

Book Reviews

Richard J. CHEROK. *Debating for God: Alexander Campbell's Challenge to Skepticism in Antebellum America*. Abilene, TX: Abilene Christian University Press, 2008. 224 pp. \$34.95.

Cherok sets out to draw his readers' attention to the fact that Alexander Campbell was "the most significant Christian apologist of America's antebellum period." This is necessary because Campbell's role as an apologist has been largely overlooked and deserves to be made evident. In the process of doing this, Cherok hopes that his readers will draw inspiration from Campbell's example of "contending earnestly for the faith." On both counts, Cherok has quite successfully accomplished his goals.

In the first two chapters, Cherok provides the religious, sociological, and philosophical framework for his thesis. Chapter one describes the religious culture of antebellum America, noting that Deism and skepticism had a widespread influence upon America, especially before the Second Great Awakening (c. 1800), but that it also experienced a resurgence in the 1820s. In addition, debating was a popular form of "entertainment" or "edification" at this time, though Campbell was reluctant, at first, to engage in it, probably out of deference to his more irenic father.

Chapter two focuses on the philosophical underpinnings of Campbell's thought. Via the influence of his father, Thomas Campbell, and the University of Glasgow, Alexander accepted and adopted (with certain modifications) Enlightenment principles derived from Bacon, Locke, and the Scottish Common Sense School of philosophy. Campbell would thus employ these weapons of reason in the defense of "revealed religion" (the Bible). Cherok astutely notes that while Enlightenment principles were often used *against* the Christian faith, Campbell "surprised" his skeptical adversaries by employing their own principles against them in defense of the faith.

The remaining chapters bring the reader to the heart of the matter—the various confrontations that Campbell had with the skeptics. Some of these confrontations were face-to-face in public and formal debate, while others were conducted only in print. Campbell's first public contact came by way of a letter from a skeptic who only signed it "D." It was printed in Campbell's religious periodical, the *Christian Baptist*, in 1826.

Much consideration, appropriately so, is devoted to Campbell's famous debate with the most infamous skeptic of the day, Robert Owen. Cherok traces Owen's arrival on the American scene and his attempt to establish and maintain a utopian community in Indiana, known as New Harmony, according to economic and sociological principles he had been advocating and employing previously in Scotland. In general terms, Owen propounded a trinity of evils that needed to be eradicated before a perfect community could be established. These were private ownership of property, individual marriage, and religion. Of course, included in "religion" was the Christian faith.

Owen was not reticent about espousing his views. In fact, he traveled about the country on lecture tours, trying to convince the public of his social program. In the process, he challenged clergy to debate, claiming in no uncertain terms that all existing religions promote superstitions, bigotry, hypocrisy, hatred, revenge, and wars; that they are the real source of vice, disunion, and misery of every description; and that they have been founded on the ignorance of mankind. Campbell took up the challenge.

During the Campbell-Owen debate, held in Cincinnati in 1829, Owen's primary strategy was to propound his twelve "fundamental laws of human nature," and then keep reverting to them. Essentially, Owen said that human beings are environmentally determined and that people of faith only believe because they have been programmed to do so by their circumstances. Campbell noted that since Owen had escaped the "chains" of his upbringing as an Episcopalian, might not others? Campbell kept trying to get Owen to address the previously agreed upon five propositions, but without success. Finally, Campbell got permission from Owen to give positive support for the Christian faith, and he did so for twelve hours. Cheroke provides the aftermath of the debate, and how a variety of sources viewed it.

One might have thought that since the champion of skepticism had done battle with Campbell, that not much else could be said. But Cheroke continues by showing that Campbell's war against skepticism was not completely over. Subsequent chapters detail this continuation in clashes of Campbell with Humphrey Marshall, Samuel Underhill, Charles Cassedy, Dolphus Skinner, and Jesse Ferguson. The final chapter summarizes Campbell's accomplishments as a debater against skeptics, and notes in passing, that Campbell also argued against Mormonism, Transcendentalism, unconverted Jews, and additional freethinkers. "Appendix A" lists Robert Owen's "Twelve Fundamental Laws of Human Nature," and "Appendix B" reproduces Underhill's published letters against Campbell.

Cheroke's work does not evince many weaknesses, and none that are significant. There are a smattering of typos, and one confusing paragraph in "Appendix B" that appears to be typographic. There are potentially misleading subtitles, such as "A Lover of Just Reasoning," "A Contradiction Examined," and "Campbell Refuted." The latter will serve to illustrate: Campbell was not *actually* refuted; instead the subtitle refers to the abbreviated name of a booklet that Samuel Underhill produced. Some of the more conservative segments of Restoration Movement heritage may be uncomfortable with Cheroke's use (though infrequent) of "Campbellite," such as when he refers to Jesse Ferguson as a "Campbellite defector." Lastly, Campbell eventually met Underhill in a relatively abbreviated face-to-face public debate wherein he spoke about miracles for an hour and twenty-five minutes. After Underhill responded for about the same amount of time, Campbell said that Underhill had not addressed Campbell's "only positive argument" that he "offered during the discussion." We are left wondering what that "only positive argument" was. An endnote, if nothing else, would have been helpful.

