

Book Reviews

Biblical Studies

***The Temple Administration and the Levites in Chronicles.* By Yeong Seon Kim. Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 2014. Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series, no. 51. 232 pages. Paperback. \$16.00**

Readers of the books of Chronicles have long noticed the prominence of the Levites in its pages, especially as one compares it to the books of Samuel and Kings. In particular, they play an important role in the management and worship of the temple. Yeong Seon Kim has examined how Chronicles portrays the role of the Levites within the temple administration, especially that of the first temple. She takes on one of the prevailing presuppositions of previous Chronicles scholarship on this issue: the presupposition that the portrait of Chronicles mainly reflects the administration of the temple of the author's own day, that is, the second temple.

Kim argues instead that the picture that the author of Chronicles (aka the Chronicler) paints about the past reflects neither the actual circumstances of the past nor of the present, but rather the way that the Chronicler wants things to be. The Chronicler desires that those who occupy offices within the temple administration be considered Levites and though these Levites serve functions distinct from and subordinate to the priests, they should nevertheless share in the contributions made to the temple. This desire motivates the Chronicler to establish "the legal grounds for the payment of the cultic personnel of the Jerusalem Temple, which was left without any royal sponsorship during the Persian period" (191). In order to demonstrate her claim, she has to reconstruct the Chronicler's portrait of the Levites in relation to the temple administration and compare it to descriptions of the temple administration in other contemporaneous literature.

Before she can establish the Chronicler's portrait of the Levites, she has to deal with another common presupposition of Chronicles research: that the block of texts within Chronicles that deal with the establishment of the priestly and levitical divisions (1 Chr 6:31–38; 9:17–32; 16:4–43; 23–26) are secondary to Chronicles itself. She entitles these texts the "Davidic Installation Blocks" and argues for their internal thematic unity based on their common conception of the levitical role in the temple administration and David's role as "the founder and guardian of the Jerusalem temple as an institution" (31). Generally in Old Testament studies, noticing blocks of texts dispersed through a book but united with distinctive themes is considered evidence of redactional activity. However, she further argues that the blocks are not secondary because the narratives in 2 Chronicles evaluate each king on the basis of their maintaining the roles of the Levites and priests as they are established by David within these blocks of text.

Having identified the blocks of text which she will analyze and demonstrated that they are part of the Chronicler's work, Kim uncovers Chronicles' portrait of the Levites within the temple administration. Within this portrait she emphasizes several points. First, Chronicles shows that the legitimacy of the temple administration is guaranteed by the authority of King David since he established it. Second, it

further legitimates the temple administration by drawing on the texts of Moses and establishing continuity between the tabernacle of the wilderness and the temple. The Chronicler accomplishes this task through genealogical connections to those serving in the wilderness tabernacle, using vocabulary associated with the tabernacle, and drawing on pentateuchal legislation. Third, besides the priests, Chronicles designates other members of the temple administration as Levites. Kim shows that Chronicles repeatedly mentions the levitical heritage of these members so that, as she argues, their heritage legitimizes their role in the temple. Fourth, she draws out the role that political and civil leaders play in supporting the temple, particularly in 2 Chronicles 24:5–11, the account of Joash's instructions in collecting funds for the upkeep of the temple and its administration.

Next Kim compares this portrait with that of other sources which precede or are contemporaneous with Chronicles and describe the temple administration. From this comparison she argues that little of the Chronicler's portrait clearly reflects the conditions of the Chronicler's context. At this point, her argument is particularly vulnerable because much of it comes from silence.

When she looks beyond the timeframe of Chronicles, she outlines a complicated picture regarding the Levites and their role in the temple. Based on the varieties of portraits, she concludes that "conflicts over the Levites' roles, whether as priests or as cultic functionaries, known from the exilic and post-exilic periods, continued into the late Second Temple period" (190). This continued conflict undergirds her argument that the Chronicler presented a picture of an ideal temple administration made up of priests, on the one hand, and Levites who perform various administrative functions, on the other.

Kim's work joins recent conversations regarding the picture of the priests and Levites, especially related to the Second Temple period. Her book also reflects another trend in recent scholarship, especially Chronicles scholarship: that Chronicles intends to portray what should be rather than what really was or is. Surprisingly, she does not interact directly with Schweitzer's work *Reading Utopia in Chronicles*, which has laid out many of the terms in the conversation. I suspect that for many readers Kim's most significant contribution is her description of the Chronicler's methods in depicting the Levites within the temple administration, in particular, her observations regarding the role of genealogy and the continuity established between the First Temple and pentateuchal narrative and legal texts through various means.

Joshua E. Williams

Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***Reality, Grief, Hope: Three Urgent Prophetic Tasks.* By Walter Brueggemann. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014. 179 pages. Paperback, \$15.00.**

Walter Brueggemann is professor emeritus of Old Testament at Columbia Theological Seminary. He is widely known for his socio-rhetorical methodology for studying the Old Testament. Brueggemann has written many influential works including, *The Prophetic Imagination*, and *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy*. As the introduction to the book notes, *Reality, Grief, Hope* is vintage Brueggemann (xiii).

The intended audience of this book appears to be American clergy. However, it also appears to be aimed at students who are undergraduates (or even first year

seminary students). While the work contains sparse footnotes, the works which are cited are often weighty. The book begins (Introduction and Chapter one) with the suggestion that the social and ideological circumstances in Jerusalem after the destruction of 587 B.C. parallel the social and ideological circumstances in post 9/11 America. What he means is that the same sort of ideology is present in both situations. First, he points out a confidence in the ideology of exceptionalism. Second, he refers to a denial amid the crisis, that such ideology has failed and is not sustainable. Third, he sees despair once the denial is broken and reality is faced.

Yet, what Brueggemann asserts throughout the book is that the prophetic voice was something different from the voice of the Babylonian and Persian empires. Within biblical texts (especially Jeremiah and Lamentations) he finds several points of difference. First, he proposes as a difference the assertion of critical reality in the face of an ideology of chosenness. Second, he uncovers a voice of grief in the face of denial. Third, he sets up buoyant hope as a counter to despair (2).

In chapter two "Grief amid Denial," Brueggemann has incorporated citations from Amos, Psalms, and Jeremiah to make his point that those who adhered to an ideology of exceptionalism lived in denial about their approaching future. Second, based upon mainly Jeremiah, Psalms and Lamentations, he stresses that the prophetic counter to denial is to practice grief. Third, he alleges that "the U.S. political economy, abetted by reassuring religion, rests upon an ideology of exceptionalism that both fosters and requires denial" (71). Fourth, citing contemporary American poets, he claims that American churches should acknowledge loss and practice grief.

In chapter four "Hope amid Despair," Brueggemann contends that the generation of Israelites who experienced the destruction of Jerusalem looked back at that time with despair. Here he cites mainly Lamentations, Isaiah 40–66, and Jeremiah. Then, using Jeremiah and Isaiah 40–66, Brueggemann suggests that the prophetic task is to cast God's future in hopeful imagery despite the looming disappointment. Next, Brueggemann claims that "[n]ot unlike the society of ancient Jerusalem after the destruction and in the midst of the displacement, our contemporary U.S. society is at the brink of despair" (113). In light of that claim, he professes that the prophetic task for the contemporary church is "to articulate hope, the prospect of fresh historical possibility assured by God's good governance of the future" (119). In the fifth chapter "Living amid Empire as Neighborhood," Brueggemann has set forth what he has identified as two competing meta-narratives: "1) the totalizing narrative of the empire, and 2) the particularizing narrative of the neighborhood" (129).

One might consider Brueggemann's work to fit into the category of "Biblical Theology as Worldview-Story" (see Klink and Lockett's *Understanding Biblical Theology*, 93–107). At the same time, it could be said that Brueggemann's approach recognizes (rightly) the continuity between the Old and New Testaments. Furthermore, he reads the text as a story more than a description of historical event.

Brueggemann has written *Reality, Grief, Hope* as a way of understanding the rhetoric in 21st century America in comparison to the rhetoric of Israel living under empire. While he has presented a well-written and engaging discussion, there are several shortcomings. The most obvious issue is that the book contains no indices at all, so one cannot quickly find where Brueggemann addresses specific Scriptures. Also, Brueggemann tends to make broad claims that are not always substantiated. For example, he writes "U.S. military hegemony is gone! U.S. economic domination is gone! Preferred racial-ethnic singularity is gone! Simplistic moral certitudes are

gone!" but gives no citations of evidence to support his claims (82). Even if his assessment is correct in this case, Brueggemann tends to use rhetorical flourish rather than evidence in proving his claims. Readers may appreciate the fact that Brueggemann appeals to Scripture as evidence to prove his claims; however his incorporation of other poetic works in similar fashion leads one to wonder how much authority he ascribes to Scripture. Next, many readers may appreciate Brueggemann's critique of the current attitudes in government (132), but not his attitudes toward Zionism or conservative politics. When these weaknesses are recognized, the work still stands as an engaging representation of a socio-rhetorical approach to Jeremiah, Lamentations and Isaiah 40–66, and can be recommended as such.

Justin Allison
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***A Concise Lexicon of Late Biblical Hebrew: Linguistic Innovations in the Writings of the Second Temple Period.* By Avi Hurvitz in collaboration with Leeor Gottlieb, Aaron Hornkohl and Emmanuel Mastéy. Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2014. Supplements to Vetus Testamentum, no. 160. 270 pages. Hardcover, \$128.00.**

The language of the Old Testament is widely known as Biblical Hebrew (BH), but this single designation for the entire literary corpus conceals its actual diversity in linguistic usage. Past research explained some of this diversity through chronological developments; that is, Biblical Hebrew reflects three different chronological phases: Archaic Biblical Hebrew (ABH), Standard Biblical Hebrew (SBH), and Late Biblical Hebrew (LBH).¹ Avi Hurvitz has been a leading voice in the diachronic study of BH for decades. He has been particularly involved in the development of the theoretical guidelines for discerning and analyzing LBH and their application to various texts of the Old Testament. This concise lexicon picks up and carries forward much of that work, especially relating to the Old Testament's vocabulary.

In the introduction to the lexicon, Hurvitz describes the historical and social developments that took place during the Persian period, the period in which LBH developed. He points out how the exile and return disrupted the normal, gradual development of BH and how Imperial Aramaic exercised a tremendous influence on the development of the language during that period. Then he places LBH in the context of all Biblical Hebrew, in particular, its relation to SBH. He discusses origins for the characteristic features of LBH, most of which are related to the historical and social circumstances of the Persian period: 1) Persian loanwords, 2) late Aramaic influence, 3) elements of BH that are absent from SBH but are characteristic of Rabbinic Hebrew, and 4) internal BH developments, which really is a category of features that cannot be explained, at this time, by the other factors, but nevertheless appears to represent LBH. The historical and social circumstances situate LBH between three different poles: SBH stands before it, Rabbinic Hebrew stands after it, and Imperial Aramaic stands beside it. Looking to each of these poles provides the basis for identifying and isolating LBH features.

Each entry of the lexicon reflects the guidelines that Hurvitz has developed for identifying a linguistic feature as LBH, based on the historical and social situation of the Second Temple Period. His first criterion for identifying a linguistic feature as

¹Other designations for these classifications are also used in scholarly literature, e.g. Standard Biblical Hebrew is also called Early Biblical Hebrew or Classical Biblical Hebrew (not to be confused with Classical Hebrew, another designation for Biblical Hebrew).

LBH is that the feature must occur exclusively or, at least, predominately in clearly late texts. Therefore, each entry begins with grammatical information regarding the lemma, its English definition, and its occurrences in clearly late biblical texts (e.g. Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, Chronicles). The occurrences are not necessarily all the occurrences of the particular lemma in the Old Testament, but only those occurrences that reflect the usage of the lemma in LBH. For instance, the root שרש occurs 165 times in the Old Testament, but Hurvitz records only six occurrences. These occurrences include those from Chronicles and Ezra, clearly late writings.

His second criterion is that the linguistic feature must have an alternative feature in SBH. He lists SBH alternatives and if available, parallel passages which clearly show the distinctive usage of SBH and LBH. A good example of such cases occurs in the entry for מְלִכּוּת. In that entry he lists several parallels (2 Sam 7:12//1 Chr 17:11; 2 Sam 7:13//1 Chr 22:10; 2 Sam 7:16//1 Chr 17:14; 1 Kgs 9:5//2 Chr 7:18; etc.). The listing of such parallels helps clarify the distinctive usages of the terms in SBH over against LBH even if it does not provide a complete picture.

