read a sermon? Levine recounts her history with the Sermon, noting her disdain towards sermons in general. Being taught that the Sermon was Jesus's referendum to the perceived legalism, misogyny, xenophobia,

violence and lack of mercy in Judaism, Levine was uninterested in such a message. After some gentle nudges and her own study, Levine eventually came to understand the Sermon as Jesus's teaching on the heart of the Torah. The teachings were not a sermon, but Jesus's discrete instruction on a number of issues from one Jew to fellow Jews (pp. x–xi). Levine jumps from her earliest memories to some "first steps" of reading and hearing the Sermon's message well. The Sermon is about the kingdom of heaven and should be read after a thorough study of Matthew's first four chapters. Levine notes that the Sermon on the Mount is Matthew's signature story that provides an interpretive key to the rest of the Gospel (p. xxiii).

In what follows, Levine splits her analysis into six chapters, which includes an introduction and afterword. The chapters are mostly split according to thematic content and generally follow the Sermon's order (i.e., the Beatitudes [chap. 1], the Extensions [chap. 2], Practicing Piety [chap. 3], Our Father [chap. 4], Finding Your Treasure [chap. 5], Living into the Kingdom [chap. 6]). At times, the chapters break according to well-noted structural cues or are dedicated to exclusive material (chaps. 1–2 on the Beatitudes and Jesus and the Torah respectively; chap. 4 on the Lord's Prayer), while at other times, Levine follows her own divisions. An example of Levine's own divisions includes her discussion of fasting (Matt 6:16–18) alongside Matt 6:19–7:5 (chap. 5 ["Finding Your Treasure"]) instead of aligning it with the other marks of Jewish piety (chap. 3 [Matt 6:2–15 on almsgiving and prayer]). My initial reaction was to note how disjointed this felt because of the separation of her discussion of almsgiving and fasting, but upon further reflection, I reconsidered how wonderful the observation! Levine also opens her discussion of the Sermon's ending (chap. 6 ["Living into the Kingdom"]), which traditionally starts at 7:13, with Matt 7:6 on pearls/swine and instruction on seeking God persistently (Matt 7:7–11). There are also places where material is presented in a different order than the Sermon's presentation. In chapter 3, before her discussion of Matt 6, Levine discusses the meaning of being salt of the earth and lights to the world (Matt 5:13–16) and perfection (Matt 5:48). The discussion on perfection (Matt 5:48) does flow naturally into the topic of greater righteousness in chapter 6 (Matt 6:1), but better serves as a summary of Matt 5:21–48 (the topic of chap. 2 ["The Extensions"]). It is also important for the reader to know that Levine gives snapshots of longer sections, dealing with some of the material in depth and glossing over other material. For instance, Levine discusses the first three beatitudes with three to four pages each and then briefly mentions the other six in a concluding paragraph. Chapter 2 is similar. When addressing Jesus's engagement with the Torah (Matt 5:21–48), Levine introduces the topic and then addresses some misconceptions of calling the section "antitheses." She then proceeds to handle the topics in order but skips the teaching on oaths (Matt 5:33–37).

In evaluating the book, several comments come to mind. First, it is a pleasure to sit at the feet of great minds in the field of NT studies. Levine is one such mind. She has studied and published on Matthew's Gospel for over thirty years. Her ease with the text is apparent and she draws several interesting connections between the Sermon and Matthew, the Hebrew Bible, Second Temple Judaism(s) texts, and Rabbinic literature. Second, the book has a very conversational tone. The writing

often reflects a teacher/student lecture in which both parties are participating in moving the class forward. It is clear that Levine is not bound by any sort of tight strictures or commentary expectations. At one point, Levine mentions that she has been having conversations with Matthew's Gospel since her dissertation days. This interplay between text/author/audience allows Levine to write about things in the text that she cares about while leaving others for the next writer. This flexibility often allows her to make applications for her conversational partner in this medium—the reader. Third, Levine constantly reminds the reader of the Jewishness of the Sermon. And, at points, she corrects scant Jewish parallels. For instance, a popular interpretation of the Sermon is that Jesus's sitting on the mountain is in accordance with rabbinic practice to sit when one teaches. Levine remarks that a rabbi teaches no matter what he is doing, sitting or otherwise. One small drawback of her emphasis on the Jewishness of the Sermon is that the book can often overemphasize Judaism at the expense of the Sermon's own distinctives. Fourth, the book provides several instances of how the Sermon can guide Jesus's disciples for today. Levine addresses a number of social justice issues and ecological concerns. During these moments, she will often express some of her deeply held beliefs on life's most fundamental questions. Instances include her view on human nature in which Levine believes that people are basically good (p. 115). Implicit questions and explicit answers of this nature are throughout the volume and will draw the lines of agreement and disagreement for the reader.

Sermon on the Mount: A Beginner's Guide to the Kingdom of Heaven is a great introduction to the Sermon. It would be an excellent read alongside Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Willimon's *Lord, Teach Us: The Lord's Prayer and the Christian Life* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996). Both share a similar cadence—challenging, scholarly, well-researched, and pastoral.

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The First Biography of Jesus: Genre and Meaning in Mark's Gospel. By Helen K. Bond. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2020, xiii + 336 pp., $42.99.

Helen K. Bond is currently professor of Christian Origins and head of the School of Divinity at the University of Edinburgh. Her published works include studies on Pontius Pilate (1998), Caiaphas (2004), and the historical Jesus (2012 and 2018). She was also a co-editor of a *Festschrift* for Larry Hurtado (2007). Bond's present study (henceforth *Biography*) seeks "to explore exactly what it means to say that Mark's Gospel is an ancient biography" (p. 5). Her stated approach is both literary and historical (p. 6). Bond structures her study in six chapters, followed by final reflections. *Biography* includes a detailed bibliography and three indices: authors, subjects, and Scripture and other ancient sources.

Bond's introduction (pp. 1–14) identifies three developments that diverted scholarly attention away from spelling out the implications of the Gospels as *bioi*: narrative criticism, the third quest for the historical Jesus, and the identification of

scriptural echoes and allusions within the Gospels. She contends that viewing the Gospels as *bioi* has profound implications for interpreting the Gospels and maintains that Mark is the earliest *bios* of Jesus. She suggests the closest analogies to Mark are Greek lives of philosophers (Xenophon's *Memorabilia*; Philo's *Life of Moses*; the anonymous *Life of Aesop*; Lucian's *Demonax*; Philostratus's *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*; and Diogenes Laertius's *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*). A preliminary look at traditional historical questions yields admittedly meager results. She favors a date in the early- to mid-70s (p. 8), a Roman provenance (p. 9), and an author with possible ties to Peter (pp. 8, 11; cf. 108). She also favors a wide rather than narrow audience (p. 11; cf. 96).

Chapters 1 and 2 are preliminary. "Mark as a *Bios*" (pp. 15–37) is a selective review of scholarship. It chronicles how Greco-Roman biography has become a dominant interpretive lens through which to interpret the Gospels' genre. "Ancient *Bioi*" (pp. 38–77) sketches the broad expectations and conventions of *bioi*. Bond acknowledges that the origins and development of biography as a literary form remain obscure and the state of our knowledge of much ancient literature remains fragmentary. She focuses her attention on the major trajectories that led to the type of biography with which Mark would have been familiar. She examines the motifs of biography and morality, character, depictions of death, and the relation of biographical fact and fiction. She does not regard historical accuracy as a particular concern of most biographies. Bond is dubious about sub-categorizing *bioi* into subtypes. "Ancient authors themselves did not seem to have categorize different types of biography, nor is it wise in the field of literature to impose modern distinctions on creative pieces, especially ones as fluid as *bioi*" (p. 76).

Chapter 3, "Mark the Biographer" (pp. 78–120), surveys Greek education in the Hellenistic and Roman eras. Bond assumes Mark and his readers were followers of Jesus. Mark's structure is relatively clear, and the anecdote is supreme in his narrative. Bond questions the common pursuit of pre-Markan tradition, sources, and traditions. The more one sees Mark as a creative biographer, the more hopeless the task becomes of identifying pre-Markan material (p. 110). She attributes Mark's lack of a strong authorial voice of Greco-Roman literary convention to the Jewish texts from which he drew. Mark's distinctively abrupt opening implies that his *bios* of Jesus would be no conventional life.

"A Life of Jesus" (pp. 121–66), chapter 4, focuses on the life and ministry of Jesus, Mark's central figure. Bond identifies four principal literary units and their related motifs. "Mark's Opening Section (1:1–15)" exemplifies temptation and resolve. "Jesus in Galilee (1:16–8:21)" covers miracles, conflict, and identity. Mark 8:22–10:52 focuses on "Teaching on Discipleship." "Jerusalem (11:1–13:44)" addresses imitation of Jesus and his appearance. By "extending the 'gospel' to include Jesus' life and ministry, Mark perhaps hoped to encourage his audience to recommit their lives not to a set of theological ideas but specifically to the *person* of Jesus" (p. 166). Jesus is not only the content of Christian proclamation, but also the model of Christian discipleship (p. 166).

