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## *Book Reviews*

### Biblical Studies

***Invitation to the Psalms: A Reader's Guide for Discovery and Engagement.* By Rolf A. Jacobson and Karl N. Jacobson. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013. 192 pages. Paperback, \$17.99.**

Brothers Rolf and Karl Jacobson guide the inexperienced student through the beautiful terrain of the Psalter with their work, *Invitation to the Psalms*. They make it decidedly clear that a reader must move from simply reading Scripture to experiencing it (1). This conviction of experiencing Scripture affects the organization and content of their book. For example, they pack examples from Psalms throughout the short book, while omitting lengthy discussion of parallelism and detailed footnotes. The outline of the book intentionally builds from the bottom-up by introducing poetry (chapter 1), genres (chapters 2-3), the voice of the psalmist (chapter 4), metaphors in Psalms (chapter 5), and the theology of Psalms (chapter 6). Noting the Jacobsons' metaphor for themselves as tour guides, the following review will place their contribution in the domain of a guided tour.

Chapter 1 presents the argument that a reader must understand the *logic of communication*. Here, the *communication* is Hebrew poetry; the *logic* is parallelism. The Jacobsons, therefore, guide the tour group through different Psalms to discover parallelism within lines (i.e., cola), between lines, between verses (i.e., unit two or more lines), between entire sections, and between psalms. The guides stop the tour group to mention the classic labels of parallelism, noting the difficulty with the third, somewhat catchall category—synthetic parallelism. From there, they let the tour group sift the dirt and test the group's analytical and creative skills by asking the group to fill out the second line that is parallel to the first example line. This type of exercise continually reinforces the Jacobsons' objective to help students learn to experience, not label, the poetry of the Bible. The necessity of labeling, however, causes them to introduce important vocabulary for poetic analysis—echoing and extending. The Jacobsons often claim that parallelism contains *both* echoing and extending, thus guarding the interpreter from an erroneous either/or dichotomy.

Chapters 2 and 3 introduce the student to the genres of Psalms. The tour guides now show the details of form and content to the tour group so that the tourists can competently return to landscape at a later time and walk through the region unguided, as it were. First, the Jacobsons highlight the distinct forms of the Psalms, especially prayers of help (i.e., laments), hymns of praise, psalms of trust, and songs of thanksgiving. The guides give the tour group a brief breakdown of each main section of a form along with lists of psalms that fit the category. The guides then show how they categorize Psalms according to content. Here, the guides list royal, enthronement, wisdom, creation, historical, Zion, imprecatory, penitential, and liturgical as categories. The guides do not oversell the objectivity of content genre analysis to their tour group; rather, they often highlight how subjective—though important—the analysis is. Throughout both chapters, the Jacobsons underscore the continuity of material that the tour group is currently learning (e.g., prayers for help

connect to songs of thanksgiving; royal connect to enthronement psalms).

Chapter 4 gives the guides the opportunity to discuss the history of the landscape, allowing the tour to imagine what might have happened prior to their viewing of the scenery. The Jacobsons find the persona and life situation highly important for interpretation. Upon discovery of the former, the tour group finds an important entry into the room of experience of the Psalms. Searching for the latter, the tour group finds the situations of help in a time of need and temple setting. The guides call for the group to use imagination when thinking about the history of the landscape. For the guides, this imaginative process is the underlying tool that one must use to interpret poetry correctly.

Chapters 5 and 6 stress important linguistic and theological features that occur throughout the poetic panorama of Psalms. Using common and important metaphors, such as shepherd and rock, the guides help the tour group think more precisely about images. Later, the guides take the tour into an art gallery away from the vast landscape. Once in the gallery they tell the tour to study the framed theological mosaic of Psalms. Unashamedly, the guides express that they intentionally picked out the frame and each theological piece of the mosaic. The overall theme of their mosaic is *hesed*. The guides then show how the themed mosaic appropriately takes pieces from each form genre (see chapter 2) to construct their theological art. Finally, they mention four holistic theological themes present in the landscape: God as committed to all creation, willing to be challenged, working through others, and active in the world.

The Jacobsons' sophisticated yet down-to-earth literary tour can garner detailed praise as well as scholarly debate over genre group and terminology. Rather than voicing ways in which one may agree or disagree with the authors, attention will focus on the purpose and intended audience of *Invitation to the Psalms*. In short, the Jacobsons hope to invite readers to read and experience the Psalms by acquainting them with the Psalter. Their target reader is the inexperienced student who has little Hebrew competency (2-3). Do they succeed? The answer is unequivocally yes! This success may be seen in several ways. First, the language that the Jacobsons choose is simple and clear (e.g., lines, verses, echoing and extending), rather than convoluted. Second, the constant active learning activities throughout the book (e.g., writing one's own parallel line and creating metaphors) help the student comprehend. Third, the breakout boxes (e.g., "covering" the Psalms) and the use of shapes (e.g., circles and triangles to explain genre) truly inculcate the undeveloped student. Fourth and broadly, the Jacobsons keep the entire work light-hearted and accessible for their target audience. Fifth, the choice and explanation of metaphor help the student understand important and often neglected imagery.

While there are many impressive aspects to the Jacobsons' work, there are a few areas, however minor, that should receive some constructive comments; each of the following comments connects to the purpose and intended audience of the book. First, the excursus on superscriptions should have some footnotes with helpful resources on this important and debated topic. Second, the Jacobsons, perhaps, should have balanced the attention given to persona and life setting with current discussions on how editing and canon might affect interpretation. Third, the discussion of theology seems to force (unnecessarily?) a *Mitte* of sorts with *hesed*. Searching for an underlying theological assumption behind the Psalter does not seem to benefit the inexperienced student; in fact, the search could be misleading. The Jacobsons could have shown various theological currents that run throughout the Psalter instead of

giving a large amount of space to abstracting *hesed*. The Jacobsons, however, were quite forthright about why they selected certain psalms and what they hoped the reader would understand after their theological presentation. Much of the theological discussion in chapter six is located in Rolf's delightful essay in *Soundings in the Theology of the Psalms*. Irrespective of debates about an underlying theological assumption of the Psalter, chapter six is quite thought provoking. Despite these criticisms, this book is a wonderful contribution to introductory studies of Psalms. In sum, the literary guides serve the tour well because their communication is helpful and accessible for the tour group to *discover* and *engage* the Psalms.

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***Coping with Change: Ecclesiastes.* By Walter Kaiser. Geanies House, Fearn, Ross-shire: Christian Focus Publications, 2013. 197 pages. Paperback, \$11.54.**

This volume is an updated version of Kaiser's 1978 publication. Though Kaiser has added his own translation and updated some of the references along with the bibliography, much of the commentary remains unchanged from its earlier edition. But, while some of his illustrations and references remain dated (cf. 56), the work demonstrates a timelessness and appeal that make it a worthwhile read for pastors, teachers, and others looking for a helpful assessment of "the relationship between Christ and culture" (13).

The introduction covers the unity, authorship, date, and purpose of the book of Ecclesiastes. Kaiser begins by challenging the prevailing interpretation of *hebel*, arguing for the translation "transitoriness" instead of "vanity," following Daniel Fredericks and others (cf. 24, 57-59). Kaiser argues that this translation better renders the Hebrew which he literally translates as "vapor, breath, mist, or smoke." Understanding *hebel* to convey temporariness rather than futility removes some of the allegations of cynicism on the part of the author, is consistent with James' description of life a vapor (James 4:13-15), and also allows for the connotation of things we are simply unable to understand (59).

In this section, the author makes a strong case for Solomonic authorship based on the language, descriptions, text, linguistic features, and ideas presented in the book (36-42). In addition, he presents a fourfold division of the book forming component parts of an overall argument that finally comes to a conclusion in 12:13-14. According to Kaiser's arrangement, each section ends with its own conclusion, before the final resolution is given. The remaining chapters of the commentary follow Kaiser's proposed fourfold division of the book.

Throughout the work, Kaiser demonstrates how Solomon addressed issues of his day that still resonant with contemporary readers. These issues include: wealth, work, wisdom, mystery, pleasure, death and mortality, justice, fear of the Lord, worship, government, enjoyment of life as a gift from God, retribution, joy, and suffering. The positive things of life are only passing pleasures unless they are understood to be gifts from God (87). The difficulties of life must be nuanced by the fear of the Lord (46, 102); the providence of God (94); and trust in the Him (118-119), His plan for His creation (120, et al), and the confidence that even suffering has purpose, though those purposes may remain a mystery for mankind (151-52).

In the end, the ultimate test of our faith, in good times and in bad, is the decisive action of remembering our creator and reflecting on who he is and what he

has done for us (180). Kaiser sees Solomon's conclusion as explaining how tragic it would be for one to finish his or her life and never have understood the key to living. The key is that this life is temporary, but God has a larger purpose. His purpose gives meaning to our existence and hope for our eternity. This, Solomon concludes, should cause us to "Fear God and keep His commands."

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***David Remembered: Kingship and National Identity in Ancient Israel.* By Joseph Blenkinsopp. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013. 231 pages. Paperback, \$26.00.**

Joseph Blenkinsopp is John A. O'Brien Professor Emeritus of Biblical Studies at the University of Notre Dame. He is the author of numerous valuable books and articles. Blenkinsopp's aim is "to trace one strand in the social and political life of the people of Israel from the sixth century B.C.E. to the early second century of the common era" (1). The strand he wishes to trace is the monarchy of David, and its influence. One might put this work in the vein of Old Testament theology in the sense that Blenkinsopp works to describe an ideology present in Israelite history. With a broad aim, the first weakness of this book might be its relatively short length. He acknowledges that it spans several sub-disciplines (Persian, Achaemenid and Hellenistic periods for example).

To begin, he encourages the reader to consider "the David legend," which he considers to be a literary work of art, "not necessarily fictional but rather allowing for a basic historical substratum" (5). Blenkinsopp is not so much interested in the historicity of "the Davidic legend" as he is in the political developments which grew out of the ideological acceptance of it. Chapter 1 details the way in which the Deuteronomist and the Chronicler evaluate later leaders in terms of the Davidic ideal. He suggests understanding 2 Kings 25:27-30 as a latter addition which saw hope for the restoration of the Davidic line in Jehoiachin's release. Chapter 2 suggests that Saul's line of Benjaminites were always in contention with David's descendents. Blenkinsopp suggests that in the climate of Babylonian and Persian rule, there was hope for a return of Saul's line to power. He even suggests that Gedeliah's appoint as (possibly) client-king gave them a concrete basis for their hope. Chapter 3 mainly argues for Gedeliah's credibility to be appointed as client-king. Blenkinsopp argues that Gedeliah and the Benjaminites in general were in opposition to the group that sought to take on Babylon, and instead Gedeliah sought peace with the Imperialists. In chapter 4, Blenkinsopp suggests that Deutero-Isaiah (Isa 40-55) argues that "Cyrus, as Yahweh's agent, will take over the succession to the now defunct Davidic dynasty" (65-66). He admits that doing so may have caused Deutero-Isaiah to be rejected. But, he also argues that Cyrus was considered the successor, or next King of Babylon, because he was favored by Marduk—another example of theological approval. In the same way, Deutero-Isaiah sees Yahweh favoring Cyrus, that is, if Cyrus re-establishes worship of Yahweh in Jerusalem. Much of the rest of the book relies on the minor prophets for historical reconstruction. He casts Zerubbabel as a part of the nationalist-dynastic resistance to empire movement in Syria-Palestine during the Persian empire, based upon his understanding of Zechariah's imagery (chapter 5). In chapter 6, Blenkinsopp argues that because of the way Chronicles and Psalms present David as a musician, the psalms work as evidence to show an increased importance on temple and priests during the Persian and Hellenistic

periods. Blenkinsopp argues that Isaiah 11:1-9 is an exilic song which shows that the new Davidic ruler will not be identified by heroic deeds, but wisdom and governance (137). Then, he considers the victim of violence, in what he calls Tritto-Zechariah, was of the Davidic line, and will be mourned as Josiah was mourned because the lineage's rule has ended. So, in chapters 7 and 8 he points out that during the late Persian period there were conflicting views about the Davidic dynasty. Chapter nine discusses resistance to Rome, which he says validates Max Weber's theory. In this section he incorporates textual evidence from the Psalms of Solomon, Sibylline Oracles, Josephus' works, and Qumran, in order to show that Jewish people still expected a new Davidic ruler. Then Blenkinsopp points out that the NT presents Jesus as that new Davidic ruler, in the sense of the Isaianic wise governor.

