# Book Reviews

*1 Peter*. 2nd ed. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. By Karen H. Jobes. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2022, xx + 374 pp., $46.99 hardcover.

Since its publication in 2005, Karen Jobes's commentary on 1 Peter in the BECNT has been the standard evangelical commentary on this letter. This second edition is a full revision in which Jobes especially includes "more textual-critical information for some of the quotations of the OT in 1 Peter" and adds an introductory section on the OT in 1 Peter as "a subject that deserves continuing study" (xi-xii). Indeed, throughout her commentary, Jobes elucidates the significance of OT quotations and allusions in 1 Peter. Therefore, this review will focus on these aspects of *1 Peter* and compare this second edition to the first edition, so that evangelical seminary students and pastors may understand this commentary's value while considering whether to consult it.

Jobes's three-page introduction to "The Use of the Old Testament in 1 Peter" is a welcome addition to this second edition of *1 Peter* (45-47). Jobes cites the most important monographs and articles that have been published since 2005 and affirms their contributions to the study of 1 Peter. She agrees with Patrick Egan that "Isaiah's prophecy forms a biblical narrative substrate of 1 Peter" (46). Commenting on 1 Peter 2:4–5, Jobes adopts Egan's argument that the macrostructure of Isaiah 40–66, which presents, respectively, God's Suffering Servant (Isa 40–53) and God's servants (Isa 54–66), informs "the close relationship between the unique, foundational Living Stone and the living stones" (149). She provides a lengthy block quotation from Egan as further support for her claim, retained from the first edition of this commentary, that Jesus "is *the* paradigm by which Christians write large the letters of his gospel in their lives," since Egan argues that Peter's interpretation of Isaiah 53 "'make[s] a christological point as a basis for further ecclesiological ramifications'" in 1 Peter 2:21–25 (196). On the other hand, Jobes rightly pushes back against Egan's rejection of scholars' "strong consensus on diaspora as the primary motif of Christian identity" in 1 Peter 1:1 (70). Jobes





thus incorporates others' recent insights about the use of the OT in 1 Peter into her commentary, while also arguing for her own positions.

Similar to the first edition of *1 Peter*, this second edition is thorough in its exposition of uses of the OT throughout 1 Peter. Peter's quotation of Leviticus 19:2 in 1 Peter 1:14 is an example of how he "invokes OT Scripture as exhortation in a new context, reinforcing the authority and relevance of the OT in the lives of Christians but always viewed through the lens of Christ's coming" (115). Furthermore, having written further articles on 1 Peter 1:22–2:3 since 2005, her exegesis of this text is even more tightly argued in this second edition: "Peter relates the concepts of both Isaiah 40:6–8 and Psalm 33:9 OG (34:9 MT/34:8 Eng.) to his readers, and they are two different concepts. Hence, it is likely that his thought has moved on beyond his concern with the word of the Lord as the seed of new life in 1 Peter 1:23–25 to the sustenance of that new life amid times of trouble in 2:1–3" (139).

Finally, as promised in her preface, Jobes increases the textual-critical strength of this second edition of her commentary. Compared to the first edition, this second edition is more precise in its analysis of Peter's quotation of Isaiah 40:6–8 in 1 Peter 1:24–25. Jobes includes a paragraph on the differences of Peter's quotation compared both to the MT and LXX/OG (127). Regarding 1 Peter 2:9 with its amalgamation of Exodus 19:6 and Isaiah 43:20–21, Jobes adopts C. T. Friedeman's suggestion from a 2020 article that the metrical construction of the quotation "might account for the small differences introduced between the quotation and its source text" (158). Another new addition in this second edition of *1 Peter* is Jobes's approval of Dubis's 2002 suggestion that Peter appends an allusion to 1 Enoch 38:2 to his quotation of Proverbs 11:31 OG in 1 Peter 4:18 (293).

For these many improvements to the first edition, this second edition is not as thorough at its time of publication compared to the first edition in 2005. This shortcoming is understandable, given the volume of monographs, articles, and dissertations on 1 Peter since 2005 compared to before 2005. Furthermore, two exhaustive critical commentaries on 1 Peter had been published in the decade before 2005—those of Paul J. Achtemeier in the Hermeneia series (1996) and of John H. Elliott in the Anchor Bible (2000)—whereas no comparable commentary was subsequently published prior to the second edition of this commentary. Nevertheless, the failure of this second edition to incorporate more secondary literature on 1 Peter

diminishes the value it adds to the first edition. Jobes does not incorporate Travis Williams's insights on the meaning of "grace" in 1 Peter 2:19–20 and 5:12, that in these passages "grace" redefines "the shame and humiliation which threatened the Christian communities … as a counter-gift to be returned to God" ("Reciprocity and Suffering in 1 Peter 2,19–20: Reading χάρις in Its Ancient Social Context," *Biblica* 97 [2016]: 438). Overlooking this article is especially surprising, since it is from an earlier volume of the same journal from which Jobes cites C. T. Friedeman, mentioned above. Furthermore, Jobes does not interact with Craig S. Keener's extensive arguments in favor of Silvanus being Peter's amanuensis for 1 Peter (*1 Peter: A Commentary* [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2021], 393–402), though she frequently interacts with this book elsewhere in her commentary. Rather, Jobes concludes, "Unless more evidence is discovered, it seems likely that this debate over Silvanus's role as courier or amanuensis will continue indefinitely" (319). This statement ignores the papyrological evidence that Keener has catalogued in favor of arguing that Silvanus could have served as Peter's secretary for 1 Peter. Finally, by keeping the second edition the same length as the first edition, Jobes has elected to abbreviate some of the theological reflection that made the first edition so valuable for pastors. In the first edition, Jobes included theological reflection where appropriate in the main body of her exegesis and extended it in her summary of each section of the letter. However, in this second edition, theological reflection is not as prevalent in the main body of the commentary but is more often reserved for each summary section.

Despite these shortcomings, this second edition of *1 Peter* remains the most extensive evangelical commentary on this letter. Pastors who do not own the first edition should make use of this second edition as they study 1 Peter for preaching, teaching, and counseling. Evangelical seminary students and New Testament scholars will likewise find this second edition an essential conversation partner on 1 Peter. However, the voluminous literature on 1 Peter in the past two decades—too much to incorporate in this commentary for its page constraints—and the relatively fewer theological reflections in the second edition means that pastors who already own the first edition need not consider this second edition a necessary purchase.

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*In Quest of the Historical Adam: A Biblical and Scientific Exploration*. By William Lane Craig. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2021, 439 pp., $38.00 hardcover.

In his book *In Quest of the Historical Adam,* William Lane Craig sets out to answer the question(s): was Adam a real historical person? And if so, who was he and when did he live? He ultimately concludes that while Adam and Eve were indeed historical persons, they were *Homo heidelbergensis* who existed somewhere between 750 thousand and 1 million years ago, *possibly* dwelling in the "Near East in the biblical site of the Garden of Eden" (336). Though Craig's work is, as the subtitle suggests, both a biblical and scientific exploration, my review will focus on his biblical/theological argumentation in both summary and critical evaluation.

Craig begins the book by establishing what is at stake in the debate surrounding Adam as a historical person theologically. In no uncertain terms, he claims that if Adam was not a historical person, then we must do away with the full inspiration of Scripture and the deity of Christ (6-8). He is equally clear, however, that while Adam's historical existence must be affirmed, the talking serpent or the historical flood in Noah's day need not be historical for Christian orthodoxy to be maintained (111-113; 120-128). What is it that leads to such hermeneutical flexibility on Craig's part? In short, it is because he understands Genesis 1-11 to be mytho-history. In referring to the opening 11 chapters of Scripture as mytho-history, Craig means to communicate that the chapters stand out from the rest of the Pentateuch (which focuses on the partial fulfillment of the promise to or blessing of the patriarchs) and must therefore receive separate hermeneutical treatment (21).

This, Craig is convinced, is different than what those like Peter Enns or Denis Lamoureux have argued, meaning he does not see NT authors using Adam for "theological purposes" unrooted from the text in Genesis (6), nor does he find God to accommodate through errors made by human authors to communicate divine truths (10-17). Rather, because Genesis 1-11 is mytho-history, Craig concludes God is not calling us to read these stories as historical narrative. He compares the primordial texts (Gen 1-11) to Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) myths and find "family resemblances" between them, as he takes chapters 3-6 to make his case as to why Genesis 1-11 should be read as mytho-history.

Craig follows this with an extended discussion on 1 Corinthians 15 and Romans 5. In it he argues Paul "associates human mortality with the creation of Adam, not with his fall" (225). What he means is that human physical mortality is inherent to humanity even without a historical Fall, because in Genesis 2:7 the breath of life is not physical, but spiritual, which he connects to 1 Corinthians 15:23 (225). Thus, when God breathes into Adam, it is not the special creation of the first man, but rather this verse refers to the giving of a spiritual soul to a *Homo heidelbergensis* couple approximately 750 thousand years ago (364-380). The *Imago Dei* then, according to Craig, is the result of a genome God implanted Into Adam and Eve, possibly in the embryonic stage of this couple (377). Thus, God's creation of them plausibly required *both* "biological and spiritual renovations" which distanced them from their non-human contemporaries (378).

When it comes to sin, Craig is clear from the beginning that original sin is not necessary for Christian orthodoxy to be maintained (5). He builds on this in more detail later when he admits "We cannot describe the universality of human sin and condemnation to utter coincidence, for Paul clearly takes Adam's sin to be in some sense the cause of universal condemnation" (228). But he explicitly pushes back on Douglas Moo's understanding of Romans 5 and the forensic notion of sin constituted to all of Adam's posterity, and in keeping with his view of Adam and Eve being called out of their *Homo heidelbergensis* community, he maintains there is an "inherent self-seeking animal nature in combination with the web of corruption in which we are born and raised …'humans have an evolutionary biological propensity to selfishness that is reinforced and quickened by our society, psychology and spiritual estate'" (231). This natural biological tendency towards survival (natural selection), coupled with a morally corrupt environment explains why all have sinned, and this comports with Romans 5:12-21, in Craig's estimation. He then makes a distinction between acts that are morally *bad* but not morally *wrong* and differentiates between death as a *consequence* of sin and death as a *penalty* for sin (234-35). He teaches that all those who lived between Adam and Moses were not deserving of spiritual death and separation from God in a punitive sense since there was yet no law for them to be guilty of breaking (235).