In chapter 5, "Other Characters" (pp. 167–221), Bond touches upon peripheral characters like Peter's mother-in-law, the man with the withered hand, and

others. She addresses whether Mark's intercalations (3:20–35; 5:21–43; 6:7–32; 11:12–25; 14:1–11; 14:53–72) are a form of *synkrisis* (comparison). She additionally examines more prominent figures like "King Herod," the High Priest, Pilate, the Twelve, and finally "Minor Characters" like Bartimaeus, the anointing woman, Simon of Cyrene, Joseph of Arimathea, and others.

Bond's final chapter focuses on various interpretive issues related to "The Death of Jesus" (pp. 222–52). She discusses the ignominious nature of crucifixion in the ancient world and reiterates her skepticism regarding a pre-Markan passion narrative. She considers it likely that there were many accounts of Jesus's death in existence and Mark had access to a wide range of traditions and anecdotes. Mark's Jesus becomes increasingly passive as the passion scenes unfold. Ridicule and abandonment are conspicuous. Mark has turned conventional ideas of a good, noble death upside down. There is coherence in Mark's composition between what Jesus taught and his death. Jesus's death offers a clear model for others to emulate. Jesus's death is both a means of redemption and a model for his followers. The darkness that covers the land points to divine displeasure, while the rending of the temple veil points to Jesus's vindication. The disappearance of Jesus's body is Mark's way of indicating that Jesus has achieved postmortem exaltation and deification. Jesus's crucifixion is an act of defiance, a refusal to accept the Roman sentence, and an attempt to shape the way his life and death should be remembered.

In "Final Reflections" (pp. 253–58), Bond notes that Mark was the most successful early biography of Jesus. She summarizes many of her findings and notes that as a good philosopher, Jesus "dies in accordance with his preaching" (p. 255). Bond sees Mark's *bios* as a form of *automimēsis* (self-imitation). Mark's account is Mark's story of Jesus. The attempt to get behind it is largely impossible, because the lines between the historical Jesus and the Markan creation are too confused, too contradictory, and too fragile (p. 258).

Bond's *Biography* is well-researched and well-written (typos observed on p. 234 ["neither are"] and an incorrect reference at p. 244 n. 77). She interacts with a wide range of Markan scholarship and offers ample bibliographic resources. She is also willing to challenge conventional source critical assumptions. *Biography* also raises many important questions vis-à-vis contemporary Gospel genre study. First, to what degree are interpreters' choices of sources as a basis for literary comparison with the Gospels conditioned by their overall understandings of Jesus? Contemporary advocates of the Gospels as *bioi* have employed competing comparative templates. Justin Marc Smith adopts Isocrates's *Evagoras*, Xenophon's *Agesilaus*, Cornelius Nepos's *Atticus*, Tacitus's *Agricola*, and Porphyry's *Vita Plotini* for comparison (*Why Βίος?*, LNTS 518 [London: T&T Clark, 2015]), while Michael R. Licona employs Plutarch's *Lives* (*Why Are There Differences in the Gospels?* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017]). Craig S. Keener focuses on biographies of real figures of the early Roman empire who lived within roughly a half century of the writers: Nicolaus's fragmentary *Augustus*, Josephus's autobiography (*Life*), Tacitus's *Agricola*, and Lucian's *Demonax* (*Christobiography* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2019]). What are the methodological principles driving such selections? In Bond's case, to what degree did her view of Jesus-as-model to be imitated (p. 76) inform her choice of the lives

of Greek philosophers as a basis of comparison, particularly given her candid concession that none of these writings provides an exact parallel to Mark or to one another (p. 6)? Bond's *Biography* also raises a question about historicity. Bond, unlike Keener, whom she singles out, does not have a particularly high view of the historical intentions of ancient biography (p. 67 nn. 108–109; cf. 232 n. 30). She describes Mark as a creative biographer (p. 110) and an artful composer (p. 233), but the resulting Jesus is little more than a Markan literary figure (p. 258). Once again, to what degree does one's overall conception of Jesus inform the question of historicity vis-à-vis the Gospels? Third, how do contemporary interpreters of the Gospels as *bioi* properly balance Greco-Roman and Hebrew/Judaic backgrounds? Bond's analysis (pp. 125–135) of Mark's opening section (1:1–15) identifies various Greek parallels but gives little attention to the explicit citations and implicit references which tie the story of Jesus to the story of Israel. Fourth, Bond's interpretive emphasis regarding Jesus's death is that Mark presents him as a good philosopher who dies in accordance with his preaching (p. 255) and "a clear model for others to emulate" (p. 235). Is that emphasis proportionately adequate vis-à-vis Jesus as redeemer? Fifth, while Bond confidently states that the term "gospel" is not a genre (p. 15), what are the literary implications of Mark's use of εὐαγγέλιον (1:1)? Why did it and not *bios* become operative in the explicit or implicit headings and colophons of early manuscripts of the Gospels, patristic references, and early canonical lists? Sixth, Bond speaks with confidence throughout about how Mark's audience would have read Mark. Can comparative literary analysis ensure such confidence? How does one guard against what Bauckham has described as "a misplaced desire for historical specificity"? While I am appreciative of Bond's professional efforts here, her *Biography* also leaves me with many questions to ponder.

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The Identity of John the Evangelist: Revision and Reinterpretation in Early Christian Sources. By Dean Furlong. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books/Fortress Academic, 2020, xii + 191 pp., $95.00.

This book is the significantly revised and slightly expanded first part of Dean Furlong's Ph.D. dissertation completed in December 2017 at Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam. It seeks to examine the reception of John the Evangelist in the sources of early Christianity, without addressing the historicity of those claims and traditions. The argument of the book is that "John the Evangelist of the earliest sources was most likely the John referred to by Papias as 'the Elder,' and that the Evangelist only later came to be widely identified with the Zebedean John, probably from the third century onwards" (p. 1). The book is divided into three sections, each of which we examine in turn. We will conclude with an assessment of the book's argument and its value for the study of the Gospel of John.

In Section 1, "The Identity of the Evangelist," Furlong challenges the view that the identification of the Evangelist with the Apostle John, the Son of Zebedee,

informed the earliest sources of the Johannine tradition. The challenge is supported by the following arguments. First, the traditions strongly separate Papias's "two Johns," distinguishing the Apostle John from John the Elder. The claim that the two Johns are the same person is modern in origin (chap. 1). Second, matching the traditions of "two Johns" is the traditions of two "John deaths," one peaceful and one martyrdom, with the latter being more strongly attested. Later variations and conflations have misdirected scholars from seeing (and accepting) the reality of two Johns and their two deaths, thus challenging the identification of these two figures (chap. 2). The profile of the author of John in the traditions is often distinguished from the Apostle John and is consistent with Papias's John the Elder. The conflation of the "two Johns" into one, and specifically as the Apostle and author of the Gospel, is not uniform in the traditions, nor without the imputation of errors. The hypothesis that Papias's John the Elder is the author better accommodates the data and corrects the confusion in the various Johannine traditions (chap. 3).

In Section 2, "Conflated Figures, Revised Narratives," Furlong describes the third-century origin of the conflation of the "Two Johns," likely constructed by Hippolytus of Rome as part of his defense against the teachings of Gaius of Rome. Challenges to the writings of "John" led to the revision of traditions in order to link the Gospel to the Apostle, thus claiming eyewitness status for the author. This removed John the Elder from the equation, since he lacked the eyewitness credibility needed in these disputes to serve as the author of the Gospel (chaps. 4 and 5). Furlong argues that "the charge that Cerinthus [a heretical teacher] authored the Gospel and Revelation was answered by an equally innovative attribution of the authorship to the Apostle John, the son of Zebedee, which was designed to invest the works with the Apostle's authority in the hope of setting aside, once and for all, lingering doubts and suspicions" (p. 84). Then Eusebius, by identifying the Apostle John as the John who died in Trajan's reign, pushed Papias's John the Elder further away from the equation of Johannine authorship (chap. 6). Furlong interprets the consequential actions of Eusebius this way: "despite the glaring discrepancies in his construction, he was remarkably successful in persuading his readers, ancient and modern, that the old authorities were to be discounted and that his own retelling of the Johannine narrative reflected a critical use of historical sources. In the process, Papias's Elder was transformed into an obscure, non-apostolic figure and Papias was largely dismissed as a credulous hoarder of legends … even Irenaeus' testimony of Papias' knowledge of John was successfully nullified" (pp. 102–3).

Finally, in Section 3, "Toward a Reconstruction of the Earliest Tradition," after deconstructing the traditional interpretation, Furlong offers a "reconstruction" of the story of the two Johns "as it likely existed before the identification of the Apostle and Evangelist" (p. 107). Furlong's version involves three arguments. First, John's exile was contextualized in the reign of Nero (chap. 7). Second, Papias identified the Evangelist with his second of two Johns, John the Elder (chap. 8). Third, the publication of the Gospel of John was placed within the context of the Asian elders who implored John to write at the end of Domitian's reign (chaps. 9 and 10). Interestingly, Furlong interprets Eusebius's failure to cite Papias as intentional, so as not to draw attention to the "chronological challenge" (p. 155) Papias's account

presents to Eusebius's reconstruction of events. The book ends with a two-page summarizing conclusion.

