Book Reviews

The Qur'an and the Christian: An In-Depth Look into the Book of Islam for Followers of Jesus. By Matthew Aaron Bennett. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2022, 256 pp., $19.99 paper.

Matthew Aaron Bennett serves as assistant professor of missions and theology at Cedarville University and received his PhD from The Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. He has contributed to the Christian study of Islam in *Narratives in Conflict: Atonement in Hebrews and the Qur'an* (2019) and *40 Questions About Islam* (2020). In his most recent work *The Qur'an and the Christian* (2022), Bennett argues that "it is crucial for a Christian disciple-maker to understand the Qur'an in order to effectively communicate biblical truths and the gospel to their Muslim friends and neighbors" (17). He seeks to help Christians understand the Qur'an through the combination of three views of this text: traditional Islamic, critical scholarship, and Christian witness. As Bennett hones in on each of these perceptions of the Qur'an, he presents a timely depiction of the Qur'an which interacts with recent scholarship and missiological movements. He dialogues with other recent works in this field including *The Qur'an and the Bible* (2018) by Gabriel Said Reynolds, *The Quran with Christian Commentary* (2020) by Gordon D. Nickel, and *A Concise Guide to the Qur'an* (2020) by Ayman S. Ibrahim.

Any Christian reading the Qur'an must consider how far to press common ground between Islam and Christianity. From the preface, Bennett presents his view with charity as he writes, "While some might contend that exposing areas of presumed common ground as superficial is detrimental to the cause of loving our Muslim neighbors, I beg to differ" (9). In contrast to missiological attempts to read Christianity into the Qur'an, Bennett seeks to present an understanding of the Qur'an which recognizes differences. This book is divided into three sections which cover the traditional Islamic, academic, and Christian understanding of the Qur'an.

The first section (chapters 1–3) sets out the narrative of the reception and teaching of the Qur'an in traditional Islamic teaching. The Qur'an is perceived to be the "final and incorruptible communication of the divine will to humanity" (22). After surveying the life of Mohammad, Bennett focuses on the teaching

of *Al-Fatiha*–the first chapter and preface to the Qur'an. Bennett progresses through *Al-Fatiha* phrase-by-phrase and contrasts its conception of revelation and ethics with a biblical understanding. He concludes this first section with a presentation of the key beliefs and practices of Islam drawn from the Qur'an.

The second section (chapters 4–6) transitions to a perception of the Qur'an characterized by critical scholarship. Chapter four addresses references to the Torah, Psalms, and Gospel in the Qur'an. Rather than simply endorsing the Bible, the Qur'an sought both to continue and challenge previous revelation (96). Chapter five continues this thought with a discussion of Jews and Christians in the Qur'an. However, Bennett's central argument in this section appears in chapter six. While the Qur'an uses stories and names from the Bible, it should be seen as a mosaic which reworks these concepts into a new narrative which provides "an intentional subversion of the traditional Jewish and Christian interpretations of biblical material" (135). Bennett argues that as the Qur'an rearranges biblical material it presents Jesus merely a prophet who anticipates a later prophet (153). While Bennett makes a strong case for this mosaic understanding, this chapter would benefit from a stronger challenge to the prevalent theory that Mohammad simply misunderstood and conflated biblical narratives.

In the third section (chapters 7–9), Bennett speaks to the Christian use and understanding of the Qur'an. In line with his central argument, Bennet argues that Christians should read the Qur'an to understand its impact on Muslims and to avoid miscommunication. In addressing how Christians should use the Qur'an in chapter eight, Bennett cautions against approaches which try to find the gospel within the Qur'an. The CAMEL Method, Insider Movements, and Muslim Idiom Translations mistakenly try to point to the gospel in a manner which "risks endorsing the Qur'an as a source of revelation" (227). Further, recent academic proposals which try to connect the Bible and Qur'an through an identification of multiple meanings in Qur'anic words (intertextual polysemy) also fail to recognize the differences between the two texts. In chapter nine, Bennett concludes with providing a positive example of how Christians may use the Qur'an through the story of Abraham's call to sacrifice his son. A few questions can help the Christian demonstrate that while the themes of ransom and sacrifice show disunity with qur'anic teaching, they better relate to the biblical metanarrative and point to the sacrificial death of Christ. In the conclusion, Bennett advocates honest communication of the differences between the Bible and Qur'an while in relationship with Muslim neighbors.

Bennett's book serves as an excellent description of the Qur'an for Christians which helps to clear up confusion. The strength of his contribution stems from his use of traditional, critical, and Christian understandings of the Qur'an. A reader can walk away from this book with a deeper understanding of the role of the Qur'an in Islam, current academic discussions on the Qur'an, and practical cautions for using the Qur'an in evangelism. One minor weakness of this book stems from dialogue with academic arguments on the Qur'an. In chapter eight, Bennett addresses the conflation of biblical and qur'anic terms from "certain academic communities" but only addresses one scholar: Abdulla Galadari. Incorporating further scholarship into this section would convince readers that Bennett is interacting with a community of scholars rather than a single scholar. Further, this book ends immediately after the conclusion lacking any index, bibliography, or suggestions for further reading. The addition of these sections would help readers seeking to dig deeper into the academic dialogues Bennett references. However, with this weakness aside, Bennett presents a practical and detailed resource for Christians. He rightly avoids the pitfalls of feigning common ground and seeks to facilitate honest conversation with Muslims. Whether a reader knows almost nothing about the Qur'an or has read widely on the subject, Bennett's *The Qur'an and the Christian* will serve as a helpful tool for communicating with Muslims neighbors and friends.

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How the Church Fathers Read the Bible: A Short Introduction. By Gerald Bray. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2022, 194 pp. $24.99.

Already the author of a useful full-length survey of the history of biblical interpretation, Gerald Bray, Research Professor of Divinity at Beeson Divinity School, approaches this more narrowly-focused introduction to patristic exegesis with both the skill and the care of a seasoned scholar.

Following the volume's title, the major divisions of the opening chapter offer working definitions of each of its key terms: What is the "Bible"? Who are the "Fathers"? And what does it mean to "read" (or interpret) Scripture? Bray's lengthy introduction skillfully sets the table, briefly summarizing the changing winds of scholarly attitudes toward patristic hermeneutics—which have

ranged from modernist hostility to a more recent resurgence of appreciation and *ressourcement*—while sidestepping the kind of extensive literature review that might prove cumbersome for non-specialists. Indeed, this commitment to accessibility is a trademark of the work throughout, as Bray opts for a heavy dose of primary source material in an effort to expose readers to the historical figures and texts themselves, rather than engaging with secondary scholarship in detail (apart from a few scattered footnotes).

Bray's preliminary definitions are helpful: the "Bible" is the collection of inspired writings comprising the Old and New Testaments, not initially recognized as a single book but ultimately gathered together, physically, in the codex after "establishing themselves" as authentic witnesses to the foundational events of the faith. The "Fathers" were once identified as the theologically orthodox shapers of the Christian tradition, but should now be understood to refer more broadly to all the major writers of the early centuries, whether Latin, Greek, or Oriental. And to "read" or interpret the Bible is to make a claim about the nature and source of truth itself, though in practical terms this unfolds through the use of particular methods, such as exposition, application, allusion, and others. Though somewhat standard, these definitions simply provide the framing for Bray's quite perceptive thesis, that "Patristic biblical interpretation is . . . not just a form of literary archaeology of interest only to specialists. It is a battleground of ideas, in which the credibility of the Christian tradition is at stake." (8) Thus, Bray quite rightly forefronts the determinative role played by underlying theological presuppositions in the acceptance or rejection of a particular exegesis (patristic or otherwise).

The title of Chapter 2, "The Clash of Worldviews," reinforces the point, as it examines the ways in which these presuppositions interacted with those of surrounding cultures, including both Jewish and Greco-Roman. In each context, the scriptural expositions of early Christians identified points of both continuity and discontinuity with the prevailing assumptions of their interlocutors—for example, insisting on biblical affirmations of monotheism and creation *ex nihilo* (shared with Judaism) and appealing to the authority of reason as a form of divine truth (in agreement with classical philosophy), while simultaneously insisting on understandings of these concepts that were ultimately christological in nature (a source of radical discontinuity). Thus, although early Christians made concerted efforts to contextualize their message, they did not (contra Harnack) "Hellenize" and therefore distort it. Rather, Bray contends (channeling Wilken's

famous inversion of Harnack's thesis), it was "the classical spirit put to work by the Spirit of God." (23)

Nevertheless, Bray does retain aspects of the conventional position in the following chapter, presenting the Hellenistic allegorism of Philo as the definitive precursor to the development of a fully realized patristic hermeneutic, which he places in the writings of Clement of Alexandria—later systematized by Origen into the threefold (and then medieval fourfold) sense. It is Origen's approach that Bray identifies as "foundational for all subsequent patristic exegesis," (92) since even his fiercest opponents defined themselves in relation to it. Though critiquing Origen's method himself as being "in strictly objective terms … wrong" (102), Bray sympathizes with his goal—the spiritual edification of the people of God—and thus exhorts his readers to exercise respectful discernment in appropriating his insights. Applied to readings of the fathers more generally, this charge might be considered the practical application of Bray's argument: "Origen and the fathers who followed his lead may have misinterpreted their texts and indulged in fanciful comparisons that fail to meet the standards of interpretation that we would now expect, but there is usually a kernel—and often much more than that—of truth in what they have to say, and if that kernel can be rescued and recycled, it is worth doing." (103)

The final constructive chapter explores how just such a "Search for Consensus" unfolded in the centuries following Origen, suggesting that extreme reactions to him (as in the zealously literalist approaches of Diodore and Theodore) eventually gave way to a more tempered synthesis that sought to balance literal and spiritual readings (somewhat curiously, Bray offers Gregory of Nyssa's heavily allegorizing *Life of Moses* as an example of this "mediating position.") In the Latin West also, a moderately Origenist legacy persisted in the exegetical works of Jerome and Augustine, despite the eventual formal rejection of Origen by the former and the distinct "hermeneutic of love" developed by the latter.

Bray concludes with a series of ten "case studies," intended to give readers manageable samples of patristic exegesis in action. Because these are Bray's own synthesized descriptions of what selected patristic writers said about particular biblical texts, rather than extended excerpts from the sources themselves, it may be difficult for unfamiliar readers to discern their context, import, and the extent to which they are representative of standard practice (was Diadochus of Photice's fifth-century reading of the "likeness of God" in Gen 1:26-27 as normative or influential as Augustine's discussion in *De Trinitate*, with which

it shares a paragraph?) Nevertheless, the chapter certainly succeeds in giving readers a "flavor" of the broad range of patristic exegesis, and helpfully directs them to Thomas Oden's *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture* series (on which Bray has also served as an editor) for the full-course meal.

By way of summary, Bray briefly offers 7 "theses" that characterize the patristic approach to biblical interpretation. Happily, these are not provocative claims, but largely incontestable generalizations (the fathers regarded the Bible as the exclusive and authoritative source of divinely-revealed doctrine and truth, christological in content though diverse in form, self-interpreting, and rightly understood and applied only in the context of the life of the church and its worship). The sixth thesis, however, pertains to the modern, rather than ancient, church, and succinctly expresses the measured appreciation that informs Bray's whole discussion: "The modern church must respect the fathers and be prepared to learn from them but without idolizing them or claiming for them an authority that they did not claim for themselves." (182)

Such a cautious judgment is perhaps not likely to win acclaim from the more radically-committed on either side of contemporary hermeneutical debates—either those who follow R. P. C. Hanson in decrying allegorical flights of fancy, or those who side with David Steinmetz and later theological interpreters like John O'Keefe and Rusty Reno in upholding the superiority of pre-critical exegesis. However, neither scholarly group represents Bray's primary audience. Rather, he writes (much like the figures he describes) for the benefit of the church's faithful, endeavoring simply to acquaint them with voices from the past who shared their belief in the authority, unity, and spiritual sufficiency of Holy Scripture, and who may therefore continue to function as sources of wisdom and guidance in interpreting its pages down to the present day. For this purpose, the volume provides a readily accessible point of departure.

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Liberty for All: Defending Everyone's Religious Freedom in a Pluralistic Age. By Andrew T. Walker. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2021, 217 pp., $19.99 paper.