While Craig is to be commended for upholding the historicity of Adam—as I am convinced that if we lose Adam, we lose the gospel—the book has a plethora of theological problems. Though he pushes back against Enns and Lamoureux his understanding of Genesis 1-11 as mytho-history amounts to a difference without a distinction functionally, as he cites the same textual criticisms they do, he just claims inconsistencies and contradictions are "inherent to the genre" of mytho-history he imposes onto the text. Furthermore, he is right to say that the deity of Christ is rejected if we deny Adam as a historical person due to Matthew 19:4-6. However, in Matthew 24:37-39 and Luke 17:26 Jesus references the "days of Noah" and the flood that swept away all the wicked. But Craig rejects the worldwide flood on both hermeneutical (120-28) and scientific grounds (344). How is it, using Craig's own standard regarding a historical Adam from Matthew 19:4-6, that the deity of Christ not rejected in denying the historical worldwide flood as he does in view of Matthew 24:37-39 and Luke 17:26?

As a broader critique, Craig regularly makes assertions without arguments. When he dismisses the idea of God walking in the Garden or claims the biblical account of Eden is both implausible and "clearly" metaphorical and figurative, he is begging the question. He also dismisses opponents who would read Genesis 1-11 as actual history, often in a mocking and condescending tone, when millions of Jews and Christians have held to the interpretation he is refuting. Moreover, he makes poor theological postulations throughout. For example, when he claims the tree of life in the Garden of Eden supports his view that physical death was natural pre-Fall one is left to wonder if he believes physical death is natural in the new heavens and new earth since we see this tree again referenced in Revelation 22:2. I am confident he would reject death is possible in the new heavens and earth due to the work of Christ going by his understanding of 1 Corinthians 15, but his comment on the tree of life supporting natural physical death already occurring pre-Fall logically leads to the same conclusion in the new heavens and new earth if accurate.

This book is written for "people like [Craig], persons who are Christian philosophers, theologians, and other academics but who are neither Old Testament scholars nor scientists … as well as intelligent laymen" (xi). It is best-suited for the classroom, though Craig's work as theologian is lacking, so I would not commend it to be used in an OT class. I was disappointed with the biblical exploration offered by Craig, as his theological sections came

across as being used to support his evolutionary presuppositions. While he does indeed affirm the historicity of Adam, I find Craig's quest takes us further away from the Adam of the Bible and it raises more theological questions than it answers along the way.

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*An Unconventional God: The Spirit According to Jesus*. By Jack Levison. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020, xiv + 213 pp., $25.00.

Jack Levison, the W. J. A Power Professor of Old Testament Interpretation and Biblical Hebrew at Perkins School of Theology and an author of a huge volume of essays and monographs, presented in the book *An Unconventional God: The Spirit According to Jesus* a project of pneumatology with references to *pneuma* as recorded in, and confined to, the four Gospels alone. The author centered on "The impact of the Holy Spirit on Jesus" or "The impact of Jesus' story on the portrayal of the Holy Spirit in the Gospels" (3) with an aim that the Holy Spirit, understood from the testimonies of the four Gospels, is "uncommon, astonishing, *unconventional* even" (2) as seen in the drama of the life and death of Jesus.

Levison attempts to achieve his goal with a methodology referring to every use of the word *pneuma* designating the Holy Spirit in the Gospels and articulating its biblical and theological meanings and implications inextricably embedded with the Old Testament foregrounds and backgrounds. He accomplished a commendable job in this project of Christocentric pneumatology of the Gospels as he rehearses the person and work of the Spirit testified through the Evangelists' written statements concerning Jesus' birth by the Spirit (ch. 1), baptism with the Spirit (chs. 2-3), temptation under the control of the Spirt (ch. 4), teaching and preaching as the Spirit-anointed Servant (ch. 5), joy in the Spirit (ch. 5), teaching of the Spirit as the greatest gift from God in answer to prayer (ch. 5), warning about blasphemy against the Spirit (ch. 6), assurance of the Spirit during judicial trials (ch. 7), teaching of the Spirit as the giver of birth from above and the source of the living water (ch. 8), teaching of the Spirit as another teaching paraclete (ch. 9), and address to the disciples about his eschatological promises in relation to the Spirit (ch. 10).





While I appreciate Levison's impressive and thorough presentation of pneumatology according to Jesus in the accounts of the Gospels and their parallels, the author deviated from his thesis and delivered more content that was not in keeping with his thesis. As thesis, Levison stated that the presence of the Spirit with Jesus and his impact on him according to the fourfold testimony of the Evangelists was unconventional because "the Spirit enmeshed in the tortured—literally, *tortured*—life of Jesus of Nazareth" (2). The author refused to define what he means when he speaks of Jesus whose life was characterized by torments and sorrows. Further, he should have given more space at the outset to the meaning and implication concerning the unconventionality of the Spirit when he argued that the presence of the Spirit with Jesus was unconventional. Because of these two factors which unfortunately hinder readers from grasping the author's main argument of the book, they will constantly raise a question throughout their reading—except three chapters—why the presence of the Spirit with Jesus or his impact on the life of Jesus was unconventional. In three chapters, however, Levison seemed to achieve his goal. In chapter 4 where he discussed Jesus' experience of the Spirit thrusting him into the wilderness for temptation (Mark 1:12), the author contends that, for Jesus, the Spirit who descended on him like a dove at baptism, and so who seemed gentle and good, felt different, even like an evil spirit. Again, in chapter 7 where he spoke of the work of the Spirit among believers facing judicial trials and threats of persecution on account of their testimony to the name of Jesus, the author well stated that the Spirit will not be presence assuring them of comfort or release, but instead he will accompany them as the speaking presence for the sake of a word of testimony and truth though they will lose life because of it (Matt 10:22; Mark 13:13; Luke 12:4-5). Levison also demonstrated well in chapter 5 when he pointed to Jesus, while joyful in the Spirit, revealing him as the Son in unique relationship to the Father rather than rejoicing over his extended dominion through the apostolic mission of his seventy disciples over demonic forces (Luke 10:21-22). Though he was excellent in articulating pneumatology seen in the life, teachings, and mission of Jesus for the rest of the chapters, the author did not do justice to it in light of his thesis.

Furthermore, we have to address three theological concerns, suggested by Levison, that are scathing, thus demanding theological revision. First, the author suggested a possibility that Mary conceived Jesus not by the divine work of the Spirit, but by virtue of "*her own* holy spirit" (11-2) or sanctity of her soul. He grounded this possibility upon the absence of the article designating the Spirit (Matt 1:20). While he mentioned it was his own view, he created a disturbing speculation denying the virginal conception of Jesus and, further, his hypostatic union for the fulfillment of trinitarian redemption. Second, Levison argued that Christ' experience of the Spirit differed antithetically between the events of baptism with the Spirit who was like a gentle dove and temptation into which the Spirit forced him like an evil spirit behaved. He supported his view with the *Community Rule* of Jewish community at Qumran where it says there are two kinds of spirits opposed to each other, spirit of truth and spirit of falsehood. He assumes that Jesus well knew the existence of both spirits and he might have been confounded with the true nature of the Spirit acting differently. We reject his view outright. While he showed his skepticism concerning the development of the historical Jesus of Nazareth of the twentieth century, he might have referred to its framework and suggested his idea of the human Jesus' consciousness and experience of the Spirit. Third, the author was reluctant to acknowledge the language of the Trinity when he discussed the baptismal formula in Matthew 28:19. He rather labeled it as "a close-knit trio" (180). Though he never mentioned the social Trinity in order to justify his concept of the trio, Levison obviously involves the social understanding of God—expressing his immanent and economic reality as the three separate centers of consciousness, will, and agency united in mutual love for others for all eternity—with his formula. The author further warrants his concept of the trio with the Pauline languages referring to the Spirit, the Lord, and God (1 Cor 12:14-6) and his benediction (2 Cor 13:13) as he contends that they are not "necessarily suggesting a fully formed Trinity." For the readers wholly adhering to the classical doctrine of the Trinity, Levison fails to do justice to the shared tradition and confession of the church concerning the incomprehensible being of God in himself as the three distinct persons fully, wholly, and simultaneously identical in divine essence for all eternity.





Had he centered his thesis simply on Christocentric pneumatology in the four Gospels, Levison would have achieved success in this project. However, he did not invest proper arguments and resources in substantiating and giving precision to his proposal, that is, the unconventional or uncommon presence of the Spirit with Jesus. After all, evangelicals will rather find his aforementioned theological conjectures unconventional and even alarming.

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*Already Sanctified: A Theology of the Christian Life in Light of God's Completed Work*. By Don J. Payne. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020, 192 pp., $18.51 paper.

Don J. Payne is associate professor of theology and Christian formation at Denver Seminary. He graduated from the University of Manchester. He was named the vice-president of academic affairs and dean of this institution the following year of the publication of this book. In *Already Sanctified*, Payne aims to persuade that transformation or growth in Christian life is possible due to accomplished sanctification. In other words, believers can pursue their transformation because Christ has already sanctified them by his work on the cross. He divides sanctification into three general categories, past or accomplished, present, and future sanctification (7). Payne argues that present and future sanctification, which he occasionally called "the imperative of sanctification," is possible due to the accomplished sanctification in Jesus that believers have.

Payne divides his book into three parts. In his first part, he deals with the historical events that developed the doctrine of sanctification to the way evangelicals understand it and teach it today. For Payne, the abandonment, which he calls mutiny, of the doctrine took place in the reformation era with Luther and Calvin. His first chapter is an attempt to unpack how the reformers reacted to the Catholic teaching that shaped the medieval era regarding the doctrine of sanctification. For Payne, this reaction of the reformer to the Catholic handling of the doctrine set the stage for four hundred years of Protestant engagement with the doctrine (13). After evaluating the way Luther and Calvin reacted and reshape the doctrine, Payne continued in his

second chapter by addressing the current situation of the doctrine. In this chapter, he focused on the Lutheran and Calvinist traditions, the Wesleyan permutation, and some other residual effects of the doctrine.