This book is a good example of creative thinking, and tracing an idea across several different time periods. Having said that, it seems that Blenkinsopp was right that he has attempted too much, because he is only able to devote one chapter to the Roman empire. This work is an example of ideological criticism. At times he disagrees with established positions in order to fit his over-arching idea (see his interpretation of Isaiah 11:1-9 on page 136 where he disagrees with Duhm, Wildberger, and Beuken). Readers of this journal might feel that he forces texts to fit his ideology, and dislike how he holds to several late-date authorship positions. It is comforting that Blenkinsopp traces textual themes to reinforce his political discussion. However, he spends so much time in the text of Zechariah that one could forget he is making a political argument. Furthermore, the political discussion would probably be served by incorporating more physical evidence into his argument. To utilize another ideological argument, he considers mainly the textual evidence of a few powerful groups which may or may not have represented the Israelite people at large. All things considered, this work can be cautiously recommended as a representation of a work which traces biblical themes and political ideology.

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***Secret Scriptures Revealed: A New Introduction to the Christian Apocrypha.* By Tony Burke. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2013. 170 pages. Paperback, \$18.00.**

Many contenders for what ultimately became the Christian New Testament were gospels, histories, epistles, and apocalyptic writings. The traditional and conservative view is that God inspired the twenty-seven writings that now comprise the New Testament (2 Tim 3:16-17), guided the slow process of determining their canonicity, and had his hand upon the transmission process, but he did not inspire any the other writings, such as the New Testament Apocrypha.

However, a number of modern scholars believe the New Testament Apocrypha were not deemed canonical for arbitrary and subjective reasons. In this camp is Tony Burke, an associate professor of Religious Studies at York University in Toronto. He has studied these writings for many years and believes they give helpful insight to "our knowledge of Christian thought and history" (6). *Secret Scriptures* is an introduction to these writings that is aimed at the layperson (4), and Burke accomplishes this task with a book that is easy for the non-specialist to understand.

This is a well-written book. It is a somewhat brief but informative primer on the Christian Apocrypha that defines terms clearly, gives a good description of these writings, and tells their stories in an interesting narrative fashion. Rather than giving

a long list of writings and descriptions, Burke focuses a chapter on: (1) Jesus' life, (2) his passion and resurrection, and (3) the early church, and the narratives contain the heart of many stories from noncanonical sources. Burke shows the broad range of extant texts for each apocryphal writing—from only a few to several hundred copies. He also mentions when sections of text are missing from available copies. At the end of each section is a small but helpful group of "Sources and Studies" so the reader can do further research if desired.

Burke places himself somewhere in between those whom he calls the "conservative apologists" (evangelical Christian scholars, such as Darrell Bock, Dan Wallace, and Ben Witherington) and "their enemies" (such as Bart Ehrman, Elaine Pagels, and John Dominic Crossan). He attempts to clear up the "misinformation"; however, he undoubtedly is on the latter side (130-31). He astutely observes that conservative scholars tend to respond to the claims of liberal scholars, but liberal scholars usually ignore conservative scholars (131). At least Burke belies this trend by responding to some conservative claims (131-48), even though his replies are unsatisfactory to this reviewer. For instance, in responding to the warning that reading the Christian Apocrypha could harm one's faith, Burke states if a person has a high view of Scripture then that faith *ought* to be harmed, and as a professor he takes joy in seeing "many students experience crises of faith" who end up feeling "cheated, misled, manipulated" by their conservative pastors and congregations back home (146-47). So, rather than disproving the point of those he calls "conservative apologists," Burke helps illustrate their point of the damage that studying the Apocrypha can do.

Burke's bias toward these noncanonical writings is evident in the book's title: they are "secret *Scriptures*." According to Burke, at least some of the writings are just as much Scripture as the present New Testament canon. He believes they should be read side-by-side and given equal value with the New Testament (141, 148, 151). He repeatedly reminds the reader that the leaders of the church tried to suppress these writings (e.g., 45, 128, 150). Burke posits the postmodern claim that everything is relative and "history is written by the winners" (16-19, 144-46). In other words, he agrees with Walter Bauer's claim (and more recently the belief of Bart Ehrman and others) that modern Christianity is not the best or truest version of Christianity—it is just the version that happened to win (18-19).<sup>1</sup> Consequently, what is considered "orthodox" or "heretical" today could just as easily have been reversed had another strain of Christianity won, such as Gnostic Christianity (20-22).

Although Burke admits that archeological finds have largely disproven the Bauer Thesis, he still claims one cannot trust "orthodox" Christianity today over any "heresy" from the last 2,000 years (19, 22, 145-46). Here are four brief responses. First, Burke ignores the role of the Holy Spirit in inspiring Scripture (2 Pet 1:21), for Burke treats the New Testament writings and the noncanonical writings as simply products of people alone. Second, he has a low view of Scripture (148-49), but a high view of Scripture gives one a better perspective on the differences and inadequacies in the New Testament Apocrypha. Third, he disregards the Holy Spirit's illumination of God's Word—guiding the church in truth (John 16:13)—from the early church through today. Fourth, he overlooks the fact that orthodox Christianity fits nicely with the Old Testament, and a heresy such as Gnosticism simply does not fit.

Despite his flawed understanding of the importance of the New Testament

<sup>1</sup>See Walter Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*, Philadelphia Seminar on Christian Origins (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971).

Apocrypha, Burke has written a helpful, instructive, and easily understandable guide to these texts. As a good companion to this text, Burke has an informative blog full of articles and sources at [www.tonyburk.ca/apocryphicity](http://www.tonyburk.ca/apocryphicity).

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***Seven Events that Shaped the New Testament World.* By Warren Carter. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013. xxi + 162 pages. Paperback, \$21.99.**

Warren Carter is currently professor of New Testament at Brite Divinity School. This work provides a stimulating format for an introduction to the historical, social, and religious background of the NT. Carter arranges the book around seven “events” (some are actually processes) that significantly shaped the ancient world in which the church began and grew. These events are (1) the death of Alexander the Great, (2) the translation of the Septuagint, (3) the rededication of the Jerusalem temple in 164 BC, (4) the Roman occupation of Judea, (5) the crucifixion of Jesus, (6) the writing of the NT texts, and (7) the “closing” of the NT canon. Carter uses each event as a launch pad for discussing historical, social, or religious factors that shaped the NT world.

Chapter 1 explains Alexander’s legacy as the spread of Hellenistic culture, which was a two-way road (8). The division of his kingdom was important, as was his example of manliness, which became a model for later Roman leaders (17-18). In chapter 2, Carter focuses on Jew-Gentile relations and how these two ethnicities were brought closer together through cultural assimilation in the process of the translation of the Septuagint (27-34). He also emphasizes the importance of the Septuagint for the NT writers and the early church, who he repeatedly says read the LXX with “Jesus-glasses” (35-41). In retelling the story of the Maccabees in chapter 3, he argues that Judaism exhibited varied responses to foreign oppression (50-55). First Maccabees prefers Jews to take up arms; Second Maccabees prefers pietistic martyrdom; Daniel advocates waiting for an eschatological deliverance from God. In explaining the significance of this event, he lays out the basic tenets of E. P. Sanders’ thesis of covenantal nomism and follows by expounding the New Perspective on Paul (56-64).

In chapter 4, Carter explains the various political dynasties that are relevant for the NT. Two responses to these oppressive dynasties were to await a Messianic deliverer, or to rebel and fight for freedom (74-79). So also in the NT the writers espoused different and contradictory (82) attitudes toward the Empire (80-85). In chapter five, Carter emphasizes it was only slaves, criminals, and seditious rebels who were crucified (89-94). He suggests Jesus was crucified because of his kingdom proclamation, his confrontation with Jewish leaders allied with Rome, and eschatological threats against the Empire (94-100). The crucifixion is interpreted variously in the NT (Rom 3:25; 1 Cor 1:23; Gal 3:13; Gospel of Matthew). In chapter 6, Carter first accepts only the seven undisputed Pauline letters (108-11). He dates the rest of the NT documents late (117-32). In chapter 7, he argues that the canon was open-ended until it was basically closed at the Council of Carthage in AD 397 (133-49). Thus, “the church produced the canon” (133).

Carter’s writing style is engaging and the organization of the book is helpful. The beginning student can easily remember these seven events and use them as pegs on which to hang NT background information. The work is meant to be

used as a textbook for beginning NT students. Thus, disagreements will be on the level of details. Some of these disagreements will be determined by confessional lines. For example, some professors will not utilize a textbook for beginning NT students that denies Pauline authorship to six of his letters, emphasizes diversity and contradictions within the NT, distinguishes sharply between the Paul of Acts and the Paul of his letters (13), suggests universal salvation (44), negatively critiques the NT writings (108, 122), dates prophecies *ex eventu* (125), and states that the NT is sometimes ethically backwards and can be ignored (156). The fact that many of these positions are explained in an isolated discussion box with no connection at all to the topic at hand will put off some readers even more (13, 44).

Some disagreements will fall more along the lines of debatable details. Carter lays out Sanders' thesis and the NPP, but he only asserts it. He does not mention any challenges to these positions (62-64). It also seems to be a forced implication of the Roman occupation of Judea, so why it is included there is a bit confusing. Moreover, in places Carter assumes one interpretation of a passage while ignoring the traditional interpretation, with the result that his interpretation of Galatians 3:13 flatly contradicts Galatians 3:10 (103), and his interpretation of Galatians 3:28 leads him to assert Paul contradicts himself (158). Carter either neglects or does not believe in Jesus' post-resurrection ministry, since he says the apostles had to work out the significance of Christ's death on their own (100). He also strangely denies the "already" to Paul's eschatology (119). Lastly, his statements are often one sided. For example, he says the Gospels address the "specific situations and needs of their communities of Jesus-believers" (124), that they "are not eyewitness accounts of Jesus' ministry" (126), and that they are written after AD 70 because they foretell the destruction of Jerusalem (125). These positions ignore recent scholarship that emphasizes a wide intended audience for the Gospels, their eyewitness nature, and the apocalyptic language rather than historical language used to describe the destruction of Jerusalem, which suggests the authenticity of the prophecy from Jesus.

Thus, while some disagreements will stem from confessional differences, some perspectives in this work may be challenged on the basis of recent research and discussions. The idea of the book is in itself insightful and creative. Whether one adopts such a textbook will depend on one's own agreements or disagreements with Carter's positions.

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***The Oral Gospel Tradition.* By James D. G. Dunn. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2013. 400 pages. Paperback, \$45.00.**

A prolific scholar on Jesus Research and Pauline studies, James D. G. (Jimmy) Dunn, Lightfoot Professor of Divinity Emeritus at the University of Durham in England, provides a thought-provoking series of essays in *The Oral Gospel Tradition*. Although most of the articles are responses to critics of his book *Jesus Remembered* or are articles that further clarify his opinions on the oral transmission of the gospel message, three articles are included that predate that book—going back to 1977.

Since these articles are from scholarly journals or books, they are aimed at the scholar or upper-level student in Gospel studies. There are few definitions given of terms, nor is there much translation of Greek or German citations. These articles are meant to further scholarly understanding on the origins of the Gospels, and Dunn

does a masterful job in doing so.

Dunn is an engaging writer. He presents helpful analogies, such as in illustrating the default settings that all scholars have. It is like a word processor with a default setting of a certain font type and size (41-43). He says most scholars approach the Synoptic Problem (the challenge of explaining both the differences and similarities in Matthew, Mark, and Luke) from a default setting of a *literary* culture perspective rather than from an *oral* culture perspective (44-51, 122).

Dunn champions the oral approach. This is his major contribution, and he repeatedly echoes the refrain that first-century AD Palestine was an oral culture (50-51, 53-57, 83) which had a “lively and diverse oral tradition” (122, see also 74, 82, 135-36, 165, 214). Along with this emphasis on the oral tradition, Dunn proposes an oral, non-fixed Q source (an alleged non-extant source for Matthew and Luke) for the Gospels (82). This idea is certainly more appealing than the typical scholarly understanding of the speculated Q as a fixed-form written source. However, some of his examples of differing oral accounts are unconvincing if one believes the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew and the Sermon on the Plain in Luke were two different sermons given in different settings (see 83-89). Similarly, Jesus taught The Lord’s Prayer in Matthew and Luke at different places and different times, but Dunn’s comparison works only if the two accounts are of the same event (95). His other examples are stronger (90-107). Interestingly, Dunn’s proposal of an oral, fluid Q may be just a step away from dispensing with Q altogether.<sup>2</sup>

To explain the similar-yet-different nature of some parallel Gospel passages, Dunn believes the Evangelists were familiar with different oral traditions that were similar to each other but different in some details (109-11, 126). However, the proposal would be stronger if it took into account the eyewitness testimony of the Evangelists: Matthew and John used their personal remembrances. Dunn claims Matthew used Mark as a source but omitted key phrases and themes (115), but it would be interesting to compare the evidence with how it would differ if Mark used Matthew as a source.