Andrew T. Walker serves as an associate professor of Christian ethics at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and is the executive director of the Carl F. H. Henry Institute for Evangelical Engagement. His message in *Liberty for All* is that "Christians should extend religious liberty to everyone because everyone is pursuing truth, even if incorrectly" (4). Walker defines religious liberty as a situation in which "every individual, regardless of their religious confession, is equally free to believe, or not to believe, and to live out their understanding . . . without threat of government penalty or social harassment" (10). He maintains that the veracity of each religion's beliefs is immaterial to our duty as Christians to defend the freedom of those who hold them. Advancing religious liberty for all is a Christian imperative.

Walker emphasizes that promoting religious freedom for all people does not mean affirming all religions as equal or true. "Religious liberty," he explains, "is not about relativizing truth claims or treating all religions as equals" (5). On the contrary, true religious freedom entails that people of all faiths—including Christians—are free to assert even the exclusivist elements of their belief systems. Only then is religious expression truly free, and only then can we have genuine dialogue on matters of faith. Walker explains, "We do no service to our neighbors by weakening the claims of our religion ... The common good is better served when honest brokers approach one another within a society that pledges to foster religious liberty by giving each equal space in the public square" (182-3). Christians should advocate for the freedom of all faith communities to assert their own competing truth claims.

Liberty for All is organized into parts on eschatology, anthropology, and missiology. The eschatology part establishes that religious liberty is desirable in our secular age because religious pluralism, while not ideal, is a reality God permits until all things are subject to him. The anthropology part shows that any infringement on a person's religious freedom is a violation of their very nature since religiosity is essential to being human. The missiology part argues that religious liberty is important for conversionist evangelism rightly understood, and true to the Southern Baptist perspective from which Walker writes, an unapologetic emphasis on mission colors the entire book. "Any claim or pursuit of

religious liberty," Walker argues, "must always point to its telos: the advancement of God's kingdom" (217). Christians should advocate for everyone's religious freedom primarily because it aids in the furtherance of Christ's mission.

Walker holds that religious liberty is central to Christian mission because it is essential to what mission is all about: giving people opportunities to make uncoerced professions of faith. "Dismissing or overlooking the centrality of religious liberty in Christian public theology," he says, "demonstrates a failure to establish first principles that are necessary for the church's mission" (12). These first principles have to do with the fact that a person receives the good news by way of an unencumbered decision to follow Christ. Religious freedom nurtures an environment in which people are empowered to make such decisions, and Walker writes that religious liberty is "designed to facilitate uncoerced and unobstructed access to humankind's greatest need – salvation in Jesus Christ" (146). He supports his advocacy of liberty for all with an unashamedly evangelistic rationale: "Christians insist on the necessity of religious liberty so that persons untainted by coercion can make voluntary professions of faith" (155). Through much of the book, Walker treads a fine line between saying an environment of religious freedom is *necessary* for effective evangelism and holding that religious freedom simply often *aids in* our mission to share the gospel.

Walker posits that religious liberty "is needed in order to advance the gospel" (18), and calls it "a necessary component for the unhindered advance of the gospel" (211). At another point he explains, "Understood as a means through which an individual encounters the gospel and responds freely and authentically, religious liberty is critical to persons experiencing salvation" (160). All this insistence on the necessity of religious liberty for salvation and gospel advance is qualified by Walker's explanation that a religiously free environment serves a facilitative role in Christian mission. "[R]eligious liberty," he writes, "facilitates mission by giving space and fostering the ideal conditions for the mission of Christ to continue" (151). Walker clarifies, "The mission of God does not wholly depend on Western ideals of religious liberty inasmuch as it is aided where religious liberty exists" (151). Christians ought to advocate for everyone's religious liberty "not because Christian mission is necessarily contingent on religious liberty but because religious liberty aids Christian mission in its ultimate task of seeing individuals reconciled and redeemed" (155). Religious liberty for all aids in Christian mission by nurturing an environment conducive to uncoerced decisions for Christ.

Here in *Liberty for All*, Andrew T. Walker encourages Christians to be advocates for religious freedom among all faith communities—even those that do not have the truth. He builds his case by drawing out religious liberty's implications on eschatology, anthropology, and missiology. Undergirding the whole book is Walker's strong contention that religious freedom fosters an environment facilitative of persons making voluntary professions of faith in Christ—the ultimate goal of mission. Advocacy for religious liberty is a missional endeavor, and *Liberty for All* is a missional book.

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

James W. Thompson is a scholar in residence at the Graduate School of Theology at Abilene Christian University. As a senior New Testament scholar, Thompson is the author of many books, including several on the apostle Paul. In *Apostle of Persuasion,* Thompson explores the relationship between rhetoric and theology (2). His thesis is that rhetoric and theology are inseparable in Paul, and both serve his goal of persuading churches towards moral formation for the purpose of presenting a transformed people to Christ at the end (16).

Thompson addresses the difficult task of bringing theology and rhetoric together by first presenting the issues around Paul as a theologian. According to Thompson, in addition to those who posit a coherent theology in Paul (4), are others who claim he is either an inconsistent theologian (3) or develops his theology over time (5). From a different perspective, says Thompson, are scholars who begin with sociological and rhetorical views of Paul from which they argue "that Paul employs strategies of community building and rhetoric to advance his theology" or "reduce his theology to strategy" (6). From this Thompson forwards a taxonomy for ways scholars construct the relationship between rhetoric and theology in Paul. The "traditional model" asserts theology and rhetoric as separate disciplines, assuming the former is the "content" and latter is the "form" (8). A second model approaches Paul as a coherent

theologian who employs theology and rhetoric to fit specific pastoral contexts. In this model theology and rhetoric are woven together––a position Thompson himself adheres (9). A third model assumes inconsistency in Paul, claiming his theology is contingent upon rhetorical purposes (10).

After deftly laying the theoretical groundwork, in chapter 1 Thompson covers the topic of ancient rhetoric and its application in rhetorical criticism. He introduces Aristotle's three species of speech (judicial, deliberative, and epideictic) and rhetorical criticisms analysis of the rhetorical species, arrangement, style, and invention (i.e., argument from ethos, pathos, and logos) (25-26). While there are points of contact between ancient rhetoric in arrangement, style, and invention, Thompson concludes that Paul's rhetoric consists mainly in his authoritative voice for God (32).

In chapters 2-3, Thompson shifts to the description of Paul's theology. He argues that the substructure of Paul's theology is Jewish (38-42), with many of the theological premises inherited from Jesus (59) and the early Christian movement (65). In chapter 4, an additional element to understanding Paul's theology is how Paul's prophetic call establishes his *ethos* over against the typical way ancient orators establish their character with people (99).

For the remainder of the book the author demonstrates how Paul theologizes as a rhetorical response to issues in the churches. In chapter 5 Thompson argues Paul's eschatology in 1 Thessalonians cannot be reduced to linear development, but instead "we can observe his continuing dialogue with his churches and his persuasive means of ensuring the fulfillment of his pastoral goal" (125). Similarly, in chapter 6 Thompson assesses the function of Christology in texts such as Phil. 2:6-11, 1 Cor. 8:6, 1 Cor. 3:23, and 1 Cor. 15:20-28, concluding Paul is not engaged in abstract theological statements but seeks to persuade his communities towards moral formation (142).

Chapter 7 examines several passages in the Corinthian correspondence to understand how Paul undermines Greco-Roman values by theologizing the cross as a response to the situation the church faces in factionalism, skewed view of wisdom, and division around the Lord's Supper. In chapter 8 Thompson argues Paul's teaching on justification by faith is developed in Galatians because of the rhetorical situation demands it (184). In chapter 9 he seeks to prove how we can understand the theme of God's righteousness, once again, by seeing how Paul crafts his theology for his rhetorical and pastoral needs (218). Chapter 10 turns to Ephesians and Colossians. Like the undisputed letters, these introduce new

dimensions in Pauline theology—the cosmic Christ and cosmic church—due to the demands of the "rhetorical situation" (246). Finally, the author turns to the Pastoral Epistles, pointing to the creedal statements that undergird the premises that function to persuade the audience towards moral formation (265).

Thompson offers students of Paul a wide-ranging book that touches on several debates within Pauline scholarship at once. Despite the book's broad scope, and to Thompson's credit as a scholar, he manages to synthesize ideas well. It may be said that the author also signals a way forward with respect to the view that Paul's theology developed over time. Thompson's thesis significantly undermines the theory of theological development in Paul. Instead, theological variation across his letters reflects the apostle's skill to apply his (coherent) theology to the unique pastoral situation he confronts. Thompson is also to be commended for demonstrating an important but often overlooked thread found in Paul's letters, namely the apostle's telos of presenting the churches morally pure and blameless to God (13-16).

One concern of clarity and a general criticism might be offered, however. Since the "rhetorical situation" is a primary lens of analysis (102, 129, 145, 171, 187, 220, 248), more elaboration (especially its distinction from historical situation) would have benefited readers. Also, one challenge for the book is how the author chooses to utilize rhetorical criticism. Thompson admits Paul's letters do not always align with ancient rhetorical conventions (25-26, 28). Nevertheless, he regularly applies these categories, even as he must qualify their presence (see 103, 124, 157, 183). If such consistent qualification is necessary, one begins to wonder the usefulness of rhetorical criticism as a form of analysis to be applied to Pauline letters.

Ministry practitioners will relate well with Thompson's argument. As practitioners know, exhortations are often grounded in theological convictions with the goal of moral formation. In this way, Thompson's integration of Paul's theology and rhetoric is insightful for both scholars and those in pastoral ministry. *Apostle of Persuasion* is recommended for students, academics, and ministry leaders.

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Revelation through Old Testament Eyes. Through Old Testament Eyes. By Tremper Longman III. Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2022, 368 pp., $29.99 paper.

When reading the book of Revelation, one cannot progress more than a few words without coming across some allusion to the Old Testament. Thus, readers who are not steeped in the Old Testament will almost inevitably find the wording and imagery of Revelation disorienting; and those who are not confused by the symbolism are very likely to misunderstand its meaning, as the book's history of interpretation has amply demonstrated. To address this issue, Tremper Longman—Distinguished Scholar and Professor Emeritus of Biblical Studies of Westmont College—applies his extensive Old Testament scholarship to explaining the source and meaning of the imagery in Revelation in his contributing volume to Kregel's Through Old Testament Eyes commentary series.

Longman begins his volume with a brief introduction touching on issues of authorship, date, and genre. He also summarizes the main theme of Revelation as "despite present trouble, God is in control, and he will have the final victory" (14). The introduction is followed by a short section outlining the structure of the book of Revelation, including some comments on how the various visions in Revelation relate to each other. The remainder of the book is, for the most part, a straightforward verse-by-verse commentary on Revelation, though with a particular focus on identifying the Old Testament backgrounds behind its language and symbols. Occasionally, however, the commentary is punctuated by excurses that fall into one of three categories (in accordance with the format of the series). First, sections titled "Through Old Testament Eyes" unpack a given Old Testament image or theme at greater length than the treatment provided in verse-specific comments. Second, sections titled "What the Structure Means" give an overview of how the portion of text under discussion fits within the overall flow of the biblical book. Third, sections titled "Going Deeper" draw out implications of the biblical book's teaching for theological and practical issues that the church faces today.

One of the book's greatest strengths is its accessibility. Longman's commentary is written at a popular level, able to be read and comprehended by pastors and laypeople alike. He refrains from using academic language or engaging in scholarly debates. Instead, he directs the attention of the average person in the pew to the biblical text itself, showing how John draws on pictures and themes

from the Old Testament to communicate his message. Many Christians who find Revelation intimidating will find Longman's insights easy to follow.

Although Longman does not use scholarly jargon, his vast knowledge of the Old Testament is clearly on display throughout his commentary. This is especially true of the "Through Old Testament Eyes" sections, where he unpacks elements of Old Testament backgrounds in greater depth, including the book of Daniel (40–42), the image of a slain lamb (91–93), and the ten plagues of Exodus (227–29). Even in the running commentary, readers will find helpful treatments of topics such as cloud-riding (38–39), Balaam (62–63), the city of Sodom (171–72), and Armageddon (239–40). These sorts of treatments are what one would expect to find in a commentary on Revelation written by an Old Testament scholar. In this area, Longman certainly delivers.

