

## BOOK REVIEWS

*The Case for Biblical Archaeology: Uncovering the Historical Record of God's Old Testament People*, by John D. Currid. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2020. xviii + 263 pp. \$29.99.

John Currid is Chancellor's Professor of Old Testament at Reformed Theological Seminary. His nearly five decades of experience in archaeology have prepared him aptly to write this introduction to the art and science of excavating the biblical lands. This primer provides an engaging and informative synopsis of the history and geography of ancient Israel as well as an instructive overview of the techniques used by archaeologists to uncover and interpret the material remains of the past.

Following an introduction, the book comprises nineteen chapters in three major parts covering the historical context of archaeology, the geography of the land, and the various categories of archaeological discovery that have proved useful to historians and biblical interpreters. Each chapter concludes with a list of key terms, discussion questions, and sources for further reading. Included also are forty color photographs of various sites and finds, three maps of ancient regions and current archaeological sites, and three appendices. The appendices include a timeline of the ancient Near East, a timeline of the kings of Israel and Judah, and a chronological outline of the extrabiblical references to these kings. The book concludes with a helpful glossary of nearly sixty archaeological terms, a bibliography, and two indices covering Scriptural references and subjects/names.

In the introduction Currid outlines the role of archaeology as shedding light on the historical and material contexts of the biblical narratives. Presuppositionalist readers will appreciate his caveat that “the purpose of archaeology (and related fields) is *not to prove the Bible*” (3, emphasis mine), a welcome distinction from a few other books on archaeology published last year (e.g., J. Daniel Hays, *A Christian's Guide to Evidence for the Bible: 101 Proofs from History and Archaeology* [Baker, 2020]; and to a lesser extent Titus Kennedy, *Unearthing the Bible: 101 Archaeological Discoveries that Bring the Bible to Life* [Harvest House, 2020]). Currid defines archaeology as the systematic study of material remains of the human past and explains its aim as the discovery, observation, preservation, and recording of the buried remains of the past in order to reconstruct ancient life (4–5). While the introduction provides a helpful overview, one deficiency is the lack of a clear purpose statement for the book itself. This lacuna points to one of the book's shortcomings as discussed below.

Part 1 (“Setting”) surveys the geography of Palestine (chap. 2), the history of archaeology from the eighteenth century to the present (chap.

3), the process of tell excavation (chap. 4), and a brief history of biblical lands (chap. 5). Part 2 (“A Journey through the Land”) zooms in on the major archaeological sites currently under excavation region-by-region: Galilee (chap. 6), the Jezreel Valley (chap. 7), the Negev (chap. 8), the Shephelah (chap. 9), Jordan River Valley (chap. 10), the southern coastal plain (chap. 11), and the central highlands (chap. 12). Part 3 (“Aspects of Society”) offers the most insight into what archaeologists have been able to discover about ancient life. The chapters cover agriculture and herding (chap. 13), water management (chap. 14), architecture (chap. 15), ceramics (chap. 16), Hebrew language (chap. 17), burial practices (chap. 18), and small finds (chap. 19). This reviewer found the chapters on Hebrew language and burial practices to be most insightful, although readers will likely gain greater understanding of the Old Testament world from each of the foregoing sections. The book ends rather abruptly with the final chapter on small finds, offering no concluding chapter to tie together the study.

Currid has provided a helpful overview of archaeology and has furnished a window into the nature of archaeological work for those unfamiliar with the ins-and-outs of field excavation. The strengths of the book include its user-friendliness and insight for those interested in specific parts of archaeology, its quality photographs and maps, and its measured approach to the benefit archaeology offers (not to *prove* the Bible so much as to illumine it). The book itself is aesthetically pleasing, with its glossy pages and informative features (e.g., frequent breakout boxes with further resources or key terms). The only weakness of the book may well be its lack of a coherent purpose statement or aim. While the title indicates the author is making a case for biblical archaeology, the book does not really offer an argument for archaeology so much as provide a loosely organized overview of important parts of the archaeological task. Nor does the author specifically define what he means by “biblical archaeology” vis-à-vis archaeology in general. In spite of these omissions, I commend the book to readers interested in discovering more about the Old Testament world and the work of archaeology. I have added sections of the book as required reading in my Old Testament Historical Books course, and I would encourage readers of this journal to read this volume to gain greater insight into the Old Testament period.

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*Bloody, Brutal, and Barbaric? Wrestling with Troubling War Texts*, by William J. Webb and Gordon K. Oest. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2019. 397 pp. \$45.00.

William J. Webb is adjunct professor of biblical studies at Tyndale

Seminary in Toronto, while Gordon K. Oeste is adjunct professor of Old Testament at Wycliffe College and the teaching pastor at Cedar Creek Community Church in Cambridge, Ontario. The book is the product of fourteen years of writing, reflecting on, and challenging conventional understandings of OT war texts. More specifically, the authors position their book as a *via media* between traditional interpretations of these texts (which they posit as viewing the ethical implications of holy-war passages in an overall positive sense) and the so-called antitraditional interpretations (which they depict as viewing the ethics of these passages as reprehensible) (20). Most of the conversation, nonetheless, is targeted toward the traditional side. The authors contend that traditional answers have come up short (i.e., square pegs, round holes), creating a gap that calls for their “realigned traditional view.” This latter perspective, they contend, asks the right questions and poses more nuanced answers (29).

They begin by proposing, in the introductory chapter and Part 1, six theses which define the agenda of the book (13–19). (1) Anachronistic readings of war texts have skewed modern interpretations because readers tend to force contemporary ethical questions upon ancient texts and cultures. (2) The “total-kill rhetoric” of OT war texts must be understood as hyperbole. (3) In divine warfare Yahweh is accommodating himself to the brutalities of ANE war conventions (e.g., “God enters our world in hip waders...sloshing through the sewer water” [14]). (4) OT warfare texts move, as does the rest of Scripture, in incremental steps within a “redemptive-movement ethic,” bringing good out of evil and diachronically ameliorating ethical standards and demands. (5) Interpreters must find convergence rather than discord in the portraits of God as divine warrior in the OT, Jesus as gentle shepherd in the Gospels and Paul, and Jesus as apocalyptic warrior in Revelation. (6) Scripture points toward an eschatological reversal, whereby God intends to right all wrongs and to subsume even warfare under his righteous, loving character and actions.

The next two chapters, Part 2, focus on the shortcomings vis-à-vis salient features of traditional approaches. Traditional interpretations fail, first, because they assume divine commands concerning Yahweh war equate to ethical commendation of these practices. Second, traditional approaches often fallaciously force the ethical ladder of abstraction on war texts to argue for their inherent goodness at the highest level, where exclusive love for God is demanded. Third, traditional interpretations simply distract from the problems attending OT war texts by turning attention instead to the holiness of God, the removal of idolatry, the depravity of the Canaanites, or the foreshadowing of eschatological judgment. On the other hand, traditional approaches offer some benefit. Here, however, the authors’ approach becomes more involved, and, to this reviewer, more recondite. They contend that to comprehend what is happening in these war texts, readers must incorporate the heuristic lens of the biblical storyline by distinguishing *ethnic* Canaanites from *literary* Canaanites and by understanding the function of sacred

space. Holy war texts begin in the opening chapters of Genesis, they posit, where sacred space is created and sinners first run afoul of it. In this vein, nearly any biblical event involving divine judgment of sin, from the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the garden to the imputation of Adamic guilt to Jesus on the cross, constitutes a variation of the same reality—*literary* Canaanites (Adam and Eve, Christ as recipient of sinners' imputed guilt) are punished just as the ethnic Canaanites living during the conquest were. This equation becomes a hermeneutical key to unlock the meaning and significance of OT war texts.

Part 3 provides the heart of the book and the bulk of its content, with thirteen chapters. This section will prove instructive to readers not familiar with ancient war practices and offers an insightful backdrop to contextualizing biblical war passages. The authors begin with a short chapter (7 pp.) summarizing Webb's redemptive-movement hermeneutic, which has appeared in his other writings (e.g., *Corporal Punishment in the Bible: A Redemptive-Movement Hermeneutic for Troubling Texts* [IVP, 2011]; *Slaves, Women, and Homosexuals: Exploring the Hermeneutics of Cultural Analysis* [IVP, 2001]). In sum, this approach argues that Scripture must be interpreted in view of two horizons—ancient and modern—so that the ethics of the ancient context (concrete words and ethics frozen in time) are to be seen as moving incrementally and redemptively toward the far horizon of contemporary application (spirit of the words and ultimate ethical application). Moreover, *the meaning of the text is bound up in this movement*. Thus, for example, while the Bible does not outrightly condemn slavery, it provides a trajectory whereby Christians are obligated to ban it in contemporary society if they correctly interpret the spirit of the text (its meaning) and rightly apply its consummatory ethic. With respect to war texts, the authors argue that the true meaning is thus “to carry Christians forward in forging new practices and policies that help offset or minimize the atrocities of war” (82).

In the next two chapters the authors tackle the theme of war rape in certain OT passages: the “ugly side” in Deut 21:10–14 and the “redemptive side” in Deut 21:4–10 and Num 31:17–18. With regard to the former, the authors conclude that Deut 21:10–14 “contains serious ethical problems” (97) and that “contemporary Christians should be repulsed” (99). In the next chapter, however, the authors attempt to contextualize this assessment by examining ANE war rape practices as well as the biblical passages cited above that provide a redemptive movement toward the compassionate and honorable treatment of women. After a brief chapter relating war rape to genocide, the authors then extensively evaluate and support their claims that the OT total-kill statements are actually hyperbole (chaps. 8–12). They analyze evidence that ANE war texts typically exaggerated battle feats, including the numbers killed, the speed of attack, the severity of the carnage, the extent of the destruction, and the responsibility for victory (i.e., the king is given an outsized role). They apply this to statements in the OT, especially in Joshua and Judges, to argue that entire populations of

Canaanites were rarely, if ever, exterminated. Furthermore, they posit that the command to drive out the Canaanites shares the goal of total-kill hyperbole in seeking to rid the land of pollutants as sacred space for Yahweh. Here the authors—to my mind—make a plausible case for some level of hyperbole in some of these texts. Next (chap. 13) the authors examine the war atrocities found in ANE texts; in terms of understanding ancient backgrounds this may be the most helpful chapter.

In the next three chapters the authors assess the divine role in OT war texts. They argue that Yahweh is an “uneasy war God” who seeks to subvert conventional war practices of the ANE. They support this thesis along several lines, suggesting, for example, that Yahweh weeps over the destruction of Israel’s enemies, that he forbids ancient-world weapons of mass destruction, and that he prohibits David from building the temple to undermine the practice of violence. Finally, the authors consider the role of Jesus in divine warfare, arguing that the cross turns warfare on its head and that holy war in Revelation is not warfare at all but simply Jesus speaking one word. The final chapter concludes by rehashing the theses of the book mentioned above and proposing continued gaps for further study.

Several strengths of the book may be mentioned. The authors provide a substantive and well-nuanced addition to the literature on Yahweh war and OT battle texts. The authors appear genuinely concerned to wrestle with these texts in a sensitive and thoughtful way. The book provides an informative background for how warfare was practiced in the ANE and will thus illuminate many OT texts for readers.

Nonetheless, some weaknesses offset the value of the book. First, the organization and outline of the book is somewhat uneven and even unfocused. Perhaps this is the result of two authors and a fourteen-year writing process. Some chapters are quite short; others are very long. The authors seem to ping back and forth from various themes and topics in a rather haphazard way. Second, the redemptive-movement hermeneutic is ultimately unconvincing. While critiquing this would require space beyond this review, the approach seems to create more problems than it solves. The ethics of Scripture become problematized, especially acute when these ethics appear to carry little or no change from the beginning to end of the Bible. Thus, for example, the book of Revelation presents battle scenes and carnage just as bloody and devastating as passages from Joshua or Judges. Zechariah—when read from a futurist, originalist perspective—presents a terrifying picture of battle and Yahweh war during the Tribulation and leading up to the Battle of Armageddon (Zech 9:12–15; 12:2–9; 14:1–3). Third, the authors tend to exacerbate some of the alleged problems in OT warfare texts and appear to inflate some of the atrocities of ANE war texts. For example, in a recent paper Charlie Trimm debunked the book’s claim that ANE war texts glorified battle rape (see “Battlefield Rape in the Ancient Near East and the Old Testament: Hiding and Exposing the Horror,” ETS 2020). Similarly, this reviewer finds objectionable, for example, that Deut 21:10–14 sanctions war rape. Fourth, in seeking to critique traditional views the

authors end up committing the same *faux pas* they identify in their traditionalist counterparts. They contend that traditional approaches have simply distracted from the difficulties of war texts. But Webb and Oeste appear to do the same when they suggest that we must widen the lens so that any sinner divinely punished becomes a “literary” Canaanite. If all punished sinners are Canaanites then some punished sinners (who happen actually to be ethnic Canaanites) cannot be Canaanites in any distinctive way. Simply put, to paraphrase a popular slogan, if everyone is a Canaanite then no one is a Canaanite. The tensions in traditional approaches have not been resolved; the lens has been widened so far as to render the killing of the Canaanites moot. A more fertile approach—to my mind—accounts for the challenges by positing a unique role and standing for Israel vis-à-vis the church, a reality that resolves tensions in the war texts of Revelation, and by understanding Yahweh war against the backdrop of the exodus event rather than exclusively of sacred space. In summary, traditional approaches are likely more valid than the authors give them credit for. While this book provides an informative backdrop on warfare in the ancient world and will prove enlightening to many readers, the authors attempt to resolve observed tensions in previous approaches must be ultimately judged to fall short.

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*Psalms 73–150*, by Daniel J. Estes. New American Commentary. Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2019. 671 pp. \$32.99.

Daniel Estes, Distinguished Professor of Old Testament at Cedarville University, has specialized in the study of Old Testament Wisdom literature and the Psalms for many years, and now he has added to his accomplishments in this area by contributing the first volume of a planned two-volume commentary on the Psalms. (The preliminary word is that the companion volume might appear in 2024.) In the author’s preface to this commentary, Estes asks the obvious question, “Why is another commentary on Psalms needed?” After all, the canonical collection of Psalms is the most sung, chanted, prayed, read, memorized, translated, and commented upon portion of inspired scripture throughout two millennia of church history. The past couple decades have added a fair number of contemporary commentaries to that great cloud of witnesses. Is there really room for another commentary?

Estes answers that question by appealing to his intended audience and his specific approach. His audience, broadly speaking, is the church, not the academy. His approach is fundamentally exegetical, which is to say, Estes self-consciously steers away from questions of reception history and Christological interpretation and focuses his efforts on interpreting each psalm as an individual work of poetry.

Estes treats each psalm with discussions of (1) form, structure, and setting, (2) commentary, (3) theme, (4) intertextuality, (5) theology, and (6) response. In his commentary section on each psalm, every verse is treated succinctly. The following four sections typically receive one, or at most two, paragraphs of discussion. In his comments on “intertextuality” Estes does not spend a great deal of time turning over rocks or digging under roots to find connections with other portions of scripture. Instead, he simply points out what he sees as “the most prominent quotations, allusions, and echoes of the psalm in other biblical passages.”