Furlong has offered Johannine scholarship a wonderful resource that examines with great detail the Johannine tradition regarding "John" and his Gospel, and has provided numerous helpful, stimulating, and suggestive interpretations and reconstructions that will be useful for interpreters of the Fourth Gospel and its origins. Yet Furlong is challenging what he himself calls the traditional interpretation, offering as the subtitle suggests a "revision and reinterpretation" of the identity of John the Evangelist. While Furlong's expansive use of sources and detailed analysis adds much to the discussion, it is important to place the nature and scope of his revisionist analysis in perspective, especially for readers of this journal. Three evaluative comments are necessary.

First, as axiomatic as it might seem, it is important to note that not all the "traditions" or "early Christian sources" upon which Furlong relies for support are equally reliable or interpretable—hence the need for Furlong's own offering. Furlong reveals as much when discussing Eusebius's silence about the death traditions of John when he states: "He *perhaps regarded* the martyrdom tradition as nothing more than one of Papias' mythical tales" (p. 25, emphasis added). This interpretation of silence may not be unwarranted, but neither is it reliable. Furlong may be correct when he suggests that "Eusebius was not averse to passing over evidence irreconcilable with his own historical reconstructions" (p. 25), but that makes accurately interpreting the intentions of what he does or does not say even more difficult. Certainly, a revisionist argument needs more solid ground upon which to build.

Second, Furlong takes what might be described as a "Majority-Text approach" to Johannine traditions about the author of the Gospel of John. For example, some sources are nearly a millennium removed from the origin of the Gospel, making "traditions" about the Gospel's origin a rather loose category. Some of the traditions, like the ancient ecclesiastical calendars or martyrologies, have their own angle or "authorial" intention besides simply reconstructing the origin and authorship of the Gospel of John in a modern, historical sense. Like with Eusebius, Furlong is not naïve to interpretive biases and alternative intentions. But it might be unfair to suggest that "scholars who follow the traditional Johannine narrative have tended to minimize or even dismiss the evidence for the Apostle's martyrdom" because they are "informed more by presuppositions than by the weakness of the evidence itself" (p. 28). Could it not be that the sources themselves are less trustworthy? If we have difficult adjudicating between Papias and Eusebius, how much more so the "Martyrdom tradition" that is even further removed?

Finally, while Furlong's analysis of the Johannine tradition is insightful, the collation and reconstruction of its data is driven by a few too many interpretive hypotheses. This is not to say that no argument is made, or that there are not some major pillars in the argument that could be substantiated. It is simply to say that at times the force of the argument is taped together with more than a fair share of "perhaps" and "likely." To give just one example, here is a collection of five statements on a typical page (p. 38):

> (1) "Ignatius's silence may also be mitigated by the possibility that it was a secondary John who was associated with the city, such as Papias' Elder, though it is more difficult to account for…."
>
> (2) "This likely identifies Polycarp with the author of 1 John, but Irenaeus does not provide any indication…."
>
> (3) "Perhaps Aristion was also one of those eyewitnesses whom Polycarp was said to have known…."
>
> (4) "The few sources available concerning Polycarp's life suggest that he could have known John…."
>
> (5) "Some hold that this refers to Polycarp's age…, but it may instead refer to…. The latter interpretation may receive some support from the Coptic Harris fragments…."

To be fair, such language may reflect the proper respect of what began as a doctoral dissertation. But at least to this reader, five uses of "maybe" will always struggle to add up to one "clearly" and a trustworthy "therefore."

The "traditions" and "early Christian sources," to state it plainly, are simply not clear enough to support Furlong's revision and reinterpretation. There just does not seem to be enough counterevidence to overturn the "traditional interpretation." Furlong simply puts too much weight on things like an interpretation of the silence of Eusebius and Irenaeus, the apparent confusion of Polycrates, or even Hippolytus's possible revisionist history. As Furlong admits in his conclusion: "The greatest challenge to the reconstruction posited here is no doubt in accounting for the use of the title of 'apostle' with respect to John" (p. 174). While this reviewer is willing to admit that there is a level of mystery that surrounds Papias's "two Johns," or even that the Johannine tradition is hardly uniform, Furlong's attempt to revise and reinterpret the traditional interpretation fails to fully convince. Even if the book fails to convince this reader, it will be a useful resource for scholars and students seeking to understand and interpret the traditions surrounding the authorship of the Gospel of John and the identity of its author.

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Savior of the World: A Theology of the Universal Gospel. By Carlos Raúl Sosa Siliezar. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2019, xiv + 240 pp., $39.95.

It was not too long ago when Johannine scholars, interested in understanding the historical setting and purpose of John's Gospel, argued that the Fourth Gospel was written in the context of sharp sectarianism. In other words, particularly for those Johannine scholars outside of the evangelical world, there was some consensus that the trauma of the so-called Johannine Community's expulsion from the synagogue resulted in that community's strong sociological sense of "us against the world." The scholarship of J. Louis Martyn and his two-level reading of the expul-

sion of the blind man in John 9 as representative of the Johannine Community's expulsion from the synagogue was seminal in establishing this prominent view.

Closer to home, almost twenty years ago, one-time member of the Evangelical Theological Society, Robert H. Gundry, published his book *Jesus the Word according to John the Sectarian: A Paleofundamentalist Manifesto for Contemporary Evangelicalism, especially Its Elites, in North America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002). While not explicitly embracing Martyn's historical reconstruction of the Johannine Community's expulsion from the synagogue (Gundry does not even include Martyn's important work in the bibliography of his book), Gundry's thesis is permeated by the notion that the author of the Fourth Gospel was "sectarian," that is, he called his readers to a life in sharp distinction from the culture surrounding them. Gundry sought to apply Johannine sectarianism to the American church. Gundry argued in *Jesus the Word according to John the Sectarian* that American evangelicalism in the early 2000's had become too worldly. In particular, he argued that the attitudes and lifestyles of young evangelicals really were not all that different from their unbelieving friends. Gundry went on to argue that the problem of evangelical worldliness could be cured by imbibing a healthy dose of Johannine sectarianism.

The point is that whether it be from the likes of J. Louis Martyn or the likes of Robert H. Gundry, there has been a tendency among a significant percentage of Johannine interpreters to view the Gospel of John through the lens of sectarianism. John himself and his followers, it is thought, saw themselves through the sociological lens of "othering," and that sense of "othering" was a prominent part of their identity. Enter the book under consideration here in this book review.

Carlos Raúl Sosa Siliezar's *Savior of the World: A Theology of the Universal Gospel* aims to challenge the sectarian reading of John's Gospel. In fact, Sosa Siliezar argues that a sectarian reading of the Fourth Gospel—one that calls the believing community to a life of isolation from the world—is not only antithetical to the actual text of the Gospel of John, but also discourages a robust understanding of the global nature of the Gospel. As he states, "Christians living in a global community today may find that the Gospel of John, read along these lines [i.e., read along sectarian lines], offers little if any help as they [i.e., Christians] strive to understand their mission" (p. xii). Sosa Siliezar goes on to argue, quite persuasively, that the literary components and rhetorical devices in the Fourth Gospel are "used to create a narrative with universal significance" (p. xiv) and not sectarianism at all.

Sosa Siliezar's primary thesis is that John's Gospel promotes what he calls "Johannine universalism" (p. xiv). Immediately, we as evangelicals upon hearing the term "universalism" ought to perk up and rightly ask for clarification. As if employing Pauline diatribe, Sosa Siliezar explains what he means and what he does not mean by the term "Johannine universalism." First, the positive. The author argues that John's Gospel portrays the "universal significance of Jesus and the message about him" by showing that "Jesus has authority over the created order, he interacts with people beyond those traditionally associated with Judaism, and his message is intended for the whole world" (p. xiv). Second, the negative. Sosa Siliezar is quick to make the point that when he uses the term "Johannine universalism" he does not have in mind theological universalism, namely, the idea that all human

beings will be saved (p. 8). In fact, Sosa Siliezar states clearly that "Those who embrace Jesus and his message are enlightened, but those who reject the light are judged" (p. xiii). In other words, "Johannine universalism" points to the global nature of the Gospel, but still affirms (in Johannine language) the need "to receive" Jesus.

A four-page introduction to the book lays out the problem of a sectarian reading of John's Gospel and briefly summarizes the way in which, according to Sosa Siliezar, the Fourth Gospel uses universal language to demonstrate "the comprehensive scope of Jesus' significance as the owner of creation" (p. xiii).

Part One of the book contains two chapters titled "The Owner of Creation" and "The Enlightenment of Humanity." Chapter one explores the universalizing language found in John 1 through John 4. In chapter one of the book, "The Owner of Creation," Sosa Siliezar connects the universalizing language of John's Prologue (i.e., the "all things" of John 1:3) to the geographic distribution of the Gospel to the Samaritans in John 4. The geographic movement of Jesus from Judea (where Jesus offered the Kingdom to Nicodemus in John 3) to Samaria (where Jesus offered the Kingdom to the Samaritan woman in John 4) mitigates against a sectarian reading of the Fourth Gospel. As Sosa Siliezar writes, "Jesus' offer is not restricted to people from Judea but is here extended to a woman in the town of Sychar" (p. 31).

In chapter two of the book, "The Enlightenment of Humanity," Sosa Siliezar explores the universalizing language found in John 5 through 12. One interesting point of discussion in this section of the book is the author's discussion on the possible OT referent behind the enigmatic "Scripture" citation in John 7:38. Sosa Siliezar proposes that Zechariah 14 and its prophecy regarding the nations going up to worship Yahweh in Jerusalem is "the Scripture" due to the Feast of Tabernacles setting of John 7. If the prophecy of Zechariah 14 is the OT reference in John 7:38, then when Jesus invites "anyone" to come to him and drink, that is universalizing language inviting people from the nations to find their thirst satisfied in him.