In his "Going Deeper" sections, Longman does an admirable job applying Revelation's teaching to current issues. He does not shirk away from more controversial subjects such as the relationship between faith and works (56–58), the wrath of God (105–07), and the reality of hell (286), though on this last point he is strangely ambiguous on the eternality of hell's punishment. In one of these sections, he provides a solid overview of the New Testament's teaching concerning the deity of Christ (48–49). Given the temptation among biblical scholars to avoid addressing matters that typically fall under the category of "systematic theology," Longman's efforts to address these and other relevant topics directly is commendable.

There are, however, a few areas of weakness that limit the book's usefulness. First, Longman's section on authorship and date in the introduction is largely unsatisfying. Longman refuses to take any definite position on authorship, and he insists that neither the authorship nor the date of the book impact one's interpretations (15–16). However, given that some approaches—such as the traditional preterist/postmillennial exegesis of Revelation—hinge on the book being written prior to AD 70, the date of the book would in fact have a direct impact on whether such approaches are valid from the start.

Second, Longman devotes very little space to defending his own approach to interpreting the symbols of Revelation. In his introductory comments concerning the book's symbolism, he essentially dismisses other views and asserts his own (what would traditionally be defined as "idealism," though he does not use the term himself) as the "more reasonable" of the options (18). Those who do not already agree with Longman on this point will find little to sway them

to his position. Thus, much of the commentary will be of limited value to those who fundamentally disagree with his overall hermeneutic.

Finally, while the commentary as a whole is solidly within the boundaries of Reformed Christianity, there are a few exegetical and theological quirks that can be somewhat off-putting when they appear. Longman asserts that Satan is not mentioned at all in the Old Testament, instead viewing "the Satan" in the OT and "the Devil/Satan" in the NT as two different figures altogether (60–61, 192–93). He creates an odd dichotomy between soul immortality and bodily resurrection (108–09, 292–93), forcing readers to choose between the two rather than seeing both as complementary truths taught in Scripture. His comments on the church's relationship to the broader society are oversimplistic and leave little room for active engagement in politics and culture on the part of Christians (18–19, 162–63). While such views are not defended at length and appear infrequently, they do slightly derail the discussion at times and will likely give some readers reason to pause.

When it comes to assessing the value of a commentary, one must ask the question, "Who would I recommend this to?" Being an introductory-level commentary, the bulk of the book's observations on OT backgrounds can also be found within some the standard evangelical academic commentaries. Thus, scholars and pastors who want to stock their library with the very best resources on Revelation might opt to forego this volume without fear of missing out on much. However, the average Christian who wants to grow in their understanding of the source of Revelation's vast amount of symbolism will find this volume immensely helpful. Longman states at the end of his commentary, "Even if it simply whets the reader's appetite for further study, I have accomplished my goal" (322). Many readers will find that this book does exactly that while also cultivating a greater understanding of both Revelation itself and the Hebrew Scriptures from which it draws much of its substance.

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Disability: Living into the Diversity of Christ's Body. Pastoring For Life. By Brian Brock. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2021, 192 pp., $21.99 paper.

Brian Brock currently serves as Professor of Moral and Practical Theology at the University of Aberdeen in Aberdeen, Scotland. He holds a DPhil from King's College, London and has published *Disability in the Christian Tradition*. He is the managing editor of the *Journal of Disability and Religion* and has contributed much to disability studies. In addition to his focus on this topic, he is an Episcopalian and a father of a son with multiple disabilities. Brock is exceptionally qualified to speak to disability and the impact on the church.

Brock's goal is to encourage Christians to consider ways in which they can better serve those with special needs in the context of the local church (1). This work is not a "how to" or "step by step" guide to making churches more inclusive; rather, it is a catalyst to help pastors and church members think deeply on the issues surrounding those with disabilities (2). Brock begins by explaining the problem associated with the topic of disability, "One of the most difficult aspects of talking about disability is the awkward fact that most people have precious little first-hand experience of it – or think that they don't" (6). The result is that most people with special needs do not attend church (7). Since people with disabilities do not attend church, the church has little to no experience serving them (10-11). Therefore, he writes the purpose of his book, "once we begin to give a little more concerted effort to thinking well about the disability experience, we discover that what we once experienced as a threatening disability crisis now appears as a promising gateway to a truly life-giving way of following Christ" (11).

Furthermore, Brock gives a definition for what he sets out to do: "The simplest definition of disability theology is this: theological work necessary for us to receive with joy and practical welcome, and without sentimentality or pity, each and every human being as one for whom Christ died" (24). He argues from 1 Corinthians 12:23-26 that there are many parts to the body, but the church today primarily embraces the strong and gifted, which he argues should not be the case (25). To Brock the issue of disability and church is not another problem to be fixed or a special ministry to be started; rather, it is a people who need to be loved and embraced in the family of God (28).

He uncovers the fallacious thinking that "Jesus Heals Everyone He Meets," which has led to Christians thinking they can spontaneously pray over those

with special needs because Jesus wants them to be "normal" (29-31). He gives stories of people with disabilities who felt deeply hurt by people trying to "fix" them (38). He argues that this well-meaning intent by some to cure others is reinforced by our modern-day view on medicine, "We overlay on the Gospels a medical picture of healing that assumes we know what it looks like for bodies to be well functioning and that has no wider goals than to restore that functioning" (52). He explains that this sort of thinking falls short, but provides a better way, "The dis-ease experienced by the Samaritan before the body of the wounded man now appears not a problem but a gift, an invitation to step into our truest selves by stepping into the gratuitous love of Christ. The gift is not an opportunity to 'do something nice,' to discharge a merit-building act of charity, but a gratuitous response to God's mercy to us" (56-57).

Another saying that Brock identifies as unhelpful is, "God chose you because he knew you could handle it," which he says only leads people facing the challenges of disability to more isolation (63). He contends that the study of disability must go beyond the Gospels and survey the rest of Scripture to get a better understanding of what God says about disability (65). He draws from Paul rebuking the church of Corinth in 1 Corinthians 11:20-22, 33, who were not waiting for each other in partaking of the Lord's Supper (89). Brock asserts, "Christians prove they despise weakness in the ways they act toward those they assume to be weak…Those who know themselves as broken, as united in a broken Christ, never rush ahead without the others" (90). He argues that churches who do this will not be a group of the gifted and powerful, but a group who "will be looking out for and embracing people who seem to offer nothing, who appear not to be able to contribute" (91).

Next, he says, "People in pain demand a pastoral response from the church… Good Christians respond to people in pain" (95). All too often, Christians will go to the Fall in providing comfort to those suffering with disabilities, wrongly assuming that people will be comforted by knowing that their disability is a result of the Fall (95-96). He calls for demonstrating love to those in need, "This is what it means to partake of Christ: to be seeking out, one relationship at a time, a community in which the least presentable parts know themselves loved – and so feel free to give what they have to the body in return" (114). This entails not creating programs or initiatives in the church to "include" those with disabilities but to ensure that all people in the body of Christ feel that they "belong" (120).

Lastly, he suggests the solution to the problem, "A good heart is not enough.

Knowing the Bible is not enough. Setting up a 'special needs' ministry is not enough. The whole church needs to become aware of – and embrace – the sheer diversity of human life if our best intentions are not to play out in hurtful actions" (137). He explains that setting up a "program" is problematic because, "Once churches have programs, they have fit people into them. And the rest of the congregation can proceed as if the 'problem' of disability is resolved" (139). He believes that as we must "wait for one another" in order "to have the Holy Spirit's desire for us to be together overwhelm our feelings of awkward embarrassment" (142). According to Brock, there is not a one size fits all methodology to serving those with special needs; rather, it is joining with those in need and to keep trying to embrace, serve, and love them (149). He concludes, "Waiting gives the time for relationship to develop. Waiting acknowledges difference in a patient and generous way. Waiting allows new levels of communication to blossom" (165).

Disability is particularly helpful because it is not a "how to" book to solve the problem of those with disabilities in our churches by creating a separate program or ministry detached from the rest of the church; rather, it is a book that causes the Christian and especially those in leadership in our churches to think on how we view those with disabilities and how best to serve them (2, 139). Although Paul is talking about the differentiation of the rich and the poor in sharing in the Lord's Super in 1 Corinthians 11:33, the application of "waiting on one another" from this text is fitting for churches to consider a better way of serving and including those with special needs (165). We are too accustomed to look to the experts or the professionals to step in to help those who need extra care, but Christians indwelled with the Holy Spirit are more than qualified to sit with a teenage boy with down syndrome or spend a Sunday morning with a 5-year-old girl on the autism spectrum so that her parents can sit under the preaching of the Word of God. To hold a hand, pray for someone, give a hug, or provide a meal are touches of God's grace to others and every Christian is "able" to do that. There is too much fear of offending or not knowing how best to help others, so people do not even try. Brock calls this the "hesitation blues," but what results from hesitation is a missed opportunity to be blessed by those who are served (146). Churches do not need to be wealthy or have special rooms to enter a person's life in a meaningful way. Those with disabilities are not projects or distractions, but vital members of the body of Christ. Brock soars with shattering preconceived notions and existing models of special needs ministry

by giving readers the opportunity to think on what would serving those with disabilities look like in their context.

I applaud Brock for taking up such a challenging topic, but I must critique his lack of clarity on the gospel. I would agree with Brock that providing pastoral care by only explaining that disability stems from the Fall is not enough; however, as he will later admit that "sin is part of the equation" is important because without it the good news of the gospel will not be good news (95-96, 104). Preaching the Fall without Christ is cruel. Preaching the Fall with Christ is life-giving. The person born with disability is not to be blamed for that disability (John 9:3). Adam and Eve are responsible for that. But the person born with disability is still a sinner in need of the God-man, Jesus Christ, who died on the cross for their sins and rose from the dead. Brock makes a concerning statement on why Christ came that I wish he gave further clarification on what he meant, "Jesus did not come into the world just to save our souls from hell. He came to unmask and resist the forces that destroy human lives and to restore those lives to fullness" (163). What are these "forces that destroy human lives" and what does this restoring mean? 1 Peter 3:18 says, "For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit." In short, he is not very clear on the gospel, nor is it the foundation of the book. Why should I wait on the weak or serve those with special needs just because it is considered the right thing to do? Or is it because the Holy Spirit has shown me my weakness, my sin, and my wickedness and I have been restored through the gospel and to union with Christ? So that through the power of the gospel I serve others out of a constant reminder of my weakness and my need for Christ. Romans 5:6 says, "For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly." Without the gospel being primary in serving those with special needs, the question of "why should I" will remain and unfortunately that is not clear in this book. Brock hits around the target but fails to hit the mark in this pivotal area.

Despite the lack of emphasis on the gospel, I found his book extremely helpful for the discussion of serving those with special needs in the local church. Every pastor should take up this book and lead his church in embracing those with disabilities out of the love of Christ.

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In the Name of God: The Colliding Lives, Legends, and Legacies of J. Frank Norris and George W. Truett. By O. S. Hawkins. Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2021, x + 208 pp., $29.99.

Brave indeed is the one who brings luster to the tarnished, illuminates the shadowy and offers impartial historical perspective. O. S. Hawkins does just that as he transports readers face to face with two Baptist icons—J. Frank Norris and George W. Truett. This work is the product of Hawkins's 2020 PhD dissertation *Two Kinds of Baptists: Re-Examining the Legacies of John Franklyn Norris and George Washington Truett*, but it is more than simple biography, it is church and Baptist history, preaching and theology, intrigue and obsession, triumph and tragedy, culminating in the Conservative Resurgence of the SBC. Hawkins is not only the perfect one to tell this tale, but he may also be the only one that can tell it with such perspective, clarity, and passion; for his "own history and heritage afforded [him] a unique opportunity to lead us on a journey of revisiting these two legendary lives" (2). He has one foot firmly planted in Fort Worth (his hometown, a TCU and Southwestern graduate, with familial ties to FBC Fort Worth) and the other in Dallas (President/CEO of GuideStone Financial Resources SBC, former pastor of FBC Dallas).