It is a pleasure to acknowledge many of the strengths of this fine work by Cheroke. There is sufficient but not overwhelming or tedious, citing of original source material, providing the reader with confidence that Campbell and his oppo-

nents have been fairly represented. The addition of Campbell's encounters with skeptics besides Robert Owen is invaluable in not only demonstrating the extent of Campbell's apologetic labors but also in revealing the magnitude of skepticism after its revival that began in the 1820s. Concerning the skeptics themselves, Cherok does not leave us hanging, but traces out their careers after their encounters with Campbell. And the variety of their life experiences makes for intriguing reading as well. Cherok's style makes his book appropriate for a wide and even popular audience, yet the content also lends itself to higher academia.

Richard Cherok has accomplished what he set out to do—give Alexander Campbell the recognition he deserves as the leading apologist in the first half of the nineteenth century. He has done so in a persuasive and compelling manner. This work thus merits an extensive readership, not only in the lower and higher reaches of academia, but also among the adults in our churches. There are yet enduring principles and insights for “defending the faith” promulgated by Campbell, and many of these have been culled and presented in this helpful work.

BOB RITCHIE

Associate Professor of History
Florida Christian College

Garth M. ROSELL. *The Surprising Work of God: Harold John Ockenga, Billy Graham, and the Rebirth of Evangelicalism.* Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008. 268 pp. \$19.99.

In the current volume, Rosell sets out to tell “the story of those remarkable individuals and those amazing years” in which a mid-twentieth-century spiritual awakening came to life in America and soon became a worldwide Christian revival (16). The development of American neo-evangelicalism, Rosell argues, was a reemergence of the evangelical movement that had its origin “in the great religious revivals that swept across England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales, and, most especially, the American colonies during the eighteenth century” (21). The “five distinctive threads of historic evangelicalism,” he explains, were “forged in the revival fires of the Great Awakening” and defined by Jonathan Edwards as “the centrality of Christ’s atoning work on the cross, the essential experience of religious conversion, the foundational authority of the Bible, the importance of spreading the gospel, and the possibility of individual and corporate renewal” (35).

Rosell’s portrayal of the twentieth century’s New Evangelicalism relies heavily upon the life and ministry of Harold John Ockenga. As minister of the historic Park Street Church in Boston, Ockenga led the charge for the development of the National Association of Evangelicals in 1942 and backed the youth revivals of the 1940s that were led by Billy Graham, Merv Rosell (the author’s father), and a host of other evangelists. “With rare exception,” the author notes, “the cities with the strongest Youth for Christ presence in the 1940s became the cities most deeply touched by the revivals of the 1950s” (111).

Though Ockenga and the leaders of the NAE prayed for a revival from the inception of their organization, the arrival of the awakening in late 1949 “seemed to burst on the scene as a surprise to everyone” (127). Beginning in the fall of

1949, Billy Graham held his famous Los Angeles tent revival that attracted over 350,000 people. Ockenga then invited Graham to Boston for a New Year's Eve rally that exceeded his every expectation. What happened in the Boston revival, Ockenga and others were convinced, "was nothing short of the kind of 'surprising work of God' that had come to New England two centuries earlier under the ministry of George Whitefield and Jonathan Edwards" (134). The Los Angeles and Boston crusades, the author contends, "seemed to portend the beginning of a new era of evangelism" (149).

As the evangelical awakening gained momentum in the United States, Ockenga encouraged Graham to take the revival throughout the world and to expand its reach to mainline Protestantism and Roman Catholicism. Ockenga also had his hand in the founding and leadership of Fuller Theological Seminary, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (though Rosell provides little coverage of Ockenga's work with Gordon-Conwell), and *Christianity Today*.

Rosell's examination of Ockenga's life and influence on the evangelical movement's growth and worldwide advancement is both insightful and engaging. His use of notes, letters, and other materials left behind by Ockenga brings an insider's perspective to the mid-century evangelicals that could not be gained otherwise. Rosell clearly demonstrates that Ockenga was a pivotal player in the resurgence of the neo-evangelicals, and his use of Ockenga as the window through which he views the twentieth-century awakening is commendable. Nevertheless, a slight weakness of this book is its propensity to overlook the contributions of others. Rosell goes to great lengths to recognize other contributors to the evangelical revival, but he occasionally fails to be as laudatory of their involvement as he is of Ockenga's.

Minor complaints aside, this book ranks alongside of Joel Carpenter's *Revive Us Again: The Reawakening of American Fundamentalism* and George Marsden's *Reforming Fundamentalism: Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism*. It is an excellent book for the classroom and a must-read for anyone interested in twentieth-century evangelical Protestantism.