Obviously, Estes has to be quite discriminating in order to compress so much material into such a brief commentary. He manages, for example, to discuss the entirety of Psalm 119 in forty-three pages. Psalm 117 requires only three pages, and most psalms require somewhere between five and twelve. This length is consistent with Estes’ goal for his commentary, which is “scholarship serving the church.” He wants to “invite readers to respond to the text in worship and obedience.” Estes does not try to bring anything new or unique to the discussion with this commentary. His comments are judicious and to the point, resting on solid scholarship but leaving out technical details and background discussions.

For those pastors and teachers who are wondering how this commentary compares to others in their library, Estes’ commentary does not have quite the literary or devotional flair of Kidner’s two-volume TOTC work, but it does have much more exegetical detail. Willem VanGemeren’s contribution to *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* is closer in scope and content to Estes’ work, but Estes includes a few items, particularly his “Response” section to each psalm, which Van Gemeren does not. Estes’ commentary is written at about the same level as Gerald Wilson’s *NIVAC* volume on Psalms 1–72. Obviously, it does not have the detail or range of Goldingay’s or Ross’s three volume works, not to mention more technical commentaries. At the same time, footnotes and a bibliography point interested readers to where they can find these kinds of discussions should they need them. In sum, Estes hits his target by contributing a substantial commentary tailored to the needs of pastors and teachers. Amid all the available commentaries on the Psalms, this one should not be overlooked as a useful tool for pastors, teachers, Bible-study leaders, or any serious-minded Christian who wants to dig into the psalms.

Is another commentary on the Psalms needed? Yes, provided it has real quality to deliver, and this commentary by Estes does. At the end of the day, I would argue that there will never be an end to new commentaries on the Psalms, for the Psalms are endlessly fruitful in the lives of each generation of believers. It is always a joy to sit down with a thoughtful, Bible-believing scholar to ponder them anew.

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

Stephen Chapman is Associate Professor of Old Testament at Duke Divinity School in Durham, NC. First published by Mohr Siebeck in 2000, this updated edition includes a supplemental bibliography of sources published since the original edition (37 pages!) and a postscript situating the study's significance 20 years on. Both editions have ultimate antecedents in Chapman's doctoral dissertation at Yale University under Christopher Seitz, himself a student of Brevard Childs. The book seeks to apply Childs's canonical approach to historical questions surrounding the formation of the canon. Chapman rejects earlier theories of OT formation as linear and Torah-centered (a later rabbinic retrojection, he claims), with the Law, Prophets, and Writings putatively developing in successive stages. Chapman contends instead that the Law and Prophets took shape simultaneously and with mutually informing awareness as the two leading impulses and repositories of the theological ideals guiding Israel. He posits an understanding of canon as "theological grammar," within a Deuteronomistic framework, whereby divine revelation is perceived as always and intrinsically conveyed by dual channels: law (Moses as lawgiver) and prophecy (Moses and his successors as prophets). An important component of this argument lies in Chapman's bifurcation between the terms *law* (תּוֹרָה) and *words* (דְּבָרִים), collocated in a handful of texts (Isa 1:10; Jer 6:19; 26:4–5; cf. 2 Kgs 17:15–16), as technical terms respectively for the Torah and the prophets in their canonical groupings.

The study divides into six chapters, with a postscript, original and supplemental bibliographies, and three indices. In the chapter 1 Chapman surveys historical scholarly discussions of canon formation from Wellhausen and Ryle to Miller and MacDonald. For readers interested in these discussions, Chapman provides extensive documentation. In chapter 2 he builds on Altieri's work in developing the understanding of canon as "theological grammar," which he posits as not a static crystallization of past dogmas but as a dynamic shaper of faith communities (concomitantly pushing back on the notion that all canon-formation activity arose from naked power assertions by ideologues) (95–99). In chapter 3 Chapman analyzes canonical conclusions, especially Deut 34:10–12 ("no prophet has arisen...like Moses") and Mal 4:4–6 ("remember the law of my servant Moses"), as hermeneutical guides to the process of canon formation. Chapters 4 and 5 work through the OT text from Deuteronomy to Daniel in seeking to outline his proposed trajectory of law and prophets as twin springs of canon-shaping influence. In chapter 6 he makes the case for the minority position of the Torah as possessing dual authority with the prophets from the inception of Scripture rather than as preeminent in authority as it became in later rabbinic Judaism. The postscript takes on developments since the



publication of the book, along with its reception, and includes droll anecdotes about the process of writing his doctoral dissertation and the first edition of the book.

Chapman has written an erudite contribution to discussions surrounding the formation of the Old Testament canon, a topic that has become central in OT studies over the last several decades. The book provides extensive documentation and is insightful at points. He offers a valuable critique to the prevailing critical view of OT canon formation, from the close of the nineteenth century onward, that the OT canon was recognized only very late and in accordance with its tripartite structure: Law being canonized during the time of Ezra (ca. 444 BC), Prophets during the Ptolemaic period (ca. 200 B.C.), and the Writings during the first century AD (often connected to the so-called Council of Jamnia). Chapman provides ample evidence against this view. There are a few issues, however, that prevent me from commending the book without qualification. I will mention two. First, and most important, for all his critique of the critical consensus on the canon, Chapman himself adopts a redactional approach to OT formation that accepts at face value most of the tenets of higher criticism. This leads him to embrace a number of assumptions or to make affirmations that conservative scholars holding to inerrancy will find problematical, such as the following: "No book of the Old Testament likely has a single author or can be assigned to a single social context or agenda. 'Scripture' is not characteristically a one-time, single-author deposition but a socio-literary means of providing corporate religious testimony over time...." (294). Scripture is intrinsically, according to Chapman, process-oriented, textually open-ended, and largely dislodged from the inherent bond between author and text. The Bible's own testimony or Jewish/Christian traditions concerning authorship are downplayed or rejected in favor of higher-critical conclusions. In contrast, readers interested in conservative, evangelical treatments of canon formation, especially in the ways in which the so-called canonical seams of the OT provide hints at its formation, would be better served to consult the work of John Sailhamer or Stephen Dempster, among others. In terms of an overview of the process of canon formation, Roger Beckwith's study still holds pride of place (*The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church* [Eerdmans, 1985]). Second, I found unconvincing Chapman's distinction between law and prophets as concurrent repositories of divine revelation based, in part, on the alleged distinction between the terms *law* and *words*. The term *words* appears more likely to be itself a synonym for *law*, or perhaps more specifically *commandments*, given its frequency as a designation in Deuteronomy for the Torah ("the *words* of this law" [Deut 17:19; 27:3, 8, 26; 28:58; 31:12, 24; 32:46]) and for the Ten Commandments (i.e., "the ten words" [Exod 20:1; 34:1, 27–28; Deut 5:22]). While the entire weight of Chapman's argument does not rest on this distinction, a major building block of his claims concerning dual channels of authoritative revelation remained unpersuasive. The book provides an impressive

treatment of an important study, but its methodological presuppositions left me dissatisfied in the end.

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*The Suffering Servant of the Lord: A Prophecy of Jesus Christ*, by David J. MacLeod. 2nd ed. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2018. xviii + 265 pp. \$32.00.

David MacLeod is Professor Emeritus of Bible and Theology at Emmaus Bible College in Dubuque, IA. In this second edition of his monograph, MacLeod provides an insightful and detailed study of the Suffering Servant passage of Isaiah 52:13–53:12. The chapters of the book originated as a series of sermons at the 2011 Guelph Bible Conference in Ontario, Canada. MacLeod cites an array of sources influential to his study, including a number of interpreters who are likely esteemed by many readers of this journal, such as David Baron, S. Lewis Johnson, Franz Delitzsch, and E. J. Young. MacLeod's thesis is that "the passage is a straightforward prophecy of Jesus Christ written by the prophet Isaiah some seven hundred years before the birth of the Savior" (x). The work divides into five chapters corresponding to the five stanzas of the song, followed by five appendices and four indices.

Chapter 1 introduces the study and exposit the introductory stanza (Isa 52:13–15). MacLeod sets the context with a brief foray into the reception history of the Suffering Servant song from the early church to the twentieth century. He then surveys the historical setting and the literary genre and structure of the passage. He concludes that the eighth-century prophet Isaiah composed the song as an explicit prophecy of the future Messiah, encompassing the atoning work of his first coming and the millennial reign following his second coming. He identifies the genre as "servant song," the last of four such songs in the latter part of Isaiah. As to its form, he deems it a unique mixture of elements from lament and thanksgiving psalms. The structure of the song consists of five stanzas of three verses each, with the first and final stanzas commending the Servant and the middle three portraying his suffering and degradation. As to the identity of the Servant, MacLeod delineates compelling external and internal evidence that the identity of the Servant is Jesus Christ. The initial stanza (52:13–15) commends the Servant by announcing his exaltation (v. 13) and by contrasting the ensuing astonishment of the Jewish people with the corresponding comprehension of the Gentiles (vv. 14–15). In v. 13 Jesus's resurrection, ascension, and session at the right hand are prophesied. In vv. 14–15 his crucifixion, substitutionary atoning work, and priestly ministry extending into the millennial kingdom are in view.

Chapter 2 surveys the second stanza portraying the suffering of the

Servant due to Israel's rejection (53:1–3). The second strophe presents the exaltation of the Servant in his future kingdom, while the first-person language reflects the eschatological, penitential prayer of "the future remnant of Israel, who will turn in faith to the Messiah at his second advent" (37). At the first coming of the Servant, Israel would reject him due to his lowly origins (v. 2a) and humble appearance (v. 2b). They despise him because they consider him offensive, contemptible, and insignificant (v. 3). Chapter 3 examines the third stanza, which prophesies the vicarious sufferings of the Servant (53:4–6). The eschatological lament of Israel's believing remnant continues, as they confess the nation's initial confusion over the miracles the Servant performs (v. 4a), their earlier misapprehension of the true nature of his suffering (v. 4b), their acknowledgment that now they finally understand his substitutionary atonement (v. 5), and their admission that their own sins brought God's wrath upon him (v. 6). Here the prophet Isaiah unpacks some of the most profound theological implications arising from the Servant's death, a death characterized as violent and painful, substitutionary and penal, and beneficial and healing (v. 5). Israel's remnant confesses their guilt corporately and individually, affirming that his suffering resulted in their good (v. 6).

Chapter 4 analyzes the humiliating yet voluntary death of the Servant outlined in the fourth stanza (53:7–9). The eschatological remnant of Israel recognizes the gentle submission of the mistreated Servant (v. 7); his unjust, violent, and vicarious death (v. 8); and the paradoxical honorific burial he receives despite his mistreatment (v. 9). The fifth chapter examines the song's final stanza outlining the resurrection and reward of the Servant (53:10–12). In this strophe the Servant advances the plan of Yahweh by dying as a guilt offering and rising from the dead (v. 10). He justifies his people successfully (v. 11) and receives exaltation upon the victorious completion of his mission (v. 12). MacLeod closes the final chapter with a brief survey of doctrinal and evangelistic implications arising from the passage. The last chapter is followed by five appendices that treat the following topics: (1) the understanding of Isaiah 53 among Jewish interpreters; (2) the nature of healing in the atonement; (3) answers to popular objections to the doctrine of substitutionary penal atonement; (4) Christian hymnody and the doctrine of penal substitution; and (5) the story of Handel's *Messiah* and its relation to Isaiah 53. The final portion of the book comprises four indices: subject, author, Scripture, and ancient sources.

MacLeod has contributed a valuable study of a singularly important passage from the OT. His combines rigorous attention to the details of the text with a premillennial and Messianic perspective. This approach refreshingly counterbalances the increasing tendency among evangelical interpreters to reject such a hermeneutical perspective, even though the latter characterized a large share, if not the majority, of conservative Christian interpretation in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. I highly recommend the volume to all readers of this journal. From the pastor intending to preach the passage to the interested Christian

desirous of supplementing his or her devotional regimen, this book will prove insightful, edifying, and informative.

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*The Doctrine of Creation: A Constructive Kuyperian Approach*, by Bruce Riley Ashford and Craig G. Bartholomew. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2020. 448 pp. \$50.00.

Craig Bartholomew and Bruce Riley Ashford, both of the Kirby Laing Center for Public Theology in Cambridge (until recently affiliated with Tyndale House), have produced a remarkable book of theology, *The Doctrine of Creation: A Constructive Kuyperian Approach*. What is most remarkable about this work—its major strength, and something that cannot be emphasized enough—is its frequent, detailed scriptural exegesis. If this book is anything, it is a model for theological method. The authors write: “Our aim here is to do theology in deep engagement with Scripture.... This is exceptionally hard work, and readers will often find detailed exegesis in subsections.... Scripture, and not our or any other tradition, has final authority when it comes to theology” (x).

This, however, means hard work for readers, too. The book is not a model of beautiful prose, and it will likely be inaccessible to anyone who lacks seminary training. The writing is clear and workmanlike (not quite including the Barth quotes, which are often abstruse), but it uses untransliterated Hebrew and Greek and is frequently broken up by paragraph-length quotations from other works. Many subsections in smaller type also break up the text, to the point that the book feels like a seriatim collection of exegetical and theological insights rather than a journey from question to answer. The arguments of each chapter can be difficult to uncover, buried as they are under (fascinating) points whose relationships to the chapter’s respective theses sometimes become obscure.

The overall shape of the viewpoint the authors are advancing is not obscure, however, because it has been well explicated by other thinkers, going back at least to Kuyper himself (and including Herman Bavinck, Albert Wolters, and now even Andy Crouch).

The appeal of Kuyperianism has risen at a somewhat ironic time in the West, a time when prospects for Christian cultural transformation are lower than they have ever been. And yet this is precisely the time when a rigorous, biblical, Calvinistic doctrine of creation is called for. The more secularism pushes Christianity to the margins in Western and particularly U.S. culture, the more tempting it is for Christians to reach for natural law arguments in the public square. This is not necessarily wrong—but it can go wrong (as Van Tilian presuppositionalism has also taught us). It takes a good Calvinist to know that depravity is total

and that while the goodness of creation extends everywhere, so do the effects of the fall. God speaks eloquently and forcefully to mankind through creation about his own eternal power and divine nature, but people suppress that truth. A biblical doctrine of creation will and must listen to God's voice in creation, and it must look at that general revelation in nature through the lenses of the special revelation in Scripture. But it must also contend with the resistance of people who do not wish to see divine norms in creation, who deny that there is a "telos of the cosmos" (88). As the authors of *The Doctrine of Creation* write, "There is no neutral ground in the creation, and the darkened heart needs to be illuminated by the gospel in order for one's eyes to be opened to see what is all around one" (23).

Ashford and Bartholomew work very hard to open already illumined eyes to more truth that the creation—interpreted in light of Scripture—has to teach. Chapter 4, to choose only one example, demonstrates through insightful exegesis of several passages, especially certain psalms, that it is better to speak of God as "Almighty"—of a God who actually rules over all his creation—than to speak of a "god" of artificial philosophical categories such as "omnipotence," the-potential-to-do-anything. Chapter 9 plumbs various passages and, ultimately, the whole story of Scripture to advance key Kuyperian doctrines such as common grace and sphere sovereignty. Chapter 10 carefully and biblically distinguishes creation and providence. Chapter 12 spells out timely implications of a biblical doctrine of creation for philosophy, food, time, the self, and science.