Part Two of the book also contains two chapters: "The Witness to a Different World" and "The Final Cosmic Conquest." The chapter titled "The Witness to a Different World" seeks to explore universalizing language found in John 13 through 17. One important observation is found in Sosa Siliezar's treatment of Jesus's High Priestly Prayer in John 17. The author recognizes that Jesus's High Priestly Prayer begins by acknowledging that the Father has given the Son "authority over all flesh" (John 17:2 ESV). In light of that, Sosa Siliezar observes that, "Since the Father sent his Son with authority over 'all flesh' (17:2), and since Jesus sends his disciples in the same way he was sent by his Father (17:18), it is reasonable to interpret that Jesus sends his disciples as representatives of God's authority over all humanity" (p. 114). Thus, the High Priestly Prayer, rather than manifesting sectarian sentiments, it actually manifests an interest in a gospel of global proportion.

The second chapter in Part Two of the book, titled "The Final Cosmic Conquest," explores universalizing language in the remainder of John's Gospel, chapters 18–21. The author writes, "The knowledge the reader has accumulated so far

about the universal significance of Jesus and the message about him aids in the interpretation of Jesus' passion in John 18–19 and resurrection in John 20–21" (p. 121).

Part Three of the book contains only one chapter titled "The Artificer of a Universal Gospel." This final chapter, which could actually serve as a stand-alone essay, surveys how standard categories of literary analysis such as "Point of View," "Plot," and "Narrative Time" highlight universalizing language throughout the Gospel of John.

The book ends with an eighteen-page conclusion, which includes a helpful critique of J. Louis Martyn's view of Johannine sectarianism in light of Sosa Siliezar's findings. A bibliography, and an index of ancient sources wraps up the book. One helpful feature, not included in the closing matter of the book, would have been a subject index.

This text will most likely not find its way to a pastor's shelf. Its lasting contribution, however, will be the following: it is a concise critique against reading the Gospel of John from a sectarian perspective and it will remind the reader that the Johannine Gospel envisions the incarnate Logos extending his authority to all the nations in one grand global Kingdom.

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Defending Shame: Its Formative Power in Paul's Letters. By Te-Li Lau. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020, xi + 271 pp., $27.99 paper.

Amid current mainstream discourse concerning issues such as political correctness, cancel culture, and "generation snowflake," a book titled *Defending Shame* is both provocative and intriguing. After an introductory chapter, Te-Li Lau structures his shame analysis in three parts: (1) Framework, (2) Exegesis, and (3) Cultural Engagement.

In the introduction, Lau observes an antagonistic attitude towards shame today, which has resulted in a lacuna of studies analyzing shame directly or with much depth. He recognizes its destructive nature but poses the question whether or not it is necessarily "destructive." In contrast, he suggests a very different shame promoted by the Apostle Paul, which "can be meaningfully employed to bring one to ethical and spiritual maturity" (p. 6). Acknowledging the interdisciplinary studies that utilize cultural-anthropological models to understand shame as the contrasting social value to honor, Lau seeks to augment their work with his focus on the ethical, moral dimensions of shame.

Part 1's "Framework" is subdivided into three chapters: definitional backgrounds (chap. 1), Greco-Roman backgrounds (chap. 2), and Jewish backgrounds (chap. 3). In chapter 1, Lau defines his terms, understanding shame as an emotion. Observing the overlapping semantic domains between shame and other conceptual synonyms, Lau clarifies that the distinctions are not always clear-cut, and that, given universal overlapping traits between cultures, it is the nuances between emotional

lexemes that are socially constructed and thus where the differences lie. Lau concludes this chapter with his definition of shame: the painful emotion that arises from an awareness that one has fallen short of some standard, ideal, or goal (p. 29).

In chapters 2 and 3, respectively, Lau deals with the Greco-Roman and Jewish literature depicting shame. For each, he identifies and discusses the main lexical terms that denote shame. Then he surveys the relevant literature. In the Greco-Roman literature, Lau covers a wide range of philosophers spanning the pre-Socratic, Socratic, and Hellenistic periods, such as Democritus, Socrates, Aristotle, Epictetus, and Dio Chysostom. In each, he observes the depiction of shame either directly in their teachings or utilized as a tool for persuasion or moral formation. In the Jewish literature, he limits his focus to selected writings (from Genesis, Deuteronomy, Ezekiel and Sirach) that help inform the conceptual background of Paul's teachings. He traces the concept of shame as a demarcation of the moral boundaries found within Israel's covenantal community and its role in Israel's deliverance and restoration of covenantal relationship with Yahweh.

Lau also subdivides "Exegesis" into three chapters: "Paul's Use of Retrospective Shame" (chap. 4), "Paul's Use of Prospective Shame" (chap. 5), and "Constructing Paul's Use of Shame" (chap. 6). Here, he focuses his analysis primarily on four Pauline epistles, namely Galatians and 1 Corinthians (chap. 4), and Philippians and Philemon (chap. 5). Lau selects a few passages per epistle which depict shame dynamics or shame rhetoric. In chapter 6, Lau synthesizes his findings from the four epistles, drawing explicit connections to the Christ-event, and implications for sin, conscience, and repentance. From these connections, Lau fleshes out his main thesis: according to Paul, shame is a pedagogical tool for moral formation, specifically "christic" in nature, and mediated through the Holy Spirit.

Part 3's "Cultural Engagement" is subdivided into two chapters: "Contemporary Contributions" (chap. 7) and "Contemporary Challenges" (chap. 8). In chapter 7, Lau proposes two contemporary depictions of shame as potentially useful voices in contemporary discourse on shame. The first is Reintegrative Shaming Theory: a theory proposing the use of informal shaming—as an alternative to formal criminal punishment—in the rehabilitation of criminals within the prison system. The second is the depiction of shame as a moral emotion by the ancient Chinese philosopher Confucius and his disciples. Lau brings Confucianism into the contemporary context by showing its influence in the parenting approaches of Chinese parents in America today. These two depictions of shame align with Pauline shame in their constructive, reintegrative nature (in contrast to the destructive, disintegrative nature of commonly held modern notions of shame) and their reliance on a preexisting relationship between the person who is shaming and the person being shamed. Both contemporary depictions of shame strengthen Lau's argument that a positive sense of shame is possible in the context of a relationship with God and even necessary for one's moral formation.

In chapter 8, Lau circles back to the problematic modern notions of shame raised in the introduction and discusses them in light of his findings in the intervening chapters. He parses out the differences between modern shame and ancient/Pauline shame. He correctly states that while modern shame is explicitly dif-

ferentiated from modern guilt, ancient notions of shame and guilt were more synonymous with overlapping semantic domains. Lau addresses harsh challenges from modern psychology against shame, refuting each, in turn, with Pauline shame. Lau shows how each challenge assumes a self-focused, destructive, arbitrary form of shame that is meted out by an anonymous shamer who neither knows nor cares for the shamed. In complete contrast, Lau deftly shows how Pauline shame is respectful and empathetic, and how it is meted out by someone from within the same community, all with the ultimate purpose of conforming the shamed person to Christ both in their identity and ethos. While not always explicitly stated, Lau essentially dismantles many presuppositions about shame that have arisen from a modern, post-Enlightenment, individualistic approach to understanding the self and community, as well as its methodological tendencies to assume overly simplistic hardlines between categories.

A few minor critiques can be made. The first one is Lau's overall presentation of the "shame" lexemes. While it initially makes sense that Lau begins both his Greco-Roman and Jewish background chapters considering the most common lexemes pertaining to shame, this priority—both in placement and proportion of the discussion—implies the same priority and frequency of these lexemes in the NT literature, notably αἰδώς and αἰσχύνη (but he adds ἐντροπή to this list in his summations in chap. 6). Lau also lists other less common synonyms of shame but only briefly defines them, giving the impression of their general infrequency of usage in comparison to the most common. And yet, the reality is quite the opposite. In the four epistles, αἰδώς and αἰσχύνη barely appear. Cognates of αἰσχύνη appear in 1 Corinthians 1:27, 11:4, and 11:22, and αἰσχύνη itself in Philippians 1:20 and 3:19. But they do not appear at all in Galatians and Philemon, which even Lau himself acknowledges. "There are no explicit shame lexemes in this letter, nor does Paul baldly state that he writes to shame them. Nonetheless, the overall tenor of the letter points in this direction" (p. 94). In fact, shame appears in Lau's selection of passages more predominantly via those other less common lexemes that he glossed over, as well as more conceptually through actions, behaviors, and embedded metaphors. Given this pattern of usage, it would have behooved Lau to shift his focus accordingly as well, to allot more space (and explanation) to the lexemes and conceptual depictions that *actually* appeared in the chosen passages.

Second, in chapters 4 and 5, Lau's rationale for focusing only on passages within those four epistles is unclear and seems arbitrary. One also wonders if Lau's categorization of retrospective vs. prospective shame was the most meaningful lens by which to view shame. Both issues carry the risk of overly restricting the scope of shame in Paul's teachings.