In the second part of the book, Payne focused on the biblical storyline of the doctrine of sanctification. In chapter three, he begins to develop the doctrine from the Old Testament's concept of consecration. His main point is that the word קדשׁ in the Old Testament is the equivalent of the word ἅγιος in the New Testament. Payne evaluated some of the appearances of this word in the Old Testament to claim that the power of sanctification in the life of God's people now can be understood in light of what consecration meant and how it functioned in the lives of the people in the Old Testament (41). In his fourth chapter, Payne continued his study of the implications of sanctification in the New Testament. His point is that the New Testament extended the Old Testament's use of the word to everyone who belongs to God through Jesus Christ (57). In his survey of the New Testament, the author aimed to demonstrate that certain assumptions have accrued in various renditions of sanctification and, for Payne, some of these are not biblically conclusive nor uniformly constructive for Christian living (57). In chapter five, the author aimed to demonstrate that the dominance of accomplished sanctification in the Bible is reinforced by three unusual examples of sanctification. These are Jesus's sanctification, the sanctification of unbelieving spouses and children of believers, and the sanctification of inanimate objects. In chapter six, Payne demonstrates that the accomplished sanctification we have in Christ illuminates imperatives as liberated responsibilities and the aspects that need completion in sanctification as compelling promises. His point is that the accomplished work of Christ has clear ethical implications which are expressed in imperatives in the Bible with the promise that believers will experience in the future (87). After surveying some verses in the New Testament to support his claim, Payne concluded that the New Testament calls believers toward the pursuit and outworking of sanctified lives. For Payne, the pursuit and outworking of sanctification are progressive, but sanctification is not progressive (105). In his seventh chapter, the author tried to define what transformation is considering what accomplished sanctification means. After evaluating several verses of the New Testament, Payne concludes that transformation is the fruit of sanctification and that the experiential realization of sanctification can increase or decrease, and





Christians should not confuse transformation with sanctification because that would be to overlook the powerful work of God (120).

Chapter eight initiates the last part of the book. This last section is more practical. In this chapter, Payne argues that though all the heavy lifting in sanctification has been accomplished, the motivation for obedience and transformative discipleship does not vanish, on the contrary, the presence of God, where sanctification leads believers, fuels Christian transformation (125). In chapter nine, Payne answers the practical question that emanates from the eighth chapter: if God has already sanctified believers in Christ, should we pursue our sanctification? The answer is that Christians need to focus on God. In this sense, the responsibility we have is responsive but also intentional and active (137). The author evaluates four areas in which believers ought to respond, they are the Word of God, suffering, worship, and gratitude. Finally, Payne evaluates the issue of transformation as it should be displayed in the life of believers. For this, he evaluates a few examples of how accomplished sanctification affects believers' lives.

Payne provides a needed book about the doctrine of sanctification. More than one time in the book the author states that pursuing sanctification by human merits, without bringing into the equation that we are already sanctified due to the work of God in Christ, results in moralism. This is crucial for the importance of accomplished sanctification in the life of believers. Payne provides persuasive arguments to support the thesis of the book. He also provides a well-organized structure for the book that enables the reader to easily follow the argument and its development through the reading. The use of both the Old and New Testament in the development of the doctrine provides a biblical theology of the doctrine that helps the reader to connect such doctrine throughout the whole bible plotline. Payne also did a good job in differentiating sanctification from transformation, which he considers being one of the greatest agents in obscuring the way the doctrine should be understood.

Although Payne tried to cover the implications of the doctrine of sanctification based on the accomplished sanctification through the work of Jesus, and in so doing he stressed the implication of such a doctrine to unbelievers related to believers and inanimate things; it would have been more helpful for the book if Payne would have interacted more with variants of the doctrine of sanctification after the reformation concerning the accomplished work of

Christ. In other words, answering the question of how Wesleyan tradition and others he mentions in his book, interact with the accomplished work of Jesus Christ, would have provided more support to the main argument of the book.

Payne's main argument is that Christians can work on their transformation on the basis that they have already been transformed by the work of Jesus. Because of this truth, every imperative they find in the Bible on growing to maturity is rooted in the fact that Jesus already took believers where they cannot go by themselves. In every part of the book, the author provides enough arguments to support his thesis. This book is helpful for pastors who need to preach and teach in their churches about the crucial doctrine of justification. But this book is more profitable for individual believers who need to strengthen their knowledge in this area.

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*What Is Saving Faith? Reflections on Receiving Christ as a Treasure*. By John Piper. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2022, 286 pp., $34.99 paper.

*What is Saving Faith?* (hereafter *WISF*) is a question that every Christian should want to answer for themselves and one that evangelical missionaries, pastors, and professors must answer. The author, John Piper, pastored for over 33 years and has authored more than 50 books, including the recent tome *Providence* (Crossway, 2021). In *WISF*, Piper's narrowly tailored question and thesis are, "Are any of these affections so *integral* to saving faith that, if they were not there, we would not have saving faith? ... I will try to show from the Bible that the answer to this question is yes. Saving faith has affectional elements without which the faith is not saving" (15). After summarizing his argument, I will offer an evaluation.

The work itself is a single *extremely* well-organized, densely packed, sustained argument constructed from Scripture in four parts, with a fifth exploring its implications.

In part 1, Piper presents reasons why the book was written (chs. 1–2), careful distinctions concerning justification (chs. 3–4), interactions with church history (ch. 5), and a critical response to Bates' "Saving Allegiance" proposal (ch. 6). Piper's concern is not *polemical* but *pastoral*: it is for those "who think of themselves as heaven-bound, hell-escaping Christians who are not" (29 cf. 139). Piper's thesis is intended to compliment and not reiterate Grudem and MacArthur's monographs on Lordship Salvation (32–33).

In part 2, Piper synthesizes the more than 600 uses of πιστ- word-family in the NT (πιστεύω, πιστός, πίστις, κτλ.) into nine clarifications about what saving faith is *in general* (chs. 7–12). This exegetical section lays out the biblical data regarding saving faith with methodical precision, so that the next two parts of the book can delve into what the nature of saving faith is. As groundwork for the rest of the book, this merits careful consideration.

In part 3, Piper presses into Christ as the object of our faith and asks, "Is saving faith a receiving of Christ *as the soul's supreme treasure*?" (133). If it is true that saving faith receives Jesus, then it matters how the Bible describes the Christ who is received. In Piper's words, "the affectional nature of saving faith really is determined by the nature of the Christ we receive" (135). The step is axiological because it aims to persuade that some of the ways the Bible talks about receiving Christ are to receive him as *supremely valuable* (ch. 14), as *of surpassing worth* (ch. 15), and as *treasure* (ch. 16).

In part 4, Piper moves from what I have called the axiological argument (about the *worth* of Christ, part 3) to the affectional argument. His logic works like this: if saving faith receives Christ (part2) *as* our supreme *treasure* (part 3), then it follows that saving faith *treasures* Christ supremely (part 4). Piper argues that saving faith includes this affectional movement of the soul toward Christ from Hebrews, 2 Thessalonians, 1 John 5, and the Gospel of John.

In part 5, Piper offers a definition of saving faith: "Saving faith is the God-given act of the human heart receiving, as its supreme treasure, Jesus Christ with all that God did for us and is for us in him" (214), where "heart" is understood biblically to include both affections and thoughts (214n1). Piper then explains the choice of language in the definition (214–15). The remainder of the book traces implications for (1) offering the gospel, (2) counting the cost, (3) warnings of judgment, (4) repentance, (5) evangelism, and (6) assurance.

This book was a joy to work through because of Piper's meticulous organization, logical precision, and exultant exposition—kindling the affection he defends. He includes numerous caveats and nuances that enhance the clarity of his argument. Piper's thesis is entirely persuasive and—most importantly—in widespread agreement with the biblical data. Since our actions are always

conducted with a disposition (n.b., indifference is itself a disposition), so Piper clarifies that *saving* faith is conducted with a *treasuring* manner. In what follows, I will briefly evaluate and resolve a potential exegetical issue in Piper's analysis of Philippians 3:7–11 (ch. 15).

Piper places significant weight on the conjunction ἵνα as "the link between saving faith and Christ as treasure" (151, see 151–54). He writes, "Christ has become Paul's supreme treasure. That is what has gone before the words *in order that* (v. 8b). The words *in order that* mean that there's an aim or outcome of Paul's embracing Christ as his supreme treasure" (152). His explanation seems to emphasize ἵνα expressing the purpose of ἐζημιώθην. Piper summarizes his reading, "I have come to experience everything as loss and rubbish, with Christ as my supreme treasure, *in order that* I might be [presently] in Christ and have a new righteousness" (153).

Is Paul's emphasis present or future? My objection concerns *when* Paul aims "to be found in him." If ἵνα describes not the purpose of ἐζημιώθην but instead the nearer present indicative, ἡγοῦμαι, then this casts the goal of "being found in Christ" into the future from Paul's present (as an outcome of his *ongoing* valuation of Christ). Alternatively, ἵνα may describe the purpose of *both* verbs inside the διά-clause (τὰ πάντα ἐζημιώθην καὶ ἡγοῦμαι σκύβαλα), which would mean the saving faith which receives Christ as treasure at conversion must continue for *final* salvation—to *ultimately* "gain Christ" (cf. 3:20–21; 1:19). This reading strengthens Piper's point: *not only* is conversion put in affectional terms *but also* this same affectional dimension of faith must abide to the end for those who would ultimately gain Christ and be found in him on the last day.

When I began to read Piper's *Providence* in 2020, I agreed that this was Piper's *magnum opus*. Now, however, with his writing of *WISF*, we must speak of *magna opera*. Piper has invested the last fifty years of his life to proclaim the truth that "*God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him*" (273), and these two works defend this truth from different directions: *Providence* defends that God's purposeful sovereignty is aimed at the ultimate goal of God's glory enjoyed by his people, and *WISF* defends that "God designed saving faith as a treasuring faith because a God who is treasured for *who he is* is more glorified than a God who is only trusted *for what he does*, or *what he gives*" (276). May the Lord use this work to awaken faith in nominal "Christians" and edify his church!