That last area raises this reviewer's own most serious disagreement with an otherwise impressive book: the authors of *The Doctrine of Creation* spend surprisingly little time on the creation-evolution debate. Positively speaking—and this is a gargantuan positive—they show that there is far more to the doctrine of creation than the question of when it happened. They write: "Our goal is the development of a constructive, biblical doctrine of creation, and in our view a next step would be deep engagement with science" (xi). But what is less clear is what cracks may occur in their entire theological edifice—indeed, in the whole creation-fall-redemption story of Scripture—if Adam and Eve were not specially created by God and if death occurred before the fall. The authors quote Bavinck twice as calling death "an alien intruder" within God's creation (102, 261), but they never explain how animal death could occur in a "very good" world. They write a lengthy book on creation and provide a lengthy Scripture index—and yet make no reference to the famous passage in Isaiah 11 describing the conversion of carnivores to herbivores in the new creation. This same theme occurs in Isaiah 65 and in Romans 8, passages they reference briefly but whose implications for the *timing* of creation they do not discuss.

Ashford and Bartholomew have written a book that has no "competitors" of which this reviewer is aware. Few books combine technical-commentary levels of exegesis (of both testaments!) with theological

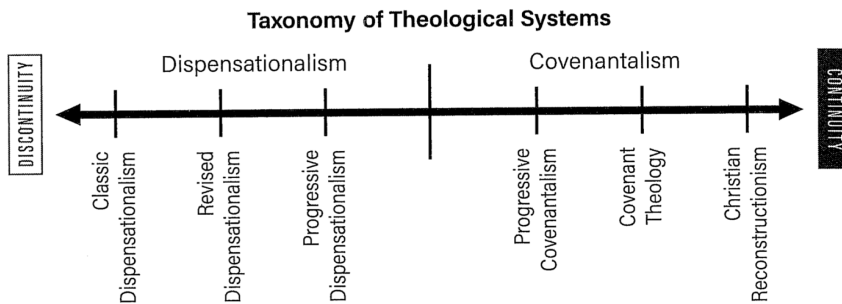
synthesis and a significant dash of historical theology and intellectual history. There is much to gain from these two wise and learned men, and it is to be hoped that they will work together on future book projects. This reviewer wonders, however, how long a Kuyperian doctrine of creation can last when built on the literary framework approach to Genesis 1. The day shall declare it.

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*Discontinuity to Continuity: A Survey of Dispensational and Covenantal Theologies*, by Benjamin L. Merkle. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2020. 288 pp. \$25.99.

Not long ago, one was presented with a binary choice of theological systems—dispensationalism or covenant theology. Over the last few decades, however, the number of systems has multiplied. While it is true that each system still falls on either the covenantal or the dispensational side (primarily on the question of the future of national Israel), the details of each system have become more nuanced and complex. For this reason, Benjamin Merkle's new book *Discontinuity to Continuity* is a needed primer on the current state of theological systems.

The name of the book highlights the direction of the volume. Beginning with theological systems that stress the discontinuity of Scripture, Merkle then moves step by step towards theological systems that stress continuity. The following image, which is used throughout the text, displays the six theological systems organized according to their place on the scale of continuity.



One of the greatest strengths of the volume is its meticulous organization. Merkle asks the same four questions, along with sub-questions, of each theological system. This makes it easy to compare the individual systems. The following outline indicates the questions and sub-questions asked of each system:

1. What is the Basic Hermeneutic?
  - a. Literal or Symbolic?
  - b. What is the Proper Role of Typology?
  - c. How should one Interpret Old Testament Restoration Prophecies to Israel?
    - i. Amos 9:11–15
    - ii. Acts 15:14–18
2. What is the Relationship Between the Covenants?
  - a. Conditional or Unconditional?
  - b. How are Old Testament Saints Saved?
  - c. How does one Apply the Law Today?
3. What is the Relationship Between Israel and the Church?
  - a. Replacement, Fulfillment, Distinct?
  - b. How should one Interpret Romans 11:26 and Galatians 6:16?
4. What is the Kingdom of God?
  - a. How is it inaugurated?
  - b. When is it Consummated?

To answer these questions, Merkle selected three conversation partners within each system. This allowed him to limit his scope, while also highlighting the work of the most significant interpreters within each of the groups. And since Merkle asks just the right questions, he is able to clearly highlight the distinctives of each system.

Merkle concludes each chapter with an “assessment,” which is designed to “evaluate the potential strengths and weaknesses of each theological system” (49). Addressing the strengths and weaknesses of these systems is hard to do while seeking to remain objective. And it is here, more than anywhere else, that one will find Merkle’s own views being expressed. For example, he notes that a strength of revised dispensationalism is that it sees “more continuity between the covenants, especially the idea that the new covenant relates to the church” (75). But this is only a strength if you find that to be a good thing, which some dispensationalists do not!

On the whole however, Merkle does a splendid job working towards objectivity in his presentation. Proponents of each position would likely read their respective chapter and agree that Merkle captured the essence of their view.

A few comments should be made about the selection of theological systems. First, Merkle recognizes that his list does not exhaust all of the theological systems. In the conclusion, he includes a brief consideration of how Lutheran thought, with its law-grace dualism, might fit into the broader discussion. Additionally, in the chapter on Progressive Covenantalism, Merkle included a number of footnotes showing how New Covenantalism understood the same issues.

Second, Merkle could have more clearly shown that there is diversity within revised dispensationalism. The stream he chose is the more popular Dallas stream, but there is a less known, though significantly influential stream from Grace Theological Seminary. Alva McClain and his views on the kingdom deserve, at least, a place in the footnotes of that chapter.

Third, the inclusion of the far left (classical dispensationalism) and far right (Christian Reconstructionism) systems was imbalanced. In short, Classical Dispensationalism was an immature, developing form of dispensational thought, while Christian Reconstructionism is a developed, hyper-form of covenantal thought. Accordingly, a fair comparison to Classical Dispensationalism would be a seventeenth-century form of covenantalism, as both are immature forms that are held by almost no one today. In regard to Christian Reconstruction, a fair comparison would be hyper-dispensationalism, as both of these movements take their systems to the extreme and have very small followings.

Despite these slight criticisms, this is a good book. It is fair and balanced, especially in the description sections, though less so in the analysis sections. Merkle wrote that he hoped the work would help readers know their own position, appreciate the positions of others, be humble in their own view, and gain a love for Scripture (1–4). The greatest recommendation I can give is to say that I think the book will succeed in all four areas.

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*Myths and Mistakes in New Testament Textual Criticism*, edited by Elijah Hixson and Peter Gurry. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2019. 400 pp. \$40.00.

There may be no field within biblical studies more complex than textual criticism. It divides into two almost completely distinct disciplines, one per testament. Properly practiced, even just the New Testament variety of textual criticism requires deep knowledge of the incredible intricacies of scribal habits, of materials science (papyrus, ink recipes, palimpsests), of church history, of Koine Greek phonology, of historical concepts of canon, of multiple Greek scripts (including the accursed medieval cursive), even of the history of printed editions of the Greek New Testament. Textual criticism is a demanding discipline.

It is also an important one for Christian apologetics: what use is an inspired Bible that is widely perceived to be textually unstable? So Christian apologists have frequently appealed to the science of New Testament textual criticism to bolster their defense of the faith. They love to mention the number of Greek New Testament manuscripts extant; that number compared to the number of manuscripts we have from



other famous ancient documents (Homer, Seneca, etc.); the stability of the canon over time; the amount of the New Testament that could be reconstructed based solely on quotations from the fathers; the number of variants in the manuscript tradition; and other assorted points drawn from the field of textual criticism.

Paragraphs 1 and 2 of this review combine to present a real problem: placing incredibly complex matters in the hands of people whose—wholly salutary—agenda is to promote and defend the Christian faith is bound to produce tendentious inaccuracies.

Enter *Myths and Mistakes in New Testament Textual Criticism* (IVP Academic, 2019). The occasion for this book may be the habit of evangelists to speak evangelistically, but the audience for it is anyone and everyone interested in the state of the New Testament textual-critical art. Peter Gurry and Elijah Hixson have assembled an excellent set of writers who understand the complexities of the field. They have written this book in a way that is both careful and accessible—as accessible as such a book can be given its frequently intricate subject matter. This book absolutely can and should be read by pastors; it is an entertaining and engrossing education in a field that *does* matter for ministry. People both inside and outside the church do have questions about the textual history of the New Testament, and the subject will necessarily come up in the work of every expository preacher who makes it to the end of John 7 (or the beginning of Rom 5, or the end of Mark, etc.).

The point of *Myths and Mistakes* is not to remove points about textual criticism from the arsenals of pastors and apologists, but to calibrate the caliber of their bullets. For example, Jacob W. Peterson questions statements from various apologists about the number of extant manuscripts of the New Testament. He shows that a great deal depends on how you count. But in the end he provides this takeaway: “Most manuscripts of the New Testament are only manuscripts of part of the New Testament, and providing an exact count of them is a fool’s errand. It is best to say that there are about fifty-three hundred Greek New Testament manuscripts in existence, although fifty-one hundred might be the safer estimate” (69).

This is clear, practical, and careful—as is the entire book. The work has three parts.

The first focuses on manuscripts. In this portion of the book, for example, James B. Prothro corrects the figures used by various apologists who make the common argument that we have far more New Testament Greek manuscripts than we do manuscripts of other Ancient Greek authors. Elijah Hixson shows how manuscripts are dated.

The second part discusses the work of copyists. Here, to choose only one chapter, Peter Gurry picks up a question he has worked on for some time: how many variants are there in the Greek New Testament manuscript tradition—and crucially, how exactly does one count?

The third part focuses on translation, patristic citation, and canon. Here (again to choose just one chapter) Andrew Blaski provides a

fascinating look at what can and cannot be gained from examining patristic citations of the New Testament.

Like theologians who work on the Trinity, true textual critics have a “yes, but” for almost any statement made by the uninitiated. Greg Laniar shows carefully, for example, why, “sometimes later manuscripts are better manuscripts” (111–12). He spoke of “appreciating the later channels of an ancient stream” (118); that is, of the value of the Byzantine family of manuscripts.

This reviewer felt that Timothy Mitchell’s otherwise excellent and careful essay promised a bit more than it delivered when it came to its central question: Is Craig Evans right to propose that the NT autographs may have remained in use for centuries? The title seemed to promise a takedown of Evan’s view; it delivered rather a few caveats and potential counterexamples.

Other very specific and minute claims in this book will no doubt be corrected or amended in time, but overall the book commended itself as eminently careful.

There is no other book quite like this one: a readable and accessible multi-author work acquainting Bible students with some of the latest and most useful information about New Testament textual criticism. One of the most outstanding features of the book, an apparently simple addition that nonetheless required significant effort and provides incredible value, is the bullet-point list of “Key Takeaways” at the end of each chapter. These can and should be consulted for many years.

*Myths and Mistakes* is not afraid to say “yes, but” (or even *Nein!*) to big names who have committed public errors regarding New Testament textual criticism. One name that comes up several times, doyen of the field Daniel B. Wallace, provides a humble and entertaining foreword to the book. His is the attitude all evangelical readers of the book should have: a willingness to make sure our talking points in support of the Truth are actually true.

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*The New Testament in Its World: An Introduction to the History, Literature, and Theology of the First Christians*, by N. T. Wright and Michael F. Bird. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019. 980 pp. \$59.99.

Several years ago, Michael Bird (Academic Dean and Lecturer, Ridley College, Melbourne) had the bright idea that N. T. Wright’s multi-volume series, *Christian Origins and the Question of God*, be condensed into a Wright primer that could also serve as an introduction to the New Testament. Wright, the retired bishop of Durham and then recently appointed research professor at the University of St. Andrews, agreed to the project. With Wright’s full guidance along the way, Bird

began the herculean task of working through Wright's published works, selecting, arranging, condensing, and supplementing material. Nearly two decades later, this unique and colorful volume appeared. Indeed, so much of this volume is "vintage Wright," both in the witty, personable style of the author as well as in his shrewd and sometimes controversial approach to the theology of the NT. It is difficult, in fact, to determine where Bird's voice can be heard in the volume apart from that of his co-author.

In Part I, Wright and Bird immediately draw the reader into the "story" of the NT and then set forth the importance of studying the NT in terms of history ("the past"), literature ("the text"), and theology ("understanding God and the world") (47). Part II follows with a 70-page presentation of the history of the second temple period, and the Jewish and Hellenistic cultural and political backgrounds for the story of Jesus and the early church. Thus the effort toward the beginning of the work to truly place the NT "in its world."

One would expect a NT introduction to move now to the study of the Gospels and Acts. Instead, Parts III through V follow the trajectory and even the titles of Wright's *Christian Origins* series: "Jesus and the Victory of God" (III), "The Resurrection of the Son of God" (IV), and "Paul and the Faithfulness of God" (V). Those who have read much of Wright's *Origins* will find themselves in very familiar territory. In fact, for anyone wishing to understand the theological musings of N. T. Wright without wading through the roughly 3,400 pages of his *Origins* series, these three sections aptly subsume the majority of his theology. In the spirit of the third "quest" for the historical Jesus (cf. 176–86), Wright presents a decidedly Jewish Jesus, true to history, who came to announce God's victory as King over the world through his own work as the "renewed Israel," and was vindicated through his resurrection. With that vindication, Israel's enslavement to the pagan world who still held them in exile was over, and the assertion of God's rule had begun. The "kingdom of God" in this introduction is "a slogan whose basic meaning was the claim that Israel's God was the world's true Lord, and that Caesar, or indeed Herod, was not" (198). The pages covering the resurrection, true to Wright's far lengthier volume on the subject, is one of the best modern apologetical defenses of the bodily resurrection of Jesus. Then, in Part V, we finally find what one might expect in an introduction of the NT, namely the cultural and theological background of Paul, followed by a treatment of each of his letters. Following the contours of Paul's story, Bird and Wright decide to treat Paul's letters in chronological rather than canonical order. However, due to their defense of an Ephesian imprisonment rather than a Roman, Paul's "prison" letters are situated between 1, 2 Thessalonians and 1, 2 Corinthians.

In one of the more curious decisions of the authors, only now does Part VI treat the Gospels and Acts, beginning with Mark, then Matthew, Luke-Acts, and finally John. However, this decision may be explained again in terms of chronology. The authors date the first five books of the NT later than other standard conservative introductions,

with the exception of John's Gospel. As the first gospel to be written, Mark is dated no earlier than 65 to 75 because of Jesus's reference to the destruction of the temple in Mark 13 (558). On the other hand, treating Luke and Acts together offers a helpful way to trace salvation from Israel to the ends of the earth right at the heart of this introduction (605). This part ends with a chapter exploring the Synoptic Problem and source criticism, arbitrating a middle-of-the road position on the question of Q: not a single document for which there is no textual evidence, but perhaps a combination of various oral and written sources, a "Q-lite" (693).

Part VII treats the "catholic" letters, including the letter to the Hebrews, continuing to bring the implications of Wright's theology to bear upon them. Revelation brings the introduction to a climax with the new heaven and earth and God's "truly, fully, and finally dwelling with his people," the new and final exodus (840). Whether a literal earthly kingdom in Revelation 20 is in view is a question left hanging.