Like Dickens's *Tale of Two Cities*, Hawkins introduces the background and characters in *Chapter One* and to be sure "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times." Hawkins contrasts Dallas and Fort Worth and their respective First churches as a backdrop to Norris and Truett (11). Norris "built the largest church in the world and at the same time was indicted for and tried for arson, perjury, and even murder" (14), although acquitted on each count. He personified the wild west Cowtown—Fort Worth and was the "true "lone star" in the Lone Star State" (15). Truett was the true opposite of Norris, universally loved, respected, he shunned controversy and conflict (15). While Truett thrived on denominational unity—Norris's aim was doctrinal fidelity.

The following chapter gives the reader a sketch of Norris impoverished childhood. Educated at Baylor and Southern Seminary, Norris found himself at the McKinney Avenue Baptist Church in Dallas with a small congregation of thirteen which in one year blossomed to one thousand (26). Many of the FBC Dallas faithful left Truett for Norris and so began the constant and continuous feud between Norris and Truett, which would last over forty years (26). Norris became pastor of FBC Fort Worth in 1909 (27). Three notable points in his life

and ministry were his acquittal for murder by reason of self-defense (39), an awakening at a revival in 1910 (40), and a second church fire in 1928 where he lost everything (41). Hawkins assesses, "People either loved him and followed him with abandon, or they despised him and stayed as far away from him as possible" (19). The focus of *Chapter Three* is Truett. Beginning with an unusual call to ministry, prompted by his home church, Truett's ministry began (60), as he had "found the shepherd's heart" (63). Helping B. H. Carroll rescue Baylor University from indebtedness, Carroll recommended Truett to FBC Dallas (as he had done for Norris at FBCFW) (63). Two significant points in Truett's ministry, like Norris who had killed a man, Truett accidently shot and killed a friend and church member on a hunting trip (65). Devastated, vowing to never preach again, Truett found affirmation from the Lord in an ensuing dream (66).

The next section covers the *Conflict and Controversy* between Norris and Truett et al. The clash began with Norris's ever-burgeoning McKinney Avenue Baptist Church (88-89). Eventually, conflict escalated to include Carroll's struggle to move Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary from Waco to Fort Worth, the Baylor evolution controversy of the 1920s, the 75 Million Campaign (85) and the ignominious Radio Hate Fest. The final two chapters deal with Norris's contributions to the modern SBC and a powerful conclusion. Hawkins details the Norris influence on the SBC and indeed, "Southern Baptists owe Norris, the "Texas Tornado," a convoluted debt of gratitude" (146).

This work is commendable for several reasons. First, objectivity is the friend of truth and Hawkins cuts through sentimentality and bias and gets to the facts, revealing both Norris's and Truett's strengths and shortcomings. Just a couple of each: positively Norris 1) pastored two churches simultaneously in Fort Worth and Detroit MI for fifteen years (42) with a joint membership of twenty-two thousand making Norris the pastor of the "largest church in the world" (47), and 2) adopted Gambrell's charge of doctrinal loyalty over denominational loyalty (90), as well as Carroll's mantle of doctrinal integrity and taking doctrinal error to the churches (94). Negatively, Norris 1) never accepted any personal responsibility (44), and 2) lived with almost no accountability (53). Positively, Truett: 1) at the behest of President Woodrow Wilson encouraged and preached to the US Armed Forces in WWI Europe and gave his famous address on religious liberty at the US capital in 1920 (68-70), 2) helped institute Baylor Medical Center and the Relief and Annuity Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, known today as GuideStone (72, 75). Negatively, Truett: 1) remained silent

about having members and deacons as Ku Klux Klan members (71-72), and 2) manipulated behind the scenes allowing others to do his dirty work (101).

Second, Hawkins is masterful in his historical analysis of these men and events, considering how their story shapes ours. The SBC of today is much more in line with Norris, than Truett (110). This is true theologically (inerrancy and premillennial eschatology), evangelistically (direct evangelism, multisite campuses, use of social media), the Sunday school movement powered by Flake's Formula, the rise of the Cooperative Program (inadvertently because of Norris's disdain for the 75 Million Campaign), the codifying of the Baptist Faith and Message (likely predicated by Norris's criticism of the Baylor evolution crisis), the Conservative Resurgence (what Norris failed to do *from without* in his lifetime, conservatives were able to do *from within* in the 1970s and 1980s). In summary, Hawkins rightly discerns there is abundant evidence to assert the SBC transformation that began in 1979 reflects the ministerial vision and method of Norris (126). Finally, Hawkins courageously reveals the inability of some to "do the right thing", whether it is Josephine Truett hindering reconciliation between her dying husband and Norris (148), the silence of L. R. Scarborough on Baylor's evolution crisis and his participation in the Radio Hate Fest, or Leon McBeth's myopia concerning Norris having no constructive part in SBC ministries in this century (139).

O. S. Hawkins has supplied an invaluable resource to Southern Baptists—this book will be a welcomed read for the layperson and the minister. Certainly, "those who fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it." Current issues facing Baptists (CRT, sexual abuse, the office of pastor, plagiarism) must give sway to doctrinal integrity and holiness, not denominational capitulation. To see more on Norris and Truett and their relationship to W. A. Criswell, look forward to the release of the O. S. Hawkins sequel *One Somebody You*: *The Life and Legacy of W. A. Criswell* (B&H Academic, 2022). May we all remember what our forefathers at times forgot, "But speaking the *truth* in *love*, let us grow in every way into him who is the head—Christ." (Eph 4:15).

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In the Name of Our Lord: Four Models of the Relationship between Baptism, Catechesis, & Communion. By Jonathan D. Watson. Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2022, 260 pp. $29.99.

In this revision of his PhD dissertation from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Jonathan D. Watson (Charleston Southern University) seeks to develop a comprehensive conceptual framework for describing and analyzing various models of Christian initiation—that is, the primary ways of characterizing the relationship between the practices of baptism and catechesis, as prerequisites to participation in the full, visible fellowship of Christian communion in the eucharist, that have been embraced historically by the major Christian traditions. By identifying and explaining the "liturgical logic" (2) that underpins each approach, Watson aims to help churches and their current or aspiring leaders to foster deeper reflection on the internal consistency (or inconsistency) of their own doctrine and practice, in addition to cultivating more genuine understandings of the practices of other traditions.

Of course, conceptual frameworks are, by definition, rather abstract, and do not always readily lend themselves to verbal descriptions (though the visual diagrams in this volume certainly help). Watson's consists of a total of four models for conceiving the relationship between baptism and catechesis, arranged on a spectrum—the Baptism, Retrospective, Prospective, and Catechesis models. While the "independent" models of Baptism and Catechesis, as the extreme poles of the spectrum, require only one initiatory practice or the other to confer entrance into the church, the inner two, the "interdependent" Retrospective and Prospective models, require both (77). The difference between these two interdependent models, as their names imply, is in the direction of the orientation of catechesis to baptism that they envision (in the former, catechesis is "retrospective," reflecting on a baptism already received and drawing out its full implications, while in the latter, catechesis is "prospective," laying the doctrinal and ethical groundwork that prepares the initiate to receive baptism). In practice, the bulk of Watson's focus (roughly half the text) is on these two interdependent models, since they represent the majority of historic and mainstream Christian traditions.

What lies at the heart of much analytic discussion of the framework's "models," "categories," "seams," "sequences," and other apparatus, however, is Watson's extended and often quite insightful meditation on the key theological principle of

lex orandi, lex credendi. As Watson himself acknowledges with a succinct profundity in the closing chapter: "Simply put, the model of entrance we deploy speaks. We do well, then, to consider what it is saying." (207) This is because "what it is saying," when publicly expressed in practice, directly shapes the theological vision of the church as a whole—there is a dialectical relationship between what the church confesses in its doctrinal statements and what it rehearses in its liturgical ceremonies, and consciously reflecting on this relationship (with the help of a conceptual framework such as Watson's) can help to maintain, or perhaps even restore, a healthy congruity between the two.

Informed, as it is, by a rigorous and wide-ranging examination of historical and contemporary sources (including catechetical manuals, confessions, and systematic theologies) from the Catholic, Orthodox, Baptist, Presbyterian, Lutheran, and other traditions, Watson's explication of each of the four models comprising his typology is both thorough and judicious—so judicious, in fact, that his own convictions never quite break through, either explicitly or implicitly (though they might be guessed, in light of his Baptist background and training, and the placement of the Prospective Model, which encompasses credobaptism, in the final position).

This is not to say that the study is merely descriptive, however, since, after completing his construction of the models, Watson proceeds to consider what "theological catalyst" may motivate the adoption of one model over another (169)—concluding that, though it may superficially appear to be simply a product of the initiate's "life stage" (baptism as either an infant or an adult), the determinative factor is actually the timing of the "entrance-defining confirmation of faith" (which either coincides with baptism, as in the Prospective model, or follows it, as in the Retrospective model) (203). In addition, Watson offers three "pastoral insights" that a church's leaders may gain through a self-examining reflection on his framework. These include the importance of a discriminate administration of the sacraments, which is necessary to preserves the church's particular liturgical logic, whatever it maybe (209); a harmonization of the divine, individual, and congregational "voices" involved in initiation (214); and an overarching concern for consistency and proportionality in the evaluation of the church's doctrinal teaching and liturgical practice (223). Nevertheless, Watson's very carefully-balanced and unprejudiced presentation does ultimately leave the reader itching for a definitive verdict from him (or at least a summary of pros and cons) by way of conclusion.

No matter where Watson (or the reader) personally lands on these matters, however, the great achievement of the work is to have stimulated a more ordered, intentional, and nuanced consideration of the issues involved—issues which are far too complex, as he notes, to be reduced to a single point of doctrine, or even to be divided simply and neatly along denominational lines. Indeed, as a contribution to the growing field of truly integrative biblical-theological-historical studies among evangelicals (of which Lexham's *Studies in Historical & Theological Studies* series, in which this volume appears, has furnished numerous recent examples), Watson's framework provides a commendable illustration of the way that such an interdisciplinary approach can helpfully shed light on both the essential doctrinal convictions of Christian orthodoxy and the "liturgical logic" to which they give rise, as these mutually inform each other and, in turn, shape the church's faith and practice.

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Natural Theology. By Geerhardus Vos. Translated by Albert Gooties. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2022., $25.00 hardback.

Is there really a stark antithesis between philosophy and theology? Is doing natural theology following the way of Cain? (xvii; lxv). Geerhardus Vos (1862-1949), known as the "father of biblical theology," was a professor at Princeton and a Dutch American Reformed Calvinist. He is the author of several books, articles, and published dictation notes. Most notably is his *Biblical Theology* and *Reformed Dogmatics*. Standing in the same vein as Abraham Kuyper and Herman Bavinck, Vos's work, *Natural Theology,* comes to the theological academic community amid a revival in Vos studies as an essential work of philosophical theology (vii). *Natural Theology,* which was originally dictated (viii) to his students in lecture format, is presented in the form of catechetical instruction (224 questions and answers). This catechetical format mirrors the dogmatics of Abraham Kuyper (viii). This volume relies on three classroom manuscripts found in the archives by James Baird in Heritage Hall at the Free University in Amsterdam (vii).

Space restricts me to limit myself to three reasons for why this book should be read. First, due to the detailed introduction (written by J. V. Fesko), *Natural Theology* functions as an aid in locating Vos squarely within the reformed-scholastic tradition. In recent decades, Protestant theologians have (re)turned to Thomas Aquinas and found his approach to theology to be in the general agreement reformed theology (xvii-xl). Fesko shows similarities between the approaches of Aquinas and Vos. Secondly, *Natural Theology* is a newly translated and published primary source for anyone desiring to study the American-Reformed tradition or the academic atmosphere of Old Princeton. And finally, *Natural Theology* provides a basic, general overview that aids in the task of apologetics and evangelism. Vos's presentation of the proofs—and the different theories and philosophers that parse them out—is excellent prep work for anyone desiring to engage unbelievers in debate or in the task of evangelism.