In part 2, Dunn’s essays answer some key critics of *Jesus Remembered*. These responses are quite helpful, because Dunn sounds less radical in his clarifications than in the first-half of the book or in *Jesus Remembered*. However, the term “fictionalizing events,” that refers to all oral remembrances of Jesus, is troubling (200-02). Dunn’s main point of emphasis is that all oral or written testimony or memory involves some interpretation. However, it is common to assert facts about other ancient people (such as, the Roman general Titus destroyed the Temple in AD 70), but unfortunately when it comes to Jesus, many theologians are hesitant to use the word “historical fact”—including Dunn.

Here are some positive emphases in the book: (1) Dunn accepts John’s Gospel as reliable material (176, 188-89), (2) he rightly affirms an oral culture in Jesus’ day (as Richard Bauckham well demonstrates in his book<sup>3</sup>), (3) and he effectively shows the weakness of the criterion of dissimilarity (39)—the misguided belief that a true teaching of Jesus will be different from what both Second Temple Judaism and what the early church taught. The main strength of this compendium of articles is that it is a one-stop collection of scholarly articles that help explain and clarify Dunn’s unique position on the oral transmission of the gospel message. His position is not different

<sup>2</sup>See Mark Goodacre, *The Case Against Q: Studies in Markan Priority and the Synoptic Problem* (London: T&T Clark, 2002). Dunn does disagree with Goodacre’s position (76-78).

<sup>3</sup>Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2008).

enough to be called a new perspective on Jesus (see 202-03),<sup>4</sup> but it is a welcome addition to the scholarly debate.

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***Interpreting the General Letters: An Exegetical Handbook.* By Herbert W. Bateman IV. Edited by John D. Harvey. *Handbooks for New Testament Exegesis. Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2013. 315 pages. Paperback, \$29.99.***

Herbert W. Bateman IV, professor of New Testament and research administrator for the Cyber-Center for Biblical Studies, provides a systematic process for the analysis and communication of the General Epistles (henceforth, GE). Bateman is eminently-competent to address the relevant issues of and steps involved in interpreting these letters since he has written a monograph devoted to Hebrews (*Early Jewish Hermeneutics and Hebrews 1:5-13*, American University Studies, vol. 193 [New York: Peter Lang, 1997]). As his latest title suggests, Bateman intends “to shape the way people think and go about studying and communicating eight books of the New Testament: Hebrews, James, the Petrine letters, the Johannine letters, and Jude” (13).

In keeping with his apparent thesis, the volume seems to divide into two logically interrelated parts. Chapters 1-3 concern introductory matters related to genre, background, and theology while chapters 4-7 offer the specific steps involved for interpreting and conveying the GE. The final chapter is a supplementary review of sources related to each interpretive step. Chapter 1, entitled “The Genre of the General Epistles,” commences with a discussion of the component parts of a letter (e.g., an opening, a body, and a closing, 20-23). The chapter compares examples of Greco-Roman letters and those letters drawn from the Oxyrhynchus Papyri with that of the GE. Bateman, for example, elucidates various types of non-canonical correspondence and categorizes some of the GE as follows: Hebrews and James reflect mainly advisory or parenetic letters; and Jude predominantly exemplifies a vituperative or maligning letter (48).

Chapter 2 covers the background of the GE, and underscores the interrelations between Judeans and Romans, and the interactions with a pre-Christian culture markedly distinct from the present-day. His historical background chronologically spans the dynasties of Alexander the Great, the Julio-Claudians of Rome, and the Hasmonean dynasty of Judea. His historical survey draws regularly on the Jewish literature of the Second Temple period (e.g., Josephus, 1-2 Maccabees, 4Q416, etc.). For example, the letter of Jude seems best understood, according to Bateman, against the backdrop of the Jewish insurrection in AD 66 since the theological theme of divine rebellion is apparent (45-46). Thus, Bateman rejects the commonly held “presence of false teachers within the church” view of Jude (cf. Gene L. Green, *Jude & 2 Peter*, BECNT, [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008], 18). Instead, he argues for Jewish Zealots who have infiltrated the church and are attempting to incite some believers to join the national revolt against Rome (84-86).

In chapter 3, “The Theology of the General Letters,” Bateman intends to present a biblical theology for the GE by examining the divine author’s predominant theologies and their contribution to the canon overall (90). He links OT unilateral

<sup>4</sup>This was the title of an earlier book by Dunn on the same subject as the present volume: James D. G. Dunn, *A New Perspective on Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005).

covenant promises with the NT fulfillment of those promises through the person of Jesus, who inaugurates the divine kingdom-redemption program alluded to in the OT (e.g. the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants).

Chapters 4-6 each delineate three steps in the interpretive process; thus, Bateman suggests nine steps *en toto* for the proper biblical interpretation of the GE. Chapter 4, for example, covers the process in which to initiate a translation, to identify interpretive issues, and to isolate major textual problems. Chapters 5-6 center on the significance of the structural outline in which Bateman identifies and distinguishes mainline (independent clauses) from subordinate information (dependent clauses), and the process for communicating the central idea of the given passage.

Finally, Chapter 7 delineates the process involved in traversing from exegesis to exposition. Chapter 8 encompasses a select bibliography of key sources for each of the nine interpretive steps delineated in chapters 4-6. The volume concludes with a glossary of terms.

Bateman's composition offers several notable fortes. First, each chapter commences with an introductory paragraph in which Bateman clearly lays out the course of the subsequent discussion, and he closes each chapter with a beneficial summary of contents chart. Second, numerous charts, and sidebars in each chapter serve as comparative, summary signposts that direct the reader. Third, Bateman's discussion of first-century letter-writing practices such as the use of the amanuensis, his literary comparison of the Oxyrhynchus Papyri and the GE, and cognizance of the Second Temple and Greco-Roman background's import for a proper interpretive framework sheds broad light on the interpreter's task. Fourth, he offers a fresh reconstruction of the events in Jude in which Jewish Zealots are determined to have infiltrated the Christian community addressed, and are influencing some to join the cause against Rome in the mid-60s. Finally, he carefully delineates and underscores the central value of the structural outline, or what Clinton E. Arnold similarly labels "clausal phrasing," for exegesis.<sup>5</sup>

On the other hand, Bateman's handbook discloses a few minor shortcomings. Although advocates of progressive dispensationalism will likely welcome this tome, his interpretive lens may go unappreciated among non-dispensational interpreters, especially his emphasis on a divine kingdom-redemption program. Put simply, despite Bateman's appeal to the non-dispensational scholar Vern Poythress for acknowledging how the various covenants occur within dispensations (115, note 51), others such as preterist scholar N. T. Wright may find troubling the conclusions reached through such a reading (102, note 26). After all, there seems to be a difference between recognition of the covenants as occurring within specified eras or *dispensations*, and Bateman's method of progressive *dispensationalism*. For Bateman, the "already" aspect of the covenant promises find their inauguration and partial fulfillment in the person of Jesus and through the church age, with the "not yet" consummation of those promises occurs to Gentile believers, but especially ethnic Israel during the millennium (113-16). The question is whether a dispensational-eschatological reading is evident or even necessary to apprehend the theology of the GE as Bateman methodologically assumes.

Another shortcoming concerns whether present-day students of burgeoning online-theological-degree programs without requisite biblical languages will discover this tome beyond their capabilities, notwithstanding Bateman's attempts to

<sup>5</sup>Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan), 2010).

simplify the process. In other words, his composition seems intended predominantly for those readers with a good foundation in the biblical languages, not *people* in general (cf. preface, 13 italics for emphasis). If Kregel considers issuing a second edition, a simple change in the preface would clarify the intended audience, pastors, teachers, and theological students.

Nonetheless, in reflection of the series design overall, Bateman seems more precisely to target the serious pastor and theologically-educated student with at least a rudimentary comprehension of the biblical languages (cp. the intended audience of the companion OT series volume, *Interpreting the Psalms: An Exegetical Handbook*).<sup>6</sup> The beleaguered pastor in need of a refresher in exegesis will benefit from the plethora of examples for proper biblical interpretation, and in a readily accessible handbook format. This format also allows the interpreter to manageably assimilate, develop, and apply each interpretive step. Whether for quick review of the interpretative process or of the socio-historical framework, this book is a welcome guide by a competent scholar and skilled practitioner. Thus, every pastor and theological student who desires to hone his exegetical skills through regular practice should acquire this reliable sourcebook.

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***Treaty, Law and Covenant in the Ancient Near East.* By Kenneth A. Kitchen and Paul J.N. Lawrence. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2013. lxxiv + 1641 pages. Hardcover, \$460.00.**

This is a monumental and magisterial work that has been in process for nearly three decades. While results have been published by Kitchen throughout the years, we now have the complete data published. This three-volume work collects and synthesizes laws, treaties, and covenants of the Ancient Near East.

The work is divided into three volumes. Volume 1 contains the texts and raw data. Volume 2 is the commentary on the texts, indices, and chromograms (colored charts to compare the various components of the law codes). Volume 3 contains a historical discussion and summary. It is purposefully designed to present the levels of analysis. Each volume contains 1086, 268, and 288 pages respectively.

The three volumes do not replace major *principle ediceps* of various collections of texts. The authors are up front and admit that this work does not supersede earlier translations of the ancient texts. The purpose is to collate this genre of literature throughout a 3000 year history. The goal of the authors is to provide an edition that allows scholars and researchers to compare this body of literature while also viewing the history and evolution of the varied formats through the centuries. First, the authors have defined fifteen possible components that they present under thirteen numeric headings (e.g. title and preamble are different components but are listed under the same numeric heading). These components are: title/preamble, prologue (historical or other), stipulations or laws, deposit of the document, periodic reading of document to parties, witnesses, blessings, curses, oath(s), solemn ceremony, epilogue, additional items, sanctions, and a historical report.

Volume 1 consists of the primary data of the work. Over 125 texts have been collated and analyzed. Each text provides introductory material such as bibliograph-

<sup>6</sup>Mark D. Futato and David M. Howard Jr., *Interpreting the Psalms: An Exegetical Handbook*, Handbooks for Old Testament Exegesis (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2007), 13.

ical references, sources, and general descriptions of the type of text (e.g. monument, location). This is followed by a transliterated text with the English translation on the opposing page. These texts are divided into subsets that correspond with the various components. At the end of each text is a “textual key to the color-chart (chromogram)” in volume three. This textual key is a table illustrating the structure of the texts and the order of the components.

Volume 2 is designed as an aide to volume 1. It contains the historical context, notes, and commentary to volume 1. While readers might question this separation, once you start using the work, it becomes clear that this was the best way to present the data as well as use the sources. A reader can have the texts open in volume 1, while having the aides open in volume 2. Volume 2 consists of three parts. The first part contains notes to the texts such as historical, geographical and/or philological commentary to the texts. The second part contains an index of topics and major notes. This includes various indices covering topics (e.g. alphabetical listing of all topics found in the laws and stipulations sections, index of deities as witnesses), statistical lists (e.g. price of slaves, fines, etc.), related notes on terminology for treaties, laws and covenants, and finally maps. The last part of volume 2 contain the chromograms. These chromograms are unique to this study and probably are the most valuable asset to assist scholars in research. These chromograms are color charts designed to facilitate the comparison of the order, content, and format of the various components of the texts. This part requires a learning curve for the reader, but once a working knowledge is acquired of the various color codes, a reader is quickly able to be able to discern the similarities and differences of the types of laws, treaties, and covenants between geographical areas over time.

Volume 3, according to the authors, offers a “synthesis of the history, development and interrelations of the subject” (xx). It provides a metanarrative from the third millennium to the early-Roman period of the laws, treaties, and covenants found throughout the Ancient Near East. Most historians and biblical scholars will likely refer to this volume.