Part VIII covers the disciplines of textual criticism and NT canon. The authors are optimistically skeptical about actually reconstructing the very original text and seem to favor David Trobisch's "canonical edition" approach (852–55). Nevertheless, they insist that we have a very sure text. They also debunk the Bauer-Ehrman thesis that the NT canon was formed through political or ecclesiastical power; for the church did not create the word of God, but the word of God created the church (867). Finally, in a mere 10 pages, Part IX summarizes the whole NT story and its significance for the church.

It is impossible in a brief review to identify all of the theological peculiarities that have come to define Wright's approach to NT theology. But they are all on display in this volume, including his New Perspectives approach to justification. God's "righteousness" revealed through the gospel is not personal righteousness, but God's own "faithfulness" to the Abrahamic covenant, and the fact that people all over the empire are believing in the true God is evidence of humankind being restored (304). The rapture of the church is not how conservative evangelicals have interpreted it, but merely "a vivid and biblically allusive description of the great transformation of the present world" (426). Neither is the lake of fire literal, but a metaphor trying to convey in the most heinous of terms what separation from God would feel like (840). But beyond its theology, some of the conclusions about genuine authorship land this introduction somewhere to the left of mainstream evangelical interpretation. The Gospel of John and his letters are most likely the product of "John the elder," not the son of Zebedee. There is a thorough discussion of the evidence for the genuine Pauline authorship of the pastoral letters, but whether Paul was the actual author is left open for discussion. And 2 Peter, easily considered the least authentic of the NT letters by critical scholars is not a "forgery" but, in Richard Bauckham's terminology, "transparent fiction" (764). To be sure, Bird and Wright carefully take these positions with the best possible explanations, insisting that the Bible is still inspired Scripture. But if the author of these letters is

someone other than the person whose name they bear, then they are at some level a lie, and this fact strains the definitions of inspiration and inerrancy.

As a primer on the theology of N. T. Wright, the volume succeeds largely, for it helpfully condenses in digestible length his longer works. It is full of colorful pictures, charts and diagrams, interesting sidebars, and engaging and creative asides. There is also a workbook available and there are accompanying video lectures which place Bird and Wright onsite in the Holy Land. But I do not believe many seminaries would choose this volume for their standard NTI text due to its unconventional approach to introduction. It may be too much N. T. Wright, and not enough standard NT.

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*Biblical Theology According to the Apostles: How the Earliest Christians Told the Story of Israel*, by Chris Bruno, Jared Compton, and Kevin McFadden. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2020. xvii + 230 pp. \$27.00.

In this fifty-second volume of the New Studies in Biblical Theology series Chris Bruno, Jared Compton, and Kevin McFadden have collaborated to answer two important questions: (1) How did the apostolic writers do biblical theology? and (2) What can we learn from them? The authors are well-suited to attempt a project like this not only because of their research interests and expertise but also because of their close, personal relationship to each other. They grew up attending the same schools and graduating from Inter-City Baptist High School in Allen Park, MI, in 1998. Furthermore, all three currently serve as professors of New Testament—Bruno and Compton at Bethlehem College and Seminary and McFadden at Cairn University (formerly Philadelphia College of the Bible).

While many different avenues could be pursued in answering the two questions listed above, the authors (BCM) choose to consider “the summaries of Israel’s story composed after the coming of Jesus Christ in the apostolic witness of the NT” (2). Admittedly, these summaries only reveal the tip of the iceberg when it comes to revealing the biblical-theological methodology of the NT writers, but they are “the clearest examples of apostolic reflection on the history or story of the Bible,” and “studying the exposed part of the iceberg will help us better understand what lies below the surface” (3).

Relying upon the work of Hood and Emerson, BCM identify summaries of Israel’s story (SIS) in the NT that meet three criteria: (1) they recount characters, events, and institutions of Israel’s story; (2) they are retold in chronological order; and (3) they are of substantial

length (6). Seven SIS satisfy these criteria: the genealogy in Matthew 1:1–17; Jesus’s parable of the tenants (Matt 21:33–46 and par.); Stephen’s speech in Acts 7; Paul’s sermon in Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:16–41); Paul’s argument from salvation history in Galatians 3–4; Paul’s defense of God’s faithfulness to Israel in Romans 9–11; and Hebrews’ exhortation about persevering faith in Hebrews 11.

BCM analyze each of the SIS in three ways. First, they examine the *context* in which the SIS is located in the NT passage, investigating *why* the NT writer chose to use the particular SIS in the way he did. Second, they look at the *content* of the SIS, answering the question of *how* the OT story is told in its NT location. For example, “which parts of the story does the author highlight and what exactly does he say about these parts” (8)? And third, they seek to determine the *contribution* each SIS makes to biblical theology, seeking to learn *what* the NT author’s usage adds to our understanding of biblical theology.

These seven SIS are investigated in five chapters: chapter 2 covers Matthew’s story of Israel in his opening genealogy and in the parable of the tenants; chapter 3 examines Luke’s usage of SIS in Stephen’s speech and Paul’s sermon at Pisidian Antioch; chapter 4 looks at “Galatians and Israel’s Law”; chapter 5 considers Israel’s identity in Romans 9–11; and chapter 6 explores how the author of Hebrews uses the nature of Israel’s inheritance to sustain his audience’s faith. While the detailed contextual and exegetical analysis of each SIS in these five chapters provides much helpful hermeneutical information, the reader will especially appreciate the sections at the end of each chapter that lay out the biblical-theological contributions discovered during the SIS investigations.

The concluding chapter provides a “biblical-theological rule of faith” based upon the NT writers’ use of SIS in these seven examples. In regard to *plot* Israel’s story climaxes in Christ and continues in the life and mission of the church. In regard to *characters* the NT writers use them as examples to follow and as types that prefigure Christ and the church; God is the main character and significant others include Abraham, David, and Moses and the law. In regard to *method* BCM see a warrant for allegorical readings, a need to accept the covenantal substructure of Israel’s story, an awareness of new-covenant referents as the goal of God’s covenantal promises to Israel, and a willingness to apply aspects of Israel’s story to our own situations.

BCM write clearly and concisely, using engaging prose. From beginning to end this book gives helpful conclusions, transitions, and explanations; the reader is never left wondering what “the point” is. This quality is even more noteworthy since three men had their hands in the effort. Though I did hear a rare dissonant note (128, 142), I applaud their honesty in bringing their disagreements to the readers’ attention. One exception to the well-reasoned arguments of the book overall relates to the use of “in Adam” and “second Adam” language when discussing the theology of Hebrews (154–59). While these phrases are certainly Pauline, Adam’s name is never mentioned in Hebrews. An alternative expression from Hebrews should have been used instead.

Dispensationalists may disagree with a few statements including: (1) the multinational nature of the “reconstituted people of God” as a new chapter in Israel’s story (46); (2) all of God’s promises to Israel “from beginning to end” find their fulfillment in the new covenant (64); (3) Israel in Romans 9:6b refers to “theological Israel” and includes Gentiles (127–28) and “theological” and “ethnic” Israel “at the end of the day are really ‘theological Israel’” (146); and (4) the land promise given to Abraham should be understood as a shadow of a better heavenly inheritance that is “distinguished from Canaan and this world” (181, 199).

These areas of debate notwithstanding, I found many helpful interpretations and explanations including (1) the role of the Gentile women as savior figures in Matthew’s genealogy (18–22); (2) the use of the OT in the parable of the tenants (32–40) and specifically the resolving of the tension between Daniel 2:44 and Matthew 21:43–44; (3) the discussion of Paul’s treatment of the law in Galatians (98–105, 112–13); and (4) the structural layout and argument of the SIS in Hebrews 11 (160–79). Added to this are the useful tables and figures throughout the book, giving greater clarity to BCM’s arguments.

This book encourages readers to study their Bibles more intentionally and carefully, especially when the NT authors are telling the story of Israel. It challenged my thinking and increased my appreciation for the way SIS are used in the NT. *Biblical Theology According to the Apostles* points the reader toward the Word and toward its Author, making it a book I can recommend even if I have a few quibbles with it along the way.

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*40 Questions about Biblical Theology*, by Jason S. DeRouchie, Oren R. Martin, and Andrew David Naselli. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2020. 400 pp. \$27.99.

Jason DeRouchie (PhD, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary) is research professor of Old Testament and biblical theology at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and serves as the Global Outreach Director of Emmaus Church. Oren Martin (PhD, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary) is assistant professor of Christian theology at Southern Seminary and Boyce College and a pastor of Clifton Baptist Church. Andrew David Naselli (PhD, Bob Jones University, PhD, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School) is associate professor of systematic theology and New Testament at Bethlehem College & Seminary and a pastor of Bethlehem Baptist Church.

Their volume, *40 Questions about Biblical Theology*, is one of eighteen resources currently available in the forty questions series by Kregel.

This series aims to provide a helpful overview and synthesis of key theological, apologetical, and practical issues in the life of the church. Each of the forty questions within *Biblical Theology* serves as its own chapter ranging from six to thirteen pages in length. These bite-sized portions help us “eat the elephant” as we work through a complex and multifaceted subject like biblical theology.

The forty questions, or chapters, are divided into five larger sections: (1) Defining Biblical Theology; (2) Exploring Method in Biblical Theology; (3) Illustrating Biblical Theology: Tracing Themes; (4) Illustrating Biblical Theology: The Use of Earlier Scripture in Later Scripture; and (5) Applying Biblical Theology. DeRouchie, Martin, and Naselli contribute equally throughout this book as each tackles questions related to these larger sections. Each chapter ends with a summary and set of reflective questions. This format is particularly helpful in light of the structure of this book and allows one to engage more thoroughly with each question/chapter.

The writers recognize the necessity of defining the term “biblical theology” at the outset and that it can be a “slippery term.” The writers define biblical theology as “a way of analyzing and synthesizing the Bible that makes organic, salvation-historical connections with the whole canon on its own terms, especially regarding how the Old and New Testaments progress, integrate, and climax in Christ.” There are a variety of methods one might utilize that would fall within this definition, but in each approach the end goal is to synthesize one’s study with the whole of Scripture.

The key difference and distinction between biblical theology and systematic theology, according to the writers, is that biblical theology “sets its own agenda” and “prioritizes a passage’s literary context.” By comparison, the writers offer that while the text is important to systematic theology, other factors will set the agenda, such as ethical or philosophical questions. The writers readily acknowledge the need and benefit for systematic theology but draw a clear distinction between the purpose and goal of systematic theology and biblical theology. This distinction is helpful so as to not place biblical and systematic theology at odds with one another but recognizes the separate benefits that might be derived from each. The writers return to the question of how systematic and biblical theology work with, and complement, one another in chapter 13.

After providing the working definition, a majority of the first section is focused upon the salvation-history component of Scripture, and specifically Scripture’s witness to Christ in Old and New Testament. Over the course of several chapters and questions, the writers provide a helpful summary and explanation of how Christ is presented throughout the Testaments.

One topic of importance to biblical studies as a whole is the question of the New Testament use of the Old. The writers initially approach this question near the end of the first section and provide a guide for analyzing the use of the Old Testament. This guide places a



significant emphasis on extrabiblical Jewish sources. This emphasis on extrabiblical writings has the tendency to overshadow or mute the benefit that can be derived from studying the context of the earlier texts. However, the writers do provide helpful caveats in their footnotes which help to prevent a complete overshadowing.

The writers provide a brief but helpful discussion of presuppositions that are incumbent with any approach to theology and discuss presuppositions that are important to biblical theology. This section is particularly helpful and necessary, which leads to a possible critique that this discussion of presuppositions be placed closer to the beginning of the book, rather than inserting it one-third of the way into the book.

At the end of the second section, the writers provide a helpful discussion and interaction with dispensational and covenantal theology with regard to biblical theology. While the writers demonstrate a bias toward covenantalism, they offer a short, but balanced presentation of dispensationalism and its more central components. However, the writers do conclude that a dispensational framework falls short as a heuristic grid for understanding fulfillment and eschatology. This assessment hinges on the writers' definition of *πληρόω*, which is not clearly defined within these chapters. The extent of their conclusions, particularly with regard to assessing the ability of dispensationalists to rightly interpret New Testament passages, may create an unnecessary distraction for dispensationalists who would otherwise benefit greatly from the overall content of this book.

The third section looks at several theological themes and provides an example for tracing themes that present themselves through the inductive study of Scripture. These chapters are helpful in demonstrating how one might go about the practice of biblical theology. The topics chosen are helpful and instructive not just as a method, but in the content itself and as a starting place from which one might probe deeper into the study of each theme.

The fourth section returns to the question of the New Testament use of the Old and works through five separate New Testament passages that quote or allude to Old Testament texts. Throughout this section the writers helpfully debunk the idea that the NT authors had a lack of respect for the meaning and context of the OT but rather show the beautifully woven tapestry of Scripture. This section is instructive in carefully and contextually approaching OT passages when seeking to understand their NT usage. The approach in these chapters helps to allay concerns of overemphasis on extrabiblical Jewish sources from the initial discussion of NT use of the Old in chapter nine.

The final section looks toward the application of biblical theology in preaching and teaching, as well as the lives of believer. The writers provide helpful suggestions in how the church can be more proactive in helping its members develop a practice of biblical theology. The concluding exhortation, which also functions as the motivation for the writing of this book, is that the beauty and finely woven tapestry of redemptive history might shine forth through the application of biblical

theology and create a deeper love and gratefulness for our God and Savior.

In summary, *40 Questions about Biblical Theology* is a helpful resource for theological studies and will be of great benefit to persons in the classroom as well as the church. In addition to providing a helpful distinction between biblical and systematic theology, it is an excellent starting point for understanding the essentials of biblical theology. The writers are both practical and accessible, and they leave the reader with a helpful framework for studying the unifying themes of Scripture.

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*Mark 13 and the Return of the Shepherd: The Narrative Logic of Zechariah in Mark*, by Paul T. Sloan. Library of New Testament Studies 604. New York: T & T Clark, 2019. x + 253 pp. \$114.00.

Scholars disagree on whether Jesus's Olivet Discourse (OD) describes the temple's destruction in AD 70, a still future Second Coming of Christ, or both. The relationship between Mark 13:1–23 and Mark 13:24–27 is especially debated. Some view the latter as a description of Jesus's Second Coming connected to the former because both describe eschatological events (e.g., Stein and Evans). Others view both as descriptions of the same events culminating in AD 70 (e.g., France and Wright). Still others argue the latter passage is a fragment with no organic connection to the preceding material (e.g., Beasley-Murray). All sides agree that much depends how Mark uses the OT, and Paul Sloan has made a significant contribution by investigating that particular intertextual question.

Sloan is Assistant Professor of Theology and Chair of the Department of Theology at the Houston Baptist University. *Mark 13 and the Return of the Shepherd* is a revised version of his PhD thesis completed at the University of St. Andrews. The purpose is "to examine the extent of Zechariah's influence upon Mark 13, and to offer an interpretation of that discourse in light of Mark's allusions to that prophetic text" (1). It includes a "comprehensive semiotic exegesis of Mark 13 within the context of Mark as a whole" (ibid.). That is, Sloan seeks to demonstrate how Mark's use of Zechariah outside of chapter 13 prepares his readers to understand his use within it.