His third criterion is that extra-biblical texts from the Second Temple Period to the end of the Talmudic period should attest to the same linguistic feature. Therefore, he lists these passages organizing them into two categories: 1) renderings, glosses, or paraphrases of biblical texts and 2) texts which are not directly dependent upon a particular biblical passage. It should be noted that these passages are listed without any English translation, so those unfamiliar with the Dead Sea Scrolls texts, Aramaic Targummim, and early rabbinic writings may find it difficult to decipher the significance of the passages cited. Furthermore, in order to suggest possible lines of Aramaic influence on LBH, he lists the Biblical Aramaic cognate, when such exists.

After providing the evidence for each linguistic feature as LBH, each entry contains a number of comments, generally more comprehensive than those included in most lexica, mostly which address issues that would be of concern for the diachronic study of BH. For instance, some comments address passages in which the lemma may possibly preserve a LBH usage; some, possible origins; others, other comparative information with other Semitic languages; etc. Often, these comments are quotations from the scholarly literature regarding the particular linguistic feature. Finally, each entry closes with a bibliography for further research.

A lexicon such as this is a tremendous resource for philological study. Its appearance comes at a time in which the diachronic study of the Old Testament is in a state of flux. In the past decade, some scholars, notably Young, Rezetko, and Ehrens-värd, have challenged the idea that chronological factors account for the diversity of BH reflected in the Old Testament. Hurvitz acknowledges this situation in the introduction to the lexicon; however, as he states that since “the gulf between the two opposing parties is hardly bridgeable,” he decided “to refrain from futile polemics” (13). Therefore, the lexicon does not intend to be a defense of Hurvitz’s diachronic study of BH: it is a summary of it. At the same time, the lexicon presents, at least for many of the lemmas, a compelling case for a diachronic explanation of the data.

Finally, the greatest benefit of the lexicon for most exegetes will be the greater detail that it offers for individual terms that other lexica do not offer. Since other BH lexica, such as HALOT, treat each lemma exhaustively in the Old Testament literature, it is difficult for them to draw out the development of the lemma’s meaning

and how such development fits within the development of BH as a whole.² This lexicon accomplishes this task well.

This lexicon is a valuable resource for exegetes working with LBH texts and for those interested in the diachronic study of BH.

Joshua E. Williams

Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***The Oxford Handbook of Apocalyptic Literature.* Edited by John J. Collins. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014. 564 pages. Hardcover, \$160.00.**

The present volume is a compendium of essays that survey the forefront of thinking and research on apocalyptic literature. It is not concerned with the genre of apocalypse “narrowly defined,” but with the “broader category of analogous literature” (6).

As mentioned in the preface, *The Oxford Handbook of Apocalyptic Literature* is not intended to replace the three volumes of *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*, but should be viewed as a companion volume (ix). Whereas *The Encyclopedia* presents a historical and more descriptive overview of apocalypticism, *The Oxford Handbook* is more thematic and analytical. It focuses on various aspects of apocalyptic literature and the different ways it can be interpreted. *The Oxford Handbook* primarily limits its scope to ancient Judaism and Christianity.

Twenty-eight essays, which correspond to individual chapters, comprise *The Oxford Handbook* and are divided into five parts. Part one surveys the literary and phenomenological context of apocalyptic literature. The relationships between different genres such as apocalypse, prophecy, and wisdom are assessed. Although wisdom and prophetic literature may contain apocalyptic elements and conversely apocalyptic literature may have elements of wisdom and prophecy within it, apocalypse did evolve into a distinct genre. Further, apocalyptic literature used and adapted other contemporary phenomena such as Jewish mysticism, dreams, and visions.

Part two surveys the social function of apocalyptic literature. This section begins with an explanation of how social-scientific ideas and perspectives “have and will shed new light on apocalyptic texts” (124). Philip Esler concludes that most situations that gave rise to apocalyptic literature were negative (132). The remainder of part two focuses on specific social issues that potentially gave rise to apocalyptic literature and its use by those who wrote and read it.

Part three assesses the literary features of apocalyptic literature. This section focuses primarily on rhetorical analyses of Jewish and early Christian apocalyptic literature. It concludes with a chapter on deconstruction where Erin Runions suggests that the structure of the Revelation imitates the Roman Empire in contrast to the book’s critique of empire, which would have enabled it to be used by those within the empire (236).

Part four, the largest section of *The Oxford Handbook*, surveys apocalyptic theology. This section covers a wide range of topics from determinism and freewill to the use of already-established claims of Torah.

Part five surveys apocalypse in the present age. This section has two strands: essays that assess modern Jewish and Christian use of ancient apocalyptic texts and essays that assess the twenty-first century apocalyptic worldview that is not necessarily directly linked to ancient apocalyptic texts.

²Thanks go to my colleague Paul Hoskins for pointing out the value of the lexicon in these terms.

The critique of *The Oxford Handbook* will be limited to the book as a unified whole because it would be impossible to evaluate the arguments and claims of each essay within a brief review such as this. There are three major strengths, first, it brings the reader to the forefront of apocalyptic scholarship and thought. With the help of a bibliography at the end of each chapter, the reader may also easily continue his research on a particular topic of interest. Second, it is sure to stimulate more thought and publications on apocalyptic literature. Many articles raise good questions and areas of interest, but are not long enough for a thorough treatment. A good example is Matthias Henze's chapter on how the authors of apocalyptic literature related their work to the already-established claims of Torah (chapter 18). Henze only interacts with 1 Enoch, 4 Ezra, and 2 Baruch. His chapter leaves a need for others to pursue similar research on other apocalyptic literature. Third, part five of this book, which covers apocalypticism today, brings apocalyptic literature into the field of religious studies. This is an area that is often neglected. The study of apocalyptic literature is usually relegated to fields of biblical studies, literary studies, or theology. *The Oxford Handbook* should be commended for engaging in the field of religious studies.

While reading *The Oxford Handbook*, a number of weaknesses and needs for the field of apocalyptic literature made themselves evident. First, the section on the literary features of apocalyptic literature was surprisingly meager. Of the three chapters in this section, two were dedicated to rhetorical criticism and one to deconstruction. More chapters on other literary features of apocalyptic literature were needed, such as time and space, style and how the authors exploit the various linguistic possibilities, the roles of narration and dialogue, imagery, and repetition and recapitulation to name a few. The many areas of literary criticism available and the lack of chapters dedicated to it in *The Oxford Handbook* indicate the need for further research and study in the field of apocalyptic literary criticism. Second, a chapter on the effects of dating apocalyptic literature would have been helpful. Many chapters, such as chapter nine, assumed a late date for the book of Daniel (150). However, one wonders if the conclusions reached regarding literary context, phenomenological context, and social context would remain the same if the authors had taken a conservative date of Daniel. A chapter detailing the differences of interpretation based on date would have been helpful for the reader.

The Oxford Handbook of Apocalyptic Literature is a compendium of essays that survey the forefront of thinking and research on apocalyptic literature. The work demonstrates that research in the field of apocalyptic literature has come a long way in the past 35 years. However, it also indicates that there is much work to be done. This book is sure to be a useful resource for graduate students and scholars alike that will hopefully stimulate further research and insights into this fascinating field.

Adam D. Robinson
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***The Gospel of the Lord: How the Early Church Wrote the Story of Jesus.* By Michael F. Bird. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014. 408 pages. Paperback, \$30.00.**

Michael F. Bird is a prolific and excellent writer. He is lecturer in theology at Ridley Melbourne Mission and Ministry College in Australia. He has written on Historical Jesus studies, including a recent co-authored response to Bart Ehrman's claim that Christians made the man Jesus into a deity. In *The Gospel of the Lord*, Bird continues his outstanding scholarly writing with this excellent introduction to the

four canonical Gospels—Bird’s earliest area of scholarly interest and research (viii). He explores three main areas: (1) the formation of the Gospels, (2) Gospel genre, and (3) how the Gospels “relate to the Christian discourse about God (viii).”

The book has six chapters: (1) introduction, (2) Jesus tradition purpose and preservation, (3) Jesus tradition formation, (4) Gospel literary genetics, (5) Gospel genre and goal, and (6) the reason for four Gospels. Chapters two and three as well as an excursus have appeared in theological journals, but Bird says they “have been heavily revised for this book in light of recent research (ix).”

Remaining true to the original meaning of the biblical text is important to Bird and is a strength of this book. For instance, in regard to the preservation of the Jesus tradition, he notes the tradition was “preserved by believing communities and guided by eyewitnesses and teachers within that community. Important didactic figures were vital guarantors of the memory and traditions of Jesus (64).” However, Bird departs from the traditional authorship position in assigning much weight to the role of early Christian communities in shaping Gospel tradition (65–66) as well as questioning the traditional authorship of Matthew (“an open question,” 140) and John, who Bird believes was a Judean disciple of Jesus that led a Christian group at Ephesus, and his disciples later redacted his testimony into the Gospel of John (191).

The Synoptic Problem remains unresolved, and understanding the complicated landscape of possible solutions is critical in Gospel studies. Bird does an admirable job describing and critiquing the primary proposals. He gives diagrams when needed (e.g., 128, 187). Helpful harmony charts list the Gospel texts side by side in both English and Greek, and this practice allows the readers to better understand Bird’s explanations (e.g., 129–31, 135–37). Bird makes the case for the Holtzmann-Gundry hypothesis—a rather complex proposal that is also called the “three source theory” (156). This proposal includes Marcan priority, Q-lite (since Bird says 70% of the claims made for the non-extant Q document are “building castles in the air,” 165), and Luke’s use of Mark. Even though Bird does not ultimately prove his case, he does well illustrate the reality that the Synoptic Problem remains an intriguing and open question.

Bird writes in an engaging style. He is easy to understand, and he uses vivid analogies. Examples include the following: “Just like peeling an onion, watching a form critic cut and tear his way through the alleged layers of tradition in Gospels also makes one want to cry because it is so painful to watch (114).” “The ‘Holy Internet’ of the early Christian movement was composed of a myriad of churches who were in close and constant contact with each other (321).” “The ‘Other’ Gospels (the noncanonical Gospels) are typically anachronistic—like finding a document in which Napoleon discussed nuclear submarines and B52 bombers with his officers (296).” Also, Bird aptly says the “forty or fifty ‘other’ Gospels” were written either to supplement or to *supplant* the four canonical Gospels (281, 308).

The book ends with an informative excursus that is typical of the often conservative viewpoint of Bird in this book: giving reasonable answers to potentially destructive claims by critics. For instance, many critics claim the scribal copying of NT texts in the second century A.D. was fluid or free—supposedly demonstrating the unreliability of God’s Word. However, in this excursus Bird notes recent finds of second-century A.D. papyrus in Oxyrhynchus containing Gospel material help affirm that in the second-century the texts were copied by “strict” or “normal” standards (334–35).

The Gospel of the Lord is an excellent introduction to the origins, interrelatedness, and purpose of the four Gospels. It is balanced and comprehensive enough to be a student textbook on the undergraduate or masters level. Pastors will find it a helpful update on the state of Gospel origin research today.

James R. Wicker
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***Reading Backwards: Figural Christology and the Fourfold Gospel Witness.* By Richard B. Hays. Waco: Baylor University Press, 2014. xxii + 155 pages. Hardcover, \$34.95.**

Few sequels are as satisfying as their predecessors. However, Hays's *Reading Backwards: Figural Christology and the Fourfold Gospel Witness*—a “Gospel-focused sequel” to *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (1989)—does not disappoint. Perhaps, rather than a “sequel,” Hays's slim volume (a permutation of his Hulsean Lectures delivered at Cambridge) may be better described as a tempting *hors d'oeuvre* to whet the appetite in anticipation of a future, more “meaty” monograph (ix). Upon first glance of the enigmatic title, *Reading Backwards*, the trials and tribulations of learning Biblical Hebrew came to mind. While this work is, indeed, interested with “Israel's Scripture” (x), it is primarily focused on the Septuagint (not the Masoretic texts) as Hays notes: “the language of the Evangelists resonates most strongly with the language of the Old Greek versions of Israel's Scripture” (xiv).