Unique to this work is that the biblical text is interspersed among the ANE texts. This is purposeful to place the laws, treaties, and covenants found in the Old Testament within their historical context. This resource is long overdue and we are fortunate that Kitchen was able to finish this *magnus opus*. Unfortunately, the price will limit its location in personal libraries, but it should be a reference resource in every research library. Old Testament scholars and students, especially those who study the Pentateuch and ANE backgrounds, will find these volumes to be extremely useful references.

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***History of New Testament Research, Volume Three: From C.H. Dodd to Hans Dieter Betz.* By William Baird. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013. 775 pages. Hardcover, \$70.00.**

This monumental work by William Baird is truly a masterpiece and serves as the culmination of thirty years of careful study. *History of New Testament Research: From C.H. Dodd to Hans Dieter Betz* is the third volume to Baird’s trilogy, which Baird originally intended to fit into one volume (1). Baird’s efforts are bound to leave NT scholars’ mouths gaping at the amount of work and skill exerted to produce this

volume.

The book is divided into three parts. Part 1, "The Renaissance of New Testament Criticism," contains three chapters. Chapter 1, "The Zenith of Enlightenment Criticism," follows the work of Taylor, Cadbury, Manson, and Dodd. Baird begins with biographical details informing the reader of early influences on each scholar. While Dodd gets the lengthiest treatment (35-52), Baird traces other major contributions that shaped mid-twentieth-century NT scholarship. Chapter 2, "The New Biblical Theology," examines Barth and Bultmann. Baird focuses on Barth's dialectical theology and dogmatics calling him "the most important theologian of the twentieth century" (64). Baird largely follows Barth's interaction with the historical critical method which Barth implements as the first step in exegesis but also "attacks the critical establishment for its pretentious objectivity" (84). Baird elaborates on Bultmann's demythologizing, NT exegesis, and NT theology. Baird praises Bultmann, not for the details of his work, but for his "overarching synthesis." Chapter 3, "The Bultmann School," focuses on the work of those influenced by Bultmann. While Bultmann intended only to stimulate dialogue, he instead founded a school. Baird then considers the influence of Käsemann, Bornkamm, and Robinson. These pupils of Bultmann were not clones but rather students influenced by Bultmann but ultimately they deviated in a variety of ways. Baird notes that Käsemann and Bornkamm maintain an accord with Bultmann's historical critical method. In fact, Käsemann goes beyond Bultmann with his radical criticism and Bornkamm with his reduction criticism (179). They differ in their refusal to conform to Bultmann's anthropology or existentialism. James M. Robinson represents Bultmann's voice in America and the push for existential readings.

Part 2 begins with the Nag Hammadi codices (NHC), the Dead Sea Scrolls, new archeological discoveries, and new advancements in textual criticism (chapter 4). Baird seeks to show the influence of the NHC through its insights on Hellenistic background and different versions of early Christianity (196-211). Baird also shows the significance of the Dead Sea Scrolls for NT research. He examines the perpetual influence of archeology and textual criticism on NT studies. In chapter 5, Baird looks at recent studies on Judaism. He considers scholars such as Joachim Jeremias, Matthew Black, W. D. Davies, E. P. Sanders, and Martin Hengel. Chapter 6 follows the developments in historical criticism. Baird shows that historical criticism is an active method still used by a vast number of scholars. Baird shows that redaction criticism has become a popular method of the nineteenth century yet often appearing with different names. Chapter 7, "Confessional Research: Roman Catholic Scholarship," looks at the work of Rudolf Schnackenburg, Raymond E. Brown, and John P. Meier. In chapter 8, "The Development of Scholarly Societies," Baird considers major societies such as the Society of Biblical Literature, The Catholic Biblical Association, and Studiorum Novi Societas. Baird shows the significance of each society arguing that, "The formation and growth of scholarly societies is a major feature of NT research in the twentieth century" (466).

Part 3, "Theological and Synthesizing Movements," contains significant omissions as Baird traces the NT scholarship of the latter half of the twentieth century. While key scholars are omitted, Baird manages to cover substantial ground. In Chapter 9, "Theological and Hermeneutical developments," Baird looks at Oscar Culmann, John Knox, Paul S. Minear, and F.F. Bruce. Chapter 10, "Critical, Exegetical, and Theological Accomplishments: Europe," focuses on C.K. Barrett, James D.G. Dunn, and Birger Gerhardsson. Chapter 11, "Critical, Exegetical, and Theo-

logical Accomplishments: North America,” follows Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, J. Louis Matyn, Leander Keck, Victor P. Furnish, and Hanz Dieter Betz. Baird’s selection of scholars here will inevitably be praised by some and bemoaned by others.

This volume will serve as an indispensable tool for NT scholars. Baird is excellent at finding theological medians and weighing the value of each NT theologian. Baird provides fair treatment of the historical critical method and even admits that the method has sustained his faith and deepened his devotion to the New Testament (4). The chapters are well organized and easy for readers to follow. Headings distinguish all new information covered. The pitfall of tracing the history of a field of study is omissions. Those most critical of Baird will likely find issue with his organization of the vast material or his choice of key figures to highlight in this history. The absence of notable female scholars, Nils A. Dahl, Krister Stendahl, N. T. Wright, and others serve as a weakness. Many of the criticisms against this volume should be aimed at the publisher not the author. For example, the endnotes make it difficult to keep up with Baird’s quotes which was a style adopted by Fortress Press (3). With the amount of information covered, a more elaborate table of contents would have been extremely helpful. The half-page of contents is insufficient to convey the manifold treasures within.

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### Theological Studies

***Five Views on Biblical Inerrancy.* Edited by J. Merrick and Stephen M. Garrett. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013. 288 pages. Paperback, \$19.99.**

Reading this book will be interesting for those who are already familiar with the relevant theological issues related to the question of inerrancy. The book is replete with alert interactions and amusing subtle quips.

The editors correctly assert that a critical issue in the discussion of inerrancy is the relationship between form and content (316). This is certainly born out in the interactions in the book. It is also revealed in the book itself. The editors framed the conversation through the organization of the book and what they asked the author’s to address. The book follows a “perspectival arrangement.” Following this structure, the editor’s weren’t only concerned with different views of inerrancy, but how various perspectives of the past, present, and international contexts may have affected the author’s understanding of inerrancy. The editors believed that this approach emphasized “converging and diverging” viewpoints (312).

It will be left to the reader to determine the effectiveness of the arrangement and its helpfulness for this discussion. Though, despite the claim that this approach would allow the authors “to express their position without trying to fit within some prescribed label” (312), it does seem that the decision on the arrangement of the book was made after the articles were completed (24), indicating that the author’s may not have fully understood the “perspectival arrangement” as they were composing their particular chapters.

The editors further asked the author’s to “develop their position in light of the following: (1) God and his relationship to his creatures, (2) the doctrine of inspiration, (3) the nature of Scripture, and (4) the nature of truth. [They] also asked authors to consider the [Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy’s (CSBI)] historical contribution when developing their position” (317). A final task assigned to

the authors was the examination of three texts which were considered “potential challenge[s] to inerrancy” (22), based on their perspective. Contributors were to examine the historical accuracy of Joshua 6, particularly in light of archeological evidence of the events described; the two accounts by Luke of Paul’s conversion in Acts 9:7 and 22:9, especially focusing on the nuances of the details of what the Apostle’s traveling companions “heard” and “saw;” and the question of the complete destruction of the Canaanites in Deuteronomy 20 in light of Jesus’ instructions to love one’s enemies in Matthew 5.

The introduction of the book outlines some of the history of the discussion of inerrancy, framing the discussion around the “Gundry-Geisler controversy.” It outlines the instructions given to the authors and briefly explains the perspectival approach of the editors (though this is much more fully explained in the concluding chapter by the editors). Missing in the introduction is a summary of the various positions by the author’s on inerrancy. Such a discussion would have added clarity to the book. As such, anyone unfamiliar with the positions held by the contributor’s will begin the book playing “catch-up” as the chapters begin.

The five contributors to the book all address the issues effectively, though it is not entirely clear that they represent five distinct views on inerrancy. Al Mohler presents what the editors describe as the “classic doctrine of Biblical Inerrancy,” maintaining (with the CSBI) that Scripture is of “infallible divine authority in all matters upon which it touches” (36). He consistently maintains that inerrancy is critical to evangelicalism. He supports his position using Scripture, tradition, and the function of the Bible. His view is criticized as simplistic (59), unyielding (69), failing to take into consideration the genre of the text (74), and too closely tied to the CSBI (80-81).

Peter Enns, in his article, presents the most serious attack against biblical inerrancy. Enns spends much of his article taking issue with the CSBI. It is not entirely clear what Enns’ position is on inerrancy, as Vanhoozer points out (135). Rather, Enns contends that the term inerrancy has “run its course” (115), and instead of presenting a position on inerrancy, rather argues what inerrancy does, which he suggests leads one towards “schizophrenia” (114). In the strongest critique of Enns, Mohler states that Enns has presented a “very consistent and clear rejection of any claim that the Bible is inerrant” (117), and “has moved far outside of any recognizable evangelical model of biblical inspiration or authority” (123).

Michael Bird’s view is that “the American inerrancy tradition is not an essential facet of the faith” (146). He contends, for example, in the story of Jesus’ healing of the blind man near Jericho that “the details are incidental and are open to rearrangement by the storyteller” (149). One might wonder if he would allow that same looseness of detail with the resurrection. A legitimate question that one might have with Bird’s position is his assumption that because those outside of the “American inerrancy tradition” are not familiar with the word, “inerrancy” that it must follow that they do not believe that the Bible is inerrant. Vanhoozer makes a similar point in his response (190).

Vanhoozer presents a clear view in support of biblical inerrancy. Though the ways that Vanhoozer and Mohler handle the specific texts in question are different, his view, as Enns proposes, seems very similar to that presented by Mohler (243). The strongest point of clarification Vanhoozer makes as he describes “well-versed inerrancy” is his insistence on the accurate understanding of the genre of the specific biblical text, a point on which Mohler would seem to agree (cf. 240). If readers are

not familiar with a previous exchange between Vanhoozer and John R. Franke, they will feel left out of the conversation reading Franke's response to Vanhoozer's article. Most of his response is not related to issues Vanhoozer presented in his article, but is rather a continuation of a previous exchange the two of them had in another forum and functions here as an "and another thing" that is only mildly related to the topic and article at hand.

The final view presented in the book is by John R. Franke. Rather than defend inerrancy, Franke, instead attempts to redefine it. He purports that inerrancy "is a technical theological term that serves to preserve the dynamic plurality contained in the texts of Scripture" (276), which, he suggests "frustrates attempts to establish a single universal theology" (278). Franke views the truth presented in Scripture "not in absolute terms but rather in terms of temporal witness in the midst of particular circumstances [which will] produce an open and flexible theology" (279). His handling of the passages assigned for each writer to address reveal his position that the details of the text itself don't matter so much as the message that the text intends to communicate (cf. 280ff). He concludes that "the ultimate truths and inerrancy of the Bible are finally contained not in the particular narratives and teachings of individual texts. . . . [and that] even our allegiance to the Bible can draw us away from God's intentions when we read it in a static and absolutist fashion" (287). The reader is left with the feeling that one should not worry so much about what the Bible says, but rather just believe in God. Though, one might legitimately counter, if his Word is not reliable, how can we know that our understanding of God can be?

Overall, this volume raises some very relevant questions for any serious Bible student to consider, such as: What is the nature of truth? What is the relationship between the various genres of Scripture and the fact that God speaks? How does the affirmation of inerrancy affect the historical accuracy of the events described in the Bible? Where are the appropriate lines in the discussion between Scripture and science? Or, to say it another way, if Scripture and science seem to contradict, to which does one default?

In the end, the editors concede that the task assigned to the contributors "may in fact have been too robust to address in the limited space of this edited volume" (323). But, at a minimum, the book raises some pertinent issues and continues the conversation.

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***Blessed: A History of the American Prosperity Gospel.* By Kate Bowler. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013. 337 pages. Hardcover, \$34.95.**

Kate Bowler's first book, *Blessed: A History of the American Prosperity Gospel* is an adaptation of her Ph.D. dissertation from Duke University. Unlike many published dissertations, Bowler's book has been made to be very readable and engaging while still maintaining its exacting detail and rigorous citation. Bowler's purpose in writing this book is "to show how millions of American Christians came to see money, health, and good fortune as divine" (7). She fulfills this purpose well.