The text is divided into three sections and each section into smaller subunits. First in his "Prolegomenon" (QQ. 1-42), Vos deals with definitions and explains the value of natural theology: "It does, however, directly teach many things that Scripture does not so much explicitly teach as assume ... [It] owes its position in science to its use in apologetics, for refuting those who have rejected the supernatural revelation of God" (5). He also distinguishes between natural theology and revealed theology saying, "both have the same object—that is, God. It is distinguished from revealed theology in that its source of knowledge and method of treatment differ" (3). Furthermore, he lists several arguments that church fathers, scholastics, and reformers have used. They are "the argument from analogy, the Ontological argument, Historical arguments, and the Cosmological argument" (6). Finally, he gives a brief survey of the reception of natural theology among scholastics, East and West church traditions, various philosophers, and ends with a survey of Immanual Kant's system. It is important to note that Vos sees two different types of natural theologies that come from interpreting the book of nature: Regenerate and Non-regenerate. Like Augustine, Calvin, and others, Vos sees that the Christian is the only truly consistent natural theologian.

In his second section, "Systems of Religion" (QQ. 43-204), Vos begins with a historical overview of monism, pantheism, deism, monotheism, theism, polytheism, dualism, pluralism, and atheism (20-36). For each of these views he not only explains their history but also provides a critique. His critique of atheism is worth noting, for it falls in line with Calvin's *sensus divinitatis* and Romans.

He says, "absolute dogmatic, positive atheism is an impossibility, a delusion, at which one can only arrive by proud self-blinding and by superficiality, but that the witness of the conscience to God's existence—just like all other innate knowledge of God—remains in the deepest recesses of the heart . . . .Something innate can never be lost altogether" (32-33).

Much of the content of "Systems of Religion" section concerns the classical arguments for the existence of God (46-87). He begins with Anselm's Ontological argument, but critiques it much in the same way as Gaunilo did in the eleventh century. Secondly, dealing with the Cosmological argument in its Aristotelian sense, Vos offers a balanced analysis demonstrating its strengths and weaknesses:

> Its strength lies in the fact that it points us to the necessary existence of a cause for all that comes into being. Its weakness lies in the fact that it teaches us nothing about this cause, except that it is a cause. We do not learn whether this cause is mind, is one, works teleologically, etc. It also cannot teach us whether this cause can exist separately from the world or is inseparably tied to it. Pantheism can therefore use this argument just as well as we can; it is not specifically theistic (55).

But from a Christian standpoint, Vos adopts the Cosmological argument into his theological program. He says plainly, "That God is the creator follows from the cosmological argument" (61). Third, he explains the Teleological view which concerns the order and purpose of creation and contrasts it with the cosmological. Vos expounds, "The teleological view on things is not simple but compound, so that we can parse it into its parts. The causal view on things is simple and cannot be reduced to more simple elements" (58). He puts a very high premium on the Teleological argument saying that "without it all scientific investigation becomes impossible" (59). Fourth, Vos describes the "three great ideas" of the Ethical argument: The idea of duty, the virtue, and the good. To do this he traces the origin of conscience, the development of ethics from a Hobbesian, and explores the evolutionary, utilitarian, and hedonistic views of ethics (69-76). Ultimately, he favors the claim that a true ethic is an outflow of the character of God. Finally, his analysis of the arguments crescendo in the Religious argument. It is important to note that Vos sees all the arguments as interrelated and inseparable from the others. His conclusion is:

> 204: How must this religious argument be related to the aforementioned arguments?
>
> Not so much as a new or separate argument for the existence of God, but as the living summary of the different arguments. All the things that have been argued abstractly above now show themselves to be a practical reality in the lives of people, which they must and do indeed take into account (87).

In the final section of *Natural Theology*, Vos deals exclusively with "The Immortality of the Soul" (QQ. 205-224). He covers four main hypotheses of the essence of the soul: The idealist view, materialist view, identity thesis, and the dualistic theory (89-94). He evaluates each view through the metaphysical, ethical, religious, and historical arguments. This is the shortest section of the book, and it culminates in an affirmation of the immortality of the soul rooted in objective historical reality of the resurrection (97).

My evaluation of the book is almost entirely positive. Much praise needs to be given on behalf of *Natural Theology*. The author/lecturer achieved his goal of presenting an accessible general overview. The catechetical format is ideal for the seminarian. The questions he raises throughout the work are pertinent and relevant and his answers are thorough. I would like to offer two specific ways in which the book excels and give a critique.

My first praise regards Vos's analysis of the Cosmological argument (in its Aristotelian form). Vos refreshingly unpacks cosmological argument in QQ. 115-131 (53-57). He says, in order for the argument to work, it must assume that the world is a type of effect that needs to have an absolute causer for its explanation. He clarifies saying that "everything that is subject to change and transformation must have a cause. But one wonders whether the world really is such a thing (=an effect in this sense)" (54). This section is relevant for the apologist who might be debating an unbeliever who advocates for a type of infinitude of matter or infinite universe. Thus, the apologist would do well to read and think through the particulars of the argument and Vos's treatment of it. Furthermore, Vos elucidates the argument more saying that "there is nothing in the world that bears the character of an absolute (=uncaused) cause" (54-55). Thus, to arrive at the idea of an "uncaused cause" one must do so by abstraction and negation. An *un*caused cause, therefore, is an argument of remotion, a type of negation (Aquinas). This is important because it shows that

the cosmological argument is a form of a *via negativa* and would be beneficial to read for any student of Aquinas.

My second praise is for Vos's keen awareness of the difference between the natural theology of the regenerate and that of the unregenerate. For Vos, the arguments, like tools, are good but can be used correctly or incorrectly according to the agent. The unregenerate produces and erroneous natural theology, the regenerate a correct one. For example, the Cosmological argument has swayed from deism to pantheism. To be fair, there was not a single section in the book that dealt with this directly. However, it was a latent and powerful supporting theme throughout the book. We can see it when Vos criticizes pantheism: "There is also a naturalistic pantheism. Its origins lie *not so much in philosophical speculation as in the innate drive within the human nature to venerate something outside itself* [emphasis mine]. When true knowledge and veneration of God were lost through sin, the human race exchanged God for nature" (24). And again, he says toward the end of the book concerning the idolatry of the nations: "Even when people fall from their awareness of the existence of a personal God, *they cannot fail to set up something else in God's place so as to venerate it*. . . . All idolatry therefore contains an element of self-worship. See also Romans 1: 25" (86). Man is an inescapable *homo adorans* for Vos. This is extremely helpful for the apologist because it can provide common ground for believer and unbeliever to have a meaningful conversation. It is also helpful for those who are within the academic community who are seemingly talking past each other about natural theology.

Natural Theology is not without its faults. Though Vos's intensity of insight and theological depth are clearly seen, his work on the "Immortality of the Soul" leaves the reader wanting. His definition of the soul is "a complete unity manifesting itself in our self-consciousness ... the continued existence, even after the body's decomposition ... the indivisible subject of mental phenomena" (93). While the definition is good, I would have liked a much more detailed investigation of the relationship between the soul and the brain. But there is a lacuna here. Second, I would have liked Vos to expand on Question 223 and give a more thorough answer: "What is the religious argument for the immortality of the soul?" (96). To be fair, he does discuss the relationship between the *imago Dei* and the immortality of the soul: "The fact that the human race is God's image bearer makes the supposition of the ending existence of the soul an improbable one" (96). Still, a more developed exposition of *imago Dei* is expected. But perhaps Vos intended to restrict this for a different class?

Natural Theology is a fantastic book for the theologian, seminarian, and educated pastor. It would be beneficial for anyone who finds themselves in a teaching

position to acquire a personal copy and consider using it in their teaching. It is probably not accessible for the common layperson. Many of the terms, arguments, theories, and historical persons mentioned will be foreign to the average church member or even pastor who hasn't studied such things. While it is a general overview, it is not an *introduction.* It assumes a level of familiarity with philosophical theology. For those are studying natural theology and reformed theology, Vos's lecture notes are fresh ground for digging. For further investigation of the relationship between Aquinas and Van Til, one might read this text to discover the methodology of the *magister* of Van Til.

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Approaching the Atonement: The Reconciling Work of Christ. By Oliver D. Crisp. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2020.

Oliver D. Crisp is professor of analytical theology at the University of St. Andrews. Beside this book, he has written other books in the field of Systematic Theology and the Reformed tradition. He is also a founding editor of the Journal of Analytic Theology, and he also is one of the organizers of the annual Los Angeles Theology Conference. With *Approaching the Atonement,* Crisp is trying to provide a method of atonement who answers the question of the mechanism by means of which Christ reconciles humans to God (3). Crisp intended with this book to provide a guide for those thinking through the difficult issues which the atonement raises (10).

The author began his book by providing an approach to the atonement. In chapter one he introduced the topic to readers who may not have the proper understanding of the doctrine of the atonement. He covered some terminology that is fundamental for the proper understanding of the remaining of the book. It was in chapter two where the author began to explore some patristic teaching of the atonement. Crisp referred to Athanasius and Irenaeus and their teachings. The reason for this is that the author believed that Gustav Aulén wrongly taught that the patristic period of the church was dominated universally by the classic view of the atonement (31). Crisp concluded this chapter demonstrating that both patristic figures had distinct views of the atonement which may not be connected to any doctrine of the atonement developed later (45). In chapter

three, the author evaluated the Ransom doctrine of the atonement and the Christus Victor view. He clarified the differences between Ransom Theory and Christus Victor. Crisp finished this chapter stating that the Ransom Theory of the atonement does not provide a mechanism of the atonement neither when they are combined nor when they are taught separately (60). On chapter four, the author introduced the Satisfaction doctrine of the atonement. After providing a brief biography of Anselm, he summarized the Satisfaction view of the atonement in thirteen bullet points. Crisp considered important for the readers to know that Satisfaction is not the same as Penal Substitution. In Penal Substitution Christ is punished in the place of the sinners while in Satisfaction Christ only satisfied the payment that human sins have caused (69). After this, Crisp evaluated some objections to the Satisfaction doctrine of the atonement and he concluded this chapter by recognizing that though the Satisfaction view of the atonement is very precise and still in use today, it doesn't provide a mechanism of the atonement (77). In chapter five, Crisp evaluated the moral exemplarism view of the atonement which began with Peter Abelard. The purpose of this chapter is to clear up the misunderstanding of this doctrine as a view of the atonement and to provide an account of two versions of the doctrine that sometimes are distinguished in theology (78). After some historical background for the Moral Exemplarism, the author provided the two versions of this doctrine which he called the non-atonement moral exemplarism where the work of Christ is not a matter of atonement because it doesn't supply a mechanism in which humans are reconciled to God (84). And the atonement moral exemplarism where the work of Christ provides a mechanism by which humans are reconciled to God. For Crisp none of these views of the moral exemplarism provide a sound mechanism of the atonement. On the one hand the non-atonement view is silent to this issue; and the atonement view raises other problematic issues which seem to presume an inadequate understanding of human sin (93). On chapter six, the author landed in the Penal Substitutionary Atonement. After defining and explaining this view, Crisp proceeded to unpack the objections this view presents. Crisp ended this chapter by arguing that Penal Substitutionary Atonement may be justified by giving some assumptions (112). In chapter seven, Crisp introduced and explained the governmental and vicarious penitence doctrines. These two doctrines, the author considers to be variation of the Ransom Theory and the Penal Substitution Theory. Because they are slightly different in the mechanism of the atonement they provide, Crisp covered them and concluded this chapter

stating that though these two views have some value, they still bringing some problematic issues like the ones in Penal Substitution and Ransom Theory (129). In chapter eight, Crisp deals with the problem of atoning violence. In this, he tried to provide a reason behind the reconciling work of Christ had to be accomplished by a violent death such as crucifixion, but he is aware that this may raise some concerns. Because of this he anticipated to unpack some of the concerns such as the divine child abuse, the redemptive violence view, and the double effect response which is the ground base for the author's personal contribution. In his chapter nine, Dr Crisp evaluated the Mashup and Kaleidoscopic view of the atonement. His main argument is that these two views are not new views, but rather they are a composition of the doctrines of the atonement that have developed throughout the history of the Christian faith (147). It is in chapter ten where the author provided his view of the atonement that he called the Union Account of the Atonement. Crisp tried to provide in the Union Account of the Atonement a response to the mechanism of the atonement, which is a gap he sees in other doctrines of the atonement which he evaluated throughout the book. Crisp stated that the central claim of the Union Account is that fallen human beings are somehow really united to Adam in their fallen humanity and also united with Christ in redeemed humanity (167).