In chapter 1, Hays (Dean of Duke Divinity School and George Washington Ivey Professor of New Testament) contends: “*the Gospels teach us how to read the OT, and—at the same time—the OT teaches us how to read the Gospels. . . . [W]e learn to read the OT by reading backwards from the Gospels, and—at the same time—we learn how to read the Gospels by reading forwards from the OT*” (4, emphasis original). Hays suggests a “Gospel-shaped” hermeneutic that “necessarily entails *reading backwards*, reinterpreting Israel's Scripture in light of the story of Jesus” (104, emphasis original). In chapter 2, Hays surveys Mark's Gospel through the hermeneutical lens of the “singular mystery” (μυστήριον) referenced in Mark 4:11 (31). For Hays, Mark 4:11 reveals that this “mystery” is none other than Christ, himself. Hays then switches his focus to Matthew in chapter 3. Here Hays contends that the “Torah has been transfigured” through Matthew 28:20 in Matthew's use of *metalepsis* (i.e., a poetic citation of a fragmentary phrase that implores New Testament readers to recover the original Old Testament subtext) via the repeated phraseology in Genesis 28:15, “Behold I am with you” (42, 50). According to Hays, Jesus is equated with the God of Israel at the end of Matthew's Gospel because Jesus is seen as standing in the same role as YHWH in Jacob's dream. Hays connects Luke 24:21 to a catena of Isaianic passages referring to YHWH as the “Redeemer of Israel” in chapter 4. Hence, through these *metalepses*, Luke depicts Jesus as “the One who redeems Israel” (74). In chapter 5, Hays depicts John as a “Baroque sign painter” employing “chiaroscuro” with words to illuminate Jesus as the “Temple transfigured” (78, 82). It is through John's “figural hermeneutic” (2) of Jesus as “Temple” that John's divine Christology reaches fulsome expression (91). Hays concludes his book in chapter 6 with a helpful list of ten ways the Evangelists inform the reading of Scripture (104–09).

Several strengths mark this work. First, Hays synthesizes a vast amount of data into a concise, well-written argument in which nearly every sentence serves to support his thesis. Second, Hays's commendation of the recovery of the Old Testament in ecclesiastical as well as scholarly circles is laudable (5). Identifying *metalepses* employed by the New Testament writers requires Christians to become

steeped in Scripture. Lastly, Hays is unafraid to swim against the currents of the scholarly consensus. Hays rejects the two-source hypothesis of the so-called “Synoptic Problem,” as well as New Testament scholars’ pervasive usage of the terms “high” and “low” Christology. Hays dispenses with “Q” (xiv), and rejects any *a priori* philosophical categorization of Christology utilizing such “thermometric” nomenclature (107–08). Hays also rejects the consensus view that the Christology in Luke’s Gospel is “primitive” (see Hays’s caustic critique on page 60), and contends for the converse—that for Luke, Jesus is “Israel’s God” (74).

But this work is not without its faults. First, chapter 6 is Hays’s weakest chapter due to Hays’s somewhat troubling, superfluous statements regarding the “weaknesses” and “drawbacks” evinced within the Evangelists’ hermeneutics and portraits of Jesus (96–102). Such language implicitly suggests that God’s Word (which is the resulting fruit of the Evangelists’ supposed “defective” depictions of the Old Testament and Christ) has “weaknesses” and “drawbacks.” This does much to denigrate the unity as well as the trustworthiness of the Fourfold Gospel in the hearts and minds of the students, pastors, and laity reading this work. Second, it seems as if Hays overstates his case as some of his apparent “allusions” could possibly be “illusions.” Hays appears to do lexical searches for what he considers to be *metalepses*—the lexical ciphers or “hermeneutical keys” that unlock the meaning of the gospel narratives (42, 86). This could lead down some problematic paths in that (like chiasmus) one could find “allusions” at every turn if he or she looked hard enough!

In sum, *Reading Backwards* is a thought-provoking work that strikes some pleasant chords as well as a few sour notes (especially in chapter 6). Regardless, Hays’s thesis is compelling, well-argued, and deserves a hearing from any serious student of the canonical gospels. Hays is attuned to the Evangelists’ “hermeneutical hindsight” in their various readings of the Old Testament and portraiture of Jesus, and urges his readers to read the gospels *backwards* as well (85).

Gregory E. Lamb

Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary

***The Other Gospels: Accounts of Jesus from Outside the New Testament.* Edited and Translated by Bart D. Ehrman and Zlatco Pleše. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014. 352 pages. Paperback, \$26.95.**

The Other Gospels is a valuable sourcebook of material most Christians never see—and for good reason. The material was either rejected long ago by the church as being noncanonical or it was written after the New Testament canon was closed. However, these writings are of interest to some lay people and students who are unable to read ancient languages, so Ehrman and Pleše do a real service in providing this unusual and often hard-to-find material.

Both men are professors at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Pleše is an authority on Gnostic literature. Ehrman is an expert on New Testament textual criticism, apocryphal writings, and the early church. He has written extensively on these subjects and is typically highly skeptical of the truth of Christianity.³ However, in this book he and Pleše simply present good descriptions and English translations of over forty ancient gospels and textual fragments. The book’s arrangement is by subject: (1) infancy gospels, (2) ministry gospels, (3) sayings gospels and

³See Bart Ehrman, *Lost Christianities: The Battles for Scripture and the Faiths We Never Knew* (Oxford: University Press, 2003).

agrapha, and (4) passion, resurrection, and post-resurrection gospels (vii–ix). These writings are extant in at least one of three possible forms: (1) as a full or fragmentary physical text, (2) as a quotation in a Patristic writing, and/or (3) as a reference in a Patristic writing with no surviving quotation or text (322).

The definitions are quite helpful, such as the *agrapha* (literally “unwritten”) being alleged sayings of Jesus that were written elsewhere but do not appear in the four canonical Gospels (xv, 180). The background descriptions are short but accurate, such as observing when it is difficult to ascertain a writing’s original text (e.g., 3–4, 99, 127, 140, 254–55) and noting that many titles given to these writings are modern titles given after their rediscovery (4, 19, 37, 58). Also, citing the textual version upon which the English translation is based is beneficial, and the translation is often very similar to one already given by a prominent scholar associated with the text (7, 22, 40, 102). Whenever a writing has similar details to a canonical Gospel, there is a helpful footnote to that Gospel (e.g., 220–24). Also, the editors give a helpful bibliography for each of the writings.

Two interesting elements in these apocryphal writings are: (1) the unusual, alleged miracles, and (2) the revelation of the origins of some Roman Catholic and/or Eastern Orthodox beliefs. Biblical miracles normally have a clear faith lesson or salvific purpose associated with them. However, a number of miracles in the apocryphal writings lack this element and clearly seem fake, such as the infant Jesus doing self-serving miracles (11–12, 55, 91), metal standards of Roman soldiers twice bowing down to Jesus when he appeared before Pilate (237), and Jesus standing taller than the sky next to a talking cross at his resurrection (199). Some stories not in the New Testament but in Catholic tradition are in these apocryphal writings: Mary’s parents being named Joachim and Anna (24–25), Gabriel appearing to Mary at a well (29, 48), Joseph being an older man with children from a previous marriage (28, 81), 4) the perpetual virginity of Mary (40, 46, 50, 90), 5) personal guardian angels (84), and 6) people making the sign of the cross on their forehead (260, 264).

Of what value is a study of these noncanonical writings? Ehrman and Pleše claim these collected writings help one to see what early Christians thought (4–5, 18–22, 234). However, since orthodox Christians rejected the canonicity of these writings, they represent only what *some* Christians and *some* heretics thought. It is unlikely that any of these writings give access to the actual sayings of Jesus—contrary to what the editors claim (159)—since most date hundreds of years after Jesus’ day. Yet, there is some value. First, it is interesting to read writings with false teachings that ancient heretical sects used. Second, it helps to understand what events some Christians (as well as heretics) wished were in the canon, such as stories of Jesus’ childhood. Third, it is helpful to know the origins of some false teachings in the Catholic and Orthodox churches. Fourth, reading these false gospels can affirm why the church rejected them and accepted the four Gospels that are canonical.

However, there is a danger in a new or nominal Christian reading these writings. Such a reader might think the outlandish claims in the writings are true. Certainly some of the stories are heretical, such as salvation being unavailable to women (173), Judas Iscariot being the hero disciple (206–13), Gnosticism (salvation comes only through secret knowledge, 162, 201–03), and Docetism (Christ was not human, but the Christ spirit inhabited a human, 191–95). Other apocryphal details are fairly innocuous but nonetheless unattested in the canonical Gospels, such as Joseph living to age 111 (80, 85) and giving names to unnamed people in the

Gospels, such as the woman healed from the issue of blood (241) and the repentant thief crucified with Jesus (244).

The book could be improved by adding a term index as well as a Scripture index as appendices. Also, a few photographs of actual source fragments would be enlightening. Nonetheless, Ehrman and Pleše have provided an interesting sourcebook of apocryphal gospels. It may have limited appeal to Christian lay people, but pastors and Bible teachers could use it for examples of writings that easily show why the church rejected them long ago.

James R. Wicker

Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***Jesus Research: New Methodologies and Perceptions. The Second Princeton-Prague Symposium on Jesus Research.* Edited by James H. Charlesworth with Brian Rhea and Peter Pokorný. Princeton-Prague Symposia Series on the Historical Jesus. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014. 1,087 pages. Paperback, \$70.00.**

Ever since reviewing the first volume from the Princeton-Prague Symposia on Jesus Research, this writer has eagerly awaited the second volume. It was worth the wait, and the second volume is a who's who of Jesus Research. This sequel is weighty in scholarly research as well as heft: it is almost three times the length of the first volume. James H. Charlesworth gives an excellent overview for each of the book's two major sections. He also contributed two articles, and Brian Rhea compiled the extensive bibliography.

This second volume is a great addition to the first volume for three reasons: (1) it represents a more interdisciplinary approach to Jesus Research, (2) it contains more positive results affirming the truthfulness of the picture of Jesus in the canonical Gospels, and (3) it reflects the recent scholarly swing back toward trusting the Gospel of John as a reliable source.

A growing appreciation among New Testament scholars for findings from other disciplines adds great benefit to the study of the Gospels, and this volume reflects this diversity (436, 465–66, 470, 476). The findings from archaeology shed invaluable light on the first-century culture in Palestine, evidenced by expert numismatist David Hendin (190–97). A topographical analysis of the location of a biblical event can shed new light on its meaning, as Jeremy M. Hutton demonstrates with the possible location of Jesus' baptism by John at the al-Magtas/Hagla ford system (176). Gabriel Mazor notes the importance of appreciating the impact of Imperial Roman architecture on first-century A.D. Palestine (178–79). Dead Sea Scroll expert Peter Flint effectively shows the positive impact some of the scrolls shed on Jesus Research (272–82), but he also criticizes radical claims some scholars have written about the scrolls and the New Testament (265–71).

Of course, no reader will agree with all of the assertions in this wide-ranging collection of research. For instance, this reviewer disagrees with Richard Horsley's often negative assessment of historical details in the canonical Gospels (352–54). On the positive side, Horsley correctly calls for more study in the political, economic, and religious situation in the Palestine of Jesus' day (335–38).

With such a wide variety of participants in the second symposium, one cannot expect consensus among the scholars. Their certitude of obtaining an accurate picture of the historical Jesus is varied. Yet, a number of positive affirmations of the biblical view in this volume are worth noting. Darrell L. Bock masterfully demonstrates how the Gospel of Mark went from the most neglected Gospel to the highly-prized

source that it is today (551–76). Craig Keener defends Luke’s careful approach as an ancient historian in writing both the Gospel of Luke and Acts (600–23). Also helpful, Craig A. Evans and PHEME PERKINS, respectively in their essays, show the extracanonical writings and apocryphal gospels do not contain helpful information for Jesus Research (634–90). The growing appreciation of Jesus’ miracles in Jesus Research (876–78) is also a welcome change in recent scholarship.

It has been over a century since most scholars neglected Mark’s Gospel, but sadly in this ensuing time period many of them have routinely neglected John’s Gospel. Fortunately the tide is changing. This volume shows some scholars are coming back to accepting the Gospel of John as a credible source (630–33). The Scripture Index appendix lists almost as many references to John as there are to Luke (1034–37).

Problem areas in Jesus Research still exist. The continued use of the Gospel of Thomas as a credible source on par with the four canonical Gospels is troubling (e.g., 220, 222, 773; and Craig Evans effectively demonstrates its numerous problems, 635–47). There is still widespread skepticism of the full accuracy of the Gospels (e.g., 25–27, 56–57, 155, 234). The continued use of the principle of double dissimilarity is questionable because it claims one can trust only Gospel sayings of Jesus that were different than what first-century A.D. Judaism taught and what the early church taught—and that overly-restrictive requirement does not leave much credible gospel material.