Third, by Lau's own admission, he only had space to cover a few passages per epistle, and thus what he achieved in breadth of insights, he sacrificed in depth. For example, the Christ Hymn in Philippians 2:6–11—though brimming with honor-shame connotations—is analyzed in under three pages. One of the most well-known occurrences of an emphatic shame synonym (ἐταπείνωσεν in Phil 2:8) is not even mentioned. However, that choice of brevity pays off in subsequent chapters

where Lau can go deep in his synthesis of the insights gained from each epistle and their implications in contemporary contexts.

There is much to commend in this book, not only because of Lau's persuasive argument for a positive sense of shame, but also because of the rich content. For the skeptical scholar, Lau's analysis of the Greco-Roman and Jewish sources should decisively show the overwhelming data of shame used for positive, constructive purpose. For the pastor dealing with congregants struggling with shame, chapters 6 and 8 will be the frequently consulted sections for the explicit comparisons between modern and ancient/Pauline notions of shame and guilt. Space on the shelves of every scholar and pastor needs to be cleared to make room for books on positive shame, with *Defending Shame* being the first one.

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Apostle of Persuasion: Theology and Rhetoric in the Pauline Letters. By James W. Thompson. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020, 320 pp., $36.99.

Dr. James Thompson, scholar in residence at the Graduate School of Theology at Abilene Christian University, has written an introduction to the theology of the Apostle Paul from a different perspective: Paul's goal to persuade his readers (2 Cor 5:11) in order to affect their behavior so that he could present a sanctified and transformed united people to God at the day of the Lord (pp. 7, 13, 124, 217, 267). *Apostle of Persuasion* gives expositions of the arguments in Paul's letters categorized by appropriate Greco-Roman rhetorical argumentation. The book is not organized by theological topic, such as Alan Richardson's *Introduction to the Theology of the New Testament,* or historical setting, such as F. F. Bruce's *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free* but, rather, by letters, basically in chronological order, comparing their major theological themes and throughout showing Paul's argumentation for moral formation. After the introductory chapters, Thompson looks at the major theological themes in 1–2 Thessalonians (chap. 5), Philippians (chap. 6), 1–2 Corinthians (chap. 7), Galatians (chap. 8), Romans (chap. 9), Colossians and Ephesians (chap. 10), and the Pastoral Epistles (chap. 11). Thompson's thesis—to show the continuity in Paul's thought—is intended to undergird the reader's confidence in the Scriptures as God's revelation.

In chapter one, Thompson concludes, as do some others, that nothing in ancient letter writing corresponds to the "authoritative voice of Paul, who speaks not only for himself but also for God." His engagement with a community and the length, genre, and function of his epistles are unique (pp. 22–23, 28). Paul's letters have points of contact with ancient literary conventions, but these conventions do not explain the letters' persuasive power.

Thompson shows how Jewish themes, reasoning, and tradition are a substructure of Paul's theology (chap. 2). For example, Jeremiah's letter to the exiles (Jer 29:1–3) is a precedent for a divine revelation mediated in a letter (p. 32). Yet, unlike Pharisaic thought, Paul learned that it was necessary for Christ to suffer (pp. 55, 67).

Thompson pays special attention to Greek tenses (e.g., p. 44). Instead of the church in Antioch as a source of Paul's beliefs, Paul's own life is a foundation for his theology (pp. 57–59), especially his connection with the Jerusalem church (chap. 3). Thompson shows many points of continuity between Paul and Jesus, such as the coming of the kingdom, table fellowship, and the central place of love (pp. 60–64, 69). Paul appealed to his prophetic consciousness for his theologizing (p. 69, chap. 4). Thompson agrees that Paul's ministry "was determined by revelation rather than by human instruction" (p. 76, citing 1 Thess 1). He overviews the importance of ethos (example) in Galatians, 1 Thessalonians, 1–2 Corinthians, and Philippians ("undisputed letters") in chapter 4 to show that Paul exemplifies "the prophetic call that compels him to speak" (p. 99).

Thompson pays special attention to 1 Thessalonians, which he sees as the earliest preserved example of Christian literature (chap. 5), ignoring James and Galatians and possibly Matthew. He reiterates that 1 Thessalonians does not conform fully to any of the types of letters identified by epistolary theorists (p. 101). However, "Aristotelian categories provide a helpful lens for analyzing the arrangement of Paul's argument" (p. 103). For instance, he analyzes 1 Thessalonians (p. 103–5) in the following way: First Thessalonians 1:2–12 functions as the *exordium* where the thanksgiving introduces topics to be developed. Aristotle defines it as the beginning or purpose of a speech (*Rhet.* 3.14, 16–17). First Thessalonians 2:1–3:10 is the *narratio* of the argument which provides the history of the relationship. In the narrative, Paul uses the techniques of *ethos* (moral character) and *pathos* (passion). The *transitus* is 3:11–13, the prayer that introduces the ethical instructions that follow. First Thessalonians 4:1–2 is the *propositio*, the prayer that presents the case that will be argued. *Probatio* is the argument that follows (the main argument in chaps. 4–5). The *peroration*, or epilogue, is the conclusion or summary of the argument (Aristotle, *Rhet.* 3.19). Paul's proof is his own authority, the community's tradition, and his prophetic insight.

Aristotle's recommendations for argumentation in speeches or debates in legal and deliberative situations provide general directions for logical and persuasive communication, including written letters, but do not describe exactly the genre of Paul's letters. For instance, unlike the Aristotelian settings, Paul's letters have no clear opponent or interrogation (cf. Aristotle, *Rhet.* 3.18). Instead of Paul's theology continually evolving and developing, Thompson contends that 1 Thessalonians anticipates theological themes that will remain consistent in all of Paul's letters, such as the gospel, Christology, election, sanctification, parousia, and judgment (pp. 109, 117–120, 124, chap. 5). 1 Thessalonians contains the standard instruction that Paul gives in all of his churches and is a "template of Pauline theology" (p. 124).

James Thompson does not see Paul as simply adapting to the Greco-Roman culture. For example, in chapter 7, Paul confronts the Corinthian church's approval of the Greco-Roman understanding of leadership, which left out the theology of the cross (pp. 150–51).

A recurring anchor of each chapter is the summary of the "rhetorical situation," the problem of the particular church as perceived by the author, to which the discourse is the answer (p. 248). It is the historical and theological setting that af-

fects the argumentation used (p. 220). Some topics that may have been implicit in earlier letters become developed in later letters because of new issues in the churches (pp. 171, 184, chap. 8). Paul's theological argument "serves the rhetorical purpose" of answering opponents in the hope that Christ will be formed in them (p. 184). What may appear to be inconsistencies between letters is not necessarily a development in Paul's thought, but rather an adaption of the gospel to fit the rhetorical situation (p. 189). Theology is the foundation for moral persuasion, but theology is adapted to confront the challenges facing the readers (p. 233, chap. 10). For example, Romans is written to defend the Gentile mission (pp. 185, 187–88, chap. 9). Colossians is addressed to people anxious that "their moral life is controlled by cosmic forces" (p. 232). The purpose in Ephesians is to persuade readers who consider themselves "powerless" (p. 233). The Pastoral Epistles are similar to Paul's "undisputed" letters because the author argues for the moral transformation that accompanies reception of the gospel (pp. 249–50, 265, chap. 11).

Despite these helpful explanations, Thompson has some conclusions that appear ill-advised, such as stating that "no consensus exists as to whether Paul studied with Gamaliel" (p. 28). Since that information is stated explicitly in Acts 22:3, I do not see why a consensus is needed. His premise is that "theology is a dimension of persuasion as it serves Paul's pastoral purposes" (p. 17) and Paul's Christology is affected by the rhetorical situation (pp. 141–42) and persuasion and theology are inseparable (p. 162). These sentences may be misunderstood to suggest that Paul's theology is *not* based on God's revelation and is relative. But, since Thompson repeatedly claims that Paul's authority is "prophetic speech" that "speaks for God" (p. 32), these conclusions would appear to disagree with Thompson's own "propositio" or thesis. More clearly stated is the conclusion: "In response to the issues in [Paul's] churches," he works out "the implications of his basic convictions" (p. 270), or, "Starting with his basic convictions, [Paul] both makes theological arguments and speaks for rhetorical effect with the larger aim of ensuring the transformation of his churches into the image of Christ" (p. 271). I would have preferred Thompson to have instead initially stated that persuasion is a dimension of theology as persuasion serves Paul's pastoral purposes. Christology and theology *are* separable from persuasion. Because of the importance of Paul's theology, derived from God's will, Paul desires to persuade his readers to become sanctified and transformed, ready for the day of the Lord. Yes, Paul may emphasize different aspects of God's nature as needed to communicate to different situations of readers, but the theology is constant, even though not fully developed in every instance. As Thompson explains, Paul "employs christological statements as premises and proofs in deliberative arguments in which he attempts to shape the behavior of the readers" (p. 142). He employs the "community's common confession to address a variety of rhetorical situations" (p. 142). I would agree, but in the process of answering specific issues, Paul teaches the churches about the person of Christ. The early church needed doctrinal clarity even as it needed practical guidance, but Paul related the two (orthodoxy and orthopraxy). For example (chap. 6), Thompson states that Christ's subordination to the Father is an example for women's subordination to men (p. 138). However, is Paul really proposing the Son is subordinate

and women are subordinate? No mention is made of the unusual non-hierarchical sequence of Christ—man—God (1 Cor 11:3). Thompson assumes that "head" refers to "*hierarchy* of being" although "head" as *source* of being fits 1 Corinthians 11:11–12. Thompson's view of Christ appears to be lower also in his comparison of Jesus to created Wisdom (pp. 43, 132, 141–42).