Bowler constructs her volume with five chapters in addition to an introduction, conclusion and two appendices. In the first chapter, she begins by describing the origins of the gospel that has been expressed by American prosperity preachers. She finds the origin of the twentieth-century prosperity gospel in the New Thought

movement of the nineteenth century, demonstrating the heritage of a uniquely American interpretation of the gospel. In chapter 2, Bowler details the descriptions of faith that is said to be the fuel for the blessings gleaned by adherents of the prosperity gospel. For adherents of the prosperity gospel, "Faith was only faith because it *worked*" (79, italics original). The third chapter explains the perceived relationship between the believers' faith and resultant wealth, "Faith operated as a perfect law, and any irregularities meant that the believer did not play by the rules" (92). Chapter 4 explains a second key feature of the prosperity gospel, namely health. Believers ought to be healthy at all times: sickness is a result of a lack of faith. In some cases, as Bowler explains, denial of real sickness in the name of faith resulted in premature death in prosperity believers (140). The fifth chapter describes the theme of victory in the American prosperity gospel. Jesus' victory on the cross is said to have provided a means for victory in the lives of believers. Thus, "no circumstance could stop followers from living in total victory here on earth" (179). In addition to the content in the body of the text, Bowler also provides two information-rich appendices. The first appendix is a detailed list of the largest prosperity churches and their key statistics. The second appendix explains Bowler's methodology for identifying churches and preachers as part of the prosperity gospel movement.

The key strength of *Blessed* is that it is exceptionally well-researched and cited. Bowler provides over six hundred citations of several hundred sources in addition to her extensive personal accounts of experiences with the prosperity movement. She attended many prosperity gospel conferences and services, even making a trip to the Middle East with Benny Hinn. There is no question that Bowler did her homework and has sufficient support for her claims. In addition to the quality of research, a second strength is that Bowler writes with theological detachment. She is careful to present the claims of the prosperity gospel fairly without selecting only the most embarrassing quotes. She also provides illustrations of many errors in the theology of the prosperity teachers, though she does so without labelling them as error. There is little doubt that Bowler has presented a fair picture of the prosperity movement. A third strength of this book is the careful method that Bowler has developed for defining the prosperity gospel movement. The methodology explained in Appendix B is both balanced and accurate, and it provides a basis for developing and applying a necessary label apart from personal opinion. As evangelical scholars seek to categorize prosperity teachers appropriately without merely calling names, Bowler's appendix will provide helpful guidance.

Along with its several strengths, there are also some important weaknesses. First, Bowler's theological detachment sometimes prevents her from offering necessary theological criticism. Early on, Bowler declares, "The Gospel is good news. Just how good is for readers and the faithful to decide" (10). Though this book is extremely informative, Bowler's detachment could allow this book to be read in affirmation of a dangerous perversion of biblical teachings on faith, wealth, and health. Contributing to this weakness, Bowler ignores the careful theological critique of the prosperity gospel, published in 2010 by David W. Jones and Russell S. Woodbridge.<sup>7</sup> Bowler's book repeats many of the themes that Jones and Woodbridge highlight, but, despite the mere thirty miles between their academic institutions, Bowler does not mention their important text among the hundreds of sources she cites. A second weakness of this text is that it fails to rightly emphasize the negative economic

<sup>7</sup>David W. Jones and Russell S. Woodbridge, *Health, Wealth & Happiness: Has the Prosperity Gospel Overshadowed the Gospel of Christ?* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2010).

consequences of the prosperity gospel, as many of the adherents were led into bankruptcy by “naming and claiming” large houses with expensive mortgages just before the housing market sharply declined several years ago. Additionally, while Bowler mentions some victims of prosperity teaching who have died as a result of a refusal of medical care, these examples are largely glossed over in the text.

Overall, this very readable book is a valuable contribution to the scholarly discussion on prosperity theology. *Blessed* is the best history of the development of the prosperity gospel written to date. It is an important addition to the library of pastors or scholars who regularly encounter the prosperity gospel in their ministry.

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***Does God Desire All to be Saved?* By John Piper. Wheaton: Crossway, 2013. 62 pages. Paperback, \$9.99.**

One of the joyous discoveries of church history is that authors used several delivery methods to communicate ideas and doctrinal discussions. One of the means available in that day, albeit less popular in our own, is the writing of doctrinal tracts. These brief booklets are often filled with wisdom and insight, yet lacking in the heft normally associated with theology and church history. *Does God Desire All to be Saved?* is a modern tract in the same line as the historical doctrinal tracts.

In his new little book, John Piper defends the theological understanding of the two wills of God. In doing so, he defends the Reformed understanding of unconditional election from the critiques that it fails to account for passages such as 1 Timothy 2:4, 2 Peter 3:9, Ezekiel 18:23, and Matthew 23:37. In various ways, these four passages all speak explicitly to God’s concern for “all,” and that he does not delight in the death of the wicked.

Further, he sets out to “show that unconditional election . . . does not contradict biblical expressions of God’s compassion for all people and does not rule out sincere offers of salvation to all who are lost among the peoples of the world” (13). Piper sees no contradiction between the doctrine of unconditional election and the full and free gospel offer to the lost world.

Piper has always been at his best when, in addition to his Bible, he clings to Jonathan Edwards’ writings. This little book—not much more than a tract—is a helpful exegetical defense of Edwards’ own, “Concerning the Decrees in General, and Election in Particular.” Those who find agreement with Piper on this issue will find no major breakthroughs in the discussion, but a helpful distillation of the discussion. Critics of unconditional election will find a genuine defense—free of unhelpful polemics and rhetoric—that succinctly captures the essence of the position.

Piper spent the overwhelming majority of his work on his first goal—to show that God’s willing that all would come to salvation is not in biblical-contradiction with the reality that only those chosen by God from before creation will be saved. However, his second goal—to show that unconditional election does not place the free gospel offer in contradiction to God’s will—is an extremely short endeavor. He devotes less than two pages to this aim.

Piper’s failure to define what he means by “free and full gospel offer” is the point which should attract the greatest critique. He writes, “we now offer him and all that he has achieved for his elect to everyone on earth. Christ invites everyone to come. And everyone who comes is saved. Everyone who receives Christ has been

chosen from the foundation of the world and is an heir of an infinite inheritance” (54). Many critics of unconditional election have argued that those holding fast to such doctrine must present a truncated gospel—void of God’s love to each specific sinner. Another brief chapter detailing exactly what Piper envisions to be a “full gospel offer” would provide greater clarification on one of the more contentious concerns of those in disagreement.

Overall, this is a very helpful little book—perhaps too little—that presents the Reformed doctrine of individual election.

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### Historical Studies

***Reading the Apostolic Fathers.* 2nd ed. By Clayton N. Jefford. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012. 224 pages. Paperback, \$27.40.**

Jefford’s “quick and simple” introduction “does not assume that the reader has any particular knowledge of early church history or any broad background in biblical studies or ancient Christian literature” (xiii). This handbook is a revision and expansion of his 1996 survey of the Apostolic Fathers (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1996). This second edition adds an entirely new chapter on the Papiian fragments (chapter four), although there seems to be some inconsistent dating of Papias’ work (cf. xxi with 63, 65, and 66). Other revisions include the widening of the possible dates of the composition of *1 Clement* (103) and an earlier shifting of the probable dates of the *Didache* (23). The discussion of the *Epistle of Barnabas* now adds Syria as a possible provenance, while retaining Egypt as “most likely” (1). Jefford now believes that the author of the *Epistle of Barnabas* probably came from a Jewish background (6), while the previous edition maintained that “in all likelihood” the author “did not come from a strongly Jewish background” (16). While the *Epistle to Diognetus* had formerly been labeled an “early Christian letter constructed from two separate letters,” its genre is now categorized as an “early Christian apology likely constructed from an apology and a homily” (165). And the conclusion that the author of the *Epistle to Diognetus* was “perhaps Clement of Alexandria” has been added to the relevant chapter summary (165).

Jefford’s primer provides a keen bird’s-eye view of the Apostolic Fathers. The main chapters address the Apostolic Fathers one-by-one, with each chapter being divided into four major sections: Answers (“a brief summary of information about the relevant text”), Questions (“an exploration of those details that make each text unique”), Contents (“an outline and summary of what can be found in the text”), and Related Literature (“a brief list of relevant studies”). A numbering system correlates the answers found in the initial chapter summaries with the corresponding in-depth investigations found later. Each chapter concludes with a helpful synopsis of the specific Apostolic Father’s argument, a condensed version of the contents of their respective work(s). Unlike the first edition, the end-of-chapter bibliographies now include foreign language titles.

Jefford’s volume exhibits numerous strengths. He guides initiates into the fullness of relevant scholarship, including text-critical, historical, theological, liturgical, and socio-rhetorical studies. He masterfully surveys differing scholarly views concerning authorship, dating, provenance, audience, and occasion. His well-versed discussions summarize the major options in debated topics, interacting with the ma-

for arguments for each alternative view. The book contains valuable diagrams, tables, and maps. Another practical mechanism is the highlighting of important, new, or difficult words in boldface font. The back of the volume contains a corresponding glossary (179-88). In this second edition, the date of Hadrian's death has been corrected (from 118 to 138), and a new entry on "millennialism" has been appropriately added. An index of ancient literature cited nicely rounds out the volume (188-96).

One fascinating thread that weaves its way through the volume concerns the imminence of the *parousia* of Christ. "For the most part," states the introductory chapter, "the early second-century church had come to accept that any such return had been delayed" (xxiv; cf. 114). Yet later chapters refer to "the rapidly approaching end of time and the resulting urgency" in the *Epistle of Barnabas* (12), "the expected return of Christ" in Ignatius (49), and *2 Clement's* being "consumed by the realization that God's judgment is at hand" (132). A few other theological issues may also be worthy of further clarification. Page 70 notes that Papias was followed in his millennialism by Irenaeus, while page 64 implies that Irenaeus was not especially disposed toward Papias' chiliasm. Even though page 93 claims that the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* "does not hold any special interest with respect to the development of early Christian theology," Polycarp's final prayer (at least in the extant text) may be of interest in the study of nascent Trinitarianism.

In a rare oversight, page 118 overlooks Hebrews among the documents known to the author of *1 Clement* (contrast 115). And Jefford's statement that Polycarp's *Philippians* broadly uses New Testament letters "especially from Paul" (73) could be modified with an additional "and especially 1 Peter as well" (cf. 82; Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 4.14.9). The inceptive discussion of genres represented in the Apostolic Fathers (xx) could include the special case of the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, which merges facets of a martyr act with epistolary accoutrements (cf. 87, 89). Jefford claims that Polycarp "was never secured to a post" (99), although the *Martyrdom* may imply that he was tied to the stake (rather than nailed). The same page claims that Polycarp "was martyred seven days before a great Sabbath" (99), although the *Martyrdom* places the execution on "the great Sabbath" itself.

Jefford's stated purpose was "to be clear and concise, easy to read, intelligible, and suitable for review in short periods of time" (xiii). He has more than attained this admirable goal of composing a succinct primer. His book succeeds as both a student introduction and a reference tool. Through his expert and highly recommended survey, may the tribe of Apostolic Fathers readers increase. And may a generation of future scholars be drawn to the *Opera Patrum Apostolicorum*, following in the worthy steps of Jefford.

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***The One Christ: St. Augustine's Theology of Deification.* By David Vincent Meconi, SJ. Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2013. 280 pages. Hardcover, \$ 64.95.**

Not a few scholars have produced insightful articles on Augustine's doctrine of deification. However, Meconi's *The One Christ* is the first book which is thoroughly dedicated to the North African bishop's understanding of deification and recognizes the doctrine of deification as "the one constant theological principle" in Augustine's theology, not as an element of his soteriology or anthropology (xvi). Refuting

Mausbach and others who argue for Augustine's isolation from the theological world of the Eastern Church and for his ignorance of the idea of deification, Meconi claims deification is "a central doctrine in the overall thought of St. Augustine of Hippo" (xii). Without a proper understanding of the importance of deification in Augustine's theology, his readers might fail to grasp how other Christian doctrines are related to salvation.