Crisp raised another voice in the conversation of the atonement in the theological circles. The number of illustrations the author used through the book to explain technical and hard-to-understand issues are sufficient for beginners in the field of the atonement to digest properly the debate. Also, his introduction and chapter one represent an attempt to open the door for those new to the field of the issue of the atonement. The mechanism of the atonement which the author was trying to prove that is lacking in the doctrines of the atonement he evaluated, is not provided either in his Union Account. The reason for this is that union with Christ is only possible after the reconciliation with God is possible, and the reconciliation with God is possible through the atonement. The author did not provide an explanation on how union with Christ is possible through the atonement of Christ. Because of that the book fails in providing an answer to the mechanism of the atonement. Crisp insinuated to favor the Penal Substitutionary Doctrine of the atonement and seemed to demonstrate through his Union Account a way in which to provide a response to the objections of Penal Substitutionary Atonement. Though in every chapter the author rightly demonstrated that in every doctrine of the atonement the issue of the mechanism

is a gap, he never closed the gap in his contribution in the last chapter. After all the pros and cons evaluated, *Approaching the Atonement* is just another voice that is worth of listening to. This book is useful for readers interested in the atonement and it provides a great survey of the different ways the atonement has been taught throughout the history of the church.

The author is trying to provide an answer to the problem of the mechanism of the atonement. In every chapter the author evaluated the different theories of the atonement and pointed to the fact that none of them provide a mechanism. In the last chapter, Crisp provided his own contribution aiming to answer the issue that is lacking among the different theories. Unfortunately, his contribution does not answer the issue of the mechanism either. This book is useful for theology students and lay people interested in the atoning work of Christ. They may benefit from the interaction the author is having with the different views of the atonement.

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Figuring Resurrection: Joseph as a Death & Resurrection Figure in the Old Testament & Second Temple Judaism. Studies in Scripture and Biblical Theology. By Jeffrey Pulse. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2021, ix + 309 pp., $29.99 paper.

Jeffrey Pulse currently serves as professor of exegetical theology at Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, IN. He earned his doctoral degree from the University of Durham, England emphasizing concepts of the afterlife in the Old Testament and Second Temple Judaism. *Figuring Resurrection* is an edited version of his 2017 dissertation and represents a recent renewal of interest in the interpretation and significance of the Joseph narrative (Gen 37–50) in wider evangelicalism. In his own words, Pulse is seeking to "resurrect Joseph's character and present him as he was once seen," as primarily a death-and-resurrection figure through whom the prominent dying and rising theme of the narrative comes to the fore (1, 11).

Pulse demonstrates his thesis in three clear parts. First, he lays the hermeneutical groundwork for his study, arguing for a "narrative reading" that approaches the text as a "unified theological narrative" (48). Such a reading stands on

the shoulders of Brevard Childs' canonical approach, Robert Alter's narrative approach, and Jon Levenson's synchronic literary approach, and aligns with the hermeneutic of the Theological Interpretation of Scripture (TIS) movement which observes the development of motifs in the biblical canon based on a "deeper meaning" or allegorical interpretation (52). For Pulse, the means by which one may read the Bible as a unity is the interweaving of motifs (56).

Second, Pulse devotes most of the book to an exhaustive treatment of the Hebrew text of Genesis 37–50. Through the course of three chapters, he summarizes the content of the Joseph narrative; he demonstrates the fruit of a careful reading of the text, namely, the unearthing of several questions regarding Joseph's character, questions that may strike readers as controversial given the historical interpretation of Joseph as a wise, righteous man; and he identifies and unpacks twelve manifestations of the downward/upward, death-and-resurrection motif in Joseph's character and story. Although a detailed examination stands outside his scope, Pulse proposes that the life of Joseph provided the foundation on which the rest of the Scriptures, including the New Testament, build the theological teaching of resurrection from death (195).

Finally, Pulse examines implications for interpreting the Joseph narrative from secondary sources, namely, the Septuagint (LXX) and Targum Onqelos. By comparing each source to the Masoretic Text (MT) and to each other, Pulse argues that these intertestamental and post-destruction rabbinic sources adjust the lexical and syntactical content of the MT to present Joseph as a salvific figure and moral exemplar. While such changes are modest, they have had the effect of muting the main thematic thrust of the MT, that being death and resurrection.

Pulse's work is erudite and thorough, and he makes a compelling case for many of his assertions regarding the significance of the Joseph narrative. First and foremost, he successfully demonstrates his thesis that reading the story as a thematic unity results in understanding Joseph as a death-and-resurrection figure. His rejection of source criticism in favor of the final form of the text is praiseworthy and it aligns with the contemporary thrust among evangelicals to pursue meaning according to the final form of the text since the work of Childs. Scholarly work of this caliber will continue to mute the influence of the Documentary Hypothesis among interpreters of the Pentateuch.

Furthermore, Pulse's hermeneutical commitments demand answers to perennially difficult questions in the Joseph narrative, namely, the function of Genesis 38 in the overall narrative. The easy answer is to relegate the inclusion of the story

of Judah and Tamar to another author and poor redacting, but Pulse shines as he demonstrates the thematic unity of Genesis 38 with the rest of the narrative.

The greatest strength of Pulse's work is certainly his close reading of the MT. His attention to the details of the text exemplifies both love for the source and the fruits of devoting significant time and attention to the Scriptures. Readers would be blessed to follow in his footsteps. For example, his observation of doubling in the MT and its function in communicating thematic emphasis becomes even more important when, as he points out, the LXX translation removes all the doubling to smooth the source for ease of aural reception. Through such reasoning the genius of the logic and organization of Pulse's work shines through.

Figuring Resurrection is not without points worthy of critique, however. First, periodically his observations of the MT are irrelevant to his thesis and the conclusions he draws are speculative. For instance, he connects Joseph's threefold separation from his father, his father's household, and his homeland to the same in Abram's life (Gen 12:1) (89). This is an intriguing observation, but Pulse does not explain its significance or its connection to his thesis. Similar examples are plentiful, so a tighter handling of the text would have helped chapter three to remain grounded.

Second, Pulse's characterization of the discipline of biblical theology is suspect. He adopts Levenson's conflation of biblical theology with the historical-critical method (31), arguing with Levenson that applying a diachronic perspective to biblical interpretation in any fashion undermines the principle that the Bible is a unity (33). In doing so Pulse has effectively ignored the evangelical expression of biblical theology in the work of James Hamilton, G. K. Beale, Stephen Wellum and Peter Gentry, and many others. These scholars acknowledge the diachronic nature of the Bible as progressive revelation and the necessity of recognizing this progression in interpreting thematic development across the canon, which leads to a further question: can biblical motifs function only synchronically? And if so, does original authorial intent determine meaning in any way? The reality is that the unity and inspiration of Scripture and the diversity of human author expression across the history of salvation are not at odds with each other. Pulse claims that his approach provides a platform for various voices to speak (51), but it is difficult to marry such a statement with his statements regarding the irrelevance of authorial intent elsewhere (39, 52).

Finally, in accordance with TIS and a synchronic hermeneutic, Pulse affirms a deeper meaning in Scripture accessible through allegorical interpretation

(52). Allegory serves as the means by which readers claim validity for their interpretations of thematic development across the canon following in the vein of the early church. Texts have authors, though, who communicated their intended meaning through the words on the page. A much more reasonable and verifiable hermeneutic understands thematic development according to inner-biblical interpretation and human authorial intent. Although Pulse does not move beyond Genesis in the canon in this book, his argument concerning the garment motif in Scripture would be much more compelling from an inner-biblical perspective emphasizing authorial intent rather than an allegorical one emphasizing reader response.

In *Figuring Resurrection,* Jeffrey Pulse has offered a compelling contribution regarding an underappreciated but significant biblical character in Joseph. The death-and-resurrection figure has surely been resurrected. This book is accessible but rather technical in many places and thus is suitable for masters-level students and above.

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Redeeming Our Thinking About History: A God-Centered Approach. By Vern S. Poythress. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2022, 247 pp., $24.99 paper.

The question of how to write and think about history has been the subject of much debate in Christian circles over the past several decades. In particular, there has been fierce disagreement about the acceptability of making explicit reference to providence and the purposes of God in the writing of history and biography. In his book, *Redeeming Our Thinking About History,* Westminster Theological Seminary professor and prolific author Vern Poythress sought to address this controversy and provide a “God-centered approach” to the way that Christians should think about history. The book covers a wide swath of considerations related to Christian consideration of history, but Poythress’ primary argument throughout was that all our thinking about history should be shaped by our understanding of the sovereign purposes of God as revealed in Scripture. This understanding should, Poythress suggested, work itself out in different ways depending on the context and the degree to which Scriptural principles can clearly be seen in the situation, but the providence and purposes

of God should always be present in our thinking.

Though the primary purpose of the work is to defend the use of providence in Christian writing and thinking about history, Poythress did not begin with that controversy, but rather sought to build a Christian understanding of history from the ground up, starting from a biblical basis for the significance of history. The book argues that we should study and value history because God's glory and his works are revealed in it. Though this is consummately true in biblical history, Poythress argued, it remains true to a lesser degree in every part of history, from the grand world-scale events to the private history of an individual. From a theological perspective, Poythress also suggested that our studies must be based around the understanding that history is a web of interrelationships between events, persons, and meanings, which together reflect the unity and diversity of the triune God. We may focus on one particular aspect more than others, but we must always include both unity and diversity if we are to be truthful in our telling of history.

After providing a theological introduction to the study of history, Poythress then turned to the main thrust of his argument – his understanding of causality in history. Based an analysis of historical writing in Scripture, Poythress argued that biblical commands and prophecy provide the lens through which history must be interpreted. Though we must be cautious in our applications of biblical teaching to extra-biblical history because we, unlike the biblical authors, cannot claim divine inspiration, the effort to apply Scriptural truth to history remains legitimate and even imperative for faithful Christians. Poythress ardently defended the legitimacy of a church prayer circle identifying the purposes of God in the events of personal histories, and on that basis argued that the same can be done on a broader scale in academic and public history.

Overall, the book provides an account of history and historical thinking that is biblically and theologically robust. While much ink has been spilled on the subject of Christian historiography in recent years, and there have been many treatments of the issue of providence in history, few go into detail that Poythress did on the biblical and theological backdrop of the issues. The first fifteen chapters, which are arguably the most valuable portion of the book, are replete with the careful exegesis of Scripture. His assessment of the historical books and their method of conveying the purposes of God is both insightful and unique among literature of this type. On the theological side, Poythress' connections between the three aspects of history (events, people, and meanings) and Frame's

three approaches to ethics, and the three persons of the Trinity are particularly thought-provoking. Poythress' expertise as a systematic theologian is clearly on display in this section, as well as in his skillful treatment of the issues of God's sovereignty and the limitations of human knowledge and objectivity.

For readers who hoping for practical advice on the writing of history, Poythress does leave something to be desired. Though the book does include two examples of the way that his account of historical thinking would play out in the consideration of particular historical periods (the persecution of the early church and the theological debates surrounding the reformation), both examples are very broad, and there is little discussion about how this way of thinking might apply to the more specific questions considered by most academic historians. Poythress addressed many of the concerns of those who would oppose the use of providence in the academic writing of history by stating the need for humility and caution in our applications and admitting that it has been done badly in the past, but he did not give a particular vision of what a legitimate application of Scripture to an academic historical study might look like. In fairness to Poythress, however, the book is primarily focused on presenting an approach to *thinking* about history, not *writing* history, so perhaps the omission is a result of that focus.

Despite the lack of specific application, *Redeeming Our Thinking About History* provides an in-depth and fresh approach to the task of thinking about history in a distinctly Christian way. The depth of Poythress' biblical and theological considerations is rare among this type of literature, and he speaks into the often-heated controversy regarding providence with considerable charity and grace. Lay Christians, pastors, and academic historians alike will find material for contemplation in Poythress' comprehensive and well-written treatment, and his many footnotes and substantial bibliography provide ample resources for further study. Overall, Poythress succeeds extremely well at providing what the subtitle claims, a "God-centered approach" to thinking about history, from the metanarrative of Scripture to the histories of our own personal lives.

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Christ Humbled yet Exalted. By John Flavel. Edited and abridged by J. Stephen Yuille. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Reformation Heritage Books, 2021, xv + 190 pp., $16.00 paper.