With such a wide variety of articles, a subject index is needed in this volume; however, the "Index of Scripture and Other Ancient Texts" is helpful (1026–53). The main issue with this book is the delay in its publication. The material is already somewhat dated. One expects a compendium of articles like this to be cutting edge. For the most part they are—but they are missing the last seven years of research. For instance, the essay on miracles misses the two-volume work by Craig Keener. The essay on Jesus’ resurrection does not mention the monograph by Michael Licona. Granted, getting over forty articles by leading scholars was likely no easy task, but quicker publication would have helped. Regardless of the wait, this volume is invaluable to both students and scholars interested in learning the latest findings in Jesus Research. The content is highly technical in nature; yet, to people interested in scholarly research about Jesus on a deep level—a noble pursuit—this book is helpful indeed.

James R. Wicker
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***What is Biblical Theology? A Guide to the Bible’s Story, Symbolism, and Patterns.* By James M. Hamilton Jr., Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013. 128 pages, Paperback, \$12.99.**

In *What is Biblical Theology?*, James Hamilton offers a simple introduction to the purpose and methods of Biblical Theology. The book contains some introductory material that defines the task Biblical Theology and three subsequent sections that address the Bible’s story, symbolism, and patterns as they relate to Biblical Theology.

Hamilton begins with an appeal to read the Bible as a single narrative of redemption and argues that, “to do Biblical Theology is to think about the whole story of the Bible” (12). This also implies that the practice of Biblical Theology must take into account the interpretive perspective of the Biblical authors or “the way the biblical authors have presented their understanding of earlier Scriptures, redemptive history, and the events they are describing” (16).

As a result, Hamilton's first section explains the "Bible's big story" and how the Bible as a whole conforms to the genre of a narrative. The setting of the Bible is the present created world, the characters include God, humankind, and Satan, and the plot comprises the grand episodes of creation, fall, redemption, and restoration. While there are many important themes in Scripture, Hamilton argues that the intervening plot structures focus on the theme of exile and return as God displays his glory by saving his people through judgment. Throughout the narrative of the Bible, God has also given specific promises that describe a future redeemer who will ultimately set things right. These promises are called *types* and together they form embedded patterns that thread together the Biblical narrative as a whole. The progressive unity of these patterns are ultimately realized when God finally defeats evil and reopens the way to salvation through the seed of the woman (Gen 3:15). In addition to biblical types, Hamilton also shows how symbols and imagery knit together the biblical narrative theologically. Biblical authors utilize key symbols, such as a tree, a flood and even the temple, to communicate God's message to his people.

In the final section, he brings all these features together by emphasizing the practical aspect of Biblical Theology saying, "The Bible's story and symbolism teach us as the church to understand who we are, what we face, and how we should live as we wait for the coming of our King and Lord" (97) All baptized believers and members of Christ's Church are all part of the story of God and God's plan of redemption.

What is Biblical Theology? is a highly accessible entryway into the field of Biblical Theology. Those who feel like the Bible is a random collection of books will find Hamilton's treatment of Biblical Theology a helpful map guiding them through the essential features of God's unified plan of redemption throughout scripture. As Hamilton argues succinctly good Biblical interpretation must take into account the broader textures of the Biblical narrative in order to appreciate the fullness of God's revelation.

The brevity of the book might leave some readers wanting more developed treatments of certain topics, such as the grand narrative of the Bible in part one, or the application for the church in part three. But readers can consult the list of works in the epilogue including the author's more developed treatment of Biblical Theology: *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment: A Biblical Theology*. This volume will work well in a church setting as a lay-level introduction to Biblical Theology or even as a brief introduction for a first-year course on Biblical Theology or hermeneutics.

Stephen Presley

Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

Theological Studies

***Engaging the Doctrine of Revelation: The Mediation of the Gospel through Church and Scripture.* By Matthew Levering. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014. 384pages. Hardcover, \$45.00.**

Matthew Levering is steadily becoming one the most prolific contemporary systematic theologians. Levering proves to be an authority on core Christian doctrine having published widely on the law, temple, afterlife, hermeneutics, the body and God. *Engaging the Doctrine of Revelation* reflects his breadth and depth as a scholar. While a committed Roman Catholic, Levering is not limited to traditional

and contemporary Roman conceptions of revelation, but he carefully explores the broader contemporary Christian literature (e.g., liberal and conservative varieties of Protestantism). His analysis of the contemporary literature is especially present in his defense concerning the mediation of Divine communication through the Church, which he primarily perceives to be the Roman Catholic Church.

Levering explicitly defends a view of revelation that is tied to the tradition that is continuously linked all the way back to Christ, the apostolic teaching, helpfully influenced by Hellenism up to the present day Catholic Church. He begins articulating and situating his view of revelation in the Trinitarian God where God the Father concretely acts in Christ and both the Father and the Son send the Holy Spirit to create a new community. Initially, he sets out his case by grounding revelation in God's concrete activity of Christ's mission to unite the church and believers to God. The Holy Spirit, sent by the Father and Son, appropriates the love of God to believers by enlightening the minds of believers within the church. God's mission to humanity is highlighted as a concrete public reality (see chapter 2), which Levering argues is represented in liturgical practice. In this way, it is not possible to sharply distinguish revelation from Christian practice. Hence, he does not defend a two-source view of revelation, namely, the Bible and tradition (or Tradition.) He recognizes the interwoven nature of the two sources. Finally, as it concerns revelatory mediation, Levering defends the hierarchical nature of Roman Catholicism (chapter 3). Levering's interlocutors include Calvin and Hobbes, yet not the comic strip mind you. Protestants will find this section especially important for clarifying how it is that they/we understand the nature of the church in terms of hierarchy and democracy.

In what remains of Levering's useful work, he discusses other significant notions tied to revelation. Chapter 4 is concerned with the concept of "gospel culture." Levering interacts with the evangelical Scot McKnight in his *The King Jesus Gospel*. Important to this discussion is Levering's intent to relate and deepen McKnight's interest in creating a culture of gospel by drawing from Aquinas' Christology. Evangelicals will find much here that is worthy of either adopting via Aquinas or criticizing and modifying in such a fashion as to retain what is in keeping with Protestant sympathies. One significant objection to Roman Catholicism is doctrinal change throughout the history of interpretation, given its strong view of Tradition. Levering rightly shows that this is not only an issue for Romans as it is also an issue for Protestants desiring some continuity with apostolic teaching through history. Arguably, this is a greater challenge for Romans, but he is right to pose it as a challenge for both. Rather than conceding to a common view that there have been "ruptures" or "corruptions" in the Church, he argues, instead that the traditions do change but there is not a "rupture." By drawing from the recent sophisticated work of Ayres and Anatolios on tradition, he defends the idea that doctrinal development has occurred as it does in all traditions, yet a doctrinal core that persists through God's providential preservation of the Church. Having said this, Levering is aware of the significant challenges with Catholicism, but this is no reason for Protestants to brush aside his meticulous and considered reflections on the topic.

In one of the most important and interesting chapters, Levering shows just how doctrinal development came about. In chapter 8, Levering defends natural law and natural theology as part and parcel of interpretive and doctrinal evolution. He uses one concrete example, the doctrine of God, as case and point that the traditional/orthodox conception of God as an immaterial being without a body is one

area that the church did not simply read directly off the pages of the Bible, although it is consistent with comprehensive biblical teaching, but that such a doctrine required traditioned reflection on the biblical data helped by Hellenistic philosophy. This, however, is not limited to Roman teaching but is consistent with a Protestant core of theology proper.

In the end, serious engagement with the doctrine of revelation ought to include Levering's *Engaging the Doctrine of Revelation*. While Protestants will come away disagreeing with much of what is defended, Protestants will not come away empty handed. Instead, Levering can help Protestants clarify what it is that we believe and hold essential to the doctrine of revelation.

Joshua Farris
Houston Baptist University

***Creation: Guides to Theology.* By David Fergusson. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014. 157 pages. Paperback, \$18.00.**

Short of being a piece of constructive theology, Fergusson's *Creation* is a splendid introductory piece on the doctrine of creation that is insightful and carefully situated in the literature. David Fergusson provides the reader with a thoughtful commentary on the doctrine of creation from a Christian perspective. Fergusson is careful to articulate and defend traditional notions within the doctrine of creation. By engaging in both its historical and contemporary contexts, Fergusson is able to capture the main topics in a creative manner with some constructive insights.

In chapter 1, Fergusson explores the scriptural data on creation. He is interested in both the Old Testament and the New Testament teaching. He helpfully leads the reader through three controversies still present today, namely, the days of creation in Genesis 1, and two anthropological concerns intimately related to creation. Fergusson insightfully ties these theological issues to ecological concerns, thus establishing the ground for further exploration in his later reflections. Fergusson proceeds to defend the doctrine of creation *ex-nihilo* as that which the Church recognized as cohering with the teaching that God is a perfect being. In this way, he wishes to highlight the Church's teaching that God is all-powerful, transcends his creation, but is also able to be present to it. Additionally, Fergusson highlights the holistic nature of God's creation, which he will later develop as it concerns human and ecological dependence. In chapter 3, Fergusson defines and defends the traditional view on Adam's fall while noting other modern innovations. Chapter 4 is concerned with the doctrine of God's providence as both a divine action of preservation and purposive guiding to an end. Fergusson addresses contemporary science and natural theology by distinguishing his approach called a theology of nature. In the final chapter, he addresses a variety of concerns related to anthropology, animals, ecology and aliens.

One notable highlight of Fergusson's work is his ability not only to disseminate a vast set of literature, but to offer some insightful thoughts by tying together various strands of thinking found in the literature. Throughout, Fergusson develops humanity's functional holistic embodiment. In the final chapter, Fergusson summarizes these thoughts by linking the human's relationship to the rest of creation. He shows that humans are intimately dependent on the ecosystem, which includes the animal world. Affirming this human-ecological dependence has implications for human living, which Fergusson makes explicit. Fergusson is clear that humans are called by God to steward God's creation. He shows that this is not only present

at creation but is reflective in God's final redemption, which includes the whole of creation. Ultimately, argues Fergusson, this should motivate not an anthropocentrism but a concern for God's larger program and design in creation. Having said this, he is quite critical of the notion, and related notions, that humans are central and primary to God's creation and redemptive purposes. In one place, he criticises the notion that humans are "priests of creation" (102). He argues that there is very little evidence, but if one were to reflect on the creation narrative more deeply, then it seems there is some justification for the idea that humans are of central importance. First, while the creation narrative climaxes with God's rest, it is the creation of humanity that serves as the penultimate climax of the narrative. Second, arguably, the creation narrative has several aspects that reflect the Temple later in the Old Testament wherein Adam would serve as a priestly figure.

Related to the above, the reader may be disappointed with Fergusson's critical tone toward natural theology as a distinct discipline, which provides the foundations for theology. He is careful to distinguish his "theology of nature" from "natural theology," and the idea that humans are natural/ontological images of God. However, many theologians see natural theology as providing the ontological pre-conditions for Christian theology.

With all that has been said, Fergusson's *Creation* is an excellent primer on the doctrine of creation. It is critical, clear, carefully developed and richly situated in historical and contemporary contexts.

Joshua Farris
Houston Baptist University

***Sanctification: Explorations in Theology and Practice.* Edited by Kelly M. Kopic. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014. 300 pages. Paperback, \$30.00.**

Presently very little academic discussion on soteriology (i.e., the doctrine of salvation) is taking place in the theological literature. Not all hope is lost, however, since there is a growing interest in soteriological studies. More specifically, there is a revival of interest in the doctrine of sanctification (i.e., the process of moral and spiritual growth). *Sanctification: Explorations in Theology and Practice* is one significant example of this development. Sanctification is a constructive contemporary re-statement of Protestant dogmatics concerning Christian growth in grace. The authors offer the reader not simply a restatement of doctrine, but charmingly explore the doctrine by drawing from scripture, history, philosophy and experience.

Throughout, the authors develop various aspects of the doctrine. Three apparent and significant themes pervade the volume. First, it considers the inter-relationship of faith and grace in human union with Christ. Richard Lints offers a representative example (also see the chapters of Blocher, Ellis, Davidson, and Canlis) where he contributes to the discussion on law in relation not only to salvation but also to sanctification. Lints argues that all spiritual growth is rooted in faith and grace, not works of law. In this way, he recognizes that his view affirms one variant of antinomianism (48). He suggests that the law is not the primary ground for human covenantal relationship with God anymore, but that God's grace is the foundation for Christian life. In this way, the relationship Christians have to the law has changed from its legal function to having a function of wisdom (49). This is in contrast to the antinomian variant (what he calls antinomianism type 2, 49), which says that the law ceases having any function in Christian life. Lints describes the Christian life as one

of exteriority wherein faith expresses itself externally not as a volitional response to the law but as a manifestation of God's grace through faith.