RICHARD J. CHEROK
Professor of Church History
Cincinnati Christian University

Barry HANKINS. *American Evangelicals: A Contemporary History of a Mainstream Religious Movement.* New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008. 204 pp. \$18.96.

In this "history" Barry Hankins offers a cogent apologetic for the place of evangelicals in mainstream America. Reacting to the secular media's attempt to marginalize the so-called "Christian Right," Hankins argues that evangelicalism's strident voices "represent only a small fraction of one of America's two largest religious subcultures" (ix). The other is Roman Catholicism. To support his claim, he identifies a number of controversial issues, shows where they started, and how a variety of positions developed within Evangelicalism over time. His purpose overall is to demonstrate that evangelicals are far more complex and diverse than expected (ix).

When all is said and done, Hankins wants his readers to realize that Evangelicals are simply not much different than other Americans (187) and thus deserve a place in the American public square.

On the whole, Hankins clearly makes his case. Hankins is part of the evangelical world himself serving as a professor of history and church-state studies at Baylor University. On the one hand some would say he writes from an Evangelical bias. Perhaps so, but he attempts to present his case honestly and gives a decent survey of various evangelical perspectives arriving at a balanced presentation based on his worldview. On the other hand, his work in church-state studies fits him for this apologetic approach as he makes his case for the place of evangelicalism in the American fabric.

As noted, Hankins gives a fairly balanced historical presentation of evangelicalism from fundamentalism in its heyday on the extreme right to Neo-evangelicals on the left. He defines evangelicalism using four essential characteristics identified by David Bebbington, *The Dominance of Evangelicalism* (InterVarsity, 2005, 22-23), an English scholar. These characteristics are (1) Biblicism, (2) crucicentrism, (3) conversionism, and (4) activism. In spite of numerous differences found in various strands of Evangelicalism, Hankins returns to these characteristics for support. Because he established this foundation, he can argue that evangelicals are not monolithic in their thinking and portray a wide range of opinion on issues ranging from science, relationships of gender, race, and gay rights, to equality and the political marketplace.

The only weaknesses in the book are seen in Hankins's tendency to write in broad generalities at times, a few historical questions, and his sources. It is obvious, for example, that Hankins is unfamiliar with the Stone-Campbell Restoration Movement in spite of the fact that he names Barton W. Stone in his chapter on "Awakenings and the Beginnings of American Evangelicalism." It was amusing, for example, to read his statement that Stone was a protégé of the frontier evangelist, James McGready. Stone heard McGready preach as a young man rejecting his "hell-fire and damnation" approach. It is also true that Stone traveled to Logan County, Kentucky, to observe a camp meeting underway there prior to the famous Cane Ridge Meeting. Those facts hardly make Stone a protégé of McGready.

Another historical question surfaces in his dating of the Second Great Awakening. He dates the beginning of this Awakening with the Cane Ridge Meeting. Most historians identify the beginning with Timothy Dwight in the late 1700s and see Cane Ridge as the last great frontier revival at the end of the Awakening. These two notes may seem picky. Admittedly they don't damage Hankins' overall purpose or argument, but they do raise questions about whether or not he got all of his facts straight.

The third area of concern is his use of sources. At no time does he cite original documents, relying instead completely on secondary sources. This fact alone would weaken his case among historians. Yet Hankins is using history as an apologetic. His purpose is not to present an overall portrait of evangelical development. Rather, he is arguing that it is difficult to pigeonhole evangelicals; yet his attempts to do so present this religious subculture inaccurately.

Those who wish to gain a better picture of evangelical presence in American culture would do well to at least browse this book.

MICHAEL HINES

Online History Instructor

Consortium of Christian Colleges for Distance Learning

Camille K. LEWIS. *Romancing the Difference: Kenneth Burke, Bob Jones University, and the Rhetoric of Religious Fundamentalism.* *Studies in Rhetoric and Religion* 4. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2007. 205 pp. \$39.95.

I found this book both useful and enjoyable but perhaps not for the reasons that the author might have intended. Camille K. Lewis was chairman of the Department of Rhetoric and Public Address at Bob Jones University (BJU) when this book was published. She thus presumably wrote as an insider when she dealt with BJU and its use of the “rhetoric of religious fundamentalism.” She generally remains objective and does not present a biased view of the role that BJU has played in some of the political controversies of the past few decades. However, in doing some online research to find out more about her background, I learned that the publication of this book caused a furor at Bob Jones University that led to Professor Lewis and her husband leaving the school.