Nevertheless, overall, Thompson has demonstrated a significant thesis for today that Paul's theological emphasis must be compared to the theological needs (or the "rhetorical situation") evident in each letter.

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Divine Discourse in the Epistle to the Hebrews: The Recontextualization of Spoken Quotations of Scripture. By Madison N. Pierce. SNTSMS 178. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020, xii + 237 pp., $99.99.

In *Divine Discourse in the Epistle to the Hebrews*, Madison N. Pierce, assistant professor of New Testament at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, examines the speeches of the Triune God in the OT quotations which the author of Hebrews utilizes using prosopological exegesis. Pierce argues that, according to Hebrews, all three persons of the Godhead—Father, Son and Spirit—speak distinctly through the use of OT quotations, and the speeches provide the portrait of God in the Epistle.

In chapter one, Pierce points out that the practice of identifying speakers/characters was common in Greco-Roman education, Jewish exegesis, and in other parts of the NT corpus. Nonetheless, Pierce argues that prosopological exegesis "is more fully developed in patristic literature" (p. 14).

Building on the works of Marie-Josèph Rondeau and Matthew W. Bates—albeit with certain variations—Pierce proposes three criteria in identifying prosopological exegesis. First, the text must be a speech. Second, the identity of the speaker in the text must be ambiguous. Third, the text must be authoritative and significant. These criteria will assist the exegete to identify the speaker in the text. Pierce notes that the presence of an introductory formula and a parallel interpretation of the text in another place could strengthen the analysis of prosopological exegesis. What is germane to Pierce's study of Hebrews is "the author's identification of unspecified participants" (p. 21). The constant participants in divine discourse in the epistle are the Father, Son, and Spirit. In the subsequent chapters, Pierce fleshes out the distinct speeches of each person of the Godhead through OT quotations.

Chapter two presents God the Father as the speaker. In many instances, Hebrews indicates the Father speaking to his Son. Hebrews 1:1–14 delineates that God speaks through, to, and about his Son. After a brief introduction of the Son's identity in the exordium (1:1–4), the author of Hebrews concentrates on depicting God's speech to his Son using a string of OT citations (1:5–14). The speeches in OT quotations stress that Jesus is God's begotten Son who is worshipped by the angels, immutable, a divine being who loves righteousness, is addressed as Lord

and God, and is exalted at the Father's side. In so doing, the author highlights Jesus's superiority over the angels. The subsequent section of Hebrews presents the Father speaking to the High Priest. In Hebrews 5:5–6, as is true in the catena, the author employs Psalmic quotations in order to exhibit the Father addressing the Son. The Psalmic quotations in Hebrews 5 (Pss 2:7; 109:4 LXX), evince that Jesus is not only God's Son but also God's appointed high priest.

In Hebrews 7, the author appropriates the Melchizedek tradition (Gen 14:18–20 and 109:4 LXX) to ascertain the perpetuity of Christ's priesthood in contrast to the Aaronic high priesthood. God's oath to the Son ratifies Jesus's unending priesthood in the manner of Melchizedek. Finally, Pierce explicates the Father's speech of the New Covenant (Heb 8:1–13). The New Covenant the Father speaks of is better because the mediator is better, and Christ's mediation is based on God's oath.

Chapter three further discusses the intra-divine discourse; this time, the Son speaks to the Father. Hebrews 2:1–18 delineates Jesus's identification with humanity, and this identification is substantiated by Psalm 8. Pierce understands the citation anthropologically rather than Christologically. While experiencing pain, Jesus speaks to the Father and mentions that the people are his brothers and sisters (Heb 2:11–12). But Pierce finds the Psalmic quotations that are in Jesus's speech unusual to be read prosopologically because the reading lacks a parallel reading in another place. She posits that it is plausible that the author read the Greek Psalm 21:23 prosopologically because of the oft-quoted Psalm 21:1–18. The prosopological reading of the citations from Isaiah 8:17–18 conveys that the Son of God speaks as the representative of his brothers and sisters. In Hebrews 10:5–7, the Son speaks again to address the issue of the ineffectual nature of the blood sacrifice of animals. The author notes that the speech is a citation from Psalm 39:7–9 LXX utilized to convey Jesus's arrival into the world in obedience to God's call. The prosopological reading of the Psalmic citation reiterates Jesus's identification with humanity.

In chapter four, Pierce presents the Spirit addressing the community of God. As opposed to the intra-divine discourse between the Son and the Father, "the Spirit's speech is 'extra-divine'" (p. 135). Using a prosopological reading of Psalm 94:7–11 LXX, the author indicates the Spirit's speech to the community in Hebrews 3:7–11. Thus Pierce contends that the Spirit speaks just as the Father and the Son speak in the Epistle. The quotation from Psalm 94:7–11 LXX appears in Hebrews 4:1–11. In this pericope, the Spirit speaks to God's people to heed his voice so that they enter God's rest and avoid the fate of the unbelieving wilderness generation. The Spirit speaks again in Hebrews 10:15–18. Using a prosopological reading of Jeremiah 38:33–34 LXX, the author declares that the Spirit "testifies to us" that Christ's definitive self-offering provides cleansing and forgiveness.

Chapter five attempts to delineate the importance of divine discourse to the structure of Hebrews. Pierce opts for the three-part structure of Hebrews rather than the five-part structure. In Hebrews 1:1–4:16 and 4:11–10:25, Pierce denotes that "the divine participants all speak in the same order: Father, Son, Spirit" (p. 178). Although the third part of the structure (Heb 10:19–13:25) contains divine discourse, Pierce remarks that it is dissimilar with the previous two parts on several

notes. In Hebrews 10:30, Pierce identifies the Spirit to be the speaker. In her estimation, the citations from Deuteronomy 32:35a LXX and Deuteronomy 32:36a/Psalm 134:14 characterize the Spirit as the One who will carry out vengeance and judgment on the disobedient. The Habakkuk 2:3–4 LXX citation in Hebrews 10:37–38 indicates that God is the speaker. Pierce stresses that the citation from Proverbs 3:11–12 in Hebrews 12:5–6 is not a divine discourse but an exhortation to the community of God to relay the idea that when God disciplines his people, he is displaying his fatherhood. Two more OT quotations appear henceforth. In Hebrews 13:5 God speaks and promises that he will not abandon his people (cf. Deut 31:6 LXX, or possibly Gen 28:15). And in Hebrews 13:6, the community responds using Psalm 118:6 LXX to express that they are "not afraid" of people.

Pierce concludes her study of divine discourse in Hebrews with three significant character qualities of the three speakers. First, the Father's speeches evince his love for his people. Second, the Son's speeches indicate his ministry through identification with humanity and his effectual sacrificial ministry. Finally, the Spirit's speeches reveal that he exhorts the community of God.

Pierce's monograph should be commended on several points. First, her work addresses the lacuna in the study of the use of the OT in Hebrews by stressing the idea that the OT quotations utilized in Hebrews are God's speeches rather than just the "word of God" or Scripture. Second, Pierce ably demonstrates that the Spirit has a major role in Hebrews, showing his status as an equal speaker compared to the Father and the Son in the Epistle. By shining a spotlight on the Spirit in Hebrews, Pierce fills the gap in past scholarship on Hebrews that paid minimal or no attention to the Spirit.

This excellent study is not without minor issues. One issue that stands out is Pierce's reading of Genesis 2:2 in Hebrews 4:4. Here Pierce argues that the quotation should be read prosopologically and identifies the Spirit as the sole speaker of the verse, not including the rest of the Godhead, even though the original text states otherwise. Conversely, I contend that this is one example where the author of Hebrews let the Godhead speak as One rather than the Spirit distinctly.

Notwithstanding this minor issue, Pierce's monograph is a welcome addition to the discussion of the use of OT quotations in Hebrews, the Trinity in Hebrews, and particularly the Holy Spirit in Hebrews.

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All Things New: Revelation as Canonical Capstone. By Brian J. Tabb. NSBT 48. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2019, xviii + 270 pp., $28.00 paper.

In this latest volume in the New Studies in Biblical Theology series, Brian Tabb presents us with an example of biblical theology at its best. Tabb makes a compelling case for Revelation's status as the "canonical capstone" of Scripture, a thesis that transparently builds on Richard Bauckham's *The Climax of Prophecy* (London: T&T Clark, 2000). He presents extensive evidence to show how Revelation

"discloses divine mysteries and brings decisive clarity and closure to the biblical story" (p. 227) as "various Old Testament prophecies and patterns find their consummation in the present and future reign of Jesus Christ, who decisively defeats his foes, saves his people, and restores all things" (p. 2).