Second, the authors consider human agency, divine agency, and sanctification (see especially Horton, O'Donovan, and Eglinton). Third and finally, it considers theological and practical implications that follow from various soteriological commitments. Common themes that make their way in all the chapters include the emphasis upon not only salvation by faith alone but sanctification by faith alone (contra Roman Catholicism), union with Christ as the central dominating theme behind both justification and sanctification, and an emphasis upon ethics as a corporate reality in Christ rather than a mere individual reality.

What seems to have motivated the work, as noted by Kacic, is the growing interest and desire to set forth clearly a doctrine of sanctification in evangelical contexts (10–11). All of the authors are broadly interested in contributing to this discussion. While the authors are motivated by such cultural influences, there is an overwhelming tendency in the volume to address Reformed soteriology, as Kacic states (11), even Calvinistic soteriology. Having said this, there are a couple of chapters which prove to expand the Calvinistic boundaries (e.g., McCormack and Moore). And, depending on one's doctrinal persuasions, this could be construed as a weakness, but for those interested in Reformed Calvinistic dogmatics this may be a strength.

Sanctification is a rich and careful contemporary engagement in a Reformed soteriology as it bears on growth, the will, and ethics. Hopefully this fine work will motivate additional discussion not only in Calvinistic soteriology but more broadly evangelical and ecumenical soteriology.

Joshua Farris
Houston Baptist University

Historical Studies

***Seven Summits in Church History.* By Jason G. Duesing. Rainer: 2016. 131 pages. Softcover, \$10.97.**

As a child I was introduced to the “Seven Wonders of the Ancient World” and was instantly captivated. I wanted to know, How was the Great Pyramid built? What did the Colossus of Rhodes look like? What was the magnitude of the Hanging Gardens of Babylon? Not only did these “wonders” pique my interest in and of themselves but they also introduced me to the world of the Ancients. Through them Egypt, Greece, and Babylon came alive to me.

In *Seven Summits in Church History* Jason G. Duesing has accomplished for the field of Church History what the Seven Wonders did for me. At first glance he has only introduced seven figures from the history of Christianity, but in reality he has exceptionally engaged the lives and ministries of these “seven summits” so that the reader is left wanting to learn more from the history of Christianity and at least for the Christian, is encouraged to live a life more honoring to Christ.

Duesing's work is intended for the average churchman. In fact the genesis of this project was in a Bible study at his church (much like Mark Noll's *Turning Points*). The idea of “seven summits” is borrowed from the mountaineers Richard Bass and Frank Wells who sought to climb the seven largest peaks on each continent. After a thought-provoking appeal on the study of Church History (21–35), Duesing addresses the specific “peaks” he has chosen: Augustine, Martin Luther,

John Calvin, Balthasar Hubmaier, Jonathan Edwards, William Carey, and Carl F. H. Henry.

The chapters that follow are brief and, as such, are unable to engage deeply into each figure, but such is to be expected of an introductory text. The reader is provided with what Duesing believes are the major events in the history of these “summits.” These summaries leaves one wanting more. This, however, is not a negative critique, but gives strength to the purpose of the book to introduce and pique interest. So, at the end of each chapter Duesing provides a few sources for further reading.

The one major question that remains is: why these “seven summits?” Duesing himself states, “As with any such list, this one contains some element of subjectivity. . . . These aren’t the seven top theologians or the seven greatest evangelists, and they are not all equal in stature (16).” So these are not necessarily *the* seven summits of Church History, rather, they were chosen because “each served to shape the general direction of the history of Christianity (16).” Though all of these figures would be on my top 25 I would construct a different list of seven summits. However, this is Duesing’s list and indeed it is a good list. *Seven Summits in Church History* is an excellent introduction that is accessible to readers of most ages.

W. Madison Grace II
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***Ancient Christian Worship: Early Church Practices in Social, Historical, and Theological Perspective.* By Andrew B. McGowan. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014. 320 Pages. Hardcover, \$34.99.**

Anyone interested in the worship practices of the Church should read this book. Andrew McGowan has produced an excellent resource describing early church practices with obvious implications on contemporary expressions. The research of the book is impressive, the organization is clear, and the content is well written. The topics covered are as follows: meal (Lord’s Supper), Word, Music, Initiation (Baptism, Anointing, and Foot Washing), Prayer, and Time (Feasts and Fasts). Within each of these topics, the author shows their development and impact on the Church.

Throughout the book, McGowan’s demonstrates an impressive familiarity and interaction with early church writings. Informed by the author’s earlier work on the Lord’s Supper, the rich impact that celebration had on the history of the church is a frequent and intriguing discovery throughout the book. In each of the topics addressed, the author unpacks the richness and complexity of the Christian tradition. He sheds light on current worship practices, but also helps the reader understand how those practices influenced other areas like ordination (159–60), preaching styles (76–78), devotional practices (78–86), and more.

The strengths of the work are McGowan’s chapters detailing the history of the Lord’s Supper (chapter 2), Baptism (chapter 5), and Holy days (chapter 7). He is honest on areas where there is a lack of clear evidence for the development of certain practices in areas like music (117, 118–19, 122) and specific times of prayer (188, 202–03), but also insightful where clear implications can be drawn, such as the impact of the growth of the church on buildings, land, and political influence (59–62).

At times, this reader would have liked to have seen more appeal to Scripture or the original languages. For example, in the section on music, a brief discussion of the history of music in relation to David and Jehoshaphat might have strengthened

the historical development of the topic. However, the confines of the book are clear and may have prevented such a discussion.

This book would be a helpful addition to any minister's library. Readers will want to read it slowly. Have a highlighter and a pen handy as nearly every page contains informative and engaging content. From the perspective of this reviewer, as soon as I finished the book, I added it to the required reading for my course and immediately made plans to read it again.

Deron J. Biles

Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***Calvin on the Christian Life: Glorifying and Enjoying God Forever.* By Michael Horton. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014. 272 pages. Paperback, \$19.99.**

In keeping with the series *on the Christian Life*, Michael Horton clearly articulates Calvin's lived theology. Unlike most studies of Calvin, Horton is primarily interested in the theological piety of Calvin's life and thought. Having said that, Calvin's piety intersects with his theology and exegesis. Horton's unique contribution to evangelical literature lies in his portrayal of Calvin not so much as a humanist or an intellectual, although he is both of these, but as a pastor. It is in this spirit that Horton addresses all theological issues found within the pages of *Calvin on the Christian Life*.

The tone of the book is practical and pastoral. Horton is careful to develop the notion of Calvin's piety from the start, and the fact that all of Calvin's thought and action is directed toward God. As he states, "Like any pious Augustinian, Calvin viewed every aspect of life *Coram Deo*, before the face of God (17)." Horton carefully and consistently leads the reader to see Calvin in this light. He does so by contextualizing Calvinian theology historically and ecclesiology. One example is Horton's exposition of Calvin's doctrine of election. Therein, Horton is careful to explain that "election" is a doctrine close to the heart of the believer. The intent for discussing election is to secure and sustain the heart of the believer not to confuse or enact despair. In contrast to common caricatures, Calvin did not use the doctrine of "election" in the manner that medieval's may have used it to punish, control, or spur on obedience in fear, instead it was used to solidify the faith of the believer that he or she is adopted as a child of God the Father.

One virtue of *Calvin on the Christian Life* is its comprehensive nature. Horton practically works through Calvin's thinking on practical living (part 1), salvation (part 2), church life (part 3), and living as a citizen of the world (part 4). More specifically, Horton grounds all doctrinal and practical matters in Calvin's epistemology and narrative of salvation. Anyone familiar with Calvin will know that what is distinctive to his epistemology is the fact that knowledge of self is always intertwined with knowledge of God (chapter 3). Furthermore, all of life is a narrative where God is the author and we are the actors living out the plot of salvation (chapter 4). Horton discusses the doctrine of Christ as mediator (chapter 5) and our union with Christ, which he explains as the foundation for our holiness in contrast to supposed medieval views that highlight Christ's role as a human 'exemplar' (103–08). Horton also discusses matters of prayer (chapter 9), Calvin's view of the Old Testament law (chapter 10), and the church (chapter 11). Finally, in the last section, Horton expounds upon Calvin's view of the Christian as a citizen of a foreign world (chapters 12–14). What he means by this is that as Christians we exist in two different kingdoms (an Augustinian flavor) and individual Christians have a role to play in

the Church as well as in society. Both realms (e.g. Church and society or empire) are 'distinct' yet related. Calvin rejects the medieval view that the Church should rule over society; he rejects the Anabaptist view that Christians are to live as separatists from the world; and he rejects theocracy (224). Instead, Calvin views redemption as a matter that occurs in the context of the church where preaching and the sacraments are vital for the life of the Christian. Calvin does affirm something like natural law (i.e. common grace) whereby Christians can have an active role in society by bringing their Christian views to bear on what is naturally known by all men.

The reader will find another virtue in chapter 13 on vocation. Calvin portrays the life of the believer as a pilgrim on his journey toward heaven to be with God. Along the way, he is involved in a vocation. Horton is careful to expound on the practicality of Calvin's thinking as it pertains to the earthy spirituality of Christian thought. As pilgrims and actors in God's world, we have been given a vocation that is meaningfully tied to the redemptive story in which we find ourselves. This is true for Calvin and his time as well as contemporary times. Calvin also teaches us how to view all of mundane life as spiritual. In contrast to some views where "common" vocations are construed as inferior to the "ministry," Calvin shows us that all vocations are infused with spirituality.

A couple of general remarks are in order. First, one of the benefits of Horton's exposition of Calvin is that he masterfully leads the reader through primary sources making this a reliable guide to Calvin's thought and practice. On the other hand, there is a related weakness that is prevalent in the book. Horton cites very little secondary material on Calvin, which at times may appear to the experienced Calvin reader as offering superficial interpretations of Calvin. In one place, for example, Horton describes Calvin's view of the *imago Dei* as relational where he says, It may be overstating things to suggest that Calvin's interpretation represents 'the birth of the relational imago'" (64) (a common contemporary view). It is true that Calvin's rich description of the "imago" has relational elements, but it can hardly be described as relational in the contemporary sense of the term. Relational views often suggest that the "image" is fundamentally relational or that we as beings are comprised of relations. By saying this, Horton misses the robust place that the soul as substance has in imaging God for Calvin and the strong role Calvin gives to the soul's capacities. As a result, this is related to a larger worry concerning Horton's sentiment on Calvin's view of philosophy. To this we turn.

In several places, Horton assumes a stereotype that Calvin is not beholden to philosophizing or the ideas of the philosophers, nor does he find it of much importance (see 63, 64, 66, 98). While it is true that Calvin makes some sharp comments against the "philosophers" to suggest that philosophy (and the philosophers) do not play a strong role for Calvin is arguably a superficial reading of Calvin. In this way, Horton would have been wise to draw from Paul Helm's recent works on Calvin (*Calvin at the Centre*, and *John Calvin's Ideas*) where Helm shows the richness of Calvin's thought as deeply influenced by philosophy. Unfortunately, I did not see one mention of Helm's work. If Horton gave considered attention to Helm, then he would have read that some of the strongest influences on Calvin's thinking include Augustine and Aquinas. While Horton is critical of both Plato and dualism in general, Calvin was a thoroughgoing substance dualist influenced by Plato and Augustine in that he held that persons are souls that have a contingent attachment to bodies (see chapter 15 of Calvin's *Institutes*). At a minimum, it seems fair to say that the 'sentiment' in

the background of Horton's thinking on Calvin is misguided, and it would have been helpful to see Horton draw from Helm's works on the matter.

There is much more that could be stated positively about Horton's exposition of Calvin. The reader will find other gems throughout, including Horton's discussion on Calvin's view of the Lord's Supper as well as his discussion of Christian living in light of future glory. In the end, evangelical Christians interested in historical theology, spiritual formation, and the reformation will gain much from *Calvin on the Christian Life*.

Joshua Farris
Houston Baptist University

***Practical Predestinarians in England, c. 1590–1640.* By Leif Dixon. Edited by Bruce Gordon et al. *St. Andrews Studies in Reformation History.* Burlington: Ashgate, 2014. viii + 380 pages. Hardcover, \$149.95.**

While the doctrine of double predestination has had no shortage of critics over the centuries, it was the spiritual salve succoring many souls in early modern England according to Dixon's *Practical Predestinarians in England, c. 1590–1640*. In this work, Dixon (Associate College Lecturer in Early Modern British History at the University of Oxford) attempts to fill an important lacuna in Reformation studies by explaining why the doctrine of double predestination was seen "by many English Protestants as a source of tremendous 'comfort' in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries," and how the English, predestinarian ministers during this period understood and communicated double predestination as a message of utmost "comfort" (3).