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*A Grammar of New Testament Greek*. By Rodney A. Whitacre. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2021, 508 pp., $49.00.

In the vast ocean of Greek grammars drops another one in the recent publication of Rodney Whitacre's, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek*. Whitacre (PhD, Cambridge University) has taught Greek for many years, most of which has been at Trinity School for Ministry in Ambridge, PA. He has authored works on John's Gospel and other books on Greek, namely, *A Patristic Greek Reader* (Baker Academic, 2007) and *Using and Enjoying Biblical Greek* (Baker Academic, 2015). His new grammar seeks to help students read and understand Koine Greek.

*A Grammar of New Testament Greek* began when Whitacre was working on another book, *Learning Koine Greek Passage by Passage*. This yet-to-be-published book takes an inductive approach to learning Greek. After students grasp the basics of grammar, they flesh out their understanding by reading actual Koine texts. *A Grammar of New Testament Greek* seeks to provide that foundational understanding of Greek grammar. After reading the first two chapters, students would then be equipped to begin working through texts in the *Passage by Passage* book. Nevertheless, despite this grammar's connection to another work, it can still function as a stand-alone volume on Greek grammar.

After two introductory chapters on writing, punctuation, and basic features of the language, the book goes on to explain morphology and syntax. Each chapter is clearly laid out and many examples from the New Testament are given. The book ends with eight helpful appendices. The grammatical discussion is student friendly and up-to-date. Whitacre sides with the Fanning school in terms of aspect and also sees the passive form as a later development with active and middle being the two base voices in Greek. In less than 500 pages, this book provides a thorough overview of Greek grammar.

There is much to be commended in *A Grammar of New Testament Greek*. First, for a beginning/intermediate book, it is thorough. If one is looking to go deeper than a traditional first-year textbook, but is not ready to wade through a massive advanced grammar, Whitacre's book would be very helpful. In terms of the basics of morphology and syntax, nothing is lacking. Whitacre seeks in a brief as possible way to cover all the major issues that students will need to read the New Testament.

In the book's effort at thoroughness, however, it does not sacrifice accessibility. Advanced grammar can be a difficult area to navigate. Students can easily be lost in the quagmire of discussion related to verbal aspect and issues of linguistics. Whitacre covers these important topics of Greek grammar, but does so in a way that is clear and accessible. This clarity combined with thoroughness is one of the greatest values in this work. This book also provides a solid discussion of morphology which is usually diminished in beginning grammars. If a student wants to go deeper with morphology after the first year of study, this would be a great place to begin. It also has a helpful discussion on etymology.

The major downside to this volume is that it may not be as classroom friendly as other beginning/intermediate grammars. The main factor contributing to this is that it is connected with a book that is not yet published. When Whitacre publishes *Reading Koine Passage by Passage*, teachers will be able to see more clearly and have the resources to understand the inductive approach to language learning proposed in it. Therefore, this book's function in the classroom will likely be limited until the publication of the other book on reading Koine.

As a stand-alone volume, teachers may have difficulty placing this book. As an introductory book, it is too thorough and lacks the usual exercises and vocabulary sections. As an intermediate text, it lacks those same user-friendly helps. Moreover, it places a great emphasis on morphology which many teachers may not emphasize in second year exegesis courses. Nevertheless, this volume could be helpful in many circumstances both for classroom and non-classroom use. For the classroom, this textbook could be used in an intermediate grammar class that focuses on exegesis. Students would spend most of their time translating, but would be able to read this grammar to grow their knowledge of the language. When a class focuses on translating, to require students to read a larger advanced grammar may be too much. This grammar could be a great in-between for beginning and advanced grammars. This book could also be used for individuals who have finished their formal education in Greek but want to continue to grow. Its comprehensiveness combined with clarity makes it a great tool for doing such.

Overall, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek* is a thorough and accessible volume on New Testament Greek. For anyone eager to grow in their knowledge of Greek but are not yet ready to dive into advanced grammars, this is





a good place to start. It can easily be read cover-to-cover and would profit any student of Greek greatly.

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*Spurgeon the Pastor: Recovering a Biblical and Theological Vision for Ministry*. By Geoffrey Chang. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2022, x + 258 pp., $17.99.

Much has been written on the Baptist luminary Charles Spurgeon, but little consideration has been given to Spurgeon's understanding of the church. His ecclesiology and resultant pastoral ministry persist as part of the *forgotten Spurgeon* (3). Geoffrey Chang intends to shine a light on this neglected aspect of Spurgeon. Chang is uniquely qualified to speak on the Baptist colossus for he serves as assistant professor of Church History and Historical Theology, as well as the curator of the Spurgeon Library at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (PhD). This book reveals that the goal of Spurgeon's preaching, evangelism, pastoral training, and church planting was not simply to promote evangelical doctrine, but to plant distinctly Baptist churches (4). He defines Spurgeon's evangelicalism beyond David Bebbington's Quadrilateral (*Biblicism*, *Crucicentrism*, *Conversionism*, and *Activism*) by adding a fifth aspect –*Ecclesialcentrism* (3). Why should ministers care about Spurgeon's ecclesiology? Because ministers of churches both small and great can learn from Spurgeon's faithfulness as he pastored amid 1) an active ministry, 2) a thriving ministry, and 3) numerous societal and theological challenges (5–7). Chang's focus is less about "how to do church like Spurgeon" and more about the biblical and theological convictions that guided his preaching and pastoral ministry (8).

The book unfolds in four thematic sections: 1) the church gathered for worship, 2) the constitution of the church, 3) the leadership and structure of the church, and 4) the church ready to engage the world with the gospel (8–10). As the church gathers for worship, *Chapter One* defines the role of preaching in the life of the church (8). Spurgeon shows every pastor, that of all the activities he may busy himself with, his primary calling is to preach God's Word … while pastoral ministry is more than preaching, it is not less than preaching (40–41). *Chapter Two* supplies insight into Spurgeon's

corporate worship strategy (9). The contemporary church can learn much here, for Spurgeon was interested in simple and edifying services where the gathering of the saints was a priority as the Lord promised His special blessing.

As the church constitutes, *Chapter Three* investigates the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper (9) and Spurgeon's convictional approach (98). The modern church tends to minimize the corporate element of the ordinances and as they lose this biblical and theological understanding, the church is weakened, and the gospel is compromised (97). *Chapter Four* discusses meaningful membership (9). Amazingly, Spurgeon saw one of his primary responsibilities as examining all new members one-by-one (120). Against the grain of much contemporary ecclesiology, Spurgeon adhered to "believing before belonging" (120). *Chapter Five* provides a deep dive into how Spurgeon accomplished meaningful membership in a church of well over 5,000 (9). To be sure, while some of Spurgeon's practices were novel, "His commitment to pastoral care, in his practice of church discipline, and in his vision for congregational involvement, we see in Spurgeon biblical principles that we can learn and emulate. (144).

Spurgeon's view of leadership and structure begins in *Chapter Six*, especially the offices of pastors, elders, and deacons (9). Spurgeon reminds us that pastoral care was never intended to be done solo … faithful elders and deacons are to equip all the church to care for all the church (171). Spurgeon was a staunch congregationalist and *Chapter Seven* will show how Spurgeon faithfully applied congregationalism even as Metropolitan Tabernacle reached mega-church status (9). Turmoil within the body of Christ leads some to abandon congregationalism in favor of a top-down (elder led) model; Spurgeon exhibits for all pastors that congregationalism does not exclude obedience to leaders (193).

As the church is now ready to engage the world with the gospel, *Chapter Eight* peers into the many charitable and evangelistic bodies that were founded out of the Tabernacle (10). Spurgeon's vision for a working church found the proper balance between external and internal emphases—while displaying mercy in their ministries, they never forgot the priority of gospel proclamation (219). *Chapter Nine* reveals Spurgeon's approach to pastoral training (10). For Spurgeon, pastoral training began in the church (244). The training of pastors is the responsibility of the pastor, and the pastor should in turn give this vision to the church to further the mission (244–245).





Nine weighty chapters well worth the investment, but two were stellar. Any look into Spurgeon's preaching is always worth the effort and *Chapter One* is a veritable treasure trove. For Spurgeon, the preaching of God's Word is the heart of pastoral ministry, and what God uses to build His church (12). Chang is careful to point out that Spurgeon "did not occupy a preaching station but pastored a church" (15) [and] "the pulpit was his Thermopylae, and every sermon was a spiritual battle against the schemes of Satan" (17).

Chang supplies Spurgeon's theology of the ordinances (*Chapter Three*). For baptism, Spurgeon 1) rejected any salvific understanding, 2) viewed it as a mark of distinction between the world and the church, and 3) pictured the Christian's union with Christ in his death and resurrection (77-80). Spurgeon's theology of communion was that he 1) was a memorialist, 2) held that Christians commune with Christ by faith, and 3) saw it as a meal for the church (87-88). Spurgeon practiced open communion and his practiced evolved from partaking once a month to eventually weekly (90-93).

This work is commendable for several reasons. First, Chang's fresh perspective from Spurgeon's robust ecclesiology is appreciated, for in it one truly gets to see *Spurgeon the Pastor*. Second, a few Spurgeon surprises, for he: 1) took responsibility for every aspect of the corporate gatherings (45), 2) issued tickets for his services (52), 3) had a strict dress code for baptism (85), 4) encouraged communion outside the official gathering of the church (91), 5) issued expiring membership certificates for moving members (129–130), 6) did not distinguish between elders, but the pastor was the main preaching elder (150), 7) viewed congregationalism as *Christocracy* (175), and 8) refused ordination because it separated him from his people (200).