Although Lewis is writing as a communications scholar primarily for others in that field, the volume is valuable as a contribution to a more general understanding of late 20th-century American fundamentalism and as a discussion of the broad debate about the proper role of religious discourse in the public arena. Few could quarrel with the observations with which Lewis frames her arguments in the preface: that sectarian religious discourse often makes more secular-minded scholars and pundits “uncomfortable.” As Lewis notes, ardent religious interests are “frequently ignored, often bracketed out, rarely accommodated, and habitually misunderstood” by scholars, commentators, and the general public (xi). Lewis argues that it is necessary to “create a new workable vocabulary to understand religious sectarian rhetoric,” and she seeks to do so by building on the concepts of tragedy and comedy, taken from the work of noted communications scholar Kenneth Burke. But Lewis suggests adding a third frame of reference—that of romance (xii). While the outsider might well view the fundamentalist rhetorician through the comic or tragic frame, Lewis argues that these fundamentalist spokespersons should be seen as seeking to “romance” their opponents. The fundamentalist seeks to woo the outsider, to ultimately win them to acceptance of the Christian gospel. Thus, while well aware that they function as opponents with the secular-minded in public discourse, fundamentalists seek to court their opponents.

Lewis seeks to show how BJU has courted the secular public by examining the school’s history, its surprisingly rich and sophisticated collection of religious art, its community outreach, the role it played in the 2000 presidential campaign, and its response to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Throughout the book, she makes a credible case for the legitimacy of this third approach. Historians might profit from looking at this concept of romance as they study the interaction of fun-

damentalists and other religious sectarians with the secular society around them. Many scholars have stressed the theme of separation, but since fundamentalists often wish to evangelize the world around them, Lewis is correct in viewing them as being involved in “wooing” or “courting” their rhetorical opponents. Scholars within the Stone-Campbell tradition can draw their own conclusions as to how this theme might be identified in the rhetoric of some of the more sectarian and separatist leaders throughout our movement’s history. Readers of *SCJ* might be interested to note that the late Michael Casey, who taught in the communications program at Pepperdine University, was one of the editors of the series of which this book is a part.

MARK S. JOY

Professor and Chair, Department of History and Political Science
Jamestown College

Thomas S. KIDD. *American Christians and Islam: Evangelical Culture and Muslims from the Colonial Period to the Age of Terrorism.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008. 224 pp. \$29.95.

Kidd adapts Edward Said’s “Orientalist thesis” and claims “that American Christians’ views about Islam usually divulge more about American Christians than about any actual Muslims” (xii). Thus, most of Kidd’s book focuses on how American Christians have come to understand Islam through the various interpretations made by other American Christians and not through any actual interaction with Muslims. The result is an impressive, well-researched, and timely book that traces the history of American Christians’ attitudes about Islam through the course of American Christian history.

The book identifies three historical trajectories that have been a part of American Christianity’s relationship with Islam. These three trajectories are: a history of misinformation by American Christians about Muslims in written documents and preached sermons; a history of failed evangelism by American Christians toward Muslims both in the Middle East and in the United States; and a history of misguided eschatological interpretations by American Christians about Islam and its role in the last days.

The first trajectory of misinformation about Muslims begins in the eighteenth century when stories of “Barbary” pirates in North Africa reached Americans’ bookshelves. These stories claimed that atrocities were being committed against Christian sailors. During this period, sermons were also preached that portrayed Muslims in a negative light (chapters 1–2). According to Kidd, attitudes toward Islam continued to be shaped by these early polemics.

The second trajectory of failed evangelism begins in the nineteenth century when Christians began to send missionaries to the Middle East in hopes of converting Muslims (chapters 3–4). According to Kidd, the restrictions against proselytizing and minimal resources doomed those early missionary efforts. However, Kidd notes that American Christians were still able to read enough conversion stories to encourage further missionary efforts and convince American Christians of their own “cultural and religious superiority” (57). When the number of Muslims

started to grow in America in the twentieth century, American Christians tried to evangelize them also, and while some aimed for peace, others verbally assaulted Muslims in America (chapter 6). As the twentieth century progressed, missionary efforts to the Middle East did as well; missionaries began to use contextualization and technology to try to reach Muslims (chapter 7).

The third trajectory of misguided eschatological interpretations begins in the early National Period when prophecy writers began to cast Islam as a threatening religion that was destined to be overthrown in the last days (chapter 2). After the missionary efforts of the nineteenth century, World War I, and the Balfour Declaration of 1917 shaped eschatological assumptions in the twentieth century (chapter 4). The Arab-Israeli Conflict only added to eschatological assumptions, which were antagonistic towards Muslims and often shaped by a dispensational pre-millennial interpretation of history (chapter 5). Conflicts like the Six Days War and the Yom Kippur War, as well as the Iranian Revolution, were often interpreted in light of the dispensational expectations of some American Christians. However, Kidd notes that many Christians cautioned against the use of such dispensational lenses for interpreting world events, especially when trying to evangelize to Muslims (chapter 7). Kidd displays how anti-Islamic rhetoric has become louder after September 11, 2001, and how dispensational premillennialists have again and again cited Islam as a key to Christian eschatology (chapter 8).