Methodologically, Dixon works with the primary sources—mostly printed sermons and treatises—of those whom he is studying (e.g., William Perkins, Richard Greenham, Richard Rogers, Thomas Wilson, and Robert Sanderson). Dixon also investigates the pragmatic, pastoral use of these materials in the sanctification of these "practical predestinarians."

Structurally, Dixon's work consists of an introduction, seven chapters, a twenty-page bibliography, and index. Dixon conspicuously places his thesis in his introduction, which can be summarized thusly: sundry crises (e.g., the horrors surrounding the pandemic of the Black Death) necessitated for some English Protestants "a radical shift of emphasis" in their theological thought and praxis, and the doctrine of double predestination "was forced to change form and became a means of guiding believers through their lives, of strengthening their faith and of helping them to interpret—and change—the world in a meaningful way" (7). Dixon stands against the consensus of scholarly opinion in that for him, double predestination did not result in spiritual anxiety, but rather was a ministerial tool that fostered the growth of "self-confident and assertive" saints who were able to engage their culture and their world more effectively because they were not wasting their time worrying over the eternal fate of their souls.

Dixon elucidates the fact that "English Calvinism" was not monolithic, but a "complex amalgam" that evinced a diachronic rather than synchronic development (9). Dixon then defines and differentiates between key, technical terms such as "credal" and "experimental" predestinarianism before opting for his moniker, "practical" predestinarianism (11). By "practical" Dixon means a combination of the "experimental," self-assuring sort who were, because of their assurance of election, to

practice their faith daily as a visible sermon to a watching world (12). In this sense, “good works” are the *effect* and not the *cause* of election.

Chapter 1 (perhaps Dixon’s weakest chapter in terms of supporting his argument) traces the history and misconceptions surrounding predestination. In chapters 2–6, Dixon studies the aforementioned pastor-theologians (and a few others) whose works are seminally important to his study. Through this investigation, Dixon convincingly argues his thesis regarding the variegated views toward predestinarianism as well as their respective pastoral applications. Chapter 7 (Dixon’s most innovative chapter) investigates the interesting melding of the genres of the funeral sermon and that of the *ars moriendi*. Dixon highlights the fact that though the *ars moriendi* exposed many gaps and inconsistencies in the thinking and preaching of predestinarian pastors (e.g., the emphasis on the works of the dying saint for proof of election), a synergistic union existed between the two seemingly antithetical doctrines during this period. Dixon quips: “the two ideas were not comfortable bedfellows, but neither could they be placed in separate beds” (352). In other words, both of these doctrines (i.e., *ars moriendi* and predestination) were seminally important to the religious experience of English Protestants during this period—thus, each doctrine informed and shaped the other.

The chief strength of this work is that Dixon has successfully argued his thesis in proving that early modern English predestinarianism was not monolithic, and did not appear *ex nihilo* through the quills of Luther and Calvin. Rather, Dixon argues that predestinarianism progressively developed and changed form over several centuries. In its most basic form, according to Dixon, predestination is explicated in the writings of Augustine and even that of Aquinas (21).

However, this work should give its readers some pause in at least one critically important area. Dixon overstates his case regarding the origins of double predestination, while seemingly offering a cavalier dismissal to those holding antithetical views. Dixon states: “The doctrine of [double] predestination is . . . *clearly* articulated in the Epistles of Saint Paul, and was a *constant* theme in the writings of the Ancient Fathers” (20–21, emphasis added). Dixon writes this without giving a single scriptural reference or even a footnote as to exactly who these “Ancient Fathers” (pace Augustine) are. It seems that Dixon commits the same error of oversimplification that he accuses other historians of in terms of their depictions of “English Calvinism” (4–6).

In sum, Dixon’s work is written well, and deserves a hearing from anyone interested in this “central theological controversy” within “the most theologically controversial period in the history of Christianity” (2). While not without its faults (as no work is), Dixon’s work reveals the complexity of predestinarianism, and informs the discussion through the framework of the cultural crises and pastoral concerns inherent within the medieval/early modern English *Sitz im Leben*.

Gregory E. Lamb
Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary

***Claude Pajon (1626–1685) and the Academy of Samur: The First Controversy over Grace.* Brill’s Series in Church History, Vol. 64. By Albert Gootjes. Leiden, Brill, 2014. 252 pages. Hardcover, \$145.00.**

Contemporary interest in post-Reformation history and theology has developed at what seems to be an exponential rate in the last few decades. Brill’s

Series in Church History is much the catalyst for this, having become something of an academic industry. Albert Gootjes's *Claude Pajon (1626–1685) and the Academy of Saumur: The First Controversy over Grace* is but one of the most recent evidences of this.

Gootjes's work is a carefully researched exposé of Claude Pajon, a hitherto little known and underappreciated seventeenth-century French theologian, and sometime professor of the notoriously controversial academy of Saumur—famous for the propagation of that strain of Reformed thought known as "Hypothetical Universalism." A theological innovation first developed by the Scottish theologian, John Cameron (1579–1625), later disseminated (and further developed) through his student Moïses Amyraut (1596–1644) and later Pajon, Hypothetical Universalism (and its close cousin, Amyradianism) is roughly the view that Christ dies in some sense for the sins of all humanity, but that the benefits accruing from his death are only applied to God's elect (a doctrine constructed largely upon the so-called "sufficiency-efficiency" distinction made by the twelfth-century Roman Catholic Archbishop, Peter Lombard).

Gootjes labors with great precision (and what is obviously a herculean archival effort) to show the significance of Pajon's role in carrying on the theological tradition of the academy at Saumur. Rather than attending the propagation of hypothetical universalism at Saumur, Gootjes fixes his attention on a controversy with which Pajon became entangled around the time of his installment at Saumur, and that followed him, though intermittently, to the end of his life. According to Gootjes, Pajon's account of the psychology of conversion in the context of Reformed debates about the so-called mediate versus immediate role of the Spirit of God in effecting not only the mind, but the will, of a converted soul raised a great deal of suspicion amongst the wider European Reformed community. Gootjes carefully parses out the highly nuanced positions held by Pajon's predecessors, Cameron and Amyraut, and most importantly for Gootjes argument, Paul Testard (1594–1650), who argued that in the conversion of a soul, the Spirit of God works immediately upon the mind (or intellect) to effect the soul's initial receptivity to the idea of one's need for conversion, after which the Spirit works only mediately through various means of grace that effect the will, through the mind, that lead the individual to conversion. Pajon's involvement in the affair and the principal worry of this theological innovation, Gootjes points out, involved several factors, including, but not limited to: the role of Spirit of God in the doctrine of conversion, human moral ability, the medieval philosophical theory of causation, known as *concursum*, and the pervasive influence of Cartesian thought that had recently emerged on the continent.

Beyond the thoughtfully argued and well-written intellectual biography and its bringing to the fore an important and until now, mischaracterized theologian, the achievement of Gootjes' work is his bringing to light the philosophical significance of causation for and the influence of Rene Descartes upon the Reformed tradition. Gootjes' attention to the post-Reformation response to the rise of the 'new philosophy' of Cartesianism in particular, a subject that is unto itself a veritable treasure trove of research possibilities and a lacuna of sorts in the contemporary literature.

Those not given to an interest in intellectual biography or the subtleties of historical-polemical theology will likely pass over Gootjes's work. For those interested in what has recently and increasingly become known as 'Deviant

Calvinism', Gootjes's work is an exciting effort to make luminous yet another dark corner of theological history.

S. Mark Hamilton
Free University of Amsterdam

Studies in Ethics and Philosophy

***The Atheist's Fatal Flaw: Exposing Conflicting Beliefs.* By Norman L. Geisler and Daniel J. McCoy. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014. 192 pages. Paperback, \$14.99.**

Atheists believe they have the upper hand on Christian theists because in the atheists' view atheists rely solely on logic and reason. But is this the truth? Do atheists properly apply both logic and reason upon their own claims and are they consistent in recognizing and addressing any inconsistencies? Norman Geisler, Christian apologist, and his coauthor, teacher, and minister Daniel McCoy, refute the atheists' claim of superior employment of logic and reason by exposing how atheists contend for two opposing positions that cannot both be simultaneously true. Geisler and McCoy maintain that atheists hold conflicting beliefs and violate the law of non-contradiction. They go on to contend that the atheists' arguments are self-defeating and violate the laws of logic and reason which are the very standards to which atheists appeal against Christian theists.

Often atheists present the reality of evil as a dominating factor for a logical and reasonable position to reject Christian theism. The argument is often based on the following logic: "If God was truly moral, he would not [action] and God does [action], therefore God is not truly moral" (2). Atheists cannot blame God since in their view He does not exist. While advocating this position, atheists maintain that their personal freedom demands that if they were to consider the possibility of the Christian God, it is not acceptable for this God to require human submission, bestow favor, authorize death, require faith, attach guilt, prescribe rules, administer punishment, grant pardon, send people to hell, or bring them to heaven. The atheists' argument is a position that only accepts human autonomy and rejects theonomy. Failing to distinguish the differences between freedom and autonomy, atheists reject God's ability to address this issue through the conscience of humans. Geisler and McCoy take as their thesis that the fatal flaw in atheistic thinking is reflected by asserting that (a) God should fix the problem of evil; that is, the problem of evil needs divine intervention, and on the other hand (b) God should not intervene in or interfere with anything; that is, divine intervention is evil.

The authors contend the view of atheists is as follows: if moral evil exists, it must be God's fault that it exists. Atheists maintain that there is no excuse for God not to stop it, prevent it, or protect humanity from it. In saying that if God exists, it is His fault that moral evil exists, atheists make it all God's problem and deny that this problem has either a human origination or that humanity is squarely and rightly responsible for its cause and effects. In doing so, atheists have come to value their human autonomy and have discarded the ability to understand the most significant questions and issues of life.

Dismissing the reality of God as Creator, a transcendent ruler from outside their own experiential framework, atheists categorically reject the possibility of such a God. Atheists declare that if the existence of the Christian God was hypothetically assumed for the sake of argument, atheists would desire neither submission nor favor from Him, even though these two possibilities are the only possible ways one could

interact with such a being. Atheists claim that the Christian conception of faith is, in essence, a withholding of knowledge from mankind and that for God to require human faith would be an immoral act. Instead, atheists choose to place their faith and trust in humanity at large and upon science. Not willing to accept responsibility for the situation of evil, atheists claim they are not guilty, rejecting the claims of God (Rom 3:23).

In their view, God's direction and will for human life needs not to be considered because if He had wanted humans to obey these directions, God should have made us less prone to disregarding them in the first place. If He is truly God, surely He could have designed us either (1) better from the outset or (2) not be concerned with such petty things as our sin in the first place. Atheists maintain that the Christian's God never has any right to be angry with His creation; thus, atheists maintain that if God did exist, humanity would be justified in being angry at Him. Atheists view any punishment of mankind as bad, rejecting any offer of pardon and atonement from God. Atheists believe that hell and heaven are not real places; they are simply a fictitious invention of Christians used to trick the gullible into good behavior and deter bad behavior. For atheists, any paradise must exist in the only real world that he has experienced to date—the natural world.

Geisler and McCoy respond to all this by stating that the atheist has two major inconsistencies. The atheist must first “either (a) drop the argument appealing to the problem of moral evil or (b) drop the arguments claiming that God's interventions to fix the problem of moral evil are immoral.” Additionally, the atheist must also “stop labeling as immoral those interventions that the Christian God proposes, while simultaneously claiming that their counterparts on the societal level are not immoral” (133).

In short, atheists needs to reexamine their use of logic and reasoning because the Christian theist has placed his faith and trust in the One who is the basis for all logic and reasoning—the eternal *logos*—Jesus Christ.

Paul A. Golata

Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***Loving God with Your Mind: Essays in Honor of J. P. Moreland.* Edited by Paul M. Gould & Richard Brian Davis. Chicago: Moody, 2014. 264 pages. Softcover, \$19.99.**

J. P. Moreland once said of his Biola University colleague William Lane Craig that Craig is one of the finest Christian thinkers of the last half-century. It seems that something similar ought to be said of Moreland, and this book is a testimony to the life and scholarship of a man who has set the bar high in philosophy, theology, apologetics, spiritual formation, and church ministry.