In contrast to many scholars that emphasize the soteriological element of deification in Augustine, Meconi begins his discussion with the bishop's understanding of creation. Since creation is the work of the triune God, it reflects the interrelationship of the three Persons in the one Godhead. As the Son eternally adheres to the Father in his love, so creation that came from the Son should imitate the Son's adherence to the Father for its continual reception of life. The continual existence of creation also depends on the Spirit who allows it to participate in the divine "immutability and permanence" that the Father and the Son share with each other (13). Therefore, the voluntary participation of humans in the divine life was a cosmological expectation prior to a soteriological goal. Deification was God's original plan for his creation of human beings. That Adam and Eve were condemned was not because they desired to be gods but because they attempted to be gods in their nature without their obedient participation in God. The more we sin, the more we become unlike God (74). In *Sermon 23B*, Augustine again wants to make sure that deification does not mean either the loss of one's own nature in its process. As Christ did not cease being God in his incarnation, man does not cease being human in his deification. The personal distinction within the unity of the Godhead also shows that deification, union between God and creation, should not mean the loss of the otherness either of God or of creation.

Meconi notices that Augustine's deification is recapitulative as is Irenaeus' deification. When explaining the purpose of the incarnation, Augustine repeated Irenaeus' phrase exactly—God became man so that man can become God. Christ as the second Adam came to restore human beings to their original destiny of becoming gods. Augustine's recapitulative deification was his theological means to refute the Manichaean separation between the Creator and the Savior (100). Interestingly, Meconi also observes that Augustine's controversy with Pelagianism affected the way he presents deification. In opposition to the Pelagians' realized deification that considered Christians as already perfect like Christ, Augustine intentionally avoided mentioning 2 Peter 1:4 and had to emphasize the sovereign grace of God rather than human cooperation and "predestination rather than participation," although continually speaking of deification during his controversy with Pelagianism (132). Refuting Patricia Wilson-Kastner and Daniel Keating who do not see the meaningful role of the Holy Spirit in deification, Meconi rightly reminds his readers of the Holy Spirit's role as the personal bond between the Father and the Son in the immanent life of the Trinity and between the church and God in the economic life of the Trinity. As the eternally personal glue between the lover and the beloved one, the Spirit leads Christians to the unity of the divine Persons in the Trinity.

Some might detect one seemingly inconsistent argument in Augustine's doctrine of deification. On one hand, the bishop always tried to preserve a qualitative difference between the union between Christians and Christ and the union between humanity and divinity in Christ. Since "the entire fullness of divinity" is only found in Christ, and the incarnation of God cannot be "inimitable," Christ alone will remain the only begotten Son of God by nature (201). For Augustine, participation

means not only that the participant “shares in the attributes of the other,” but also that “the participant never becomes identical with or absorbed into the one in whom it participates” (51). On the other hand, Augustine also argues that deified Christians are “other Christs (*alter Christus*)” as if there is no ontological differentiation between Christians and Christ (202). However, what the bishop means by “other Christs” is only in the sense of “the *totus Christus* (the whole Christ),” in other words, Christ with his church (202, 206).

This reviewer appreciates Meconi’s efforts to understand Augustine’s doctrine of deification in light of his overall theology. This book will be a great resource for anyone who wants to study Augustine’s doctrine of deification.

Dongsun Cho

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***The Distinctiveness of Baptist Covenant Theology: A Comparison Between Seventeenth-Century Particular Baptist and Paedobaptist Federalism.* By Pascal Denault. Vestavia Hills, AL: Solid Ground Christian Books, 2013. 188 pages. Paperback, \$29.99.**

While Reformed Puritanism was initially sustained by unified views on God’s election, a break arose within the movement concerning baptism. Pascal Denault seizes on this difference and clarifies it in relation to covenantal language in hopes of providing a historical foundation for modern, Reformed Baptists. Utilizing two seventeenth-century Baptist confessions and various writings of Paedobaptist and Baptist theologians, Denault affirms that while many similarities existed between the two parties, ultimately their distinct views on the covenant of grace proved too substantial for reconciliation.

In chapter 1, Denault notes that the Paedobaptist understanding of the covenant of grace, one covenant under two unique administrations spanning the Old and New Testaments, forced them to affirm that the testaments were not antithetical (31). Thus, the “curse of the law” terminology, understood by Paedobaptists as a reference to the covenant of works, was recognized by Baptists as a reference to the covenant of works and the old covenant (32). Due to the New Testament distinction between law and grace, the Paedobaptist affirmation of one covenant of grace seemed unsound to Baptists. Paedobaptists not only drew a distinction between the substance and administration of the covenant of grace, but also drew a distinction within the administration of the covenant into an external administration and an internal substance, accounting for their insistence on the “mixed nature of the church” (51). Consequently, Paedobaptists made circumcision and baptism analogous, allowing for the retention of a “natural posterity” (46–47).

To support this mixed nature, Paedobaptists were forced to separate salvation from the covenant (88). Denault criticizes the contradictory Paedobaptist viewpoint by noting “the Paedobaptists did not purport to be in the Covenant of Grace as the natural descendants of Abraham, but as his spiritual descendants; however they practiced a spiritual ordinance on the basis of natural generation” (87). Denault rightly affirms that this led Paedobaptists to transfer salvific benefits to the non-elect (96–97).

Contrary to this, Baptists argued that both the administration and the substance of the covenant of grace changed with the declaration of the new covenant. However, since the Baptist covenantal position retained a presence of the covenant

of grace in the Old Testament, they were inclined to use the term progressive to denote both the possibility of old covenant salvation and the necessity of Christ's sacrifice (61). The language of waiting for the "full discovery" in the *Second London Confession of 1689* affirms this view (61).

Next, Denault denotes the problems inherent within the Paedobaptist view of the Sinaitic covenant as a covenant of works. By denying the Sinaitic covenant as a covenant of works, Paedobaptists opposed the biblical references that affirmed a conditional covenant. Thus, Paedobaptists attributed unconditionality to the Abrahamic covenant and conditionality to the Sinaitic covenant (111). While both parties recognized a dualism within the promises in the Abrahamic covenant, Paedobaptists understood these promises as existent under the covenant of grace. On the other hand, Baptists understood the dualism as existent under two covenants, leading some to affirm the issuance of two divine covenants, Genesis 12 and Genesis 17 for Abraham's spiritual and natural posterity, respectively (121). Denault critiques the Paedobaptist solution to the relationship between the Abrahamic and Sinaitic covenants by noting their tendency to "amalgamate" the spiritual blessings with the physical covenant issued for Abraham's natural posterity through circumcision (125).

In chapter 4, Denault focuses on the Paedobaptist insistence of the new covenant as new, despite their covenantal views. By accepting the certainty of new covenant blessings for believers, specifically its eternity, Denault notes that under Paedobaptist covenantal theology, this covenant suddenly becomes temporary.

Considering the surge of New Calvinism within evangelicalism and the appeal of Presbyterian ecclesiology and polity among Reformed Baptists, Denault's work on the historicity of Particular Baptists and Paedobaptists is timely for two reasons.

First, while Denault's selection of seven Paedobaptist and nine Particular Baptist theologians might elicit criticism, his intent to highlight theologians who authored works arguing for either view on covenant theology is clear. Thus, one should not question Denault's inclusion of John Owen into a Baptist framework, despite his life-long affection for Paedobaptism.

Second, Denault's reliance on primary sources guarantees an accurate representation of the historical debate. Ultimately, Denault's insistence on historical context generally protects him from offering a Whiggish interpretation, a common historical critique.

However, Denault's work possesses weaknesses that should have been addressed. First, Denault makes an unfortunate reference to Dispensationalism, a nineteenth-century theological system. Since Denault elsewhere remains loyal to the seventeenth century, his reference to a movement that lacked any importance to the seventeenth century is unnecessary, leading one to interpret Denault's remark as a personal conflict against Dispensationalism.

Second, when discussing the relationship between God and the old covenant, Denault notes, "to be the people of God, under the Old Covenant, was conditional on the obedience of the people" (108). This assertion, coupled with Denault's later affirmation regarding old covenant members lacking spiritual blessings leads one to question Denault's theology concerning the spiritual condition of old covenant members. While Denault's theology allows the blessings of the new covenant to be reinstated into the old covenant, his terminology disregards the importance of faith.

Third, a contradiction arises when comparing Denault's introduction with

his conclusion. Initially, Denault stresses the uniqueness between Paedobaptist and Baptist covenantal theology by affirming their baptismal distinction as a “stem” from their covenantal difference (5). Yet, in Denault’s conclusion, he credits Paedobaptists with creating “an artificial construction developed to justify an end: Paedobaptism” (155). Thus, if baptism was established and Paedobaptist covenantal theology developed afterwards, then Denault contradicted his earlier statement, “baptism is not, therefore, the point of origin of differences” (5). Overall, Denault’s work is scholarly and is a valuable starting point for seventeenth-century covenantal theology.

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### Studies in Ethics and Philosophy

***An Introduction to Biblical Ethics.* David W. Jones. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2013. xi+226 pages. Paperback, \$24.99.**

This is David Jones’ sixth book in the field of Christian ethics. Before this he has written on ethical issues such as marriage and family, usury, and the prosperity gospel. Much like his previous works, *An Introduction to Biblical Ethics* makes a solid contribution to the field. Jones is an Associate Professor of Christian Ethics at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary who writes from an evangelical perspective with a theological approach to ethics. The purpose of *An Introduction to Biblical Ethics* is to provide a foundational overview of a bibliocentric, theologically conservative Christian ethic.

Jones’ approach is consistent with the best biblical ethics texts: he focuses on the development of an ethical system instead of casuistically assessing a list of contemporary concerns. Instead of attempting to merely exegete a handful of passages from the Bible in order to immediately apply them to ethical issues, Jones lays a foundation for ethics based on an authoritative, inerrant Bible. He shows how the moral law, as exemplified by the Decalogue, is foundational for Christian ethics, which, when combined with his three-part ethical schema, allows the reader to successfully interpret and apply Scripture to ethical issues. Like John Frame, Jones argues for three aspects that should be considered in ethical decisions, though Jones uses the categories of *conduct*, *character* and *goals* instead of Frame’s tri-perspectival terminology. In many ways, *An Introduction to Biblical Ethics* represents the best aspects of Frame’s *Doctrine of the Christian Life*, but in about a quarter of the length.<sup>8</sup>

This book consists of nine chapters, each chapter contributing to the discussion of the role of Scripture in Christian ethics. The first five chapters are foundational in nature; the final four chapters consist of an exposition of the Decalogue in relation to Christian ethics. In chapter 1, Jones begins by laying groundwork for ethics in general and briefly explaining different approaches to ethics. Jones begins with a working definition, “Biblical ethics is the study and applications of the morals prescribed in God’s Word that pertain to the kind of conduct, character, and goals required of one who professes to be in a redemptive relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ” (6). He uses this definition as a backbone for the first five chapters, explaining the clauses and terms in turn. The second chapter offers an overview of the nature of revelation, explaining how both general and special revelation play a role

<sup>8</sup>John Frame, *Doctrine of the Christian Life* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2008).

in ethics, but arguing for the primacy and sufficiency of Scripture for moral decision making. Chapter three argues for the unity of the canon, supporting the usefulness of both the Old and New Testaments as sources for Christian moral norms. In this discussion, Jones provides a concise introduction to the various positions on continuity of Scripture and the reformed understanding of the tri-partite division of the Old Testament law. The fourth chapter explains the coherency of Scripture, making a case for a non-conflicting absolutist approach to moral theology. Concluding the foundational section, in chapter 5, Jones explains how the moral law, particularly as framed in the Decalogue, can be used for making ethical decisions when it is applied through Jones' three part ethical schema.

The sixth through eighth chapters are an introduction to the Decalogue as a paradigm for Christian ethics, reflecting Jones' understanding that the Ten Commandments summarize the nature of God's moral law and are an expression of God's own character. In chapter 6, Jones provides a background for the delivery of the Decalogue, its varied ordering in different traditions, and the context of the Ten Commandments found in its prologue (i.e., Ex 20:2). Chapter 7 gives an overview of the various topics that are addressed from the moral law recorded in the first four commandments, which tend to be focused on the human-divine relationship. The eighth chapter explains the implications of the last six commandments of the Decalogue, which emphasis morality in human-human relationships. The book concludes with a brief chapter tying the themes together and emphasizing the importance of biblical ethics for faithful Christians.

Jones is successful in his attempt to produce an effective and interesting introduction to the discipline of biblical ethics. The book assumes the reader does not have a background in moral theology or philosophical approaches to ethics, but begins the explanation at the ground floor. Each chapter has a brief outline summary and the book includes a glossary with essential theological and ethical terms. Jones' lucid writing style combined with the glossary and chapter summaries make this book a good option for collegiate ethics courses or use in the local church. Additionally, while many other introductory-ethics texts emphasize a topical approach to Christian ethics, Jones provides an ethical methodology which can be applied beyond particular case studies, which often become dated and irrelevant. This makes *An Introduction to Biblical Ethics* a text that should be helpful for years to come.