The book's Epilogue includes several thoughtful reflections by the author about the relationship between American Christians and Islam in the twenty-first century; Kidd advocates an Augustinian "city of God and . . . earthly city" approach to the relationship (167). That is, Kidd suggests that Christians must remember their citizenship in the kingdom of God and witness its truth peaceably. His final suggestions are especially helpful, saying that Christians should "take Muslims seriously, minimize or eliminate . . . offensive language, highlight cultural commonalities, and refuse to indulge in sensational stories" about the nature of Islam (169). Instead, Christians must remember that they are citizens of the "city of God" and allow that citizenship to shape their lives and interactions with Muslims.

This book's strength is as an academic, historical account of American Christianity's interpretation of Islam. As a result, one weakness is that it assumes the reader's familiarity with Islam and American church history. Its academic nature may cause it to be somewhat less accessible to some. As it is though, this book would be very valuable to any upper-level undergraduate or graduate course. This book is a needed addition to the history of American Christianity, and both the academy and the church will do well to read and reflect upon it.

CRAIG D. KATZENMILLER
Lipscomb University

Antony FLEW and Roy Abraham VARGHESE. *There Is a God: How the World's Most Notorious Atheist Changed His Mind.* New York: HarperOne, 2008. 222 pp. \$14.95.

Amid the recent opposition to theism that has been loudly trumpeted from the so-called "New Atheists"—Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens, Sam Harris, et

al.—one might be surprised to learn that the foremost atheistic thinker of the past half century has renounced his disbelief in God and joined the ranks of the theists. Antony Flew, a distinguished philosopher and, as the book's subtitle claims, "the world's most notorious atheist," announced in 2004 that after more than sixty years as an atheist, he has changed his mind about the existence of God. To explain this thought reversal, Flew, accompanied by Roy Abraham Varghese, has published this semiautobiographical examination of his life and changing ideas.

Following Varghese's examination of Flew's ideas and significance to modern atheism, Flew describes his childhood as the son of a Methodist minister and his rejection of theism by the age of fifteen. The "problem of evil," he explains, with specific reference to the Nazi treatment of the Jews in World War II, was a primary reason for his "conversion to atheism." This decision, he writes, was made "much too quickly, much too easily, and for what later seemed to me the wrong reasons" (12-13).

As a student, and later an instructor, at Oxford University, Flew regularly attended the Socratic Club over which C.S. Lewis presided from 1942 to 1954. Lewis regularly encouraged the club members to pursue Socrates' exhortation to "follow the argument wherever it leads" (23). Apparently Lewis's refrain had an impact on Flew, who repeated the Socratic phrase throughout this book and concluded that he "followed the argument where it has led" in his "discovery of the Divine" (155).

Throughout this book, Flew explores many of the philosophical arguments opposed to theism and the reasons why he now rejects them. The primary cause for his refutation of atheism, Flew writes, "is the world picture . . . that has emerged from modern science" (88). Modern science, he insists, has "built a philosophically compelling vision of a rational universe that sprang from a divine Mind" (91). Moreover, he explains, "three domains of scientific inquiry" have been most influential in his denunciation of atheism: (1) the source of the laws of nature; (2) the development of life from nonlife; and (3) the origin of the universe (91). Flew goes on to contend that "philosopher David Conway's argument for God's existence in his book *The Recovery of Wisdom: From Here to Antiquity in Quest of Sophia* [David Conway, *The Rediscovery of Wisdom*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000] was equally influential in his acceptance of theism" (92).

While Flew's conversion to theism is a watershed event in the modern exploration of ultimate reality, it should be noted that he makes it abundantly clear that he has not become a Christian, does not expect to have an eternal life, and is uncertain about the possibility of special revelation (2). Nevertheless, Flew includes an appendix to the book in which N.T. Wright discusses "The Self-Revelation of God in Human History" and contends that "the Christian Religion is the one religion that most clearly deserves to be honored and respected whether or not its claim to be a divine revelation is true" (185). Moreover he insists, "no other religion enjoys anything like the combination of a charismatic figure like Jesus and a first-class intellectual like St. Paul. If you're wanting omnipotence to set up a religion, it seems to me that this is the one to beat!" (157).

Flew is open, fair, honest, and thoughtful in presenting the atheist's perspectives—perspectives to which he once adhered—and his challenges to these ideas.

Though some of the concepts he discusses are rather complex, Flew makes a concerted effort to simplify his discussion and clarify the reasons for his newfound theistic views. Overall, this is an exceptional book for students of Christian apologetics.

RICHARD J. CHEROK
Associate Professor of Church History
Cincinnati Christian University

Thomas C. ODEN. *How Africa Shaped the Christian Mind: Rediscovering the African Seedbed of Western Christianity.* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2008. 168 pp. \$19.00.

This is an exciting book with one message, generously documented and passionately written. It was conceived as the pilot project of *The Center for Early African Christianity* (CEAC), of which Oden is the director (<http://earlyafricanchristianity.com/>). The Center in general and the book in particular take on the portrayal of Africa as a continent that has always been at the receiving end of Christian teaching. Oden argues that Africans had an essential contribution to Christianity in its formative stages and that the flow of intellectual and spiritual treasures was often from south to north.