In the Introduction, general editors Gould and Davis note that the Christian academic landscape looks much different after three decades of Moreland's service (13); indeed, this edited volume serves as a primer “to the rich intellectual resources of J. P.'s thinking” (15). The contributors are “J. P.'s colleagues, former students, and partners in ministry.” Moreover, “[t]hey are friends who deeply love and admire the man—just for being J. P.” (15).

Loving God with Your Mind is divided into three main parts, all of which represent various aspects of both Moreland's academic and practical contributions. Part One is concerned with his metaphysics. Since Moreland is primarily a metaphysician, in Chapter One Gould and Stan Wallace show how his view “is an

explanatorily powerful and satisfying view of reality” (22); Chapter Two, by Robert K. Garcia, explains Moreland’s critique of naturalism; certainly, Moreland’s Platonism “makes atheism less plausible than it otherwise would be” (48). Chapters Three and Four, by Timothy Pickavance and Stewart Goetz, respectively, attempt to explicate Moreland’s substance dualism, while in Chapter Five R. Scott Smith provides a helpful essay on Moreland’s work on both truth and postmodernity.

Part Two, roughly, is devoted to Moreland’s epistemology and apologetics. In Chapter Six, Douglas Groothuis explains that Christianity is a “knowledge tradition” (97), a theme that is taken seriously throughout all of Moreland’s work. Of course, as Paul Copan notes (Chapter Seven), Moreland is also an esteemed natural theologian, particularly savvy on the argument from mind/consciousness, yet Copan points out that Moreland’s winsome argumentation never neglects special revelation. Davis and W. Paul Franks, in Chapter Eight, describe Moreland’s apologetics, disclosing that followers of Jesus are obligated to engage in it. They include a helpful exposition of Romans 1:18-20 in the spirit of Moreland.

Mike Keas in Chapter Nine discusses epistemic virtues in science and theology, noting that a certain theory’s strength is not dependent upon expert opinion but rather on how that theory “embodies epistemic virtues” such as “scope,” “elegance,” “universal coherence,” and the like (152). These virtues, of course, are part and parcel of a Christian worldview, something Moreland has always demonstrated in his ministry. Scott Rae contributes a helpful essay (Chapter Ten) on pro-life activism, covering topics such as abortion, infanticide, infertility, genetic testing, stem cell research, etc. Moreland’s attention on substance dualism provides a theistic framework for reflecting on these important issues (170).

Part Three is dedicated to spiritual formation and church ministry topics. In Chapter Eleven, Tim Muehlhoff fleshes out cultural apologetics—the notion that believers ought to “be real by going public with personal struggles” (173). Authenticity and vulnerability, writes Muehlhoff, form a powerful apologetic. Chapter Twelve, by Klaus Issler, describes spiritual formation shaped after Jesus’ example, which, per Moreland, is important to a believer’s intellectual life. Issler provides a relevant model for Christians to follow (awake, admit, ask, act). Chapter Thirteen discusses virtue and happiness: Michael W. Austin writes there that “those who follow . . . Jesus” must “become evidence for the reality of God in Christ” (211). Chapter Fourteen, by Mike Erre, is devoted to examining the main contents of Moreland’s *Kingdom Triangle: Recover the Christian Mind, Renovate the Soul, Restore the Spirit’s Power* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007) since his chapter coordinates with the three legs of that book’s subtitle. Erre calls the church to consider Moreland’s proposals as we share Christ with “a culture that is progressively suspicious and antagonistic of the gospel we proclaim” (224).

Lastly, Moreland offers a thoughtful afterword. He reflects on cultivating the Christian mind, and discusses topics such as theistic evolution, neuroscience and the soul, and doctrine and ethics. In noting that some Christian thinkers have recently embraced non-traditional views on these issues, Moreland urges caution in that “ideas have consequences,” for “if there is a robust defense available for the traditional position,” he asks, “why not stick with it?” (236). In the final pages, he exhorts Christian thinkers to engage in spiritual formation, shares some personal stories of how God has worked in his own life, and ends with a gentle (but firm) word of encouragement for the church to be “filled with overtly supernatural, spiritually formed, intelligent and articulate ambassadors for Christ” (241).

Apart from the awkwardly bolded words in Pickavance's chapter, as well as the unfortunate choice of endnotes over footnotes, this is an important work on behalf of one of today's most esteemed evangelical thinkers. The essays strike an elegant balance between academic, intellectual topics and practical, ministerial concerns, for such balance has been exemplified in Moreland's own work. The chapters are fairly short and the writing is accessible. Both a helpful timeline and a bibliography of Moreland's publications are provided; moreover, each author gives a personal anecdote of Moreland's impact on their lives. Gould and Davis ought to be commended for editing this fine volume.

Tyler M. Taber
Free University of Amsterdam

***Being as Communion: A Metaphysics of Information.* By William Albert Dembski. Ashgate Science and Religion Series. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2014, 236 pages. Paperback, \$34.95.**

Being as Communion is a work of speculative philosophy that focuses on ontology. Dembski endeavors to articulate a metaphysical vision that contrasts directly with materialistic metaphysics, which he deems as unsatisfactory due to its atomistic, reductive, and mechanic nature. Dembski states that being is to be understood as the exchange of information.

At the outset, Dembski asserts that materialism implies cosmic determination and destroys any chance for human freedom. Since free will is the power to make a decision that rules out a possibility, it is, in other words, the ability to say no. Dembski argues information itself is what is necessary to eliminate a possibility. The elimination of possibilities is what allows the actual world to be known from among all possible worlds. Human beings naturally look at various possibilities and ascertain meaning of the actual world based upon the relationship of possibilities to each another.

Dembski states that it is possible for information to be produced by (a) design or (b) nature, and these two possibilities are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Dembski believes that material is an abstraction drawn from information. Matter lacking information is an incoherent concept as the information provides the pattern from which to empirically observe and characterize matter. No doubt a materialist will refuse to acknowledge that matter, as presently understood, is a myth. Information is always embodied and may be subject to being transposed as happened to Jesus' body after His resurrection. Einstein developed the formula $E=mc^2$, relating energy to matter. Since information is primary to matter and matter can be converted to energy, energy likewise logically follows information. The world exhibits contingency as seen from empirical observations (science) that deny certain possibilities. Determinism is required to conceive of chance as ignorance; however, chance is best understood as something that derives from intelligence (information). Information may be conserved, but may never grow without an intelligent input. Thus, natural selection cannot create information; it can only redistribute it. Dembski argues that the most logical way information is placed into nature is by intelligence, which he argues is the Christian God of the Bible. He calls this metaphysical understanding of the world informational realism, whereby information is exchanged through freedom expressed via (a) necessity, (b) chance, and (c) design within constraint.

Dembski's proposal makes information, not material, the proper object of metaphysical study. Since the Enlightenment, the world has steadily moved toward

a position defending the ontology of materialism. Materialism fails to give valid credence to the possibility of a transcendent God who created and ordered the universe and is concerned with the affairs of men. The thesis put forth by Dembski seeks to challenge the prevailing understanding and argue that it is reasonable to consider something else as fundamentally basic in the universe. If Dembski is correct, his thesis would allow for and build support for the Christian God of the Bible as the ultimate source of information and intelligence.

Based upon Scripture, for Dembski, Christian theism maintains that nature contains teleological laws that are woven into it by its Creator and Sustainer (Gen 1:1; Ps 19:1–6; 146:6; Isa 42:5; Acts 14:17; 17:24–29; Col 1:15–20). God’s handiwork of creation both manifests His glory and “speaks” demonstrating “His invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, [which] have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made” (Rom 1:20). This reality places all mankind before a just and Holy God without excuse regarding their sin.

Dembski’s idea was stimulated by previous philosophers, including John A. Wheeler and Paul C. W. Davies. Dembski is successful in completing his trilogy (*The Design Inference* [Cambridge University Press, 1998], *No Free Lunch* [Rowman & Littlefield, 2002]) and providing an articulation of the conceivability of metaphysics of information as the fundamental structure of reality, and that this information exists in relationships with respect to other information.

This work is appropriate for philosophers and theologians interested in metaphysics. Secondly, it would be beneficial for people that are interested in the arguments for intelligent design in contrast to evolutionary materialism.

Christian philosophers should ensure that they are articulating a Christian worldview that allows for realism and discounts materialism as the fundamental reality of the cosmos. Dembski provides a speculative philosophy that pushes against this materialism and provides a thoughtful way for Christian philosophers to continue the dialog that leaves open a cosmos that God created.

Paul A. Golata

Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***Truth Matters: Confident Faith in a Confusing World.* By Andreas J. Köstenberger, Darrell L. Bock, and Josh D. Chatraw. Nashville: B&H, 2014. 188 pages. Hardcover. \$12.99.**

***Truth in a Culture of Doubt: Engaging Skeptical Challenges to the Bible.* By Andreas J. Köstenberger, Darrell L. Bock, and Josh D. Chatraw. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2014. 224 pages. Paperback. \$19.99.**

Recognizing Western society’s long drift away from absolute truth claims and its overall inclination towards overwhelming skepticism and suspicion towards the biblical texts, these complementary books address these issues head-on by providing an apologetic through evidence supporting a proper orthodox understanding of various doctrinal theologies important to Christianity. The books are a joint collaboration between Andreas J. Köstenberger, Senior Research Professor at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Darrell L. Bock, Senior Research Professor at Dallas Theological Seminary, and Josh D. Chatraw, Associate Professor at Liberty University. Employing former evangelical and present skeptic, Bart D. Ehrman (b. 1955), a New Testament scholar and textual critic, as an exemplar of the

skeptic's position, the authors choose to respond to specific arguments that Ehrman has claimed in his writings. Their thesis is that Ehrman's position is generally indicative of the Christian skeptics' position—a disbelief in the reliability of the Bible and the truth claims of the historical Christian faith. The authors reason that if they can successfully provide a reasonable defense of the Christian faith to Ehrman's claim, they have addressed and negated many of the general skeptic's objections.

Truth Matters: Confident Faith in a Confusing World is written in a style and manner that is well-suited for high school and university students who are about to enter, or have recently entered into a classroom setting that is hostile to the Christian worldview. *Truth in a Culture of Doubt: Engaging Skeptical Challenges to the Bible* specifically addresses in greater detail and depth some of the most noteworthy challenges Ehrman has proposed to the Christian faith including the following: (1) the presence of suffering, (2) apparent biblical contradictions, (3) claimed manuscript corruptions, (4) the vast number of different expressions of the Christian faith, and (5) the possibility that the texts are not genuine.

In *Truth Matters*, the authors begin by pointing out that no one can absolutely prove the Christian faith. They argue that it is not absolute certainty that is required, but rather reasonable certainty, the same type of certainty that is employed in decision-making. If the skeptic is to demand absolute certainty from the Christian, the response to the skeptics is to state that skeptics cannot meet their own demands for certainty regarding their own claims and to state that the correct bar is reasonable certainty.

Suffering and pain are part of the condition of the world. The skeptic wants to know why this is so, and to claim that because it exists, we should be skeptical regarding the goodness of any so-called Christian God. The Christian's understanding of the grand meta-narrative of Creation-Fall-Redemption explains why things are the way they are and why the crucifixion of Jesus points to God's intended final solution for His creation.

Skeptics also take issue that the original manuscripts are missing and consequently claim the original words and meaning are now potentially not original. However, the manuscript evidence for the Scriptures is at least of an order of magnitude better than anything else we have. It is in fact the most well-attested and best-preserved ancient text that exists in the world.

Christianity was not something that came to be because of an ecclesial council, backroom power brokers, or politicians such as Constantine the Great (272–337), as skeptics including Ehrman believe. The rules of faith were in place early and are partially reflected in the New Testament witness. The mission was known, the early church understood the apostles' teaching, and their message was the gospel of Jesus Christ. The faith of the early church was not corrupted, but is rather the proper and true faith of Christianity. The central point of the entire Bible is the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, fully God and fully man. The skeptic wants to deny that we know that Jesus Christ really resurrected from the dead. The alternative explanations made by the skeptics are unsatisfactory based on the witness of the gospel writers, the nature and number of the witnesses, and the historical impact.

The authors conclude by saying the Christian faith is reasonable, not blind. Christians can read and trust that their Bibles contain the story that God wanted told.

Truth in a Culture of Doubt takes the items discussed in *Truth Matters* and addresses each major contention of Ehrman by breaking it down into a multipoint

claim. The authors then examine each individual claim and address it by providing evidence that discredit the various claims of Ehrman. Because the essential high-level points being discussed so closely correlate to the material in *Truth Matters*, the material presented in *Truth in a Culture of Doubt* often appears a second time. The positive is that this allows both books to stand alone in their defenses. The drawback to this approach is that the reader is reading large sections of text that exist in the other book.