While the provision of a methodology is very helpful and will add to the longevity of the text, this book would have been better for the addition of a few more examples of the application of the ethical schema; there are too few specific examples in the text. Taken as a whole, this lacuna seems to be the most significant weakness of an otherwise excellent text.

*An Introduction to Biblical Ethics* is a well-written contribution to the field of Christian ethics, and an invaluable resource for those interested in biblical ethics. The book's accessibility, biblical faithfulness, and structure make it an excellent introductory text at a graduate or undergraduate level and a helpful addition to the library of a pastor or scholar.

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***The Christian Homemaker's Handbook.* Edited by Pat Ennis and Dorothy Kelley Patterson. Wheaton: Crossway, 2013. 544 pages. Paperback, \$25.00.**

What influences have helped to define the twenty-first-century woman? How would a handbook, designed to equip women for the responsibilities of motherhood and managing a home, be received in today's society? In 2009, the "Perceptions of Homemaking Study" was distributed internationally as a survey designed to gauge the twenty-first-century woman's knowledge and ability to carry out successfully the skills pertaining to the management of the home.

While the survey was met with an enthusiastic response, the results also revealed a concern from women thirty-five years and older that women younger than themselves were not receiving the knowledge and skills needed for managing a home that the former generation had acquired. According to Titus 2:3-5, older women play a critical role in passing down these practical skills of homemaking to the next generation of women through their example and personal instruction. Editor Pat Ennis states, "Only when the younger and older women partner together to fulfill this biblical mandate will the Christian home be recovered" (35).

The scriptural basis for God's unique design for women is also being taught less and less in evangelical circles, she explained. Ennis states that in teaching a character-based home economics class, she has found new students to be "increasingly unaware of God's special instructions to women" (29). Likewise, co-editor Dorothy Patterson sadly acknowledges how society has suffered "from the advancement of feminism into the heart of the family" (22).

While the feminist movement at its onset observed true injustices against women, Candi Finch quotes Carolyn McCulley stating, "Its interpretation of how to solve these problems is incorrect because feminists abandon God and his plan for humanity" (38). The need for a resource for the next generation of women that is both biblically based and practical became the inspiration for *The Christian Homemaker's Handbook*.

This release from Crossway is a collaborative effort featuring twenty-two authors and forty chapters that provide both a biblical foundation and practical instruction on skills related to managing a home. Before fully utilizing the practical aspects of the book, authors address in the second part of the handbook God's view of the sanctity of life. Through passages like Deuteronomy 6:7-8, authors explain the important role God gives parents to teach their children how to love and follow him. Patterson states, "Rearing the next generation is an awesome task . . . motherhood should encompass a lifetime investment" (87). Additional topics addressed in this section reinforce the great value God places on every human life.

Part three of the handbook is devoted to foundational principles for parenting. Twenty-first-century women often struggle with a perceived expectation that they must do it all, the writers conclude. They feel pressure to balance a professional job with raising children, participate in community service, manage their home and make it to the local gym. Without time to rest or play the demands of life can leave women feeling overwhelmed and unfulfilled. In order to benefit fully from the practical instruction featured in this resource, it is important for women first to evaluate attitudes, priorities and influences that shape their current priorities and practices against the priorities and values of God's Word. Patterson states, "In the quest to be all you are meant to be, you must not forget who you are meant to be and what you are meant to do!" (178).

“The Practical Aspects of Establishing a Home” are addressed in part four beginning with a chapter on life management skills. Rhonda Kelley encourages women to “focus on knowing God” first and to “invest energy in work that has eternal benefits” (269–70). She also provides a helpful suggestion for maintaining balance. Kelley and her husband have identified six life areas: spiritual, mental, physical, family, financial and social. They set specific goals for each and annually establish and reevaluate their priorities concerning these goals. The next chapter in this section entitled, “Nest Building 101: Setting Up a Household,” emphasizes the importance of having a biblical framework for the purpose of the home. Aspects of safety, furnishing a home, organizing important documents and stocking a pantry are also mentioned. Other practical topics regarding establishing a home covered in subsequent chapters include: relocating a household, smart cleaning routines, working from home, home decorating and money management.

*The Christian Homemaker's Handbook* devotes two chapters, written by Mary K. Mohler, to the home as an evangelistic and discipleship tool entitled, “Biblical Hospitality” and “Making Your Kitchen a Springboard for Ministry.” Mohler describes hospitality as a selfless way to care for others, allowing them to get to know you beyond a surface level and “abandoning the sinful tendency to be self-absorbed” (390). The neighborhood, the context in which a woman lives, is a natural mission field. Practicing biblical hospitality and deepening friendships in the context of your home provides natural opportunities to share your faith and personal testimony of knowing Christ.

While women today may recognize the value of investing their time and resources in the pursuit of making a home, many still struggle practically to live out this role. This is due in part to factors like individual personality, lack of positive role models and even challenging issues faced in parenting. Each woman is a product of God's unique design. Her personality, strengths, weakness, skills and abilities impact her approach to homemaking. As a tool, the handbook includes insights and practical tips in a wide range of areas related to homemaking, proving an opportunity to equip women in an area in which they do not feel particularly strong.

As a resource for pastors and women's ministry leaders, *The Christian Homemaker's Handbook* can be utilized to encourage and equip women to live out their God-designed purpose. For use in a small group setting, each chapter ends with suggestions for putting the principles into practice. In a discipleship context, this resource is an excellent tool for equipping more mature women in their mentorship of younger women. Without adequate examples and positive reinforcement in society the twenty-first-century Christian woman is in great need of the practical instruction gained from *The Christian Homemaker's Handbook*, and it will serve as a treasured guide for women of all ages for years to come.

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***What Is the Meaning of Sex?* By Denny Burk. Wheaton: Crossway, 2013. 262 pages. Paperback, \$17.99.**

The culture is engulfed with the talk of sex and sexuality. Even within Christian circles, many books and sermons have taken on the topic of sex to encourage

<sup>9</sup>The original version of this review appeared in the Southern Baptist *TEXAN* ([www.texanonline.net/archives/4567](http://www.texanonline.net/archives/4567)). Adapted version is used here with permission.

believers to move beyond the taboo and embrace a more holistic perspective on this very personal topic. Unfortunately, there have been some Christian resources in recent years that have sounded more like the culture and less like the Bible when it comes to sex. Thankfully, Denny Burk's contribution in *What Is the Meaning of Sex?* is a welcome relief that brings the focus back to Scripture.

Answering the question of the title is the primary task of the book. Burk does not set out to write a comprehensive guide to all issues related to sex. Instead, he wants to point out what God designed sex to be. In answering his own question, Burk writes, "The short answer is this: sex exists for the glory of God. Consequently, all sexual morality must be measured by the ability to achieve that purpose" (12).

This work makes no apologies for driving its readers back to the text of Scripture in order to make sense of the meaning of sex. Burk starts with a helpful look at 1 Corinthians 6 and its implications for the Christian understanding of sex and the body. As a follow-up to that chapter, Burk also spends a chapter dealing with hermeneutics. In an otherwise very accessible work, this chapter could have the tendency to bog down readers who are not aware of the intricacies of hermeneutical method. Burk attempts to make the discussion easier to understand, but the non-specialist may find it confusing.

Burk then moves to discussions more familiar to those interested in the topic. He addresses matters of marriage, conjugal union, family planning, gender, sexuality, and singleness in the remaining chapters of the book. Within each of these chapters, he picks up significant cultural issues and shows his readers how the Bible addresses them. For example, in the chapter on marriage, Burk provides seven descriptors of marriage (covenantal, sexual, procreative, heterosexual, monogamous, nonincestuous, and symbolic) that directly address some of the concerns regarding same-sex marriage and polygamy. As the culture moves in the direction of affirming these alternative relationships, Burk's work is helpful in countering those arguments.

The two most interesting chapters are those addressing gender and sexuality. The chapter on gender finds its genesis in an encounter Burk first references in the introduction. While speaking at a conference on sexuality, the author received a question about people born with intersex conditions. This drove him to consider whether such conditions undermine the classical understanding of gender as male and female and complementarianism. After considering a number of different conditions and noting the development of the medical community's responses to these conditions, Burk concludes, "Scripture defines what's normative for us, not any anomaly that we find in fallen creation. The phenomenon of intersex should call forth our compassion and our love for our neighbors who carry in their persons a painful reminder of the groaning creation. It should not call forth from us a revision of the binary ideal of Scripture. That binary ideal is the matrix from which a binary ideal of gender roles emerges as well" (180-81).

Burk's chapter on sexuality is also a helpful resource for dealing with challenges related to homosexuality. In this chapter, he focuses on the New Testament texts, especially Romans 1:26-27, and engages those who have veered from the traditional view that homosexuality is sinful. In a world that is swiftly moving toward the acceptance of homosexuality, this chapter is another useful guide on how to engage the church and culture.

Readers will benefit from Burk's careful treatment of the subject of sex. One need not be a trained theologian or ethicist to glean useful insights from the book. As a result, Christians can approach *What Is the Meaning of Sex?* with an assurance

that Burk will lead them to the text of Scripture to find out what God wants them to know about sex.

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***Theology and Sexuality.* By Susannah Cornwall. London: SCM Press, 2013. viii + 195 pages. Paperback, \$45.00.**

There is no shortage of texts dealing with Christianity and sexuality today. Several decades ago, writing a book about the intersection of theology and sexuality would have drawn sharp criticism; however, today such work is becoming more commonplace across the spectrum of Christian traditions. In her latest work, Susannah Cornwall adds to her contributions in the field by surveying what Christian theology has said about sex, gender, and sexuality. Cornwall currently serves as post-doctoral research associate at the Lincoln Theological Institute at the University of Manchester. She has previously written on the topics of queer theology and intersex conditions.

It is difficult to characterize a book when the author acknowledges, "This book hasn't set out to give definitive answers to questions about whether these expressions of sexuality are right or wrong" (161). Rather than attempting to build a theologically consistent sexual ethic, Cornwall desires to raise questions about traditional Christian responses to sexual issues and leave her readers to formulate answers on their own. However, the one consistent element to her questions and discussion is an attempt to undermine traditionally held sexual mores.

Cornwall begins by setting forth definitions and a brief survey of the influences on Christian views of sexuality. She makes clear from the beginning that sex, gender, and sexuality are three distinct terms. Sex refers to the biology of an individual, gender denotes an individual's identity as a man, woman, or something else, and sexuality can be used to refer to both sexual orientation and how one interacts with the world (1-2). These definitions are important to how Cornwall uses the terms throughout her book. She also provides a look at the idea of essentialist and constructivist views of sexuality. She provides critique of both, which is interesting in light of later conclusions drawn in the book.

Much of the rest of the book is focused on specific issues related to sex, gender, and sexuality. Cornwall devotes chapters to various expressions of sexuality (homosexuality, transgender, intersex, etc.), celibacy and virginity, marriage, sex outside marriage, and same-sex relationships. In each case, she interacts with evangelical, Catholic, and mainline Protestant thought. She also tends to lead her readers away from accepting any sexual norms that have historically been promoted within Christian theology. For example, she endorses a distinction between "premarital" and "preceremonial" sex (102-05). Preceremonial sex takes place before the wedding ceremony but after there is some level of commitment on the part of the couple. It is unclear what level of commitment is necessary to move from one category to the next, but it is evident that the effect is to make sex before marriage less taboo.

Perhaps the most extreme example of undermining traditional sexual ethics is how Cornwall handles the issue of prostitution. While not giving it her wholesale endorsement, the research she provides consistently points her readers to look beyond the stigma of prostitution and consider how it could be a legitimate expression of human sexuality (112-16). She concludes the section on prostitution by asking

the questions, “Would it be possible to construct a theological argument in favour of prostitution? What theological resources could you draw upon in constructing such an argument?” The author provides no questions directing her readers to consider the other side of the question.

At the heart of her argument is a desire to see a different Christian perspective on sexuality. She summarizes her concluding chapter by stating, “In the Conclusion, I’ll go on to suggest that all Christian thinking about sex and sexuality must happen in the context of the broader Christian story, and especially the conviction that a new and just age is coming and has already begun” (144). In her words, this new and just age is “sexchatological” in nature. Although she rarely draws conclusions on sexual norms that should be expected of Christians, she channels all her evaluation through an ethic of love, in essence adopting the situation ethics of Joseph Fletcher. This approach is not uncommon to contemporary works on sexual ethics that seek to change the landscape of Christian thought on sexuality.