Following most recent scholars, Tabb rightly emphasizes that Revelation is intended to motivate followers of Jesus "to live counterculturally in the world as faithful witnesses" (p. 2). Revelation, then, is "not a riddle to be decoded," but rather is "meant to decode our reality" (p. 2). Its focus on the future return and reign of Jesus, along with the judgment it will bring to those opposed to his reign, is intended to help readers reorient their perspective on their present circumstances so that they will be able to conquer the dragon and his allies through the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony (p. 11). Tabb's approach may be described as "eclectic or mixed" (p. 10), characterized by "redemptive-historical idealism" (p. 10), and giving "primacy to the symbolic nature of the text" (p. 12). He notes that the symbolic language of Revelation is "drawn primarily from the Old Testament and also conditioned by the Graeco-Roman context of John and his first readers" (p. 9).

After an excellent, succinct introduction to the unique nature of Revelation and some of the distinctive challenges that this book poses for readers today, Tabb divides his biblical-theological analysis into four parts. Part 1 ("The Triune God") includes individual chapters on the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Tabb notes "the absolute centrality of God in the symbolic universe of the Apocalypse" (p. 31), driven home through nearly forty references to the throne of God, which is "the dominant feature of John's heavenly vision" in Revelation 4–5 (p. 37). He points to "Revelation's kaleidoscopic portrait of the Lord Jesus" (p. 47), which builds on five Christological titles that are rich in biblical-theological significance. And he effectively outlines how Revelation affirms the essential and varied role that the Spirit plays in establishing God's kingdom in this world. Part 2 ("Worship and Witness") includes chapters focusing on the "followers of the Lamb" and "the battle for universal worship." Tabb notes that the people of God are depicted in a multifaceted manner in Revelation, with particular focus on their status as priests, prophetic witnesses, the new Israel, and conquerors. He shows how Revelation brings to fruition God's ancient promises to the patriarchs to bless all nations through Abraham's offspring, while it also shows the ongoing presence of counterfeit worship and rebellion against God, which ultimately will be decisively addressed at the last battle. Part 3 ("Judgment, Salvation and Restoration") is made up of three chapters. The first focuses on "the wrath of the Lamb," which is poured out in the seal, trumpet, and bowl judgments, and is described in a way that effectively portrays a coming new exodus for God's people. The second deals with "Babylon the harlot and Jerusalem the Bride" and outlines how Revelation "combines several significant biblical-theological motifs in describing and contrasting the harlot city and the bride city" (p. 184) in order to demonstrate to "embattled believers that while it appears to be 'the best of times' for Babylon and 'the worst of times' for God's people, a great reversal is coming" (pp. 163–64). The third chapter of this section shows how Revelation sets forth God's plan to make "all things new" in a new

creation that represents "a greater Eden," where "every threat and barrier to uninhibited fellowship between God and his people is eliminated" (p. 198). Finally, in Part 4, Tabb devotes a single chapter to Revelation as the Word of God, highlighting the concomitant importance of responding appropriately to what Revelation says. In these ten chapters, Tabb effectively articulates what Revelation reveals about each of the major theological themes it addresses and successfully establishes his thesis that Revelation functions as a canonical capstone to Scripture through his extensive detailing of where it echoes OT motifs and prophecies.

What ultimately makes *All Things New* such a valuable contribution to Revelation studies is the exceptional exegetical skill that Tabb consistently employs. Although no two scholars will ever agree on every detail of how Revelation should be interpreted, Tabb's analysis is usually compelling, almost always plausible, and only very occasionally dubious. Unlike some commentaries, Tabb does not simply regurgitate the work of earlier scholars. He draws heavily on the work of Bauckham, Beale, and Koester, in particular, but he is not hesitant to critique their exegesis and frequently improves on already solid analyses of the text. Tabb draws on his knowledge of Greco-Roman literature, culture, and history, skillfully navigates issues relating to Greek lexicography (see, e.g., his treatment of "lamb" language associated with Jesus [pp. 59–60] or his treatment of Jesus as the *archē* of God's creation in 3:14 [pp. 62–63]), adroitly wades through debates related to Greek grammar (such as the genitive in the phrase "the testimony of Jesus"), and is clearly very well-versed in the history of interpretation and recent secondary literature on Revelation. Tabb's compelling exegetical skill serves him well in fleshing out his biblical-theological analysis and instills confidence in readers that his conclusions flow from the text itself, rather than from his imagination or from prior theological commitments that have been imposed on the biblical text. He engages the most challenging exegetical issues in Revelation in a competent and compelling manner, highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of earlier analyses before pointing readers to the most plausible reading of the text (see, e.g., his treatment of the blood on Jesus's robe in Rev 19 [pp. 58–59]). These features, and many others, make *All Things New* an important resource to have on hand alongside traditional commentaries as scholars and preachers seek to understand the text. Indeed, Tabb's analysis frequently represents some of the best commentary treatments to be found on particular challenging issues.

If there is a weakness to Tabb's work, it is found when he deals with theological, rather than exegetical, debates. I was eager to see, for example, how Tabb would use his exegetical skill to test his own amillennial position. He did not, for example, address the fact that Rev 20 appears to flesh out Jesus's promise that his followers will "reign *on the earth*" (5:10). He also did not wrestle with how the consistent portrayal of Satan's activity in this world (see especially the language in 12:9, 17; 13:1–18) could be consistent with the view that 20:1–3 portrays Satan as currently bound in any sense that would be meaningful to the original readers. Similarly, Tabb takes the well-established view that the seal, trumpet, and bowl judgments are best understood as representing "progressive parallelism" or "recapitulation" (pp. 154–55), but he does not show readers how he exegetically reconciles this view

with the fact that the bowl judgments are explicitly described as "seven plagues, the seven last (ones), because with them the wrath of God was ended" (15:1). On rare occasions, Tabb also affirms the positions of other scholars without keeping them exegetically accountable. He cites the view that in 19:8 "the bride's beautiful wedding dress 'has been granted to her as a gift in the first instance'" (p. 182), but he fails to point out that Revelation itself says that the bride had "*made herself* ready" and that the fine linen that was granted to her represented her *own* "righteous deeds." Similarly, his affirmations of the view that Adam's work in the garden constituted priestly activity includes some of the only non-sequiturs in the book (p. 198). These minor critiques, however, do not take away from the fact that *All Things New* is an exemplary biblical-theological analysis of Revelation. It reads like a very effective upgrade to Bauckham's laudable brief volume on *The Theology of the Book of Revelation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993). It is a book that every student of Revelation and every preacher of Revelation should read carefully and consult frequently.

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Finding the Right Hills to Die On: The Case for Theological Triage. By Gavin Ortlund. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020, 165 pp., $17.99 paper.

Just a few years ago, I taught a class for my local church that included a lesson on theological prioritization. While the categories or levels surfaced naturally, finding resources to develop the lesson conceptually proved difficult. Gavin Ortlund has provided the evangelical world with just the resource needed for such a task. *Finding the Right Hills to Die On* was the book for which I was looking, but it didn't exist at that time. I will now, happily and immediately, go back to my brothers and sisters and recommend it for further study.

The driving schema for the book, presented in the Introduction, is a fourfold division between, successively, first-rank or essential doctrines, second-rank or urgent doctrines, third-rank or important doctrines, and fourth-rank or unimportant doctrines. Each doctrine's place on the scale is determined by its relatedness to the gospel and its impact on church unity and ministry. A unique strength of the book is how frequently and clearly Ortlund underscores that not everyone will agree with him regarding what doctrines belong in which categories. His theological experiences and ecclesial circumstances play an undeniable role in his categorizations, as is the case for each one of us. Yet the situatedness of our theologizing does not negate the necessity of following wise and reasoned principles when prioritizing. We can disagree with Ortlund as to whether baptism is a second-rank or third-rank doctrine, but we should agree that baptism ought to be ranked according to guidelines similar to those Ortlund explicates.

Following the initial prioritization roadmap, Chapter One contains a number of preliminary clarifications, the first being the problems associated with doctrinal maximalism, i.e., making every doctrine a first-rank doctrine. It is, unfortunately,

quite easy for most of us to think of a denomination, church, or group of Christians that considers their perspective on a particular theological position to be vital and non-negotiable while the majority of the universal church holds that same position as secondary or tertiary. It is truly noble to display deep conviction when core tenets of the faith are being challenged or compromised. But to hold as essential a particular doctrine that Scripture, tradition, and/or right reason does not so demand, can be divisive and devastating to the unity of Christ's church and its work in the world: "The results of unnecessary doctrinal division—church splits, aloofness of how God is at work in our city, failed opportunities to link arms with other ministries, and so on—are incredibly damaging to the mission of the church" (p. 36). Theological prioritizing is necessary so that we avoid dividing what Christ has unified.