The body of the book consists of two parts. The first part (chapters 1–5), “The African Seedbed of Western Christianity,” argues that from the beginning Africa has contributed substantially to the formation and spread of Christianity. Oden claims that in the first five centuries of Christianity, “significant transfer of intellectual strength and creativity” has come from Africa to Europe (59). He argues convincingly that many of the pillars of western Christianity were conceived and shaped in Africa: universities and scholarship, Bible translation and exegesis, conciliar decision making, formulation of dogma, ecumenical awareness, spiritual formation and monasticism, all of these key elements were born and nurtured on African soil. Great intellects like Tertullian, Origen, Lactantius, Athanasius, Victorinus, Augustine, and Cyril were genuinely African, “not just in a geographical sense but in spirit and temperament” (62). More than anywhere else the blood of martyrs was shed in Africa and became the seed of the church. Oden mentions Mark, the twelve martyrs of Scilli, Felicitas and Perpetua, Cyprian, who were just a few among many who died for their faith in Africa.

After making his point in part one of the book, Oden unfolds a program in his second part (chapters 6–9), “African Orthodox Recovery,” that offers a way to go from here after centuries of neglect. He insists on the urgency of such a program. Indicators suggest that “there may be a short-term window of opportunity for African Christians to recover their classical African past.” These are: (1) “Rapid numerical expansion of Christianity”; (2) “a new hunger for intellectual depth”; (3) “the perceived might of the Muslim world, coupled with the exhaustion of modern Western intellectual alternatives” (101). What then is the challenge and the assignment? Key texts of early African Christian teaching must be translated and distributed (143), historians and linguists must be trained and engaged for the task, and African theologians must be made aware of Africa’s rich tradition of patristic sources. Especially in the first appendix, “The Challenges of Early African

Research” (143-155), the program of CEAC is spelled out. “Africa is now poised to rediscover its own history, its deeper identity and its renewed vocation within world history” (124), and RCEC is eager to assist in making this happen.

The book reads pleasantly from beginning to end. Oden is unmistakably well informed, but he has chosen not to bother the reader with endless footnotes or acknowledgement of sources otherwise. This is not an academic treatise; it is an eye opener and a plea. Hardly any data in the book are debatable, they are just nicely presented to bring the message home. A bibliography of 119 relevant titles at the end of his book shows the reader where to go for further reference.

One major flaw that seriously weakens Oden’s claims: Almost the entire book is about North Africa and the Nile Valley. In fact a better title would have been *How Northern Africa Shaped the Christian Mind*. Oden has done his best to answer this objection but fails to convince. It is hard to see how any of the data and arguments could apply to sub-Saharan Africa. I hope the CEAC home page will at least address this reservation.

The marketing style of the book at times is irritating. Oden is unquestionably exaggerating. It is best, as I decided, to take this as intrinsic to the genre of this work and to enjoy his animated appeal.

GIE VLEUGELS

Professor of New Testament and Early Christianity
Evangelische Theologische Faculteit, Leuven, Belgium

Jeff VINES. *Dinner with Skeptics: Defending God in a World That Makes No Sense*. Joplin, MO: College Press, 2008. 159 pp. \$11.99.

This is one of several recent monographs spawned by three emerging cultural trends: the “new atheism,” a shift towards relational apologetics, and the post-modern demand for everything narrative. The context for this work is slightly different, so it tackles all three trends in its own way. Vines spent twenty years on the mission field and has, only in recent years, moved back to the United States. I mention this because the core of the narrative for this work is told in first person as someone being hosted at what he thinks is a dinner party in Australia. He only finds out—after the fact—that he is being “placed on the hot seat” to answer difficult questions about his belief in Christianity. At the conclusion of the book he states, “that evening with Laura and her staff will remain one of the most dramatic events of my life” (148).

Though writing outside the American context Vines deals with many of the same “age-old” questions that have plagued believers for years. These questions can be homogenized into the following categories: Does God exist? Why is there evil and suffering in the world? Does humanity have free will? Is there a heaven or a hell?

The bulk of this brief volume, a mere 155 pages of narrative, is concerned with the existence of God, human suffering, and the question of free will, but other issues surface out of the various conversations surrounding these topics.

Many positive aspects recommend this volume. Vines presents classic dialogue concerning philosophical questions with a fresh relevance. Early on, he poses the classic “moral law” argument in relation to the question of God’s existence and

human suffering in a creative dialogue like a postmodern Socrates. Vines persistently draws on an array of resources and illustrative material to move the narrative along using diverse quotes from a variety of media including popular movies, television, recent theological works, and classic apologetic texts. The narrative transitions from question to question easily and moves quickly, so this work is an “easy read” for those without a theological background. In each chapter, there are “time out” and “quick application” boxes that are separate from the text itself that help the reader understand the implications of the argument as well as aid the narrative as it progresses.