Why Zechariah 13–14? Mark uses Zechariah 14:5 to describe Jesus's *παρουσία* in 8:38, and he uses Zechariah 13:7 to describe Jesus's death in 14:27. In the intervening material, Zechariah describes the following events which also appear in Mark's OD: "(1) tribulation in all the land; (2) refinement by fire of God's covenantal people; and (3) an international war waged in Jerusalem with concomitant suffering for Jerusalem's inhabitants" (5). By citing Zechariah 13:7, Mark "indicates

that the striking of the shepherd signals the onset of the eschatological tribulations of Zech. 13:8–9 and 14:1–4 [i.e., the content of Mark 13], which culminate in the theophany of Zech. 14:5” (6). That is, Zechariah explains why Mark’s OD combines events that might at first glance seem disparate. “The strangeness of the disciples asking about the temple’s destruction but being told about their own persecution and the coming of the Son of Man dissolves when read in light of the allusions to Zechariah” (212).

Chapter 1 presents the methodology. Sloan admirably seeks to interpret Mark’s story from the perspective of a mid-first-century author and audience. Sloan argues that the OT would have formed a significant part of what Eco has called the “cultural encyclopedia” or “body of knowledge that might be known by members of a given culture in a given time and place” and “conditions what a sender might intend, and therefore what a receiver might understand, with respect to a given utterance” (10). Sloan employs a modified form of Hays’s methodology for identifying evoked texts. Like Hays, Sloan begins with the presupposition that Mark generates a new meaning of Zechariah by using the OT prophet’s words.

In chapter 2, Sloan examines specific Second Temple literature to demonstrate prior use of Zechariah 13–14 consistent with Mark 13’s usage. Sloan persuasively shows that these early texts understood Zechariah 13–14 to describe a time of affliction and war ended by an angel-accompanied theophany. In chapter 3, Sloan examines Mark’s use of Zechariah 9–14 throughout his Gospel. Sloan concludes that “Mark’s narrative does not simply pilfer Zech. 9–14 for various lexemes, but demonstrates a reflection upon Zechariah’s content in service of the whole story Mark tells” (70).

Chapter 4 examines the two bookends that Mark uses on either side of his OD—Zechariah 13:7 and 14:5. Sloan suggests that Mark uses the former to indicate that the “disciples’ flight is the inauguration [or what Sloan later calls the “first step”] of the eschatological tribulation depicted in Zech 13:8–9 and 14:1–4” (90). *Contra* the majority position, Sloan argues Jesus’s post-resurrection meeting with his disciples in Galilee does not fulfill the promised regathering. The regathering will come after the disciples have endured a long period of tribulation. Furthermore, understanding Mark’s use of Zechariah sheds light on several obscure passages in the Gospel. For example, “Mark 13 represents the content of the cryptic references to ‘fire’ and ‘stumbling’ from [Mk] 9:49 [“salted with fire”] and 14:27–31, and should be understood as the fulfillment of the tribulations of Zech. 13:8–9” (118).

After examining Mark’s Gospel as a whole, Sloan moves to discussing Mark 13 in particular. The literature review (chap. 5) includes significant interaction with preterist interpretations of the OD. Sloan admits that his survey is not exhaustive, and does not include any interaction with those who argue that Mark 13:14–22 refers to an eschatological “abomination of desolation” and still-future tribulation. In chapter 6, Sloan provides his exegesis of Mark 13. He argues that 13:5–23

provides the answer to the disciples' question regarding the timing of the temple's destruction. Verses 5–13 describe general trials that Jesus's disciples will endure, and vv. 14–23 describe the specific trial that comes upon the believers in Judea in conjunction with the Jewish War. Mark 13:24–27 is a new unit describing the coming of the Son of Man following (much later) the tribulation period in 13:14–23; 13:24–31 provides a warning regarding the timing of the near judgment on Jerusalem. And 13:32–37 provides a similar notice regarding the παρουσία. Sloan does not identify the “abomination of desolation,” but he suggests that it is some sign that precedes the temple's destruction and is not the destruction itself.

Sloan's conclusion (chap. 7) not only summarizes his findings but also demonstrates that two ancient documents (the *Didache* and Cyril of Alexander's commentary on Zechariah) recognized the influence of Zechariah on Mark 13. Cyril also understands Zechariah 14:1–3 as a reference to AD 70 followed by Jesus's eventual παρουσία in 14:5. However, as Sloan acknowledges, *Didache* 16.3–5 places the coming “fiery test” after the ascension of the “world-deceiver” who commits abominations (218) which would seem to weaken Sloan's argument.

Sloan makes a valuable contribution to the debate over Mark 13:24–27 by demonstrating its reliance on Zechariah's vision of an angel-accompanied theophany. For example, the phrase μετὰ δυνάμεως πολλῆς in Mark 13:26 based on its usage in the LXX should be understood as a reference to an army, specifically an angelic army which accompanies Christ at his return. Sloan's argument that Mark describes the events of AD 70 in 13:14–23 by evoking Zechariah is not as convincing. Sloan argues that the “day” in both Zechariah 14:4 and Mark 13:32 should be distinguished from the “day” of Zechariah 14:1, which is the judgment of AD 70. Sloan's argument relies on the lack of the demonstrative ἐκεῖνος in the LXX's version of Zechariah 14:1. Still, the demonstrative is present repeatedly throughout Zechariah 12:1–9, which describes “that day” in which the nations besiege Jerusalem and the Lord comes to deliver her from that attack. Based on the repetition of the phrase “that day” in chapter 14 and the presence of an attack on Jerusalem in both passages, wouldn't the reader of Zechariah have assumed that both chapter 12 and chapter 14 were describing the same attack? It seems more likely that the Hebrew text of Zechariah 14:1 used a participle (“coming”) attached to the word “day,” rather than the usual construct “day of the Lord” for reasons other than making a distinction between the “day” of Zechariah 14:2 and all of the other references to “day” in Zechariah 12–14. In other words, while Sloan has made a compelling case from Zechariah for a future angel-accompanied theophany of the Son of Man in Mark 13:24–27, he has not made as convincing a case that Mark 13:14–23 drawing on Zechariah 14 also described AD 70.

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*An Introduction to Biblical Greek: A Grammar with Exercises*, by John D. Schwandt. Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2020. xii + 497 pp. \$34.99.

John D. Schwandt is currently the president of Redemption Seminary after having taught New Testament at New Saint Andrews College for seventeen years. He based *An Introduction to Biblical Greek* on H. P. V. Nunn's 1913 grammar, *The Elements of New Testament Greek*. Much of the explanation in the more recent text is new, but Schwandt acknowledges that the "structure of the text, vocabulary, and exercises remain essentially the same as Nunn's original text" (xi–xii). To reverse what he sees as a minimalist approach in recent grammars, Schwandt returns to an older method that emphasized Greek composition, frequent translation exercises, and more vocabulary memorization.

The content is presented in an attractive format that prioritizes the reduction of clutter. Following Nunn's outline, Schwandt divides the text into thirty-seven concise lessons. The present active indicative verb is introduced in the third lesson so that students can quickly begin translating complete sentences. Each lesson often covers only three or four pages with plenty of white space for taking marginal notes. Rather than requiring the student to purchase an accompanying workbook, one or two pages containing exercises follow each lesson. Instead of being in the main text, each lesson's accompanying vocabulary lists are in the first appendix. The vocabulary lists to be learned contain a total of 603 lexical forms (almost twice what other first-year grammars require!). The lists have suggested English glosses (rather than definitions), and, for verbs, their principal parts (with forms occurring outside the NT helpfully identified with blue font). It is striking that the first two vocabulary lists contain only verbs. The rest of the appendices (which total 175 pages, about a third of the book) include (1) an answer key for the exercises, (2) a discussion of accentuation (another of Schwandt's emphases), (3) a more in-depth treatment of prepositions (remember the lessons themselves are very concise), (4) morphology references tables, and (5) an English-Greek glossary. Throughout the book, Schwandt develops a single chart that helpfully illustrates how all words function either adjectivally (substantival or attributive) or adverbially and how to identify the two functions.

What about debated issues in NT Greek? Regarding aspect, Schwandt holds that the present tense form has an incomplete aspect with the "thematic stem (the variable vowel ε/ο)" reflecting "the unfolding nature of the present" (71). In the imperfect tense form, this present stem "often denotes an unfolding action in past time, such as a continuous or repeated past action" (71). The future and aorist tense forms convey a simple or completed aspect with "an array of meanings that diametrically correspond to incomplete aspect meanings" (136). In other words, the text presents aspect as closely associated with various types of action (e.g., continuous vs. instantaneous, iterative vs. completed once, conative vs. result, etc.). The chapter on the perfect and pluperfect tense forms does not contain a discussion of aspect. As far as middle-only

verbs, Schwandt retains the category of deponent which have “the same meaning as if they were active” (119). When discussing pronunciation, the text introduces Erasmian and historically reconstructed Koine pronunciation. However, the text favors the latter over the former. For example, students are encouraged not to pronounce the rough breathing mark and are introduced to the “micro o” and “mega o.”

Schwandt’s exercises set his text apart from other recent first-year grammars. Not only are students early and often translating sentences taken from Scripture, but they also translate English words, phrases, and (eventually) whole sentences into Greek, demonstrating the importance placed on learning Greek spelling and accentuation. For example, a randomly chosen lesson (chap. 34) contains fifteen Greek sentences to be translated into English, twenty English sentences to be translated into Greek, and three Greek NT verses to be translated into English. However, earlier lessons also contain an assortment of exercises designed to push the student to tackle Greek words in different ways. For example, one activity requires the student to identify whether a noun is singular or plural and then change it to the inverse form. Another exercise asks the students to write the corresponding lexical form from a list of various imperfect verb forms. In other words, rather than merely parsing words in the same way in every lesson, Schwandt’s text finds creative ways for students to tackle the same question from various angles. Undoubtedly, a student would benefit significantly from diligently completing all the included exercises. However, a professor faced with the ever-increasing pressure to streamline the study of biblical languages will have to be committed to the value of devoting time to teaching students to master Greek composition and spelling.

At times the text is very detailed. For example, a digraph is contrasted with a diphthong, a careful distinction is made between a root and a stem, and a student learns about proclitics and unvoiced fricatives. However, at other times the concise text seems to be missing common elements. For example, the word *articular* appears suddenly without a definition. Also, the paradigm for the present active indicative verb appears in lesson three. Still, there is no accompanying explanation of what “active” or “indicative” means (the descriptions of voice and mood come ten lessons later), and no explanation of the meaning of the person and number represented in the paradigm. These omissions perhaps reflect an older approach to teaching languages which assumed that students had a better grasp of their own language’s grammar. Sometimes important definitions or concepts are buried in paragraphs, and a future edition would benefit from placing these in bold font or by placing a corresponding marginal note.

Reading this work was a little like helping my children with their math homework. It is both illuminating and enjoyable (and sometimes jarring) to see familiar information taught in a new way. Former Greek students who want to brush up on their Greek and advance in their spelling and composition will benefit greatly from this work. Schwandt

has also provided a valuable resource for the experienced teacher who is able to supplement the helpful outline provided in this work.

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*The Holy Trinity: In Scripture, History, Theology, and Worship*. Revised and Expanded edition, by Robert Letham. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2019. xl + 650 pp. \$22.50.

In this expanded second edition of his magisterial work, *The Holy Trinity: In Scripture, History, Theology, and Worship*, Robert Letham highlights once again the foundational importance of the historic, orthodox doctrine of the Trinity by way of masterful biblical exegesis, thorough historical analysis, and ample application for the church's ministry and worship. However, this time, Letham includes new sections that incorporate the latest research in Augustine and Barth studies. He moreover addresses current evangelical discussions regarding the Trinity, especially as they relate to subordinationism. The underlying thesis of this work is the necessity of listening intently to those who have contributed substantially to the development of the church's understanding of the Triune God. Divided into four main sections, the book covers the biblical basis for the doctrine, its historical developments, modern-day discussions, and critical issues ranging from the relationship between the Trinity and the Incarnation to the place of the Trinity in worship and missions.

In the first section, Letham traces the biblical background for the Trinity throughout the Old and New Testaments. In a rather extensive footnote, Letham justifies the older Christian practice of starting with the Old Testament in discerning a biblical doctrine of the Trinity rather than starting with the New Testament and reading it back into the Old as Fred Sanders and other scholars suggest. Also with respect to the Old Testament, Letham, again over and against the objection of Sanders, tentatively allows for the identification of various appearances of God as either theophanies or Christophanies, arguing that doing so would not necessarily undermine the Incarnation. With respect to the New Testament, the author engages in detailed exegesis of various Johannine and Pauline passages to argue for the Son's equality with the Father as well as his pre-existence as the Son. This matter of the Son's pre-existence is of particular significance in that Letham on exegetical grounds challenges the scholarly consensus that it was a later development in New Testament Christology. In this regard, the author argues that earlier New Testament writings, like those of Paul affirm the Son's pre-existence. Elsewhere in this first section, Letham makes a very convincing case that passages regarded as largely "binitarian" strongly imply Trinitarian relations.

The second section on the historical development of Trinitarian doctrine is unsurprisingly the longest one. One of the major strengths of this section is its clarity in explaining complex, abstract concepts. This section alone makes the volume an invaluable resource as it constitutes a helpful compendium on the development of Trinitarian theology from the post-apostolic period to the post-Reformation era. While space prohibits an exhaustive review of this section's contents, several features warrant attention. In addition to trenchant discussions of Athanasius and the Cappadocians (chaps. 6 and 7 respectively), is a detailed analysis of both the text and theology of Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed which came out of the Council of Constantinople in 381 (chap. 8).

Probably one of the most noteworthy features of this chapter is the subdivision on the "Constitutive Elements of the Trinitarian Settlement" in which Letham outlines the parameters of Trinitarian doctrine defined by the Creed that are absolutely essential: one being, three persons; consubstantiality, which is the fact that all three persons "are of one substance, of the identical being" (190), meaning that there is one being of God which all three Persons equally share; indivisible will and inseparable operations of all three Persons within the Godhead; perichoresis (the mutual indwelling of all three Persons in the being of God); eternal generation of the Son and eternal procession of the Spirit; and *taxis*, the necessary order of relations within the Trinity: "from the Father, through the Son, by the Holy Spirit" (201). Most interesting in this regard is the author's inclusion of the last two, the eternal generation of the Son and procession of the Spirit as well as the order of relations as essential elements of orthodox Trinitarian doctrine. In this regard, Letham makes a very detailed exegetical case for eternal generation and procession. Two other invaluable chapters in this historical section discuss in detail Augustine's doctrine of the Trinity (chap. 9) as well as John Calvin's (chap. 12). In chapter 9, the author largely defends the bishop of Hippo's doctrine against the late Colin Gunton's charge that it encouraged alleged modalistic tendencies in the general Trinitarian doctrine of the West. In chapter 12, he calls attention to Calvin's emphasis on the three distinct Persons within the Trinity, as opposed to Thomas Aquinas' emphasis on the unity of God, which he, in the author's opinion, unduly disjoined from the three Persons. This stress on the absolute equality of the three Persons in which the reformer understood their distinctions to be relational, served as the basis for his view of the Son being *autotheos* ("God of himself").