At the end of the day, Cornwall’s book is insightful regarding the direction of scholarship on sexuality and theology. Evangelicals will often find it disconcerting as she moves away from Scripture and toward a more progressive acceptance of all sexual expression.

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***The Poverty of Nations.* By Wayne Grudem and Barry Asmus. Wheaton: Crossway, 2013. 398 pages. Paperback, \$23.97.**

While economic issues have always been at the forefront of politics, philosophy, and theology, these issues have become more prevalent since the onset of the Great Recession in 2008. Many are now asking what correct economic policy should look like not just for the US but also for the world, especially those nations mired in poverty. In their latest book, Wayne Grudem and Barry Asmus attempt to assert a sustainable solution that nations may use to lift almost all residents out of poverty (25). They further contend that such a solution is grounded in a Christian worldview.

According to the authors, the goal of this solution is for a nation to produce more goods and services so that there will be more wealth available to people. This goal requires a nation to examine its laws, cultural values, and traditions to see if they support such an endeavor (45-48). Such production involves creating more objects of value rather than redistributing wealth or printing more money (52-54). As they argue in chapter 2, nations must avoid the wrong goals which do not lead to prosperity: depending on donations, redistribution, depleting natural resource rather than diversifying, or by blaming factors and entities external to the nation. These goals will not lead to prosperity.

This conclusion leads to the central question of chapter 3. What kind of economy best motivates people to bring about more goods and services? There are many systems that will not work: hunter-gatherer, subsistence farming, slavery, feudalism, mercantilism, socialism/communism, and the welfare state. The authors contend that all of these systems take away the worker’s incentive or ability to produce. Without production of goods and services, these systems cannot lead to prosperity. The authors contend that a free-market system where individuals control the means of production and determine production and consumption through free, individual choices without government control or compulsion is the only economic

system that produces prosperity (131-32).

The free market is a complex system that makes complex products that spontaneously emerges from the free choices of many individuals since no one person can have enough information to decide how the market should operate and produce (140-41, 163-64). Such a system requires the rule of law, property rights, sound currency, and low taxation in order to incentivize people to work and to prosper. This system also requires a system of government that protects against corruption and tyranny, provides protection for citizens from crime and war, upholds individual rights, and promotes national welfare through education, strong biblical families, and religious freedom (223-58). The free market also involves moral virtues, such as responsibility, integrity, and cooperation; however, it does not make people perfectly virtuous. It does tend to discourage as well as punish immoral behavior (187-88). The establishment of such a market will require change in cultural traditions that impede economic growth, which includes a nation's beliefs about God, human nature, morality, the family, the earth, as well as economic and political issues (309-68). Only then can a nation and its people be lifted out of poverty and sustain prosperity.

Grudem and Asmus have done an incredible job of boiling down economic jargon and presenting it in an easy to understand matter. At the same time, they do not skimp on analysis. They present a breadth of penetrating analysis and argument to support their contention that the free market is the correct solution. On the other hand, the theological aspect of the book is not as pronounced. While theological insights are scattered throughout the book, it is not until the final chapter that any grand theological argument is presented. More attention is given to economics than to theology.

Grudem and Asmus go astray in two other areas as well. First, the authors argue that the Bible supports a federally-controlled social safety net (77-79). However, the authors' arguments do not support such a conclusion. The Scripture passages used to support such a safety net do not necessarily imply the authors' claims. They only imply that rulers are to do good for their people, which can be accomplished in a variety of ways. The authors stretch Scripture to support their argument. Further, they immediately undermine their claim in the next paragraphs by stating that Scripture and the free market deny government the right to redistribute wealth by force. A federal social safety net, however, requires the government to forcibly redistribute wealth through taxation. The authors cannot have it both ways.

Second, the authors explicitly state their support for a currency backed by gold. This type of currency is in opposition to a fiat currency which has value based on the good faith of the nation. Such a currency can be easily debased or lost (156). Gold, however, is itself a fiat currency. It only has value as long as people believe it has value. Many cultures, like the Incas, never valued it as currency. Further, gold is a limited resource, and it cannot be consumed. A day may come when gold is no longer desired or able to be found. While gold can help stabilize a currency, it should not be an economic crutch.

Overall, Grudem and Asmus do an excellent job at presenting a sustainable solution to world poverty that is also biblically based. While this book is not the complete word on the issue, it is certainly a starting point for both governments and churches in their mission to serve a struggling world.

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***Come Let Us Reason: New Essays in Christian Apologetics.* Edited by Paul Copan and William Lane Craig. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2013. 336 pages. Paperback, \$24.99.**

*Come Let Us Reason* exemplifies a substantive-yet-simple approach to popular-level apologetics. While this is a text on apologetics, it is also a book on the Christian worldview. The authors engage with contemporary issues and demonstrate the superiority and comprehensive nature of Christian thought. The defense, then, is both positive and negative. Positive in supplying reasons for believing Christianity and negative in criticizing other views. As the title suggests, the authors come with the assumption that all of biblical thinking is undergirded by reasonable and comprehensive thinking—which the authors demonstrate throughout the book through logical analysis.

By way of summary, the book is divided in five sections. First, the book covers apologetics, culture and the kingdom of God. In it, there are two very practical chapters concerning the move from *apologia* to evangelism and practical helps for women to develop an apologetic mind. Additionally, Moreland carefully delineates the relationship between kinds of postmodernism and an pluralism. Second, the book addresses the God question. Herein, the authors cover an argument for God, the problem of doubt, and an enemy of Theism—naturalistic atheism. Part 3 addresses the matter of the historical Jesus and the reliability of the New Testament. Issues covered include authorship and recent criticisms of the Gospel portrayal of Jesus. In part 4, the authors address the relationship of Israel to other religions. This is clearly important to Christian thought because Christianity finds its origins in Israel with Judaism, thus the ethical tensions that emerge there create potential problems for Christians. Finally, the last section puts forward important and fresh criticisms of both Islam and Hinduism—two religions that are gaining a greater hearing.

Four characteristic attributes describe the whole of *Come Let Us Reason*. It is at once analytic, comprehensive, edgy, and academically sophisticated. This in itself is impressive and unique to this volume in contrast to others.

While all the chapters are analytic in nature, there are two that stand out as exemplifying the virtues of an analytic approach (i.e. an analytic philosophy method characteristically logical, clear, precise and detailed). Both Moreland and Craig, display the virtues of an analytic approach. Moreland moves systematically from metaphysics to ontology, epistemology, and finally to ethics/aesthetics. Moreland argues that a consistent postmodernism leads to pluralism, yet not vice versa. Helpfully, Moreland displays such care with parsing out the relations between the views making this chapter clear and persuasive to the reader. While typically the lay person in the pews would struggle with the variety of disciplines at play he will find this essay strikingly clear and will come away with the belief that this likely is true. Craig, in a similar fashion, works through ten contemporary objections to the Kalam Cosmological argument for God's existence (an argument he is famous in defending). The lay person, with a cup of coffee in hand, will follow Craig's reasoning with clarity and comprehension. Additionally, the seasoned apologist will gain something from this essay.

Second, *Come Let Us Reason* bears the attribute of comprehensiveness; the whole touches on the variety of interrelated core issues within Christian theism and many of the essays themselves are potent with application in that they are carefully situated in Christian thought like a web of interlocking beliefs. Robert Stewart's essay

stands out on this front. Stewart puts forward an important critique of naturalism by addressing it as a whole in light of various parts. This type of argument is in contrast to many arguments that move from parts to whole (e.g., arguments for God, the resurrection etc.). I suspect this sort of argument may have more currency in popular culture in that it displays the inner logic of a belief system. Other apologetic texts would be wise to develop these sorts of arguments similar to Stewarts.

Next, the reader should note the edgy nature of the book. By edgy I mean to convey the notion that the book is cutting-edge and pushes the boundaries of present thinking. Most notable examples include Foreman's critique of a recent documentary called *Zeitgeist* and Flannagan's response to the genocidal objections to Christian theism. Foreman's argument is useful in showing the fallacious reasoning of a documentary that attempts to discredit Christian revelation. He shows that the line of reasoning is not new nor is it a very good argument against Scripture. Flannagan offers a somewhat novel response to the genocidal arguments by attending more carefully to a canonical reading of specific Old Testament passages.

Finally, the book is academically-sophisticated. This may surprise the reader given the book is written in a non-technical fashion, but almost all of the essays carry the discussion forward in important ways. Michael H. Edens puts forward a potentially-devastating argument against the Qur'an (i.e. Islamic revelation). Edens argues that the Qur'an is built upon the Christian Scriptures and is an extension of the Christian Scriptures, yet the Qur'an also claims that Christian Scriptures have been corrupted thus we have a problem of incoherence. Edens attends to the Qur'an texts themselves to demonstrate this incoherence and persuasively shows that this argument deserves further attention from scholars.

Most distinguishing about *Come Let Us Reason* is the simplicity of the arguments communicated. This is the strength of the book. While the seasoned apologist will gain much from reading it he/she may find the book too simple, but this is not a weakness of the book given its aims. Both lay readers and students of apologetics will profit from a reflective reading of the book. As such, this book becomes an ideal text for Sunday school apologetics and as a supplementary text in an undergraduate apologetics course.

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### **Studies in Preaching and Pastoral Ministry**

***Straining at the Oars: Case Studies in Pastoral Leadership.* By H. Dana Fearon III. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013. 118 pages. Paperback, \$18.00.**

Dana Fearon is the Pastor emeritus of the Presbyterian Church of Lawrenceville, NJ and also served as guest lecturer at Princeton Theological Seminary. His experience in ministry and the classroom are soon evident in the brief, but helpful volume on case studies in pastoral ministry. The book targets seminary students considering their first ministry position in a local church and the transition that occurs from seminary to full-time ministry.

The book addresses twenty case studies intending to represent "episodes in ministry that pastors might encounter" (xv). The title of the book depicts the struggle that many young ministers face as they begin their ministries. The realities of inexperience meet the frustrations of every day ministry and new pastors discover that the sterile environment of a seminary classroom doesn't always answer every question

they will face or prepare them for every job they will assume in the church.

But this is not another book taking cheap shots at the seminary for unrealistically expecting that three years of training will be sufficient to cover every conceivable issue a pastor will face in a lifetime of ministry. Instead, Fearon affirms the great value of and need for seminary training, but concedes that many of the lessons pastors learn about ministry will only be learned while doing ministry (vii).

Readers will enjoy the easy-to-read writing style and young pastors will appreciate the timely and cogent advice throughout. All ministers will appreciate the wisdom revealed or learned through real-life experiences of the author. The issues addressed include: when theological explanations are not enough (3), the importance of prayer (chapters 2 and 3), leading through the potential conflict of people misplaced in leadership positions in the church (chapter 5), conflict management (chapter 12), and community affairs. Fearon also alerts potential ministers to the (sometimes unglamorous) realities of pastoral responsibilities by describing a typical pastor's day (28-29), honestly assesses who we are and who we are not in ministry (31), deals with practical issues like baptism and marriage (chapter 13), and emphasizes the importance of missions and ministry (chapter 14).

One of the most helpful chapters dispels the old myth once taught in academia (as this reviewer can attest from his own experience in seminary) that pastors should not have personal friendships in the church. Fearon explains the effective and intentional friendships of Paul and Jesus and differentiates between healthy friendships and unhealthy cronyism (chapter eight).

Readers outside the Presbyterian tradition will not agree with or even relate to every issue Fearon presents. But, though one may not support paedobaptism (chapters 1 and 13), most will relate to the lessons these chapters teach on the importance of ministering to people and the opportunities for reaching parents through their children. While those outside the Presbyterian system will not relate to working with a session (19), all will relate to the similar issue of working with deacon or other leadership bodies in the church. While many pastors will not relate to wearing a collar in ministry (42), we can relate to the role of the minister representing the church in the community. While many will not agree with his support of female pastors (101), all pastors can benefit from his timely advice to all ministers throughout.

Fearon continues the conversation of ministry preparation. He has demonstrated how pastors lead with faith and wisdom through the myriad of issues that confront them. But, this is not just a book about working hard for Jesus. The book begins and ends with the reminder that the answer to tempests in ministry is not simply straining harder at the oars; it is trusting by faith that the Lord who called us is always sufficient to calm the storm.

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