In addition to several books, Oxford-educated and English Nonconformist pastor John Flavel (1628-1691) published many sermons which were collected after his death. In *The Works of John Flavel* (six volumes printed by Banner of Truth Trust) are forty-two sermons circulated by Flavel himself under the title, *The Fountain of Life*. From that collection, essentially the last half were chosen by editor Stephen Yuille for incorporation into *Christ Humbled yet Exalted*.

Yuille (PhD, London School of Theology) is himself a renowned historical theologian and pastor. He currently serves as Professor of Spiritual Formation and Pastoral Theology at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Flavel "was known for doctrinal instruction and pastoral application" (ix). Perhaps influencing such aspirations, he experienced great personal loss himself; his parents died of plague (his father while imprisoned for his beliefs), three wives and several children preceded him in death, and the Anglican-enmeshed English government forbade him to preach for a time. Flavel learned first-hand, though, that despite circumstances a Christian can have joy which is "ultimately rooted in the knowledge of Jesus Christ," because "all the comforts of believers are streams from this fountain" (x, Works 1:35).

Selections from *The Fountain* included in *Christ Humbled* support Yuille's understanding of Favel's thesis, "that Christ is the fountain of true joy because he has secured it for his people by means of his twofold estate – humiliation and exaltation," for "he has removed our debt [via humiliation] and secured our inheritance [via exaltation]" (xi, xii).

After a brief introduction to Flavel's life and ministry, Yuille provides twenty chapters which almost exactly follow sermons 18-42 of the source material. The first fifteen deal with Christ's humiliation, and the last five regard his exaltation. Consistency with Flavel is also seen in Yuille's following of sermon order, a mild abridgement and modernization of the text, and dutiful maintenance of the original sermon structure – the typical Puritan form of explanation, doctrine, and application.

Although leaving the original text mostly intact, Yuille does occasionally rearrange some material and provide additional headings to aid the reader in understanding the author's thought. An added benefit to the scrupulous notetaker

(especially when outlining), Yuille has provided standalone chapter titles which reflect content without enslavement to Flavel's titles and sermon introductions, which apparently were not always preplanned when first delivered.

The first two chapters explore two phases of Christ's humiliation, in the human experiences of birth and life. Immanent and lowly, Jesus voluntarily embraced the pain, sorrow, and temptations of man's fallen condition because of pity for us. Flavel warns readers that "the lower Christ stooped to save us, the lower we will sink under wrath if we neglect so great a salvation" (6).

Death is the third phase of Christ's humiliation and receives the most substantial treatment in this book (comprising chapters 3-15). Chapters 3-5 discuss elements of Jesus' preparation for death: the high priestly prayer, institution of the Lord's Supper, and a painstaking appeal to his Father on behalf of the disciples. Then, in chapters 6-8 attention is given to the debasement, forsakenness, and sorrow of his death.

The humble Jesus is next described in a series of five sermons (chapters 9-13) which explore instructional statements given by him while hanging on the cross. Here, Flavel also teaches that there are four types of temporary desertion by God of his children (including Jesus' experience on the cross) in which the Father removes "manifestations of his love and favor for a time," but purposefully and for our good (90).

A component of Jesus' death on the cross was suffering which involved physical pain. Once again, Flavel cautions believers that "if Christ complained, 'I thirst,' when he had struggled but a few hours with God's wrath, what is the state of those who will grapple with it forever?" (109) Such provocation toward a sober faith does not stand alone, however, because the author uses distress to lay a foundation for relief. As believers consider the outcome of Jesus' horrifying experience, the securement for us of a future state with him, we may have hope to endure life's afflictions. At death all believers will immediately join Jesus in heaven. After all, "why did he come into the world if there is no future state?" (83) Furthermore, we are comforted in knowing that "Christ finished his work *for* us [in his humble birth, life, and death]; therefore, there is no doubt that he will finish his work *in* us." (119) Here again Flavel charges Christians to take heed as to how we live. "Will Christ work and we play? Will a zealous Christ be reproached with idle and lazy followers?" (121)

Although a transition in theme is evidently approaching, chapters 14-15 first deal with Jesus' burial and the results of his completed work on our behalf:

deliverance from danger, atonement for sin, cleansing of pollution, and confirmation of the new covenant.

Next, Yuille inserts chapter sixteen (not a separate sermon in *The Fountain*) as a marker to delineate the official shift in themes from humiliation to exaltation. Then, the final chapters 17-20 elucidate aspects of Jesus' resurrection, such as: the power and effect of its occurrence, the resulting location of Christ now, and the potential for his future return in judgment. In the last pages, Flavel again compels his audience to respond with action. As he puts it, "Christ entered heaven as a forerunner. We should be diligent in following him. Did he run to glory, and will we linger?" (168)

The assessment in summary, Yuille makes the biblical teaching of a Puritan pastor accessible to a broad audience, from the lay church member to the historical theologian. Thus, the practicality of this monograph accords with a useful place in both academia and on the bookstore shelf; as an introduction to Flavel or Puritan doctrine in general, while also meeting devotional criteria of simplicity and brevity – chapter length averaging less than ten pages.

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Signs of the Messiah: An Introduction to John's Gospel. Andreas J. Köstenberger. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2021, 200 pp., $27.99 hardcover.

Dr. Andreas Köstenberger, Research Professor of New Testament and Biblical Theology and Director of the Center for Biblical Studies at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, has spent much of his academic career immersed in the Gospel of John, publishing numerous volumes and articles on this particular New Testament book. In *Signs of the Messiah,* based in part on a series of "For the Church" lectures given at MBTS, Köstenberger distills the fruit of his extensive study into a brief and accessible volume, providing an overview of the literary traits and theological teaching of John's Gospel. In so doing, the provides a bird's-eye view of the book while highlighting enough key details to equip the reader to engage in their own in-depth study.

After a brief introduction, Köstenberger's book divides into three parts. Part one begins with an argument for a traditional understanding of Johannine

authorship, followed by a discussion of John's prologue (John 1:1–18). The bulk of part one focuses on the "Cana Cycle," so called for its bracketed references to Cana in Galilee (John 2:1; 4:46), the location of two of Jesus' messianic signs (turning the water into wine and healing the official's son; cf. John 4:54). Part two focuses on the "Festival Cycle," (i.e., John 5–10). Here Köstenberger unpacks the signs and discourses of Jesus during key Jewish festivals over the course of his ministry, such as the Feast of Tabernacles, the Passover, and the Feast of Dedication. Part three starts with the healing of Lazarus, marking the transition from the first half of John's Gospel (John 1–12, traditionally referred to as "The Book of Signs") to the second half (John 13–21, which Köstenberger terms "The Book of Exaltation"). Köstenberger closes out part three with studies of the Farewell Discourse (John 13–17) and John's passion narrative and epilogue (John 18–21).

Although written in a short, devotional style, the book contains no shortage of insights from Köstenberger's scholarship. In the opening chapter, he provides a concise yet strong case for Johannine authorship, examining both the internal and external evidence and interacting with alternative views (10–23). At various points, he presents a nuanced understanding of the relationship between John and the Synoptic Gospels, arguing that John "assumed much of the content of the earlier Gospels and theologically transposed various motifs to bring out the underlying significance of particular aspects of Jesus' person or work, just like in music you may transpose a tune into a different key" (35). For example, Köstenberger points out that while the Synoptics present Jesus's miracles as primarily demonstrations of his power and authority, John instead depicts them as highlighting Jesus's messianic identity (35–36). He further notes that John likely intended to supplement (not contradict or replace) the Synoptic accounts by presenting some of the events and discourses of Jesus's ministry not found in the other three Gospels (69–71). These kinds of scholarly insights can also have tremendous pastoral implications. This is made particularly clear when Köstenberger highlights two sets of literary contrasts in the Fourth Gospel—Nicodemus with the Samaritan woman, and the paralytic with the blind man—as representing right and wrong responses to Jesus (57–59, 108–09).

As with a commentary, not every interpretation offered in an introduction like this is equally convincing. For example, while Köstenberger presents the temple cleansing in John 2:13–22 as one of the seven Johannine "signs" (40–43), Jesus's exchange with the Jewish leaders in verses 18–22 seems more naturally

to point forward to his resurrection (rather than back to the temple cleansing) as the seventh "sign" of his messianic identity. The book also would have benefited from an additional chapter summarizing the main theological themes of John's Gospel. With so much textual ground being covered in so short of space, a theological summary would have gone far in helping the reader synthesize the various exegetical and theological insights found throughout the book's chapters.

Köstenberger's book is designed as a companion volume to be read alongside the Gospel of John. The chapters are short and easy to read, generally avoiding technical terminology (aside from a few terms that Köstenberger takes the time to define). The book includes discussion questions in the back to coincide with each chapter, helping the reader review and remember key points from each section. The devotional tone of the book makes it ideal for use in personal Bible study, Sunday School classes, or sermon preparation. With a combination of readability, scholarly insight, and pastoral wisdom, Köstenberger's *Signs of the Messiah* will prove to be a valuable resource for anyone planning to study or teach on the Fourth Gospel.

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Discovering Luke: Content, Interpretation, Reception. By Joel B. Green. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2021, xii + 246 pp., $22.00 paper.

The Discovering Biblical Text series offers comprehensive, "student-friendly introductions" on the structure, content, theological concerns, key interpretative debates, and historical reception for a growing number of Old Testament and New Testament books. Author of *Discovering Luke,* Joel B. Green, associate dean for the Center for Advanced Theological Studies and professor of New Testament interpretation at Fuller Theological Seminary, offers a thought-provoking and engaging resource for scholars, students, and pastor-theologians on both sides of the academy. Among his many publications and monographs on Luke, he recently published, *Luke as Narrative Theologian: Texts and Topics.* In *Discovering Luke,* Green continues examining the Gospel of Luke as literature arguing for a narrative reading as whole in its own context. Such a wholistic approach is contrasted with previous "atomistic" approaches that search for historical, theological, and moral "nuggets" such as the well-known Christmas

birth narrative or the Good Samaritan parable. Green differentiates context from "co-text" which is the textual material surrounding the passage under study" (54). Focusing on context he examines the place "within which the Bible is read, heard and studied" (3, 54). He argues the Lukan narrative presents a unified theological voice without committing to a single meaning which speaks to Scripture's "immediacy" and "simultaneity," i.e. "the Scriptures are *for us*, and they are ever-contemporary: "This *is* the word of the Lord'––not "This *was* the word of the Lord" (24).

In the first two chapters, Green illustrates his thesis by accessing the reception and hermeneutical history of a single Lukan text––the Magnificat or Mary's song in 1:46-55––illustrating how it was "repeatedly recontextualized" to address contemporary theological concerns as it was interpreted in the early and medieval church, through the Reformation, post-Reformation, modern and post-modern era. He shows that even early interpreters "were open to hearing the one voice of God in different registers, that is, with reference to different levels of meaning suited to different audiences" (24). Greene also selects Mary's Song to illustrate how Luke's narrative is a series of intertwined theological motifs regarding Jesus, the church, Israel, and the nature of salvation. Questioning the search for the "right" or "singular" meaning, Green welcomes multiple meanings as a reflection of Scripture's coherence and "unified theological voices" despite different ecclesial contexts particularly in the face of "inter-ecclesial struggles" (25). While offering an even-handed critique of post-modern interpretation, Green, advocates a similar perspective that claims meaning is "not simply a property of the text waiting for a reader to discover or excavate, but is somehow the product of the interaction of readers with texts" (45). Accordingly, Green finds that "all interpretations are located," stressing that interpretations in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries are just as "contextually constrained" as "Origen's or Calvin's readings were constrained by reigning views of hermeneutical enquiry in their own day" (56).

Green argues for reading Luke as a literary product "on its own terms," that is the world as Luke portrays––rather than hearing our own voices and expecting a neutral historical exercise (79). In this regard, Green affirms from the start of chapter three, that most current background information is largely based on "educated guesses or theoretical incursions," which propels Green to read scholarly introductions cautiously. Accordingly, Green reads Luke as a latter first century text from the Roman Mediterranean concerning John and Baptist and

Jesus within the latter background of God's promises to Abraham and Israel. However, he stresses that Luke's literary work "negotiate[s] among different ways of construing reality" (81) so readers should not expect a neutral narrative of social, religious and political beliefs. Accordingly, in chapter four, Green provides many apt examples of intercultural engagement regarding Rome, the temple, synagogues, town-and-country life, economics, spatial metaphors which provide the setting for "imagining the renewed world purposed by God" (92).