The third section of the work deals with the contributions made to Trinitarian theology in twentieth century by Karl Barth (the subject of chapter 13), Karl Rahner, Jurgen Moltmann, Wolfhart Pannenberg (chap. 14), various Eastern Orthodox thinkers (chap. 15), and T. F. Torrance (chap. 16). Significantly, Letham addresses the question as to whether Barth's Trinitarian theology is modalistic. In this regard, while Letham acknowledges that Barth strongly rejected modalism, he nevertheless argues that the Swiss theologian's rejection of the traditional word, *person*, in favor of "revealer, revelation, and revealedness" to refer



to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit respectively implies a unipersonality in God that would lend itself to modalism.

The fourth and last section concerns critical issues such as the relationship between the Trinity and the Incarnation as well as worship, prayer, and missions. One of the most compelling chapters in this section has to do with “the Trinity and Persons” (chap. 20). Drawing from Scriptural exegesis as well as historical resources from the Patristic through post-Reformation periods, Letham powerfully demonstrates how the Trinity serves as the necessary basis for the ultimate goal of Christian salvation which is the believer’s union with God, or in other words, the sharing in the love that is constantly shared among the Persons within the Trinity. This, in turn, Letham alleges, fundamentally determines how we treat people who bear the image of this Triune God.

*The Holy Trinity* is a more valuable work now than when it was first published. It is clearly written and masterfully demonstrates the necessarily complementary relationship between biblical exegesis, historical, systematic, and practical theology. Letham throughout shows how the Trinity is absolutely foundational not only to Christian doctrine, but to Christian life as well. It is an invaluable resource for seminary level classes in theology proper as well as theologically serious pastors and laypeople who are interested in restoring the Trinity to its necessarily central role in preaching, teaching, worship, and ministry. *The Holy Trinity* is indeed an outstanding gift to both the Christian academy and the Church.

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*The Mystery of the Trinity: A Trinitarian Approach to the Attributes of God*, by Vern S. Poythress. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2020. xxx + 688 pp. \$49.99.

For the better part of the past two decades, evangelicals have debated the nature of the absoluteness of God, particularly what it means to say that God is impassible. At times, the controversy has been rancorous; accusations of heresy have split at least one denomination. Both sides reject process theology and open theism, in which God is entirely absorbed into the flux of the finite world. But the classical theists (James Dolezal most prominent among them) have argued that many otherwise conservative theologians have nonetheless compromised the absolute nature of God.

Vern Poythress makes it clear that *The Mystery of the Trinity* addresses the present controversy, particularly in the appendices (three of which are entitled “Issues in the Controversy,” “Suggestions for Classical Christian Theists,” and “Suggestions for Christian Personalists”). Yet his ambitions for this book are broader; it is not intended solely as a

work of polemical theology. Nor is he seeking to find some middle position by blending classical theism with Christian personalism (Poythress's label for what Dolezal calls *theistic mutualism*). Rather, Poythress wishes to emphasize the centrality of intentional Trinitarianism to this entire debate.

Poythress is to be commended for making a truly daunting subject as accessible as possible. Most chapters conclude by showing a link between the chapter's topic and the Resurrection. While some of these feel forced, their inclusion shows that Trinitarian theology is not a mere abstraction. Each chapter also closes with a list of important terms (many of which are keyed to the volume's glossary), study questions, further reading, and a devotional prayer. (The absence of *impassibility* from the glossary—and the book's index—is a flaw.) There are well over 200 diagrams to illustrate Trinitarian concepts, although some seem more complicated and puzzling than the text itself. Poythress favors simple language as much as possible, despite the depths of the discussion.

After a couple of introductory chapters on methodology, Poythress opens the body of his work with a survey of the attributes of God, chiefly those that highlight God's transcendence. These are brief chapters in which Poythress summarizes and affirms God's classical attributes, including immutability and simplicity.

The next major section introduces Poythress's main argument: that discussions of the attributes of God must be self-consciously Trinitarian. Right away, he insists that our doctrine of divine simplicity must not be incompatible with the Trinity. This should be obvious given Christian orthodoxy, but one of Poythress's chief concerns (reflected in the next two sections of the book) is that classical theism has committed itself linguistically to philosophical systems (chiefly, Aristotelianism) that are fundamentally anti-Trinitarian and therefore anti-Christian. Christian Trinitarianism, not abstract considerations of "perfect being" theology, must be fundamental to our doctrine of God.

To be sure, Poythress acknowledges at multiple points that appealing to the Trinity does not resolve all the difficulties that arise when we attempt to conceive of a God who is absolute yet who nevertheless has genuine interaction with his created world. But that is the point: mystery is not avoidable when finite creatures think about our Creator. There is nothing "back of" the Trinity. Any attempt to erase all mystery will result in a sub-biblical theology.

The next section of chapters unpacks a Trinitarian theology of language. Even more basic than the question of how finite creatures can speak about God is how we can truly speak about *anything*. Human thought and language derive their power from being created by God himself. They are analogous to divine thought and speech, which (apart from any reference to the finite world) evidences Trinitarian unity and diversity. Understood in this way, human language has meaning. But if finite language is supposed to stand independent of God, it fails (this is a Van Tilian point as Poythress explains more fully in chap. 42).

For that reason, in the next section of the book, Poythress argues that inasmuch as the language of classical theism is derived from philosophical systems not rooted in Scripture, we must be aware that the language can itself smuggle in metaphysical concepts alien to Scripture and ultimately incompatible with how God has revealed himself. Here, Poythress analyzes the Aristotelian notions of form, matter, and essence that are so prominent in both discussions of God's attributes and Trinitarian theology. His argument is that, while these terms (and the Aristotelian categories that underlie them) give the appearance of clarity and precision, some of that is illusory.

This argument is exemplified in the next long section, in which Poythress explores how three theologians wrestle with the complexities of a simple God who creates, regrets, and saves: Thomas Aquinas, Francis Turretin, and Stephen Charnock. The discussion here is very involved, but in general, Poythress argues that the more one is committed to Aristotelian categories the more difficult he will find it to affirm all that Scripture says about God.

The final two sections are Poythress's attempts to make further application of his Trinitarian emphasis to the vexing questions about God's attributes and relations. Here, he constantly emphasizes the dangers of the two suction pools: the quicksand that would absorb God into the world of creation and the black hole that cuts God off from any intelligible contact with creation. Reacting against either position, Poythress argues, makes one likely to be drawn into the opposite error.

The particulars of the present debate, as with Trinitarian debates of significance throughout church history, will take time to resolve. But Poythress's contribution is an important one and deserves careful consideration.

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*Reenchanting Humanity: A Theology of Mankind* by Owen Strachan. Ross-shire, UK: Mentor, 2019. 418 pp. \$39.99.

Owen Strachan, associate professor of Christian Theology and Director for the Center for Public Theology at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary has provided the conservative evangelical church an important, up-to-date conversation on the doctrine of anthropology. *Reenchanting Humanity* is well-written and deals with some of the most pressing anthropological issues of our day. Strachan examines his subject around ten key terms, divided into nine chapters—Image, Depravity, Work, Sexuality, Race and Ethnicity (one chap.), Technology, Justice, Contingency, and Christ. He writes from a Calvinist viewpoint, arguing for the total depravity of humanity, the limited nature of the atonement, and for the eternal security and perseverance of the believer. “Sin reaches

into every aspect of the human person...(although) we are not as bad as we could be” (86). “We see a demonstration of what God will do to the ungodly whose sins were not covered by the blood of the Son of God. Christ has not made atonement for the vessels of wrath” (307–8). “No believer will fall away from the Lord...the believer—anchored by the grace of God—must take care to ‘remain’ in Christ, and thereby yield ‘much fruit’” (376).

The foil for much of Strachan’s argument is the “antiwisdom” of “neopaganism” (4, 44, etc.). It is this serpentine “antiwisdom” (54, etc.) that causes humanity, originally made in the *imago dei* discussed in fine detail in chapter one, to reject the divine path set forth and plunge itself onto its sinful pathway. Strachan takes a literal approach to creation in six days, the historicity of Adam and of the Fall, discussing the creation of humanity in God’s likeness with all that it may entail, treating the substantive, the relational and the representative views (26–27), opting for the image “as an ontological reality that leads to function” (29). The second chapter discusses depravity in careful detail, recognizing that the “Christian vision of humanity is exalted...though in Adam we have lost sight of this precious truth” (53). Adam’s sin became the sin of all humanity (84). To “reenchant humanity,... we must know that from every angle—intellectual, ethical, personal, and otherwise—mankind is straining to shut its eyes to the realities of indwelling sin” (93). In chapter three, Strachan talks about our vocation and avocation as humans. God wants us to be neither workaholics nor consumed with trivialities. Work is important but so is rest. For the believer, all of life is doxological in its goal.

Strachan’s fourth chapter on sexuality, his longest chapter, covers the gamut of issues facing the Church today from male headship and women’s functional subordination, to gender dysphoria and the significant challenge of rising gender debates, concluding with a discussion on homosexuality. Engaging these categories, Strachan anchors his argument to the text of the Scripture in a careful, yet winsome way. As a former president of the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, it comes as no surprise that he holds a very conservative understanding of manhood and womanhood, e.g., the Greek term *κεφαλή* signifies authority rather than source (150). Many contemporary evangelicals will be offended by Strachan’s reiteration of historic Christian views, yet he writes with a light tone so as to give hard truth fresh insight.

Strachan’s fifth chapter “Race and Ethnicity” also offers new and contemporary perspectives on issues currently agitating the church. He gives no quarter to the racist ideology found in much of American history, yet he tries to press through the past to offer biblical help to find biblical understanding. He urges repentance where necessary or reentrenchment where appropriate. Humans are one “race,” “the human race is unitary” (219) and “the Bible begins with the oneness of humanity” (207). The Bible ends (Rev 5) with a discussion of humanity’s oneness in Christ (208ff). What lies between the early pages of Genesis and

the promise of reunification in Christ in Revelation is the record of human sinfulness that uses ethnic diversities to divide the humanity that God has created.

Strachan has an interesting chapter on technology, especially given our technologically advanced and driven world. God is the God who gives humanity the capacity to produce technological advance because God himself, starting with creation, has shown himself to be technologically like no other. As an example, Strachan gives a scientific discussion of the human eye and the explanation of just how it is that humanity can “see.” God is the author, the originator, and the inspiration of and for technology. So, humanity’s capacity to create and use technology comes from God, yet sin corrupts technological advance (e.g., abortion). In critiquing this corruption, Strachan refutes the posthumanism of the 1960s and 1970s that does not see humans as a special creation of God and transhumanism which strives for immortality through technology (271ff).

The next chapters discuss justice and contingency. Justice is a pressing topic for today as the world is confused about what it is and how to attain it. Only in Jesus and his crucifixion can justice be seen and accomplished. In the chapter on contingency, Strachan reminds the reader that humanity with all of its advances, is now and always shall be, contingent beings, dependent upon the God who created. This can be seen clearly in the example of Nebuchadnezzar, who though he thought he had reached the pinnacle of greatness, was laid low by God Almighty (315ff).

The apex of the book is “Christ,” the final chapter, who is rightly seen as the apex of humanity. The first Adam sinned, plunging humanity into sin, but the second Adam was impeccable and shows humanity what it is meant to be. Strachan’s book is a refreshing, insightful, Scripturally-robust, and contemporary discussion. It deserves a wide read and it is to be hoped that *Reenchanting Humanity* will help the church regain a vision for what God, through his Word, intends humans to become, that is, *Reentrenching Humanity*.

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*Baptists and the Bible, 40th Anniversary Edition*, by L. Russ Bush and Tom. J. Nettles. Fort Worth, TX: Seminary Hill Press, 2020. xxx + 480 pp. \$24.99.

*Baptists and the Bible*, the fruit of almost a decade of discussions and research by L. Russ Bush (d. 2008) and Tom J. Nettles, first appeared in 1980. Both pursued doctorates and then worked together at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. Bush went on to serve in teaching and administrative roles at Southeastern Baptist

Theological Seminary. Nettles moved to Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary before teaching at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Both have had a wide writing and speaking ministry and made lasting contributions to the conservative resurgence of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Broadman and Holman issued a revised, expanded edition of *Baptists and the Bible* in 1999. Southwestern Baptist's Seminary Hill Press published this fortieth-anniversary edition featuring a new foreword and preface, student and colleague tributes, and a new section on the 2000 *Baptist Faith and Message*. In nineteen chapters, the book presents Baptist views on the Bible. Part one demonstrates a consensus among Baptists from the seventeenth to mid-eighteenth century. Part two covers philosophical challenges to prior understandings of Scripture and chronicles the responses to those theological changes. The third part focuses on Baptist confessions of faith and provides a summative analysis and recommendations.

Part one argues that English General and Particular Baptists and American Northern and Southern Baptists, despite theological diversity, found common ground in the doctrine of Scripture. While John Smyth embraced both a personal subjective inspiration as well as the full trustworthiness of the Bible in the original languages (15), Thomas Helwys and later General Baptists "rejected Quaker claims of immediate inspiration in favor of biblical authority" and infallibility in their *Orthodox Creed* (29). The 1644 Particular Baptist *First London Confession* stated that "[T]he character of God, the ministry of Christ, and the effectual working of the Spirit all witness to the utter truthfulness of the Bible" (40). The 1677 *Second London Confession* both followed the *Westminster Confession of Faith* and made "even more explicit...their affirmation of Scripture as the only authoritative source of God's revealed truth" (43). Philadelphia Baptists believed that the Bible "was an unerring volume...given by inspiration of the unerring God" (56). Roger Williams, Isaac Backus, John Bunyan, and Benjamin Keach agreed that "what Scripture says, God says" (58). John Gill, Andrew Fuller, and Dan Taylor affirmed "the inspiration and thus the infallibility of Scripture, its status as divine revelation, and thus its inerrancy in the 'originals'" in the face of encroaching rationalism (110). Baptist missionaries William Carey and Adoniram Judson likewise saw Scripture as light-bringing truth (122) and infallible revelation from God (131). Nineteenth-century American Baptists John Leland, Richard Furman, Francis Wayland, and John L. Dagg were divided over slavery, but exhibited "union in their view of Scripture" (136).