Sadly, the end of Spurgeon's ministry was marked more by heartache than by triumph (247). Like Paul's vision (2 Cor 12:1-10), Spurgeon's vison for ministry moved him from paradise to pain—ecstasy to agony. Yet he drew strength from God for his ministry and the health of the church (248). The Downgrade Controversy left him heartbroken, yet while the Baptist Union failed, he remained faithful. Through the pastoral ministry of Spurgeon, Chang provides an excellent accounting of a proper biblical and theological vision for ministry. To see more on Spurgeon, give a look at Thomas Breimaier's *Tethered to the Cross: The Life and Preaching of C. H. Spurgeon* (IVP Academic, 2020) or Chang's newest Spurgeon offering *The Army of God: Spurgeon's Vision for the Church* (Mentor, 2022). Chang reminds every

pastor, "A living church is the best defense for the truth of the gospel. This was Spurgeon's conviction and what he pursued to the very end" (251). Let each of us join Spurgeon, "For we have become participants in Christ if we hold firmly until the end the reality that we had at the start" (Heb 3:14).

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*Imprecations in the Psalms: Love for Enemies in Hard Places*. By Steffen G. Jenkins. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2022, 352 pp., $41.00 paper.

Steffen Jenkins currently serves as a lecturer in Greek and Biblical Studies at Union School of Theology in Bridgend, Wales, prior to which he taught at seminaries in Cuba and was Tutor in Biblical Languages at Tyndale House, Cambridge. His recently published monograph, *Imprecations in the Psalms: Love for Enemies in Hard Places*, builds upon doctoral research he previously completed for his dissertation thesis at Trinity College at Bristol University. Here Jenkins tackles the thorny issue of the songs of retribution found throughout the Psalter, and attempts to understand these imprecatory psalms by reading and interpreting them within the context of the Psalter as a book.

To frame his investigation, Jenkins begins by posing five key questions that reflect several common assumptions readers make about the Old Testament—particularly about the Psalms: "1. Do prayers against enemies require perfect righteousness? 2. Alternatively, do such prayers stem from a deluded self-righteousness, which is unaware of the supplicant's own need for mercy and forgiveness? 3. Is suffering a sufficient qualification for prayer against enemies? 4. Do the psalms understand that the enemy is able to repent, or do they imagine that they can only ask for the destruction of the enemy? 5. Do the psalms have any notion of loving the enemy, desiring their blessing, or do they simply demand vengeance" (2).

Jenkins then proceeds to survey a variety of explanations which scholars have offered up in response to the imprecatory prayers (5-26), before laying out his own methodology for reading these psalms—namely, a canonical approach that treats each psalm against the backdrop of three canonical contexts: firstly, "placement within the collection [of the Psalter] and the neighboring psalms," secondly, its relationship "to the Hebrew Bible, being aware of connections with the Pentateuch and the person of David," and thirdly, "the context in the Christian canon, especially as the Psalms are the most quoted book in the NT" (43).

Next, Jenkins turns his attention to the first three entries of the Psalter, which not only introduce readers to the Psalms as a book, but also to the subject of enemies and retribution, as well as to the specific character of David (45-103). Whereas Psalm 1 introduces the righteous man "who loves Yahweh, delights in his Torah, and shuns the gatherings and schemes of those who hate Yahweh. . . . Psalm 2 introduces a twist to the plot of Ps 1: the unrighteous will not necessarily fall at the judgment either. They are invited to repent" (73-74).

Immediately following Psalms 1-2, Psalm 3 adds further complexity to the picture by bringing David into the conversation. Given the historical superscription of this psalm, which recalls David's flight from Absalom as a result of his adultery with Bathsheba and murder of Uriah, Jenkins maintains that David is simultaneously guilty and yet innocent as he prays this psalm: "When faced with Absalom, he is both justly facing Yahweh's righteous condemnation, and yet also facing a wicked and undeserved plot by an unrighteous slanderer who wants to steal Yahweh's throne" (78-79). Thus, "any impression of self-righteousness in Ps 1 is immediately qualified in Ps 2 and refuted by Ps 3" (107).

Moreover, Jenkins argues for a typological relationship between David and Absalom, and Israel and Babylon (114-119). His sin with Bathsheba and Uriah, and subsequent "exile" as he flees from Absalom, shares a connection to Israel's own sin and subsequent exile at the hands of the Babylonians. Thus, "for the exiles, the prayers of David provide highly relevant instruction in how to pray. Like David, they have earned their punishment ... Like Absalom, Babylon was acting wickedly even while being the means of punishment ... As we have seen, David in Ps 3 teaches the nation to pray from a position of needing mercy and to the end of blessing their enemies" (134).

Having set the table with this discussion of Psalms 1-3 and its implications for how to read and understand the prayers of retribution found elsewhere in the Psalter, Jenkins devotes the remainder of his book to examining a few of the most significant imprecatory psalms: Psalms 7, 18, 109, 119, 129, and 137 (135-267). By applying his canonical method to each of these

individual psalms and reading them within the circles of context discussed earlier, Jenkins arrives at the conclusion that all of the assumptions reflected by the five questions posed at the beginning of the book must be overturned (268). Thus, prayers of retribution neither require perfect righteousness nor should they be considered a symptom of self-righteousness. And relatedly, victimhood is not to be equated with righteousness (269-270). In addition, the Psalms reflect the firm belief that even one's enemies are redeemable, and indeed, "even imprecatory psalms show concern for the welfare of the enemy, including not only leniency in punishment but also forgiveness and a desire for their repentance and blessing" (271-272).

While word constraints do not permit a discussion of each of the book's many merits, the greatest strength of Jenkins's work—and what sets his treatment of the imprecatory psalms apart from practically every other recent treatment out there—is his methodology. By adopting a canonical approach that seeks to read the Psalter as a book, interpret the psalms within their surrounding context, and give due consideration to literary structure, Jenkins has allowed the psalms to speak for themselves, on their own terms, and according to their own canonical shaping and form. He does not impose outside sources, backgrounds, assumptions, or ideas back upon the psalms he deals with. This reflects Jenkins's rightful commitment to an exegesis that privileges the text above all else, and ultimately leads him to arrive at reasonable and biblically-balanced conclusions regarding the psalms of retribution.

Unfortunately, there are two quibbles I have with this book. Firstly, and more broadly speaking, the detailed rigor of Jenkins's exegetical work naturally means that he must leave vast portions of the Book of Psalms undealt with. Indeed, outside of a few select psalms (e.g., Pss 51, 72, 89, 103-106), the majority of this work camps out in Books I and V of the Psalter. Thus, while this study addresses retribution in the Psalms, it is not, by any means, an exhaustive treatment of every imprecatory psalm out there. Having pointed this out, however, I would qualify that this is more a limitation of the book, rather than a flaw or oversight on the author's part. And Jenkins himself acknowledges as much on several occasions throughout his work.

Another minor critique that bears mentioning relates to Jenkins's discussion of Psalm 109 (185-196). On the whole, his textual analysis here is both impressive and compelling—regardless of whether or not one may agree with his conclusions, particularly with regard to verses 6-19. Nevertheless, one significant oversight would be Jenkins's failure to consider the use of Psalm 109:8 in Acts 1:20, with the exception of a brief comment he makes (189-190). This is rather unfortunate because the psalm's occurrence in Acts 1:20 suggests a different interpretation of Psalm 109 than that advanced by Jenkins.

Overall, however, Jenkins has produced a thoughtful and valuable work on the imprecatory psalms that not only contributes in fresh and helpful new ways to the ongoing conversation regarding this tricky topic, but also models careful, contextually-sensitive exegesis that teaches one how to properly read and interpret the Psalms as a unified book that has been intentionally arranged with a coherent message and flow.

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*James: An Exegetical Guide for Preaching and Teaching*. Big Greek Idea Series. By Herbert W. Bateman IV and William C. Varner. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2022, 317 pp., $33.99.

Herbert W. Bateman IV is the founder of the Cyber-Center for Biblical Studies, and William C. Varner is professor of biblical studies at The Master's University. Both have previously published on Greek grammar, exegesis, and the epistle of James, and they bring this experience to bear in this unique work.

*James: An Exegetical Guide for Preaching and Teaching*, as an offering in Kregel's Big Greek Idea Series, is a clause-by-clause grammatical commentary on the Greek text (NA[28]) epistle of James. The authors call it "a grammatical-*like* commentary with interlinear-*like* English translations of the Greek text that provides expositional-*like* commentary to guide pastors and teachers in their sermon and teaching preparations" (9, emphasis original), and each of these three characteristics are evident. Following an introduction identifying the independent and dependent clauses, style, and message of James, the chapters of the book correspond to the pericopes of the epistle. Each chapter begins with a "big Greek idea" stated as a proposition, a structural overview of the pericope, and a subject outline further subdividing the pericope. Each subject section consists of two parts: (1) a Greek-English clausal outline with independent and dependent clauses marked using typographical formatting (bold, italics, underline), indentation, paragraphing, and connecting lines, and

(2) a commentary-like syntax section highlighting particular Greek words and phrases and explaining the syntactic and semantic significance of each item. Also scattered throughout the syntax section are lexical, grammatical, semantical, text-critical, and theological "nuggets" (set apart through gray shading) which ask and answer various questions raised by the Greek text.

Two characteristics most distinguish the present work from other recent Greek handbooks on James, namely A. K. M. Adam's *James: A Handbook on the Greek Text* (BHGNT; Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2013) and Chris A. Vlachos' *James* (EGGNT; Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2013). First, Bateman and Varner foreground their Greek clausal diagrams by placing them prominently at the head of each subsection, guiding the reader to grapple with the text itself before encountering commentary. Adam's and Vlachos' volumes have no parallel to this feature. Secondly, Bateman and Varner prioritize homiletics by providing a sermon outline at the *beginning* of each section and using the sermon points in the titles of the sections. In contrast, Adam's work lacks outlines, and Vlachos' includes "homiletical suggestions" at the *end* of each section. These features of the Big Greek Idea commentary seem geared to smooth the path from Greek exegesis to sermon as much as possible, and they will be welcome to the pastor or teacher who wants to utilize Greek in his or her preparation but cannot afford to lose sight of an impending deadline. As a result, such an approach could surely serve the "busy pastor" for whom the book is designed (9).

At the same time, Bateman and Varner's strong guiding "hand" means that the commentary makes many of the grammatical and exegetical decisions for the reader. Moreover, difficult sections of the Greek text (such as Jas 4:5, the apparent quotation of Scripture) receive little discussion of various viewpoints, feature few bibliographic references, and weight comments heavily toward whatever conclusion the authors have already reached without showing the reader *how* it was reached. Readers will need to look elsewhere for thorough treatments of such questions. However, knowing this limitation of *James* then frees the reader to use the work as it was intended, namely as "an exegetical *guide* for preaching and teaching," as the subtitle indicates.