Chapter five examines the architecture or structure of the Lukan narrative which serves the larger arc as it strings together various episodes into one whole. Green argues that Luke can be viewed as a single narrative account with its own overarching structure (while also acknowledging the unity of Luke-Acts) to identify the "narrative aim" or the overarching purpose (113). Green imagines viewing Luke-Acts through a panoramic mural revealing a straightforward narrative cycle with broad strokes illustrating God's aim to bring salvation to all people through the movement from "anticipation to possibility to probability to actuality to results" (112). Green tracks this Lukan movement from the anticipation of angelic and prophetic voices; to the possibilities through the birth and nurturing of John and Jesus; to the probable mission of John and life, death and exaltation of Jesus, and the empowering of disciples; to the realization and results of God's "cross-national community" and expanding Gentile mission in Acts.

Green reveals the main elements of Luke's theology in the last three chapters: God's purpose, Jesus's mission, and discipleship. Contrary to popular opinion, Luke's Gospel primarily concerns the God of Israel's salvific aim for all people rather than the story of Jesus. For Green, Mary's Song centers on God and frames the remainder of Luke. Having explored the interpretation of Mary's Song in the first two chapters from the first centuries to the post-Reformation, Green returns to Mary's Song in chapter six, seven and eight to further illustrate "a series of intertwined theological motifs" (3). Mary's Song is important to Green because it illustrates the theology of (1) God's past, present and future, including God's moral character; (2) key aspects of Luke's Christology; and (3) faithful discipleship.

Green's thesis is well-argued and developed–– grounded in years of scholarly engagement on Luke and the interpretation of New Testament Scripture. Not all confessional scholars who question multiple readings will agree with his understanding of context verses co-text, and the "meaning" of a text. Nevertheless, he offers a fresh contemporary perspective on hermeneutical issues from a

narrative framework particularly for those interested in the on-going theological interpretation of Scripture debates. His insightful end-of-chapter "reflections" further support that "there is more than one way to tell a story depending on one's interests and aim" (66). Given Green's extensive background in narrative, theological, and ethical interpretation of Luke, he offers a thoughtful view on the relationship between God, Jesus, and discipleship by unexpectedly prioritizing God's agenda as the center of Luke rather than Jesus's mission.

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Carl F. H. Henry on The Holy Spirit. By Jesse M. Payne. (Studies in Historical and Systematic Theology) Bellingham, WA: Lexham Academic, 2021, 180 pp., $29.99 paper.

Timothy George has said that a new generation of evangelicals will find Carl F. H. Henry to be worthy of serious attention in the future (5). Despite the voluminous material written on Henry, Jesse M. Payne's *Carl F. H. Henry on The Holy Spirit* is a worthy addition to the scholarly literature as Payne brings to light what is often characterized as Henry's underdeveloped pneumatology. But Payne's work is no dry volume only to be found useful for academics. As a pastor himself, Payne heralds Henry's conviction that all Christians are to be utterly dependent on the Holy Spirit in life and ministry. This is an accessible work, relevant to scholars, pastors, students, and church members alike.

Payne argues that to accurately understand Henry, one of the chief architects of modern evangelicalism, one must grasp how his pneumatology functions as a deep reservoir nourishing much of his life and thought. In other words, the Spirit is essential in getting Henry "right." Specifically, Payne argues that the Spirit plays a vital role in three key areas of Henry's thought, namely, revelation, ecclesiology, and ethics (4). Henry believed "that a Spirit-inspired Bible (revelation) would order a Spirit-enlivened body (ecclesiology) composed of Spirit-filled believers (ethics)" (4). While those may seem like disparate theological categories, Payne views Henry's pneumatology as the thread that unites them.

Carl Henry's historical and theological context matters. Before defending his central argument, Payne rightly situates Henry in the twentieth century renaissance of pneumatology. Henry faced pneumatological challenges on multiple

fronts, from modern theology's immanentizing the Spirit to an impersonal force to the charismatic wave that swept through Protestant and Catholic traditions in the mid-twentieth century. Payne's attention to Henry's theological and historical context helps the reader understand that Henry's pneumatological concerns were not ancillary but, in many ways, definitive of the era (12).

After providing this contextual foundation, Payne devotes three individual chapters to the three components of his thesis: A Spirit-inspired Bible (chap. 3), A Spirit-enlivened Body (chap. 4) and A Spirit-Filled Believer (chap. 5). In chapter 3, Payne's main task is to demonstrate how Henry's pneumatology illuminates and deepens his doctrine of revelation. Payne invites challengers of Henry's view to embrace a more nuanced understanding of propositional revelation (71). Chapter 4 explores Henry's ecclesiology, giving specific attention to the Spirit's role at the universal and local level. At the universal level, Henry believed in a "Spirit-engendered unity" that was necessary if the ecumenical movement of the twentieth century was to achieve true unity. At the local level, Henry believed in the importance of "Spirit-anointed proclamation," both in personal evangelism and in the preaching ministry of the local church (104-5). Chapter 5 highlights the importance of the Spirit-filled life as Payne argues that Henry "understood the Holy Spirit to be the dynamic power behind ethical living" (114-5). Here, Payne also presents Henry himself as a case study of the Spirit-filled believer. The reader enjoys the fruit of Payne's archival research as many personal letters to prominent evangelical figures, from Billy Graham to Edward Carnell, reveal how Henry modeled a Spirit-filled life worthy of emulation (141).

Payne brings his volume to a close with a coda arguing that Henry ought to be remembered as "*a* theologian of the Spirit" (143). Payne is not seeking to engage in historical revision by exaggerating the prominence of pneumatology in Henry's thought. While it is true Henry provided no systematic treatment of The Holy Spirit, Payne argues that the role of the Spirit in informing and shaping Henry's theological vision should not be discounted.

The strongest contribution that Payne's book provides is its corrective to misunderstandings and caricatures of Henry's view of propositional revelation. Propositionalism refers to an interpretive practice where divine revelation of Scripture is understood to convey information (e.g., "God is love"). Too often, this has been characterized as a hyper-rationalistic, mechanistic, or reductionistic distillation of the Bible to "bare facts" as if Scripture's only value is to function as a collection of proof-texts to support theological propositions. When pushed to

the extreme, this view can tend to depersonalize Scripture or ignore important features of the text such as literary genre or canonical context. Charitable critics of propositionalism, such as Kevin Vanhoozer, acknowledge the right impulse behind propositional approaches to interpreting Scripture but warn of its gross distortions. What makes Payne's work singularly distinctive is that he shatters any notion of pigeonholing Henry as a cold rationalist who severed the word and Spirit. Rather, as Payne effectively demonstrates, Henry's pneumatology was a deep reservoir that gave his doctrine of revelation its vibrancy and vitality (73). Some critics of Henry maintain that he prioritized the theology of the word over the Spirit. Payne doesn't buy it; the categories are too rigid in Payne's estimation. Rather, Payne argues that "Henry's theology of the word was a theology of the *Spirit-inspired* word" (75). Here, Payne effectively argues that Henry did not divorce word and Spirit but firmly emphasized the Spirit's working *through* the Scriptures (75).

Another important feature of this book is the deeply intimate portrayal of Carl Henry's piety. This aspect of the book is profoundly moving, in terms of Henry's passion for prayer and personal encouragement. Payne states his intention is not to provide a hagiographical account of Henry, though I'm afraid he falls short of his intention in this section of the book as he pays minimal attention to Henry's faults.

Many works on Carl Henry have rightly emphasized his titanic role in giving shape to modern evangelicalism. Payne's work stands out as the first sustained analysis of Henry's pneumatology. Its pages teem with Henry's passionate conviction that the Spirit is necessary for life transformation and effective ministry. While reading, at times, I found myself crying out to be filled with the Spirit—what Henry called, the "full, furious wind of God."

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Hollywood Heroes: How Your Favorite Movies Reveal God. By Frank Turek and Zach Turek. Colorado Spring, CO: NavPress, 2022, 222 pp., $16.99, paper.

Apologetics goes to the movies! Grab some popcorn and learn how Hollywood's most memorable heroes shine the spotlight on the ultimate hero of the universe, Jesus Christ. In their new fast-paced work, *Hollywood Heroes*: *How Your Favorite Movies Reveal God* seasoned apologists Frank Turek (Crossexamined.org) and his son, Captain Zach Turek harness the explosive power of the silver screen, showing how 7 of Hollywood's most unforgettable characters point to the truths of Christianity.

First in the star-studded lineup is Captain America, everyone's favorite hero who's always willing to put himself in harm's way to overcome evil. Feisty Iron Man follows, revealing personal moral growth over time which resembles Christian sanctification. Magical connections are made when *Harry Potter* fans see how the young wizard's life models the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. Then the *Star Wars* saga is presented with striking resemblances to the biblical concepts of morality, self-sacrifice, and redemption. After that, the Tureks take us back down to Middle Earth and highlight the Christ-like qualities of Gandalf, Aragorn, and Frodo from Tolkien's fantasy *The Lord of the Rings*. Batman swoops in next, acquiring virtue through trials and displaying an unwavering resolve to fight evil. And no hall of heroes would be complete without Wonder Woman, exhibiting breathtaking courage and an unprecedented commitment to truth and love. Finally, the consummate hero of all time is features in the final pages, as the Tureks take an extended look at the person and work of Jesus Christ who possesses all the virtues of every hero to an infinite degree and did what no one else has ever done: He laid his life down for his enemies.

The overarching message of Hollywood Heroes is how the super-charged love of the gospel is reflected in fictional heroes and their stories; it is, in fact, why we love them. They represent a sacrificial love for others that we admire, the kind of love Jesus demonstrated to the world when He went to Calvary to save sinners. In each chapter, the authors include dramatic events which parallel biblical truth along with helpful sections of dialogue to illustrate the connections. Their thesis is clear: if we love the heroes in these movies, we should love Jesus. For those unfamiliar with the characters and storylines, a movie-guide is included in the preface, guiding readers to approximately 50 films in which morality, eternity, and the truth of the gospel message can be clearly observed.

In eight action-packed chapters, the Tureks offer numerous defenses of the

Christian faith, including the Cosmological Argument, appropriately placed in the *Star Wars* chapter, as well as arguments against materialism and moral relativism. Responses to the problem of evil are peppered throughout the book and the authors take on Lex Luthor's Epicurean objections in *Batman vs. Superman* with a thorough critique. The final chapter is a mini-apologetic handbook on the reliability of the historical witness of Jesus. Frank Turek brings his extensive experience as an apologist to bear on many objections to the reliability of the gospels. The compelling strength of the book is its repeated focus upon Jesus at applicable junctures, accompanied with Scripture references to guide readers back to the Bible. Reflection questions are included at the end of each chapter, making the book adaptable to small group discussion.

Some may object to the plundering of Hollywood for apologetic purposes; however the Tureks encourage readers to consider how the twenty-three Marvel movies alone have grossed around $22.5 billion dollars, a clear sign these films are a dominant presence in cultural conversations. The authors also encourage readers to accept the universal appeal and popularity of these films among the younger generations as facts the contemporary church cannot ignore. Undoubtedly, there is apologetic gold to be found in the movies, but challenging questions arise for the serious student of Scripture: Are the similarities between the movie heroes and Jesus strong enough to correct for the irreconcilable differences? Is the apologetic value found in redemptive stories enough to overcome the false religious views presented at the same time? The Tureks think so. Notably, it seems to be a forgone conclusion of the authors that sexually alluring costumes, profanity, and satanic evil presented in these films is acceptable for Christian viewing, while the gospel appears to be reduced to the call to join God's team and be a hero. A clear, full explanation of biblical repentance is absent from the book.

Overall, the carefully selected films keep the book at a manageable length and align perfectly with the author's stated goal: to invite others into conversation about the redeeming love of Christ. The Tureks have shown thought provoking similarities between some of the most popular movie characters and the biblical storyline of God's plan to redeem His people through his Son, Jesus Christ. For all the movie lovers out there, this energetic and easy read will likely be a welcome relief from weightier tomes.

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