Part two explains impact of the philosophical movements that reshaped intellectual thought in the nineteenth century and Baptist responses. The onset of "religious doubt and skepticism," higher critical theories such as source criticism of the Pentateuch, the division of faith from history, and the rejection of absolute truth led some to the conclusion that the Bible was a product of its times rather than an absolutely true book (170–71, 174–75, 179). J. P. Boyce, the first president of the

Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, saw the Bible “as the unique source of religious authority” and “unhesitatingly asserted that Scripture is without error” (197). Basil Manly, Jr., authored the seminary’s *Abstract of Principles*, stating: “The Scriptures of the Old and New Testament were given by inspiration of God, and are the only sufficient, certain and authoritative rule of all saving knowledge, faith and obedience” (205). John A. Broadus shared the views of Boyce and Manly, but C. H. Toy embraced higher critical theories, separated faith and history, denied full inspiration, and began to teach that the Bible contained mistakes (218). J. R. Graves declared, “To intimate that the least sentence or allusion of the Scriptures is inaccurate or false, is to make God a liar” (208). In Britain, C. H. Spurgeon held the Bible as “the inspired truth of God” (235), while John Clifford “sought to blend evolutionary hypotheses and the conclusions of higher criticism with Christian piety” (231). Among American Northern Baptists, A. H. Strong held that the Scriptures were inspired and inerrant, although he rejected “verbal dictation” as a method of inspiration and allowed for the possibility of historical and logical errors (256–58). Alvah Hovey extensively defended “the Bible as a supernatural revelation from God” (264). Southern Seminary’s E. Y. Mullins believed “the Bible was God’s revealed truth un-mixed with error” but downplayed “the theological issues relating to the manner of God’s work of inspiration” (281). A. T. Robertson submitted his biblical scholarship to the teachings of the Bible (287). Southwestern Seminary’s founding president, B. H. Carroll, refused to separate theological, scientific, and historical truth, seeing the Bible as completely trustworthy (298). W. T. Conner spoke of inspiration but viewed “the empirical certainty implied by the popular use of the word inerrancy” as unnecessary for true faith (305). In the twentieth century, Walter Rauschenbusch, Shailer Mathews, William Newton Clarke, Harry Emerson Fosdick, and James Josiah Reeve embraced the theologically liberal or modernist position on the Bible, focusing more on “social implications of the Gospel” or seeing the Bible as “a record of religious experiences” (309). Part two closes by chronicling sharp division over the doctrine of Scripture among Northern Baptists as well as internal conflict in the Southern Baptist Convention manifested with the 1925 *Baptist Faith and Message*, the *Broadman Bible Commentary*, and Ralph Elliot controversies.

Part three examines key Baptist confessions, chronicles recent developments such as the conservative resurgence in the Southern Baptist Convention, and urges readers to hold the Scriptures as the fully trustworthy, authoritative revelation of God and to seek to spread its message. The authors defend the view that “[t]he historic Baptist view of Scripture assumes the unity of all truth and a coherent view of reality” and explain the implications of this conviction for ministry (450). The book closes with person, subject, and Scripture indices.

*Baptists and the Bible* is thoroughly researched, well-argued, and engaging. One of the main strengths of the book is the sheer number of primary resources the authors draw upon. The authors provide

numerous quotations and close each chapter with a bibliography, providing ample material for confirming or building upon their work. The authors provide clear and irenic analysis and explanation of the persons and documents discussed, setting them in their historical, cultural, and intellectual contexts. The authors persuasively argue that a robust doctrine of Scripture existed among Baptists from the beginning. The chapters weave together fascinating narratives of Baptist thought leaders and show the nature and impact of their ideas.

To comprise a single volume, such a study must be selective. Readers should know that the book emphasizes Baptists in England and America. Among American Baptists, some readers might expect to see treatment of how various independent Baptist groups view the Bible, but such is not the focus of this work. Understandably, much of the work centers on the heritage and challenges of Southern Baptists, who remain the largest Protestant denomination in America.

Bush and Nettles have contributed an enduring resource for those studying Baptist history and Christian theology. A beautiful hardcover binding adorns this edition, appropriately included in the publisher's "legacy series." *Baptists and the Bible* deserves pride of place in the syllabi of Baptist history and theology courses, merits consideration for classes on the doctrine of Scripture, and is worthy of a place on the shelves and in the hands of pastors and church members who wish to understand, articulate, and apply the Bible as the very Word of God.

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*Tethered to the Cross: The Life and Preaching of Charles H. Spurgeon*, by Thomas Breimaier. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2020. xvi + 271 pp. \$35.00.

Charles Spurgeon numbers among history's most prominent English-speaking preachers. His powerful preaching shaped generations of preachers, and he remains a topic of significant interest and research. Breimaier explores Spurgeon's biblical hermeneutic through analysis of his sermons and broader writings. Spurgeon "viewed the entire Bible through the lens of the cross, with an aim to bring about the conversion of sinners" (3). Breimaier, a tutor in systematic theology and history at Spurgeon's College in London, shares the fruit of his PhD thesis. He proceeds broadly chronologically through Spurgeon's life and ministry to expose "the overarching themes of crucicentrism and conversionism throughout Spurgeon's preached and written materials" (4).

Chapter 1 examines the early influences of Spurgeon's grandfather and father, both preachers, along with the impact of his mother. His early education fades in importance compared to the central role of Spurgeon's own conversion which became "an idealized pattern that he



attempted to recreate and establish as normative in his own ministry” (32). Chapter 2 continues into Spurgeon’s ministry at New Park Street Chapel and its relocation as the Metropolitan Tabernacle. Spurgeon rejected high Calvinism in his emphasis on the free offer of the gospel. Spurgeon’s commentaries, magazine, and devotional writings confirm his insistence on the cross and conversion.

Chapters 3 and 4 form the heart of the book as Breimaier analyzes Spurgeon’s preaching from the Old and New Testaments. Just as all roads lead to London, Spurgeon argued that for each biblical verse, “There is a road from here to Jesus Christ” (78). Breimaier summarizes the developments in critical scholarship in the nineteenth century and Spurgeon’s interaction with available commentaries. Rather than divert from the flowing narrative of Spurgeon’s ministry, these sections situate Spurgeon in his broader context. Breimaier also compares Spurgeon’s crucicentrism to his contemporaries, such as J. C. Ryle, Alexander Maclaren, and George MacDonald, to highlight Spurgeon’s emphasis on the atonement and conversion.

In chapter 5, he surveys the later years of Spurgeon’s ministry, including the Downgrade Controversy. Breimaier emphasizes Spurgeon’s commitment to biblical authority. Spurgeon’s preaching emphasis remained the salvation of his listeners. Spurgeon’s written work affirmed the ongoing themes of the cross and conversion. In an engaging section, Breimaier considers *The Bible and the Newspaper*. Spurgeon matched newspaper headlines from the 1870s with biblical passages. His “interpretations featured the cross and the free offer of the gospel” (190). The Downgrade Controversy threatened the core doctrines of the atonement and plenary inspiration which led to Spurgeon’s resignation from the Baptist Union over his defense of these essential doctrines. To the very end of his ministry, Spurgeon considered himself “tethered to the cross” in his crucicentric and conversionistic approach to preaching (206).

The final chapter provides evidence of Spurgeon’s commitment to keep the cross central in his training programs including the Pastors’ College. By the end of his life, more than half of the Baptist ministers in England and Wales had been trained at the college (219). Spurgeon longed for his students to “Preach Christ in a Christly Manner” (236). His final writings, including *Lectures to My Students* and *The Soul Winner*, echo Spurgeon’s constant theme to preach the gospel “and preach nothing else” (238).

Breimaier succeeds in proving Spurgeon’s hermeneutical emphasis on the cross and conversion. Every page of the book defends the centrality of the cross in Spurgeon’s ministry. Breimaier covers the breadth of Spurgeon’s ministry and writings without losing the narrative of Spurgeon’s life and central passion. Breimaier provides ample quotations but never leaves the reader bogged down in minutiae. Well-trodden paths in Spurgeon’s story feel fresh and vibrant in Breimaier’s clear writing. He highlights significant moments and familiar quotations from Spurgeon, but never diverts from his central thesis. Readers witness Spurgeon’s snowy conversion as a lay preacher urged him to “Look to

*Christ*" (35). Spurgeon's defense of the Bible is like defending a lion, "open the door and let the lion out; he will take care of himself" (73). In all preaching opportunities, from the sorrow of "the tragic loss of life in the stampede at the Surrey Gardens Hall" (108) to the enormous crowd at the Crystal Palace, Spurgeon pointed to the cross and pushed for conversion. Gems from Spurgeon's lips and pen abound: "Saints have no hell but what they suffer here on earth; sinners will have no heaven but what they have here in this poor troublous world" (153).

*Tethered to the Cross* rests on the solid scholarship of Breimaier's dissertation while remaining readable and engaging. The clear, crisp writing moves the reader joyfully into the ministry of Spurgeon. Breimaier's summaries of technical discussions provide the lay reader with sufficient context. The format of each chapter, with a helpful section of conclusions, brings the reader gently along while emphasizing the centrality of the cross and conversion. Breimaier's deep affection for Spurgeon never devolves into hagiography as he willingly identifies weaknesses in Spurgeon's hermeneutic. Spurgeon sometimes ignored the "more straightforward interpretations of the biblical text" (166).

The reader new to Spurgeon will gain a clear understanding of the man and his ministry. The experienced Spurgeon reader will be strengthened by his pulpit passion. Preachers will be encouraged by Spurgeon's devotion to the conversion of his listeners. Even where Breimaier exposes weaknesses in Spurgeon's hermeneutic, the underlying fervor for ministry shines through. *Tethered to the Cross* is a valuable addition to the field of homiletical hermeneutics and provides an engaging entryway into the preaching of Charles Spurgeon.

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*Pastors and Their Critics: A Guide to Coping with Criticism in the Ministry*, by Joel R. Beeke and Nick Thompson. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2020. 177 pp. \$15.99

Seminary students often entertain romantic ideas about pastoral ministry. They imagine a future marked by successive spiritual victories and only occasional defeats. Sometime after ordination, however, a young pastor discovers that reality is just the opposite! The work is difficult, and the critics are many. In all too many cases, the disconnect between expectation and reality leads to disenchantment, and then disengagement, from the Christian ministry.

Enter this new book by Joel Beeke and Nick Thompson. Beeke is the long-time president of Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary (PRTS) and a minister in the Heritage Reformed Church of Grand Rapids. Thompson is a recent graduate of PRTS who is pursuing ordination in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Together, these men offer

the first-ever, book-length treatment on pastoral criticism from a Reformed perspective.

While the book is primarily aimed at seminary students and young gospel ministers, it will undoubtedly be a help to seasoned pastors as well. The book exhibits the theological depth that we have come to expect from Beeke, and it is replete with personal examples from his ministry which will resonate with pastors young and old. Thompson's appendix, which contains his "Seminarian's Decalogue," will be especially helpful to students preparing for their entrance into ministry.

The main body of the work comes in four parts. The first part offers a brief biblical theology of abuse. The authors remind us that "the earliest appearance of character-distorting verbal abuse was actually in the garden of Eden. And the object of this destructive criticism was God Himself." The LORD was subjected to "deceitful, godless words" and attacks on both his generosity and integrity (19–20). The authors also discuss the abuse suffered by Moses, Aaron, David, Nehemiah, and the apostle Paul. Christ receives the greatest treatment, for he "is not only our representative; He is also our exemplar" (37). The authors take us through the verbal onslaughts and physical torture that our Lord endured, finally culminating in his crucifixion. We see how Christ endured this injustice without abandoning his calling or sinning against his enemies. "When we meditate on Christ," the authors tell us, "the Spirit meets with us and enables us to say, 'He suffered for me, and now I will suffer this criticism for Him. God has vindicated His Son, and God will vindicate me one day as well'" (42).

In part two, the authors provide a number of practical tips for receiving and responding to criticism in a Christ-like way. First, they encourage us to develop a realistic view of the ministry. This is done by remembering the tragic reality of sin, the destructive schemes of Satan, and the sanctifying purposes of God. Second, they encourage us to consider the source of the criticism we receive—is it coming from a nonbeliever or a believer? Is the believer mature or immature? Is it coming from an individual or from a group of friends? Third, they encourage us to discern, to the best of our ability, the chief motive of our critic(s). Is the critic seeking our good or our destruction? Once we understand the source and purpose of the criticism, we are ready to respond properly to it. And when responding, the authors encourage us to practice humility, prayer, and grace.

In part three, the authors discuss the best ways for pastors to *offer* constructive criticism and how they can foster an environment which permits constructive criticism between church members. Regarding the former, they suggest giving heed to the ancient categories of *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos*. In other words, in offering criticism to others, pastors should think carefully about how their criticism is framed. Regarding the latter, pastors can foster a culture of constructive criticism by (1) preaching Christ; (2) praying continually; (3) pleading guilty [i.e., confessing their own faults]; (4) providing platforms for people to voice their concerns; (5) planning big [i.e., taking risks and being willing to

fail publicly]; and (6) cultivating patience.

The fourth part offers a “theological vision” for coping with criticism. The authors plead with pastors to reorient their perspective so they are not focused on the destructive criticism they receive, but on the glory that awaits faithful ministers. The authors remind pastors that they are ministering for the glory of God, not for the applause of men; their task is to build the Church, not to enjoy a life free of pain; and their concern should be the Judgment Day of Christ, not the cruel judgments of their peers. “Oh, happy day when this mortality shall put on immortality, and we shall ever be with the Lord!” the authors write. “Let all the criticism that our Sovereign God in His infinite wisdom calls us to endure in this life make us more homesick for the criticism-free land of glory. Let our vision be consumed with this world of love, sweetening the often loveless adversity we face here below” (163).

A book like this one was long overdue. Beeke and Thompson have done a wonderful service to the Church, and I hope the book finds a wide readership. I purchased ten copies to hand out to my friends in ministry. I strongly recommend that you buy a few as well—one for yourself and several others to give away.

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*Fault Lines: The Social Justice Movement and Evangelicalism's Looming Catastrophe* by Voddie Baucham. Washington, D. C.: Salem Books. xvii, 254 pp. \$24.99.

“For such a time as this” (Esth 4:14). Tensions have been mounting over questions of race and social justice. Marxist ideologies in the evangelical church cause it to stagger under an onslaught of cultural crises that threaten to undue the work of God today. Some Americans consider all whites to be racists because of the simple fact of their birth. They allege that racism permeates our culture, and whites are expected to own this reality, beg for forgiveness, regardless of any personal, overt acts and to support reparations for wrongs long ago perpetrated. Persons of color, it is said, are hunted by the police, who as a group are out of control and desperately need to be reined in or defunded altogether. Sadly, they conclude, the church, at least the white church, has been complicit in this legacy. It is a part of the problem, not the solution.

These are stunning accusations that, if true, need to be taken seriously. Many of these charges cannot be ignored. However, things get complicated when a white person objects to any of these indictments. Any objection is said to show the extent of the problem. But this makes the accusations unfalsifiable. To reject them at any level is to prove

their veracity.

Not so fast, says Voddie Baucham, an American man of color—"I am not an African. I am not an African American. I am an American, and I wouldn't want to be anything else" (229). Raised in an impoverished, single-parent home, a descendant of slaves whose ancestors were sold into slavery not by white slave traders but by fellow Africans (37), he moved from Texas to Los Angeles and grew up during the era of desegregation. He experienced forced bussing, drugs, crime, and gangs. Baucham suffered many Jim Crow era abuses hurled upon individuals of color. But he turned his life over to Christ and has become a strong voice for reformed orthodoxy and an outspoken critic of our cultural crisis. In *Fault Lines*, Baucham offers an in-depth and well researched response to some of these cultural legacies and challenges, especially Critical Social Justice, Critical Race Theory, and Intersectionality. This is very personal for him. He is very informed as he points out the origin of CRT—Harvard Law professor Derrick Bell and a conference in 1989, where Intersectionality was also introduced by Bell protégé, Kimberlé Crenshaw (xvii), setting the stage for his discussion.

Armed with a bachelor's degree in Sociology and seminary at Southwestern Baptist of Fort Worth, Baucham shares his own personal journey to faith and to his rejection of the notion of systemic racism in America (chap. 2) so that the reader may understand his perspective. This is not theoretical and academic for him. This is his lived experience. All things must be brought to the Scripture for analysis and judgment. He looks at current issues pressing the church both historically and with an eye to the Scripture.