Bateman and Varner indeed have produced a valuable guide to the Greek text, and this work certainly will come off the shelf the next time that I preach or teach from the epistle of James.

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*Preaching Life-Changing Sermons: Six Steps to Developing and Delivering Biblical Messages*. By Jesse L. Nelson. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2022, 144 pp., $16.99 paper.

Jesse Nelson, who began preaching at merely fourteen and now continues to serve in the field as a senior pastor and adjunct professor, writes *Preaching Life-Changing Sermons* to serve as another resource for preachers continuing to hone their craft. Nelson guides preachers through six steps toward developing text-centered, life-changing sermons that conforms both the preacher and his hearers to the image of Christ.

In his introduction, Nelson reasons that effective sermons are text-centered. Consequently, his steps for preparing and delivering sermons are deliberately steps toward grasping and communicating the biblical text. For Nelson, whose book draws more attention to the work of the Spirit than many others like it, grasping the text begins with intentionally and patiently seeking the Spirit. The Spirit is, as Nelson points out, the author of the biblical text and the one who knows and reveals the wisdom of God. Although Nelson lists five spiritual disciplines for seeking the Spirit, he devotes the chapter to the oft-neglected discipline of prayer. Turning from prayer, Nelson gives the second step: selecting the Scripture. Here Nelson is unapologetically expositional. Without discounting other approaches, Nelson argues that preaching "verse by verse" through books of the Bible simplifies preparation, demonstrates the cohesiveness of Scripture, and aids in exposing the congregation to the whole of Scripture and maturing their biblical literacy. Text selection then, is more a matter of selecting a book of the Bible than a particular verse or set of verses within a book. Of course, preaching the selected text requires grasping the text well. This is Nelson's third step toward life-changing sermons—studying the Scripture. Apart from right study, preachers tend to misinterpret the text, causing the listeners to "misapply the text" and leading them toward "mistakes" and "missed opportunities" (43). Nelson's method for grasping the text resembles many other popular resources that approach Scripture with a grammatical-historical hermeneutic. Discovering authorial intent within the text is the primary goal. With a handle on the text, Nelson moves the pastor into structuring the sermon. Typical of expositional preaching, Nelson's approach lets the main points of the text develop the main points of the sermon. The result is a sermon that

necessarily includes the main point of the text, a life-changing principle, a unifying key word, the purpose of the sermon, main points, illustrations, applications, an invitation, and transitions. Yet, Nelson clarifies that a clear sermon structure remains inadequate without his fifth step. The fifth step, speaking in the Spirit, gives power to the sermon. Absent from many popular books on preaching, Nelson gives a brief theology of anointing, insisting that effective preachers rid their lives of sin and let the Spirit anoint them in their preaching. The final major chapter of the book addresses the final minutes of the sermon, the Gospel invitation. Nelson insists that sermons should reach their climax in a closing plea to the congregation to believe in the Gospel. In this invitation, preachers should make very clear how the congregation ought to respond to the sermon.

Among the orchards of preaching books, *Preaching Life-Changing Sermons* has particularly low hanging fruit. In this way, Nelson achieves his goal of "simplif[ying] the approach to preparing biblical sermons (12). Young pastors face to face with the new stress of weekly sermon preparation will find in Nelson a clear and straightforward guide without getting lost in technical jargon and complex concepts. In addition, readers are exposed to a diverse number of great expositors in each chapter of the book. Preachers hear from two pastors in every chapter, the very pastors that impacted Nelson's own preaching. New pastors will find Nelson helpful and approachable in these respects.

While I applaud Nelson for his simplicity and his uniqueness in highlighting the words of great preachers, I find his work inadequately Christ-centered. Commendably, Nelson insists that "Expository preaching is Christ-centered." Yet, this Christ-centeredness is not reflected in the body of the book. The significance of Christ and his Gospel receives little mention throughout the first five chapters. In chapter three, "Studying the Scripture," Nelson outlines how to grasp the main point of a biblical text. Only in his, albeit lengthy, aside on biblical genres does the person of Christ receive any mention, and here only in three short paragraphs on reading the Gospels and Acts (58). In the same aside on biblical genres, Nelson highlights how to understand Old Testament narrative. He suggests preachers should note the characters of the story – "the protagonist (hero of the story) and antagonist (the person or group who opposes the protagonist)" (54). He fails, however, to exhort preachers to see God and his future redemption through the suffering messiah





in the Old Testament narratives. In fact, Nelson gives an example that the Old Testament narrative about Passover "can help us to understand the Lord's Supper," but fails to make clear that both the Passover and the Supper point to Christ, the center of all Scripture. Nelson's notes on other genres do not fare any better in highlighting the Christ-centered nature of expository preaching. Only in the final major chapter, the shortest of the book (six pages in total), does Nelson focus specifically on the importance of Christ's Gospel in life-changing preaching. Even here, however, the Gospel could be understood as a necessary, though important, conclusion to the sermon rather than the all-saturating point of the sermon itself. The chapter, titled "Sharing the Savior," focuses entirely on how to present a concluding Gospel invitation. I agree that sermons should conclude with such a Gospel plea, yet a Christ-centered conclusion does not a Christ-centered sermon make.

Overall, Nelson does present to preachers a helpful and simplified guide for crafting effective sermons. His methodology appears classically expositional, and preachers who follow his approach carefully will undoubtedly have a good start to preaching the text. Nevertheless, Nelson's failure to adequately present Christ as the center of all Scripture – and so the center of every sermon – cannot be overlooked. In this way, Nelson falls short of leading preachers to craft life-changing sermons.

For preachers still adjusting and modifying their approach to sermon preparation, Nelson's work serves as a helpful tool to add to the toolbox. His simplicity and practicality make his work worthwhile. Yet, preachers will want surely need other works in the toolbox as well, tools that help them with Christ-centered exposition and more complex ideas related to preaching.

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*Covenantal and Dispensational Theologies: Four Views on the Continuity of Scripture*. Edited by Brent E. Parker and Richard J. Lucas. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2022, 280 pp., $22.99 paper.

Brent Parker and Richard Lucas are PhD graduates from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Parker is the assistant editor of the Southern Baptist Journal of Theology, and Lucas is the pastor of teaching and reaching at the First Baptist Church in Jacksonville, Florida. They have made an outstanding contribution to the series Spectrum Multiview Books in providing this resource. The issue of Covenantal and Dispensational theologies is of no small debate among evangelicals today. Parker and Lucas's aim in this volume is to interact with the different views concerning how the canon of the Scripture fits together (3). Parker and Lucas intend to provide for readers an understanding of how theologians have put together the relationship between covenants in the Bible. In this, their aim is not limited only to the relationship between Israel and the church, though the contributors have to dive into these waters due to the nature of the debate.

The book contains eight chapters. The first four chapters deal with the main views the editors intend to interact with. They structure the book moving from the view that supports more continuity between the covenants to the view that argues for less continuity. In this sense, the book begins with Covenant Theology, addressed by Michael Horton, professor of Systematic Theology and Apologetics at Westminster Seminary in California. It follows Progressive Covenantalism, addressed by Stephen Wellum. It continues with Progressive Dispensationalism, explained by Darrell Bock.

Furthermore, finally, Traditional Dispensationalism, issued by Mark Snoeberger. The remaining four chapters have to do with the responses of each contributor to the views they disagree with. The editors include in a single chapter for each contributor their response to every view with which they disagree.

Michael Horton begins the debate with Covenantal Theology in chapter one. The main argument in his chapter is that the Bible follows a covenantal framework in its totality (36). He proceeds to support his claim by evaluating the architectural design of the covenant in the Bible. In this section, Horton evaluates how this architectural system develops in different places, such as the law and the gospel (37). Horton concludes that all triune God's saving purposes are in service to the eternal covenant of redemption with Christ as the mediator (72).

Chapter two is dedicated to Stephen Wellum's Progressive Covenantalism. Stephen Wellum is a professor of Christian Theology at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. As its name expresses, Wellum argues that the Bible presents a plurality of covenants that progressively reveals the redemptive plan of God for his people, which reaches his fulfillment in Christ (75). Progressive Covenantalism affirms that covenants are more than a unifying theme of Scripture. They are the backbone of the Scripture's entire storyline (75). Wellum develops his chapter in three steps. He supports his claim hermeneutically and affirms that Scripture is interpreted according to its claim to be God's Word written through the agency of human authors (77). Based on Hebrews 1:1-3, Wellum affirms that Scripture is interpreted according to a progressive revelation (78). Wellum also argues that Scripture is interpreted according to three horizons of context: the textual horizon, the epochal horizon, and the canonical horizon (79). It is in this canonical horizon where Wellum considers the typology to play a crucial role (82). In his second step, Wellum argues that through Progressive Covenantalism emerges the larger truth of kingdom through covenant, which unites the metanarrative of the Bible from creation to consummation (87). Because of this, Wellum moves to explain his understanding of the covenants. He sees all the covenants of the Bible as a progressive advance toward the New Covenant fulfilled in Christ (98).

It follows chapter three with Darrell Bock's Progressive Dispensationalism. Bock is a senior research professor of New Testament studies at Dallas Theological Seminary. He aims to concentrate on the element of a discontinuity between the covenants which is the historical interpretation of Dispensationalism (116). He approaches the issue from a hermeneutical perspective and evaluates the different covenants in the Bible. Bock concludes that his description of Dispensationalism sees the program of God mediated in the progress of various structures, such as Israel, the church, and the consummated kingdom leading to a new heaven and earth (146). Bock explicitly distinguishes Israel as a nation and the recipient of the promises of God and the church as another entity different from national Israel (146). Bock considers that each Testament should be read for what they say (146).