As a narrative and relational approach to the field of apologetics Vines’s brief volume succeeds in a variety of ways. However, it falls short in providing definitive answers to some of life’s most perplexing issues. Truly postmodern people will distrust the modernistic evidentialism that forms the basis for his methodology. The Socratic methodology of intertwining dialogue is relational and helpful, but Vines never seems to move beyond the dialogue towards definitive responses. When arguing for a loving God in the midst of human suffering, he states, “Over the years I have come to recognize two immutable truths in relation to this question . . . First, God can and does prevent . . . tragedies every day . . . Second, . . .when God does not intervene to prevent tragedy, He is still working behind the scenes to say ‘this far and no further’” (78). The reader can only assume that this is a subjective assumption based on evidence from the author’s own experience and paradigm of faith. How are these objective “immutable truths?” Is there objective evidence to bolster this argument? This hardly seems like an answer to questions regarding human suffering that would satisfy a nontheist perspective. In the midst of human tragedy what nonbeliever would say, “I am certainly glad God stopped at this point instead of allowing more suffering to be heaped upon me!?”

Vines voices the frustration of many apologists when he states, “In today’s world, God cannot win. Whether He acts or refuses to act, the world is never void of protestors accusing God of injustice” (77). He goes on to explain the many inconsistencies and logical impossibilities heaped upon arguments against a logical, coherent, and consistently natured God.

This work is an excellent beginning to what should have been a much longer work. It succeeds as a primer to its topics that might prove useful for small groups in the church or college freshmen to begin to dialogue about the monumental issues it treats. However, it is too brief and lacks the substance to be truly helpful in academic circles or at higher levels of discussion. I highly recommend it for congregational use or introductory-level application for college age reading.

DAVID PADDICK, JR.
Associate Minister
17th Street Christian Church, Corbin, KY

Ron HIGHFIELD. *Great Is the Lord: Theology for the Praise of God.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008. 467 pp. \$30.00.

“Can you discover the limits and bounds of the greatness and power of God?” (Job 11:7, GNT). Zophar’s question still confronts us today. Because God is tran-

scendent in his eternality, holiness, and infinite exaltation (Isa 57:15), God must reveal himself to us if we are to know him: “The Lord our God has secrets known to no one. We are not accountable for them, but we and our children are accountable forever for all that he has revealed to us, so that we may obey all the terms of these instructions” (Deut 29:29, NLT). Jesus is that Word by which God has ultimately revealed himself to humanity (John 1:1,14,18). If we do not take our stand in faith on that Word, we will not have anything to stand on (Isa 7:9)!

This is the theological context for this volume, a scholarly exploration of God’s nature and activities intended to cause greater understanding, appreciation, praise, and service of the Creator. Highfield is Professor of Religion at Pepperdine University, a school affiliated with the Churches of Christ (a cappella).

His thesis is that if we start with ourselves and try to develop concepts of God based on human experiences, we inevitably will distort God into an idol serving human desires. He argues that the traditional view of God, found in the Bible and the Church Fathers, opposes anthropocentric concepts of God found in classical liberalism (Schleiermacher), Socinians/Unitarians, abstract philosophies (the Academy), process theology (Hartshorne), and openness theology (Pinnock, Sanders, Boyd, Rice, and Hasker). He also critiques a simplistic biblicism that fails to interpret individual texts within a systematic view of God. He believes that the truest and most worshipful description of God’s nature is found in the tradition of Augustine, Anselm (faith seeking understanding), Calvin, Barth (his mentor apparently), Torrance, and the orthodox Reformed Tradition in general (as summarized by Richard Muller).

To envision the topics the book covers, imagine a large grid where these attributes of God form the coordinates: unity/oneness/singularity, simplicity, independence, infinity, eternity, immutability, impassibility, omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence, will, benevolence, justice, truth, glory, beauty, incomprehensibility, Trinity, and goodness (156). Time and time again Highfield skillfully explores important intersections where these attributes define and impact each other.

Chapter one states the foundational assumption of the book: you can only come to a true knowledge of God if you acknowledge (1) that *only* God truly knows God, (2) that his knowledge does *not* depend at all on anything outside of himself (as human knowledge does), but (3) that instead it depends only on the internal personal relationships within the Trinity that precede anything created.

Chapter two evaluates the four classical “sources” of theology as proposed in the Wesleyan Quadrilateral: scripture, tradition, reason, and experience. Highfield argues that Scripture alone should be the norm determining the limits of usefulness of the other three resources or one is left with traditionalism, subjectivism, and rationalism. Chapter three proposes that the proposition “God exists” is not the opening argument that Christian theology needs to prove at the outset but is biblical faith’s presupposition. If you don’t start with the self-revealed Trinity you will never arrive at the true God but will inevitably wind up in atheism.

Chapters four through twelve present the various attributes of God in (1) succinct expositions of relevant biblical passages, (2) clear summaries of traditional understandings, and (3) in-depth critiques and rebuttals of recent positions on God that differ. Chapter thirteen concludes the book by spelling out devotional, ethical, practical, and liturgical applications of this understanding God.