Baucham's starts with biblical principles that condemn falsehoods (e.g., the Ninth Commandment) and false narratives (chap 3). Using current data, he shows that many of the common public stories (Trayvon Martin, Breanna Taylor, Philando Castile, etc.) are simply false and meant to enrage rather than inform. An examination of Fatal Officer Involved Shootings (FOIS) shows that "it is white people who are actually shot at disproportionately high rates" rather than persons of color (49). Of course, persons of color also experience FOIS, but the data does not support the common narrative that they are "hunted" or that the police are racist.

It is claimed that America is racist to its core. And what is the solution to racism? One cannot simply say they are "not racist" as this is a racist trope. One must be "antiracist." Baucham considers the thought of Ibrahim X. Kendi and antiracism which he labels a "new religion" and "cult" (chap. 4). "In classic cult fashion, they borrow from the familiar and accepted, then infuse it with new meaning" (66). This new cult needs a priesthood, which includes "all oppressed minorities (people of color, women, LGBTQIA+, non-citizens, the disabled, the obese, the poor, non-Christians, and anyone else with an oppressed status" (91). "Ethnic Gnosticism," "special knowledge based solely on ethnicity" (92), where "white people cannot 'see' without black voices" (98) must be rejected. The antidote for this is Scripture. Citing Romans 3, he ar-

gues that the biblical picture is that all humans are sinful, not just white men but all men.

Baucham critiques prominent evangelicals where they get things wrong (e.g., David Platt [121ff]). He discusses CRT and intersectionality and demonstrates why, contra Resolution 9 of the 2019 Southern Baptist Convention, “On Critical Race Theory and Intersectionality,” these are not and cannot be considered “analytical tools” useful for Christians to understand the world today. He engages the prominent black evangelical voices including Curtis Woods, Jarvis Williams, Jemar Tisby, and others. Both black and white Christians are complicit in promoting false ideologies in evangelicalism.

The problems in the black community cannot be laid at the feet of systemic racism. He shows how the historic black pulpit has spoken out against some of the problems. “The internet is filled with clips of black pastors getting standing ovations as they passionately admonish their young members to ‘pull up your pants, get an education, stop dropping babies all over the place, learn to speak proper English, get all that gold out of your mouth’” (157). He takes on abortion in the black community, “the unspoken epidemic,” discussing the infamous case of Kermit Gosnell, the Philadelphia abortionist jailed for killing live birth babies and Margaret Sanger’s Planned Parenthood and its “unreported genocide”—the Negro Project whose goal was to reduce the black population through birth control (173).

For Baucham, “this book is...a plea to the Church. I believe we are being duped by an ideology bent on our demise.... We cannot embrace, modify, baptize, or Christianize these ideologies. We must identify, resist and reject them” (204). CRT, CSJ, Intersectionality “and their antecedents” are “cosmic powers over this present darkness” (209). The church must pursue God’s work God’s way. “Our war is spiritual” (209). “Our weapons are spiritual” (210). “We fight with the truth of biblical justice” (211). Included is a brief critique of Black Lives Matter (217ff).

This is a remarkable book from an important scholar who is trying to set the record straight so that the church will respond to the current crises in a biblical fashion. It deserves a careful read and deep reflection. May God use *Fault Lines* to warn his church. *Soli Deo Gloria*.

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*Remaining Faithful in Ministry: 9 Essential Convictions for Every Pastor*  
by John MacArthur. Wheaton: Crossway, 2019. 77 pp. \$9.99.

John MacArthur is the pastor-teacher of Grace Community Church in Sun Valley, CA, and chancellor and founder of The Master’s University and Seminary. Grace to You is his vast teaching and preaching

media ministry. MacArthur is an expositor, a defender of the faith, a pastor-theologian, and the author of 400 plus books or study guides. Having pastored Grace Community Church for fifty plus years, he is well-qualified to write this volume on faithful ministry.

*Remaining Faithful in Ministry* serves as another installment of MacArthur's contribution to pastoral leadership alongside *Preaching: How to Preach Biblically* (Thomas Nelson, 2005) and to a greater degree *Pastoral Ministry: How to Shepherd Biblically* (Thomas Nelson, 2005). In this contribution MacArthur sketches nine Pauline convictions drawn from 2 Corinthians 4, that the minister must be convinced of to persevere in ministry. These convictions make up the chapter divisions. He must be convinced: (1) of the superiority of the new covenant; (2) that ministry is a mercy; (3) of the need for a pure heart; (4) of the need to preach the Word faithfully; (5) that the results belong to God; (6) of his own insignificance; (7) of the benefit of suffering; (8) of the need for courage; and (9) that future glory is better than anything this world could offer.

MacArthur admits that the greatest influence on his life has been the apostle Paul (10). With all the adversity that Paul faced "he persevered out of sheer love for the Lord, for the simple joy of obedience, with his hopes fixed firmly on heaven" (13). One can sum up the thrust of this work in one question, "How do we cultivate commitment and imitate Paul?" MacArthur believes that "detailed answers to those questions are outlined by the apostle himself in 2 Corinthians 4 (14). These detailed answers are the reasons that Paul "did not lose heart" (vv. 1, 16). The ministry Paul received was a ministry that neither he nor we deserve—it is a ministry of mercy, and this drove Paul to maintain a pure heart declaring "my life is an open book" (36). MacArthur is always Word-focused and warns us of the type of ministry to avoid: "In our generation it seems that there's a glut of pragmatic ministry philosophies and utilitarian people in high-profile positions of church leadership. They will do anything to draw a crowd, and they assiduously avoid 'the open statement of truth'" (42).

While some ministers may be naïve, he reminds us that the results must belong to God—even if they are unwelcomed: "The response Paul got to his preaching was often violently negative" (45). MacArthur describes the minister's own insignificance: "Paul pictures himself as a cheap container holding a priceless treasure" (51). On the conviction that suffering is beneficial, MacArthur believes that "surely one of the reasons trouble always accompanies ministry is that it's one of the main ways God keeps his ministers humble" (59). Regarding courage, he makes an interesting historical point: "Only one of three shipwrecks is described for us in Scripture, which means in all likelihood that the numerous trials recorded in the book of Acts are just a small sample of the relentless hardships Paul courageously endured" (62).

The strengths of his work are thorough exegesis flowing from a belief in an inerrant Word. The implications he draws are sound and convicting. He reminds us that Paul's ministry of the new covenant applies

to all, “Down to and including those whom God has ordained and called into ministry in our generation and in the years to come” (25). For the minister who battles with hubris MacArthur offers some humble pie: “We are not in ministry because we are somehow more righteous or more worthy than others” (29). He offers a strong warning concerning God’s message: “And be forewarned: the ‘results’ of tampering with the gospel message are always negative, even if the strategy produces a superficially positive response” (47). And concerning God’s messenger: “I’m tasked with delivering a message, not with masterminding a compromise between human opinion and divine revelation” (64).

Weaknesses are minimal. Oddly, the Introduction (twelve pages) is longer than any other chapter, the longest being seven. One other exegetical note: MacArthur holds a curious (or at least non-traditional or minority view) of Paul’s “thorn in the flesh ... a messenger of Satan to buffet me.” He cavalierly dismisses the notion of a physical malady stating, “So it seems he is describing a person, not a disability or illness” (58). He later elaborates on that person, “Here is a group of false teachers led by a demon-possessed leader tearing up this church” (59).

I would classify this work as a homiletic commentary. Homiletic, in that it seems like a sermon in MacArthur’s style, and commentary since it is an exegesis of 2 Corinthians 4. If one wants a beefier version of similar material, one may try other MacArthur contributions to pastoral leadership—*The Book on Leadership* (Thomas Nelson, 2004) and *The John MacArthur Handbook of Effective Biblical Leadership* (Harvest House, 2019), where he serves as contributor and general editor. If you want to read MacArthur in a more academic or technical format, then you may wish to consult *2 Corinthians* (MacArthur New Testament Commentary Series) (Moody Press, 2003). I would recommend this book to the devoted layman or the beginning preacher. As for academia, I would only recommend this on an undergraduate level. While anything MacArthur writes is worth reading, the seasoned expositor will glean more from MacArthur’s other volumes mentioned above.

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*Finding the Right Hills to Die On: The Case for Theological Triage*, by Gavin Ortlund. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020. 163 pp. \$17.99.

This book, whose title blends two metaphors to create the image of urgency as applied to Bible doctrine, is the kind of a book that ministers need to read periodically. As a former Emergency Medical Technician, one of the things we learned in training was that not all medical problems are of the same seriousness, particularly in a mass casualty situation. Once on scene at a catastrophe where there are multiple victims, the first medical responders on site assess the various injuries to



determine a priority of treatment. Those injuries that are both life-threatening and have the greatest chance for survival are treated first, while lesser injuries or fatal injuries may be immediately passed over because there simply are not enough hands to care for those involved. This is medical triage. It has been applied appropriately in recent years to theological discourse to stress that while all doctrines are important, not all are equally important. Some doctrines matter more to the Church than others.

The second metaphor is a military one—knowing which hills in a military campaign can be passed by as unworthy of the cost in lives needed to secure them, while others are too important to be overlooked and must be taken at all cost. Some hills become a “hill to die on.” Applied to the Bible, some doctrines, while important because they are taught in the Scripture, do not rise to the level of a life-or-death struggle. Some doctrines are gospel-critical (the Virgin Birth of Jesus) while some, significant (baptism), and others, tertiary (end-time events). A person may be wrong on the latter and still find eternal rest in Christ, but to deny the former is to deny the uniquely divine nature of the Son of God.

This book is a fresh attempt to examine the importance of doing theological triage (section one) and suggests a strategy for evaluating the relative significance of doctrines to determine which are gospel-critical and which are tertiary. The author writes out of his experience of moving from Presbyterianism to becoming a Baptist during his college years as he came to conclude that credobaptism and not paedobaptism was biblical (64). Having been sprinkled as a baby, he was immersed as an adult upon his profession of faith. But was the mode and recipient of baptism an important enough doctrine to separate from other believers? This was a question he had to wrestle with. Also, he was amillennial in his eschatology, moving into a world of premillennialism. Did this doctrine rise to a reason for Christian division?

These are the kinds of questions that serious Christians need to ponder. As a product of a prominent, professing fundamentalist university, many of those whom I heard preach from the platform took a strong view on doctrinal issues that other Christians held to be tertiary, while criticizing some Christians for considering many important issues as tertiary. Theological issues that come to mind include baptism, eschatology, Calvinism vs. Arminianism, lordship salvation, Pentecostalism and related matters such as tongues, creationism vs. old earth or theistic evolution and especially Bible versions. Lifestyle issues also fall under these guidelines. Consuming alcohol as a beverage, music, movies, hair and dress styles, etc. were matters of Christian separation. As a young minister, if you did not use the “right” Bible, no matter what else you believed, you were considered a heretic or worse in some circles.

A book of this nature would have been very helpful to me as a young ministerial student just to appreciate the importance of theological triage—not all doctrines, biblical though they may be, carry the same weight. Gospel-critical doctrines must be treated more seriously in

matters of Christian fellowship and cooperation.

So, from the standpoint of value, this book and those like it are important for ministers to read and subsequently reexamine their own doctrinal sensibilities. Which ones are really important and for what reasons? Few conservative evangelicals will find much to quibble with in the first section of the book, "Why Theological Triage?" More debate and criticism will result in Ortlund's application section, "Theological Triage at Work."

Granted that many will disagree with portions of this section, few will likely disagree with the fifth chapter which treats Gospel-critical issues. Ortlund offers a series of reasons why certain doctrines matter, following ranking systems of Erik Thoennes, *Life's Biggest Questions*, (2011) and Wayne Grudem's essay "Why, When and for What We Should Draw Boundaries?" (2003) (76–79). In chapter six, Ortlund moves from critical issues to lesser, even tertiary issues, some of which will find disagreement among conservatives. Baptism is important in a local church context but may not be a cause for division for wider Christian fellowship, unless one is talking about baptismal regeneration (101). The more contested example will be Ortlund's discussion of cessationism vs continuationism (108ff). Ortlund locates this discussion in between a "broadly second rank doctrine (and, in some cases, a third rank [tertiary] doctrine)." Also ranked lower in Ortlund's mind is the creationism debate. He offers numerous individuals from church history who held to something other than young-earth creation.

This highlights the key weakness in the book. Because an honored Christian of the past did not believe that a theological issue of contention in our day was an issue in his day, does not always bear on our consideration of the relative value of that issue now. Many in the nineteenth century did not see any problem with aspects of the evolutionary hypothesis and the theory seemed to be so irrefutable then. But through the progress of doctrine, many have come to see with a clearer eye the significance of views that older Christians simply did not have the capacity to grasp. This has always been true in the progress of doctrine. Few genuine Christians during Jesus's earthly ministry doubted his deity. They could see it on display in his personal life. The same could be said with the doctrine of the Trinity. Jesus made claims to his equality with the Father. It was only after his death and into the first four centuries of the Church that the major trinitarian and Christological debates occurred and were settled. It may be true that Christians did not argue about eschatological issues then, but these became issues for the Church later, after the heavy issues surrounding Christ's person were settled. The fact that the twentieth century became the so-called "Century of the Holy Spirit" because of the rising Pentecostal movement has little bearing on the truthfulness of the theological views espoused. Frankly, Ortlund's sword cuts both ways. He wants Christians to accept creationism as a tertiary issue because of the old timers who did not hold to young-earth creationism, while at the same time accepting continuationism that has very little support in church history.

One's understanding on doctrinal importance really amounts to how a tertiary doctrine is determined and by whom. Within the boundaries of a local church, for cessationism and continuationism to co-exist would likely mean that one group or the other does not take their view seriously. The same is true with creationism and complementarianism/egalitarianism. The same could be said about baptism. A prominent local pastor about fifteen years ago attempted to relegate baptismal form to a *de facto* tertiary issue. The attempt did not pass in the church.

While the church seeks to display the unity of the Spirit, the hard truth is that there are too many issues that divide us that we believe are too important to overlook within the confines of a local assembly. This is why we have denominations. These will not go away, try as we might. Ortlund's tertiary issues are tertiary for him, but perhaps not for others, not because they are gospel-critical, but because within a local church, some issues simply shape the way the church sees its ministry. I just cannot envision a church saying, "Next Sunday is Young-Earth creation Sunday, in two weeks we will have Old Earth Sunday." Talk about confusing the sheep.

Should we do theological triage? Absolutely, but to what end? In forming and ordering a church, if baptism is an important secondary issue, why may not creationism be as well? Or cessationism? This does not mean that we consign old earth supporters to the abyss. We may genuinely think they are wrong, and their view significantly damages the Gospel presentation they claim to affirm. We can and should have Christian fellowship with a broad range of believers with whom we agree regarding Gospel-critical doctrines. The closer our working relationship and the narrower the purpose, the narrower our theological sensibilities will become. These are hard conversations. The book is generally helpful, even if I do not grant a doctrinal issue as tertiary following Ortlund's understanding. We look forward to that day when the King of kings will set everything right. Until then, we wrestle, in humility (Ortlund's final excellent plea) to understand and uphold the Word of God.

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