In chapter four, Mark Snoeberger, professor of Systematic Theology and Apologetics at Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary, continues the interaction by explaining the Traditional Dispensationalism view. Snoeberger argues that the dispensational system is the solution to the problem the other views face. After surveying the history of the hermeneutical interpretation concerning issues throughout the history of the church, Snoeberger concludes that the departure of the hermeneutical interpretation throughout the ages provides the necessary soil for Dispensational to germinate (150). He claims that his view provided a renewed quest for biblical unity. Because of this, Snoeberger structures his essay based on his hermeneutics, his theological centering, and the idea of diversity within the divine government (153). After evaluating and interpreting the covenants and the issues concerning putting together the whole Bible, Snoeberger concludes that traditional Dispensationalism best accommodates an originalist hermeneutic that lets the Bible speak clearly for itself. His system offers a more satisfying and all-inclusive *mitte* for all God's activity. Furthermore, Traditional Dispensationalism best explains the manifest discontinuity within that government (182).

Parker and Lucas have provided an excellent resource for readers interested in understanding the Bible altogether as a whole. The views represented in the book, though there may be some variations of them in different churches, are the more well-known. Each of the contributors explained his view clearly and consistently. For readers, it is easier to follow their arguments when interacting with them. The editors organized the views moving from robust continuity to solid discontinuity. This organization helps the reader to move in the theological spectrum while interacting with the book quickly. Parker and Lucas provided a helpful introduction to the issue of the book that is highly beneficial for readers that may not be familiar with the topic in question in this book. This structural organization helps to introduce readers to what is coming next.

The topic the book addresses have been crucial in Christianity's history, and this specific issue of the continuity and discontinuity of the covenants has been the theological topic that has given birth to not a few denominations in the world. Because of this, it would have been better if each contributor had responded to their opponent separately and not thrown all the responses in a single chapter. This separation would have made the interaction stronger, and readers would have been able to grasp a more profound understanding of the different views of the debate.

Above all, this book is an excellent tool for pastors, theologians, and readers interested in knowing how Christians have tried to understand the Bible as a whole. The interaction among the contributors is also beneficial for readers to understand the theological approaches of certain Christian denominations from a different point of view and conclude how such denominations do their theology. Pastors, theology students, and lay people with a teaching role in their local churches will benefit significantly from the material presented in this book.

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*The Septuagint from Alexandria to Constantinople: Canon, New Testament, Church Fathers, Catenae*. By Gilles Dorival. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2021, 240 pp., $85.00 paper.

Gilles Dorival's book, *The Septuagint from Alexandria to Constantinople*, provides an enlightening history of how the Septuagint was used by the community of faith from its genesis until the terminus of the Byzantine Empire (1453). Dorival is a well-known Septuagint specialist, serving as a professor emeritus at Aix-Marseille University in their department of antiquity. He has edited several books in the series *Textes Documents de la Mediterranee Antique et Medievale*. In this recent monograph, he traces the reception of the Septuagint, dividing his book into four sections of two chapters each. These sections correlate with its four stages of usage among Christians: canon, New Testament, church fathers, and the catenae.

In issues of canon, Dorival begins by defining a canonical book as "being inspired by God and therefore normative, enumerated according to a given order and in a determined number" (2). He proceeds to examine various theories for the Old Testament's canonization, presenting his own hypothesis for a twofold canonization of the Law and Prophets, then the Writings. However, he concedes that taking this view is premature (barring further research) and posits that the classic theory of a threefold canonization (Law, then Prophets, then Writings) ought to be the basis for further inquiry. Because canonization was a long process, the Septuagint ended up with

a larger corpus than the Hebrew Bible. Why these extra books are in the Septuagint and not the Hebrew is paradoxical, according to Dorival, since all the books included in the Septuagint's canon are Hebrew in origin (47). Considering that the canonization process was still underway in the first century, Dorival claims that "the New Testament quotes—as Scripture—texts which do not belong to the Hebrew Bible" (7). To support his claim, he cites texts like Jude 14 which quotes 1 Enoch 1:9.

In issues of the New Testament, Dorival's foremost assertion is that the New Testament authors almost unanimously quote the Septuagint (51). Granted, the precise number of quotes in the New Testament can range from 160 to over 4,000 (54). Dorival says that the most in-depth work on the New Testament's quotations of the Old was actually done by C. H. Toy who numbers the quotations to be around 600 (55). While the New Testament authors do almost exclusively quote the Septuagint, Dorival encourages his reader that they *never* explicitly quote from the Septuagint's deuterocanonical books, inferring from this that the deuterocanon was not considered authoritative Scripture by the New Testament authors (59).

Dorival's next chapter considers whether the Septuagint underwent a Christianization either from the time of the New Testament or the fathers. For example, while Psalm 40:6 says, "but you have given me an open ear," Hebrews 10:5 quotes this psalm as saying, "but a body have you prepared for me," which is appropriated to fit Jesus' incarnation. In this and other examples, Dorival concludes that while Christianization may be present, it is often scant and overstated. Interestingly, when there is a plurality of textual forms, as in Psalm 40:6 talking about an ear in one text and a body in another, the fathers' commentaries expound each of the textual forms available to them. In Dorival's words, "such textual plurality does not bother the ancient commentators: they see it as a richness" (114).

Moving to the church fathers, Dorival's first question is whether the Septuagint is their primary Old Testament (in Greek-speaking regions) or what their translation was based off of (in Latin and Syriac-speaking regions). He holds that, while the Septuagint is not a basis for translation in Syriac-speaking regions, "in all other regions of the Mediterranean basin, the Old Testament of the Church Fathers was the Septuagint" (114). Further, because the fathers accessed the Old Testament through the Septuagint, almost all the fathers understood its divisions to be bipartite or quadripartite,





unlike the Jews at the time who held to a ranked and tripartite canon with the Law at the top (20).

Finally, Dorival examines the Septuagint's occurrences in the catenae. For those unfamiliar with the term, Dorival defines the catenae as a literary innovation which "consist[s] of commentaries, homilies, *scholia* of the past centuries, but also of any other literary form in which Scripture verse are explained" (135). As it pertains to the Septuagint, Dorival shows how central the text of Scripture was in the writing of these compilations: the passage was often in a larger font in the center of the page with all the commentary surrounding it. With this last study, he concludes his overview.

The introduction Dorival gives to the canonization process and its relation to the Septuagint is rich and balanced. Further, while his own theory for canonization seems promising, Dorival is wise to forego applying this theory too soon. Admitting to the paradox of the Septuagint's canon is likewise a good decision, although it may have been best for Dorival to present a hypothesis for this anomaly. Lastly, Dorival leaves the discussion open as to which books the New Testament authors would have considered canonical: at one point, he states that the New Testament did not consider the deuterocanonical books as authoritative, but at another point, he argues that the New Testament does quote noncanonical books as Scripture. More clarity on this issue is desirable.

Dorival's claim of a Septuagint-dominated New Testament is uncontested, but this fact demands much attention due to its theological implications—especially where the Septuagint disagrees with the Hebrew Bible. One such example Dorival draws attention to, without resolving, is Acts 7:14 where Stephen says that the total number of people who went into Egypt with Joseph was 75 (agreeing with the Septuagint), but the Hebrew (and, consequently, English) Bible states that the total number was 70 (Gen 46:27). Moreover, his claim about the deuterocanon fails to take into account New Testament citations of the apocrypha like Jude 9 quoting *The Assumption of Moses*. If an argument could be made for an authoritative apocrypha, almost undoubtedly, the deuterocanon would also be considered authoritative.

The claim that the fathers accept textual plurality is both exemplified well and fascinating for further study. Moreover, their various views on the partitions of the Old Testament seem right and rich with implications. However, Dorival's emphasis on the Septuagint being the main translation

of the fathers seems unbalanced. First, as he admits, the Syriac translation of the Old Testament was based on the Hebrew Bible (99). Second, while many of the early Latin translations (*Vetus Latina*) used the Septuagint, Jerome's *Vulgate*, the standard Latin translation, was based on the Hebrew. Third, although the Greek Fathers tended to use the Septuagint, some make use of its Jewish revisions (99). Moreover, to claim that the Greek Fathers used the standard Greek translation of the Old Testament is unremarkable.

The discussion of catenae proves to be a helpful introduction to a puzzlingly overlooked genre. While Dorival's insights on the catenae are engaging, they might be better suited to a separate monograph on the subject. This last section focuses little on the Septuagint in comparison to the preceding three.

Overall, Dorival's book is an excellent overview and introduction to issues relating to the Septuagint. Being such a broad overview, this book lends itself to being read by as wide an audience as is interested in the topic. For a conversation partner to Dorival, Peter Gentry has written extensively on the Septuagint. One of Gentry's helpful articles on the Septuagint is published by the *Bulletin for Biblical Research* entitled "The Septuagint and the Text of the Old Testament." Gentry will provide useful insights for any evangelical seeking further study.

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*The Royal Priesthood and the Glory of God*. By David S. Schrock. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2022, 208 pp., $17.99 paper.

In 2015, *Crossway* began publishing titles for a series called Short Studies in Biblical Theology. The aim of the series is to "connect the resurgence of biblical theology at the academic level with everyday believers" (13). David S. Schrock, the Pastor of Preaching and Theology at Occoquan Bible Church in Woodbridge, Virginia, has written the latest contribution in this series, focused on the priesthood of believers and its significance for everyday discipleship. *The Royal Priesthood and the Glory of God* "[traces] Christ's priestly glory through the Bible, learning how a biblical theology of priesthood informs our own discipleship as royal priests" (24).

In the Introduction, Schrock presents a working definition of the





priesthood as "consecrated mediators between God and his covenant people who stand to serve at God's altar (1) sanctifying God's holy place, (2) sacrificing God's offerings, and (3) speaking God's covenant" (21). After this careful definition and then delineating the "Levitical priesthood" from the "royal priesthood" (20-23), he outlines the development of this doctrine in six stages, each following the pattern and flow of the witness of Scripture.