The corresponding clarification to avoiding doctrinal maximalism is avoiding doctrinal minimalism, expounded in Chapter Two. As a natural conflict avoider, I acknowledge that this principle strikes deepest in my heart. Yes, there is a doctrinal core to Christianity—the necessity and centrality of the gospel having biblical pride of place—but that doesn't relegate every other doctrine to absolute, or even relative, unimportance. Ortlund shines in this chapter as he shows how secondary and tertiary doctrines can be important without being primary. First of all, because Scripture is not concerned with merely propounding core doctrines, if we are to uphold the inspiration and authority of the whole Bible, we must hold that non-primary doctrines are significant in a myriad of ways. Second, church history shows us that devout followers of Jesus have been willing to die for doctrines that, while not primary, are vital in the upholding and promoting of doctrines that are primary. Doctrinal minimalism can thus be dismissive of the faith of our forefathers. Third, our lives are a complex interplay of belief and action, and it is not only doctrinally essential beliefs that affect our decisions. Urgent, important, and even unimportant doctrinal convictions play a role in our lives, even if they are not categorized as first rank. Doctrinal minimalism can thus lead us to indifference in matters that have direct impact on the everyday expression of our faith. Fourth and finally, the Christian faith is a coherent whole; therefore, beliefs are interlocking and mutually reinforcing. This means that a doctrine not considered as primary as the gospel itself may still play such a decisive, supportive role in the Christian elucidation of the gospel that it must be considered with utter seriousness. Ortlund's four reasons should drive us away from a dangerous doctrinal minimalism and toward the demanding but necessary work of theological prioritization.

In Chapter Three, bridging between his preliminary considerations and concrete examples of prioritization at work, Ortlund details his experience with three doctrinal issues—baptism, the millennium, and creation days—and how his navigation of the issues displays the complexity and careful thinking required when ranking doctrines. As mentioned, it is this personalizing element of the book that puts the theological rubber to the road of practical living, humanizing what could otherwise be a very theoretical and academic exercise. Moreover, the depth of Ortlund's exposure to various theological convictions in the array of faith communities

with which he has been involved provides a credibility and authenticity that greatly strengthens his contribution to the growing literature on the topic.

The remaining chapters of the book center on the first-rank, second-rank, and third-rank categories, respectively, assisting readers with how to think about what doctrines fall into which categories. In the opening pages of Chapter Four, regarding first-rank doctrines, Ortlund overviews two lists of criteria—from Erik Thoennes's *Life's Biggest Questions* and Wayne Grudem's "When, Why, and for What Should We Draw New Boundaries?" in *Beyond the Bounds: Open Theism and the Undermining of Biblical Christianity*—before finally proposing his own four questions to ask when deciding a doctrine's place in one's theological matrix. "1. How clear is the *Bible* on this doctrine? 2. What is this doctrine's importance to *the gospel*? 3. What is the testimony of the *historical church* on this doctrine? 4. What is this doctrine's effect upon the *church today*?" (p. 79). Clarifying categories is helpful. Providing criteria for determining what goes where is indispensable, making this one of the most positive contributions of the book. Thoennes's and Grudem's lists are much longer than Ortlund's, making them more helpful for believers working systematically through an issue. Ortlund's list is concise and memorable, equipping believers to think through doctrines when time for study is a luxury.

Continuing in Chapter Four, Ortlund focuses on two essential doctrines—the virgin birth and justification by faith—that showcase the needed nuance in dealing with ideas in the first-rank category. The doctrine of the virgin birth was of major concern in the fundamentalist-modernist controversies a century ago. Antisupernaturalist modernists denied the virgin birth of Jesus while Bible-believing fundamentalists considered it essential for both biblical and historical reasons. Because the virgin birth is not such an important issue today, we see that certain cultural trends change and, with those cultural changes, the need for the church to evaluate what truth claims to emphasize; such an exercise proves to be a somewhat dynamic and fluid process. Also, the virgin birth may not be something essential to affirm for initial salvation, but it certainly is a doctrine that cannot be denied without drastically altering one's view of the Bible, one's understanding of how God works in the world, and one's theological conception of the incarnation. In contrast, the doctrine of justification by faith is at the heart of Paul's Letter to the Galatians and to the general, biblical portrait of salvation. "The fundamental claim that we are right with God by faith in Christ alone, apart from our good works—this is integral to the gospel and to every practical aspect of the Christian life" (p. 92). Regardless of the various conceptions of the doctrine of justification we find throughout history, the church has consistently held to the doctrine as a central element of the gospel and, hence, as a first-rank doctrine. Lack of historical unanimity in understanding the subtleties of the doctrine, which Ortlund claims may be exaggerated (citing Thomas Oden and James Buchanan), is not grounds for demoting a first-rank doctrine to a lower rank. This biblically and historically resilient doctrine is essential to the Christian faith, regardless of how one's faith community—Protestant, Catholic, or Orthodox—may construe the doctrine. Ordering doctrines as primary is mandatory yet complex. Ortlund's approach to ordering the virgin birth and justification as first-rank doctrines substantiates both of these qualities.

At the outset of Chapter Five, Ortlund helpfully spells out the mentalities that best prepare us for the theological prioritization process at each level. Courage and conviction are needed to categorize first-rank doctrines. Wisdom and balance appropriately temper us as we give doctrines second rank. Third-rank doctrines require circumspection and restraint.

The attributes of wisdom and balance come into view in Ortlund's discussion of baptism, spiritual gifts, and gender roles in the home and church, the second-rank/urgent doctrines he works through in this chapter. The historical controversies surrounding baptism are well known, but the complexities are not always appreciated. Not only is the mode of baptism at issue; so are the questions of whom should be baptized and when someone should be baptized. While most of us would not want to claim any of these matters as doctrinally primary, they are all tightly bound up with a person's conversion, incorporation into the believing community, and public declaration of faith. Baptism is thus close to the heart of the gospel, which explains why local churches that can claim true Christian unity with one another worship separately from one another on Sundays over issues relating to baptism.

The question of whether all of the New Testament spiritual gifts are operative in the church today or whether some of them, for any of a number of reasons, ceased at some point in history, may seem to be fairly straightforward. As he does with so many issues throughout the book, Ortlund exposes the various options within the continuationist and cessationist schools, concluding that whether one ranks the matter as secondary or tertiary depends on the position a church takes on these options and how it thus practices spiritual gifts. In certain cases, theological issues are mutually exclusive, resulting in a necessary practical divide between believers. If believers are convinced that all of the Spirit's gifts should manifest in the church today, those believers will likely encounter serious practical and theological problems in a cessationist community. And when a non-primary doctrine is important enough to divide communities, Ortlund categorizes it as second rank, as he does with the spiritual gifts issue.

The complementarian-egalitarian debate over men's and women's roles in the church and home is a prime example of an issue that most Christians would not place as first-rank doctrinally but that appears first-rank in our emotional reactions. Ortlund rightly points out that, in part, it is our current culture's opposition to the traditional understanding of gender roles that raises the emotional stakes. It is in such highly charged circumstances that the church must show balance and wisdom. Balance requires us to deal thoroughly with the intricate, cultural issues of gender roles in both the ancient and modern worlds. Wisdom requires us to engage winsomely and civilly. "Complementarians conceive of egalitarians as compromising liberals, and egalitarians regard complementarians as sexists who oppress women" (p. 120). In place of such reductionistic assumptions, Ortlund challenges us to study this secondary issue thoroughly while treating with charity those with whom we disagree. The church will only benefit if we take such an approach to all second-rank doctrines.

Chapter Six opens with a double warning that churches should heed today. "Fighting over tertiary issues is unhelpful. But fighting over tertiary issues while simultaneously neglecting primary issues is even worse" (p. 126). To illustrate this unfortunate tendency, Ortlund highlights the doctrines of the millennium and of the creation days of Genesis. Because the millennium is only explicitly taught in one passage of Scripture, because it does not make significant impact in our everyday lives, and because the church's explanation of the doctrine is not univocal, Ortlund proposes that there should be neither fighting nor church division over millennial views. Of course, because it is taught in Scripture and because the intricacies and implications of the doctrine are important, believers should work toward a settled view on the issue. But there should be room in evangelicalism for all premillennialists, postmillennialists, and amillennialists. Personally, I felt most uncomfortable with Ortlund's discussion of the millennium because it was here that I found him to be more critical than appropriate of premillennialism. But I count this a minor deviation from the overall evenhandedness with which he treats other issues.

The creation-evolution debate has been a flash point between the church and Western culture's scientism for decades. Yet the dialogue covers issues such as creation from something or nothing, whether the fall of humanity is a fact of history, and what it means for men and women to be made in the image of God. Of particular concern to many is whether the days of creation in Genesis 1 were literal 24-hour days, epochs or ages, or a literary device around which a creation theology is structured. As he does with most other issues, Ortlund surveys the history of doctrine concerning the interpretation of these "days," concluding that faithful exegetes throughout the centuries have differed widely, a fact that should move us away from rigid certitude concerning their meaning. Again, by classifying the days of creation as a tertiary issue, the argument is not that the doctrine is unimportant. How we interpret Genesis 1 will substantially impact many decisions when interpreting the remainder of Scripture. Yet such hermeneutical disagreements should not compromise the unity of brothers and sisters in Christ as we live out our faith in this young-or-old world that God created. It is critical that we are conversant in third-rank doctrines, but it is just as critical that we guard against granting them greater rank than they warrant.

Ortlund's Conclusion is a fitting and powerful call to theological humility. Defining doctrinal categories is vital work that requires a certain level of passion and fortitude. But "our zeal for theology must never exceed our zeal for our actual brothers and sisters in Christ" (p. 149). As we make up our minds on theological issues, we must guard our hearts so that we are respectful and winsome toward those with whom we disagree. This takes the kind of humility that Ortlund shows throughout *Finding the Right Hills to Die On.* This book is thus not merely a much-needed call to informed and principled theological prioritization; it is a consistent modeling of the biblical posture and attitude required to do such work well.

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