Readers should be aware that the amount of overlap between the two books is substantial and that it may have been better to connect these two titles in a more intentional way than just leading off with the word "Truth." *Truth in a Culture of Doubt* is largely a repackaged *Truth Matters* for those who prefer and desire the more formal, yet highly readable argument. Whereas *Truth Matters* appeals to a general audience, *Truth in a Culture of Doubt* is better suited for those who want a closer look at Ehrman's claims. My suggestion to any potential reader is to determine which approach appeals to you more and read that one.

Paul A. Golata

Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***Christian Bioethics: A Guide for Pastors, Health Care Professionals, and Families.* By C. Ben Mitchell and D. Joy Reily. B&H Studies in Christian Ethics. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2014. 207 pages. Paperback, \$24.99.**

As American society progresses technologically, one of the areas affected greatly is the world of medicine. This progress has not only opened new doors to helping humankind but has also raised new questions about the interface of humanity with technology. As result, the issue of bioethics has become a serious concern not only for society at large but also for the church. Wanting to provide a guide for pastors and lay people, C. Ben Mitchell and D. Joy Riley attempt to expound upon the issues that Christianity now faces regarding bioethics.

Their book consists of three sections: taking life, making life, and remaking life. These sections represent the major categories of issues that bioethics has raised. Before looking at the issues, the authors ask what kind of doctor physicians should be since there is no universal ethical oath required for physicians (12, 16–17). Rejecting the notion that physicians are to be parent, warrior, or technician, the authors settle on the concept of trust as necessary to maintain a proper physician–patient relationship (20–21). Further, they argue that the Bible is the canonical revelation of divine commands and Christian virtues. It needs to be interpreted correctly using the right context and background in order to shed light on biomedical issues (31).

From here, the authors delve into the issues that face society and the church today. As a result, they derive certain biblical and ethical principles to shape a Christian bioethics. First, life is sacred since it is in the image of God. It is to always be respected no matter the circumstances (see discussions on abortion and human cloning, 54–55, 165). Second, death is the enemy of the Christian; however, we must learn to die well. Christian virtues give people a means by which to face death and ultimately to accept it because of what lies beyond. These virtues free people from fear, anger, and anxiety so that they can let go (100–03). Third, technologies that enhance life and facilitate conception are not in themselves bad but require great responsibility. We must always respect life as well as the nuclear family that God has designed. Further, people should be willing to accept the will of God as it pertains to these matters instead of trying to take control themselves (122–26). Lastly, aging is

not something to be hated and removed but celebrated. It is the evidence of a well-lived life full of wisdom instead of a life of perpetual youthful childishness (179–80).

Mitchell and Riley's book does a good job of outlining the major issues of bioethics while providing some Scriptural background to help Christians think carefully about these issues. It is very easy to read and understand. Where the book tends to fall short is that it does not delve too deeply into the issues. Most of the book involves historical outlays of the issues and tends to be general rather than specific in regards to dealing practically with the issues. Many people will want to find answers to the hard questions of bioethics, such as whether or not abortion is permissible when the mother's life is in danger or whether or not one may "pull the plug" on a dying relative. Unfortunately, this book does not deal with those issues or other hard questions that pastors and laypeople are likely to face. The authors wrote the book in a style which they hoped would invoke thought rather than provide hard-and-fast answers on every issue. As a result, it is likely to disappoint readers who are looking for such answers as well as more practical guidance on these issues. This concern ultimately raises questions as to how helpful the book will actually be as a guide to pastors and lay people.

Subsequently, Mitchell and Riley's book serves more as a basic introduction to Christian thought on bioethical issues rather than as a full-fledged guide. It opens the mind to the subject of bioethics and the Christian response but does not necessarily fill it with substance. This book is best paired with a more substantial book on the subject that will provide more concrete answers and guidance on the issues.

Graham Floyd

Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

Studies in Preaching and Pastoral Ministry

***Organizational Leadership: Foundations and Practices for Christians.* Edited by John S. Burns, John R. Shoup, and Donald C. Simmons, Jr. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2014. 287 pages. Paperback, \$26.00.**

This book is designed to address the issue of leadership from a Christian worldview. The editors have compiled articles around five key themes: communication, negotiation, decision-making, financial stewardship, and personal development. The authors attempt to outline principles for individuals seeking to "conduct leadership from all kinds of formal and informal positions in organizations" (9).

The book is organized around 3 sections: theological foundations, theoretical foundations, and key skills and practices. The first section addresses the calling to leadership. The first chapter is foundational to the entire work. In it, the author outlines primary and secondary callings of God. He emphasizes the need for a genuine relationship with the Lord and also shows the value of all work as part of the calling to God. He talks about how to discern one's calling of God and concludes with some general character traits necessary for leadership. The other two chapters in this section address some general principles on a Christian worldview and the theological foundations of leadership.

The second section addresses theoretical foundations for Christian leadership. The first chapter in this section is a complex extended metaphor on leadership theories that have been proposed throughout history. The other chapter in this section conveys the general principle of faith informing our life journey.

The final section is a detailed look at the five selected key themes related to Christian leadership. While the importance of these themes is obvious and well-supported, an explanation for the selection these themes as opposed to others would have strengthened this section. Additionally, while the general principles related to them are addressed, it would have been helpful here to more specifically address: how the Bible influences our communication, biblical principles for conflict and negotiation, how our Christian faith informs our decision making, how God's Word teaches financial stewardship, and how spiritual disciplines impact our personal development.

The book is an interesting read and establishes a worthy goal of leading according to biblical principles. At times, the book overcomplicates somewhat simple truths, while at other times left this reader wishing for more practical, biblical tips for organizational leaders. The section on theological foundations would be a beneficial read for anyone interested in leading according to God's truth.

Deron J. Biles

Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***Re:Vision: The Key to Transforming Your Church.* By Aubrey Malphurs and Gordon E. Penfold. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014. 288 pages. Hardcover, \$19.99.**

Aubrey Malphurs is Senior Professor of Educational Ministries and Leadership and Pastoral Ministry at Dallas Theological Seminary. He is the founder and president of the Malphurs Group and is a trainer and consultant to churches, denominations, and ministry organizations throughout North America and Europe. Gordon Penfold currently is lead pastor of First Baptist Church in Holyoke, Colorado. He is the director of Fresh Start Ministries, which focuses on bringing health and vitality to plateaued, declining, and conflicted congregations.

Re:Vision is a book of pastoral theology that focuses on practical aspects of leadership and is intended to renew local churches. While David Platt's *Radical Together: Unleashing the People of God for the Purpose of God* (Multnomah Books: 2011) asks the church to unite around a gospel-centered vision, the authors of this work, in the wake of the majority of individual churches in a state of plateau or decline, provide a rationale to call pastors to re-envision (revitalize) their churches.

The book is divided into three parts. The first part prepares readers by introducing them to the need of having a vision for the future of their church. The authors examine the current state of pastoral leadership and articulate what re-envisioning pastoral leadership should look like. Placing the Bible at the center of this process allows leadership to examine themselves in their own personal design by God, the direction that the church is currently headed and possible plans for the future. The leader's temperament and character are vital for the carrying out the church's vision. The process of discovery is evaluated in part two. This process articulates the results of what the authors have found to be common critical and successful characteristics found with re-envisioning pastors. They encourage the pastor to examine whether he is indeed a re-envisioning pastor or not. If he is not a re-envisioning pastor, he is then asked to reflect if he can become one, or if he should even attempt to try based upon his unique gifting and talents. The final section of the book tells how one should embrace being a re-envisioning pastor and cast a clear and compelling vision for the church. Leadership is exemplified by the ability to influence and impact the church's unique DNA that has provided its culture. Bringing in a coach or mentor allows the re-envisioning pastor the opportunity to

obtain great leverage by learning from another. The book closes by showing how all these lessons can be applied. A wide assortment of appendixes gives the readers a starting point for beginning the process within their local churches.

The authors' key idea in the work is that visionary leadership is a key to healthy churches in general and specifically in re-envisioning churches. Leadership is all about influence. They recognize that vision most often is effectively cast by leaders that have a strong propensity to move the status quo forward in two key areas: by capturing the hearts and minds of people through defining and articulating a clear and exciting picture of God's future for the church, and by focusing on creating a culture that wants to move towards and accomplish this vision.

The theological and biblical basis for doing so is both solid and secure. God's desire for the nation of Israel and His people was that they would always follow God. Throughout history God provided leaders with His specific vision to deliver to the people to help accomplish their great task. With the establishment of the New Testament church, the call was now placed upon the church leaders to spread the gospel throughout the world.

The authors achieved their objective in providing a resource to aid and transform local churches by offering practical criteria and approaches for moving from lifelessness toward vitality and flourishing.

The strength of this effort is that it articulates a simple, coherent, and unified approach for church leaders to use both (a) to encourage people in leadership and (b) to enable strategic planning for the future. A possible caution for readers of this work is that it may appear to some readers to be too reductionistic.

This book is targeted at pastors, elders, deacons, and lay leaders. It is easy to read. There is appropriate biblical connection to the topics woven throughout the book.

I encourage pastors and lay leaders to pick up this book and read it. The church is the embassy of the kingdom of God and must carry on this work as ambassadors of our King, Jesus Christ. The most important work of evangelizing the world and making disciples requires us to re-envision the current state of the church and lead it so that a lost and hurting world comes into contact and establishes a relationship with our King.

Paul A. Golata

Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***For the Glory of God: Recovering a Biblical Theology of Worship.* By Daniel I. Block. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014. 432 pages. Hardcover, \$36.99.**

If you are called of God to a ministry position in the local church, this is a book that you should read. The strength of the book is the author's thorough and balanced treatment of Scripture. But it is not merely a book for theologians. Instead, its value is as wide as its subject.

In the Introduction, Block outlines the need for the book by recounting an episode from his own experience that perhaps has often been repeated in churches around the world. He told of a music minister in a worship service making the statement, "Now, before we continue our worship, let me read a passage from Colossians 3" (xi). The clear implication was that Scripture reading and hearing was separate from the worship activity of the church. It is this kind of miscommunication, or worse, misunderstanding of worship that occasions this book. Instead, Block

presents a clear, Scripture-intensive, and comprehensive view of what worship is and how God intends it to function in our lives.

The book is divided into 13 chapters with a target audience of church groups and seminary classrooms (xiv). Each chapter addresses a critical aspect of worship and concludes with a practical application for the local church. But rather than simply giving suggestions from his experience, he crafts his application based on his treatment of the biblical text. Block must think in list form. The book is replete with frequent and helpful outlines that provide structure for the content.

The author begins by explaining what worship is. He proposes the following definition: "True worship involves reverential human acts of submission and homage before the divine Sovereign in response to his gracious revelation of himself and in accord with his will" (23). Block is not content to allow the mere performance of religious activities to be confused with worship. Even what is often thought of as religious music, if it does not direct our focus to the Lord and bring honor alone to him may become merely "jingles that borrow biblical phrases but are little more than sound bites empty of biblical meaning to many who sing them" (170).

Block brings his Old Testament background and expertise to bear in this project. But while the Old Testament is prominent, it is by no means the only focus of the book. Instead, the author through careful interaction with the Greek and Hebrew and thorough interaction with the whole of Scripture presents a picture of worship in the Old Testament (or as he describes it, "the First Testament") and the New Testament as complementary and supportive of each other. Block affirms that "Jesus does not declare old theology obsolete; rather, in him the theology underlying Israelite worship finds its fulfillment" (7).

Infused with Scripture, the book depicts worship as part of our daily lives, family life, and work, in addition to the normal corporate gatherings. Next, the author discusses the ordinances, the preaching and hearing of Scripture, prayer, music, sacrifices and offerings, drama, space, and leaders in worship.

Block suggests that even though the Bible does not prescribe a form of worship (6), neither are we free to worship as we please or to expect that our casual cultic expressions are necessarily or automatically acceptable to God (78). Instead, he wants us to see worship as an expression of the whole life and not merely a cultic ritual (81). He asserts that "God is not obligated to accept the worship of those whose hearts are hardened towards him and who live contrary to his will" (62).

On the whole, the book is a worthy read for all believers to study and enjoy. Many sections stand out, but the chapter on "Family Life and Work as Worship" is worth the price of the book. Parents and pastors should read and apply these lessons in our families and churches.

The book is a call to genuine, God-focused, Christ-honoring, Bible-affirming worship. His call is timely and needed. May its plea be heard.

Deron J. Biles
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