Chapter 1 begins by laying out the priestly pattern in the Garden with Adam, on through the patriarchs. Schrock argues that the priestly pattern in Eden is seen from its form and structure as a "garden sanctuary" where the presence of God is mediated through the first image bearers (28-29). It is also a place in which their "priestly commission" to "work" and to "keep" is carried out—terms which are characteristic of the priestly service in the tabernacle in passages such as Numbers 3:7-7; 8:25-26; 18:5-7 (30). These "echoes of Eden" can be seen throughout the rest of Genesis, showing how the pattern fits his definition of the priesthood (34-44). The echo that reverberates into the New Testament most notably for this particular treatment is that of Melchizedek and, looking ahead at this point, Schrock concludes that "Melchizedek provides a glimpse of what Adam might have been, what Israel was meant to be(come), and what Jesus Christ would ultimately be—a glorious royal priest" (43).

The remaining chapters survey the progressive revelation of God's glory through the priesthood within successive portions of Scripture, as you would expect from a work of biblical theology. Chapter 2 looks at the shape of the priesthood in the Pentateuch as it develops and is legislated under the ministry of Moses—"an idealized pattern" with respect to its duties, and a "shadow that will find its true substance in the great priesthood of Jesus Christ" with respect to its limitations (70). Chapter 3 begins with the time of Joshua, in which we see the Levitical priesthood living out the pattern set for them and enjoying God's blessing (73-77). Soon thereafter, the covenant blessings of obedience were exchanged for certain curses of disobedience as the priests did not live up to the pattern of promise (77-78). The priests did not obey God's Law, guard his temple, or instruct his people (78-83). What they did do was offer impure and unauthorized sacrifices in unsanctioned spaces (83-85). Despite the failure of this priesthood and their covenant unfaithfulness, God had not abandoned his covenant. In the life of David, however, we see the hope of a better priesthood—a royal priesthood—and

a new covenant (86-96).

This better hope spoken of in the Prophets is confirmed in the Writings, which Schrock argues "heighten our anticipation of the royal priesthood" (99). Chapter 4 draws this out from 1-2 Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah, showing how the "priestly administration" of David and his sons foreshadows the overlap in the roles of priest and king (104). This royal priesthood which was foreshadowed and foretold in the Old Testament comes front and center in the Gospels with the advent of Jesus Christ. Concerning his priestly identity, "the Gospels are filled with episodes that point to Jesus' priestly actions" (121). That is, Jesus shows his priesthood through his teaching of the kingdom, his healing ministry, and his ability to forgive sin and cleanse the temple. It is in his death, however, that his priestly work is more fully on display. Unlike any other priest, Jesus is the one who *offers sacrifice* to God and who *is himself the sacrifice*—a "priestly sacrifice which effectively redeems the people whom the Father gave him before the world began" (140).

The rest of the New Testament from Acts to Revelation shows "what Christ's priesthood means for his people and how his people (especially the author of Hebrews) understand the meaning of his priesthood" (141). This new priesthood is inaugurated in Acts as a clear shift is seen from the physical temple to a spiritual one—the people of God are the new temple (142-145), then expanded through Paul and Peter as the church is "identified as a family of royal priests and empowered by the Holy Spirit [to sanctify] the household of God" by performing priestly work for one another and speaking God's Word (148).

The letter to the Hebrews presents the priesthood of Christ and of believers most beautifully. Jesus is the great high priest who offers a better sacrifice, enacted on better promises, securing a better hope for God's people. Christ is the priest-king in the order of Melchizedek as prophesied through David in Psalm 110. The Levitical sacrifices of the Old are done away with as Christ is the all-sufficient sacrifice of the New, and the royal priesthood of believers now offers the sacrifice of praise (Heb. 13:15). Schrock concludes, as believers today are "worshipping God, serving one another, sanctifying God's house with prayer and church discipline, baptizing saints, communing at the Lord's Table, offering sacrifices of praise, speaking the word to one another, and blessing the nations with the gospel, they are priests living in the kingdom of Christ" (175).

Like other books in the series, *The Royal Priesthood and the Glory of God* covers a swath of biblical and theological data with accessible language and practical insight. Indeed, the strength of the series is the strength of this book. Admittedly, there are certain aspects of his position that would be met with disagreement, such as the degree to which the priestly patterns are seen in Scripture. However, these disagreements are not likely to be an obstacle to those for which these books are written, nor is there sufficient space to unpack all his exegetical work in arriving at his conclusions. Schrock has done the task of tracing this theme of priesthood throughout Scripture and relating its relevance for application in everyday discipleship. This book will be of benefit to those new and old in the faith as it points believers to the sacred work of their royal priesthood, following after the Priest-King, Jesus.

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*The Good Samaritan: Luke 10 for the Life of the Church*. Touchstone Text Series. By Emerson B. Powery. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2022, 175 pp., $24.99 hardcover.

Understanding how to love one's neighbor can be challenging. Fortunately, the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) has served believers as a guide to what loving one another looks like in application. This biblical text has stood as that example for almost two millennia for believers, with commentators and biblical scholars taking into account its implications. Emerson B. Powery brings fresh insight and application upon the parable to its readers in the Touchstone Texts series by Baker Academic. Powery received his PhD from Duke University and currently serves as Biblical Studies Professor at Messiah University.

Powery's work posits, "what you see depends on where you stand" (31). Working off this idea, Powery argues for a dynamic reading of the Samaritan parable that ushers the present-day church to action. The work examines four selected perspectives throughout history to demonstrate the parable's variance of interpretations. Then, Powery breaks down the parable in its context before working towards an application. On the backdrop of proper

contextual interpretation of the parable, Power utilizes contemporary movements and events (i.e., Black Lives Matter movement and the COVID-19 Pandemic) to push the church towards exemplifying societal behavior and ushering change.

Before going through the different perspectives that the Christian interpretative tradition has yielded in the past with the parable, Powery goes into his approach by examining the different ways it is received by people and people groups. In Chapter one, Powery notes his observations in the Gospels and contemporary churches that demonstrate different perspectives people have had on the parable and how they also handle tragedies. To Powery, it is "in turn, appreciation for these differences can make us value our own particular expression of the Christian faith even more" (8). From here, Powery brings in examples from literature.

Using Toni Morrison's, *A Mercy*, Power expresses how the book informs people to read and understand their shared history and, in turn, understand each other (13). From here, referencing two tragedies and the community's response (i.e., the Amish community of Nickel Mines killings and Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church shooting), Powery suggests the principles of the Good Samaritan "behind these Christian Communities' responses to their tragic situations" (23). It is more about the response of the communities that share in the experience together, mirroring principles off the parable that Powery informs the church.

In Chapter two, Powery initiates his exploration of the Samaritan parable with four perspectives throughout history: Augustine, Howard Thurman, the Solentiname Community, and Harriet Jacobs. Augustine's writings related to Luke 10 contained at least two interpretational methods: allegorical and literal. This helps brings Powery's argument on differing views forward, allowing for his advocation for a liberal interpretation of multiple meanings. The examination of variance from Augustine is something that is typically contrary to interpretive methods seen today. Furthermore, this allows for a deeper understanding of the "ethnic dimensions" of the parable the author wishes to draw out (44). To Powery, the understanding of Augustine's writings on the parable limit its implications by imputing Jesus as the Samaritan versus appreciating the unique contribution the Samaritan himself offers.

Powery then moves to Howard Thurman, the Solentiname Community, and Harriet Jacobs, focusing on their interpretations of the parable within





their contemporary context. How these various interpretations matter, according to Powery, is in their ability to pull different impressions that Scripture has on minorities in the way they live and interact with society (i.e., Howard Thurman in the 1950s) (58). This was not strictly a spiritual experience to some people or people groups, but one that had real-time implications for politics also (71). These various viewpoints ultimately show readers how to engage the Scripture in their own lives and contexts (84).

In Chapter three, the author then moves to a more proper study of the parable, covering the text directly and its intended audience, even looking to better understand the Samaritan's unique contribution by examining their history. Focusing on the unique ethnicity of the Samaritan in the parable, Powery suggests that "nonetheless, from the perspective of nonwhite readers, the ethnic identity of the Samaritan (and his status in relationship to ancient Judaism) matters deeply" (118). The argument from here develops further in its focus almost explicitly on the ethnic dimension of the parable (from considering the Romans to and a western movement of understanding Scripture).

In Chapter four, Power finishes his work with the application of the parable. Using examples such as COVID-19 and the death of George Floyd, he implores the church to make "good trouble" as Martin Luther King Junior encouraged (144). The Black Lives Matter movement, he says, is about "good trouble," and churches should follow suit (147). Concluding his chapter, Powery sums up his view on the application of the parable, "In the spirit of this book, Jesus' imaginative use of the Samaritan confirms the creative power of difference to challenge the status quo of our lives together" (153). Jesus' use of a unique ethnic character in the parable, which was contrary to the norm in that time, serve as a motivator for change in the current church.

A strength of the work in the area of New Testament studies is in the authors exploration of historical interpretation from non-mainstream individuals and ethnic groups, except for the use of Augustine. Powery works diligently through these various interpretations, understanding the parable and how it applies to the context in which they lived, which vary considerably because of each context. The author gives readers a broader understanding of how the Good Samaritan applies in contemporary times in several situations. This compounds his exegesis of the Luke-Acts, which acutely demonstrates ethnic and linguistic features are essential. In fact, the unique

ethnic dimension of the Samaritan in the Parable proves to play a crucial part in ones understanding of how to apply Scripture.

A glaring weakness is in the book's selected use of contemporary issues that house negative connotations (i.e., COVID-19). These movements, events, or pandemics serve as examples the reader can relate to, and they do well in bringing attention to the tragedies of our day. However, Powery pushes too far by degradation, seemingly contradicting his argument in applying the parable to the lives of believers. He goes as far as calling white people's ancestors "moral monsters" in a brief quotation from Black Lives Matter (150). The frequent digression from exegesis and application detracts from its effectiveness and contradicts his own premise. Almost the entire fourth chapter left this reader feeling as if the book was advocating for a movement more than a biblical study on the parable of the Good Samaritan.

The book has a rightful place in Lukan studies with its contributions to the ethnic dimension of the parable in Luke 10. The Samaritan and the Samaritan's ethnicity plays such a critical role that they cannot be ignored in interpreting the text. Furthermore, observing this unique ethnic dimension brings a rich and full grasp of who one's neighbor is. Nevertheless, the book suffers at points and must be handled in pieces rather than in its entirety, as it leaves its own premise and seems to get lost in current affairs.

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