The central message of the book is that God alone is worthy of our praise because he freely and faithfully chooses to be true to his own triune, infinitely good, and holy nature (what Anselm calls God's "rectitude"). Nothing in all of creation or history can change or compel God to be more gracious or loving!

Highfield has written a contemporary masterpiece in "theology proper," a theological study focused on God's nature. The amount of research, references, and reflections is amazing. It is hard to imagine any relevant question concerning God that is not explored in demanding and rewarding details. Anyone today wanting to study what the Bible says about God, what the Church has thought, and what current thinking about God involves, will find an excellent introduction as well as an advanced analysis here. Any disciple will benefit from its insight, any preacher from its comprehensive scope, and any scholar from its resources.

SCJ readers will be surprised that Highfield does not interact with Jack Cottrell, Professor of Theology (Cincinnati Bible Seminary) and his significant expositions on God. Indeed, almost no other Restoration Movement author is mentioned. Perhaps this means our heritage has neglected theology proper.

One controversial aspect of this volume is the pervasive reliance on Karl Barth. On the one hand, Barth is a powerful ally for any theologian wanting to affirm the right of Christians to stand on biblical truth without having to legitimate it before the bar of critical naturalistic reasoning. On the other hand, by denying any informative point of contact between nature, reason, and human experience, except in Jesus Christ, Barth opens himself to the charge of fideism which accuses him of taking an irrational and unwarranted leap of faith concerning God.

The two most controversial positions of the book will probably be that God is *immutable* and *impassible* (unable to experience change or suffering in response to anything exterior to God). Highfield explains how the doctrine of God's impassibility originated as an apophatic move of the Church Fathers to protect God from having the vile passions of pagan gods ascribed to his holy nature. However, while not *separating* the immanent Trinity (God as he is in himself) from the economic Trinity (God at work in history), he sufficiently *distinguishes* these two concepts so as to leave it unclear how the sufferings that the Son of God experienced do or do not affect God's essential being. It is somewhat jarring to read that only Jesus' human nature was involved in suffering (388) and God's heart, therefore, is essentially unaffected by any human suffering. It would have been helpful to hear Highfield respond to a proposition he mentions that "a person is in vain distinguished from his essence" (130).

If it is true that "nothing that happens in the world can change God" (181), what role does the cross play in God's forgiveness of sinners? Aquinas explains that God is as unmoved when our relationship with him changes as a pillar is when we move from its left to right side (*Summa Theologica* 1a.13.7). Does the cross then move *only* the sinner to embrace God's love (as in Abelard's view of the atonement) or is there a propitiation/expiation in Jesus' sacrifice that moves God to forgive the sinner he previously has not forgiven? Or has the incredibly loving Trinity forgiven the sinner apart from sin being committed or the sinner believing and repenting? Like all good books, this one provokes deep and fruitful questions!

JOHN CASTELEIN
Professor of Contemporary Christian Theology
Lincoln Christian University

Drop in advertisement:
Milligan College
[Milligan SCJ Ad 2009.pdf]

Christopher J.H. WRIGHT. *The God I Don't Understand: Reflections on Tough Questions of Faith.* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008. 224 pp. \$19.99.

Anyone familiar with Wright's other works (three other books whose titles begin with *Knowing God*) might be surprised at the title of this book. The impetus for writing on this subject came through personal conversations with friends regarding the quantity and severity of evil in the world. Thoughtful introspection and simple honesty brought Wright to admit that there are things about God that, for various reasons, he does not understand. The result is the present volume, divided into four sections, each wrestling with a tough question of faith.

The first three chapters deal with the question, what about evil and suffering? Chapter one discusses the mystery of evil. The answer to the dilemma (that God is either all-loving or all-powerful, but not both because evil exists) is found not in asking, "Why?" but in asking, "How long?" (27) This is because the Bible does not detail the ultimate *origin* of evil but only the *entrance* of evil into the world and assures us of its final destruction (35). Chapter two addresses natural evil and the Christian's response to evil in general. Scripture "not only gives us permission but even gives us the words to [protest]" (44). Wright rebuts two common but misguided beliefs about natural disasters (such as "the tsunami was the judgment of God") and sets forth a proper understanding of God's cursing the ground. Chapter three calls the reader to rejoice at the promise that evil will be finally defeated and destroyed (56). He uses the stories of Joseph and Jesus to illustrate "three great biblical truths": "the utter 'evilness' of evil; the utter goodness of God; and the utter sovereignty of God" (57).

Chapters four and five address the question, what about the Canaanites? Wright's aim is to refute challenges to biblical faith that attack God in the OT as a vengeful, bloodthirsty monster. Chapter four dismisses wrong approaches to God's dealings with the nations in the OT and refuses to allegorize the suffering therein. Chapter five provides three frameworks for understanding this section of the OT, emphasizing that "there is a huge moral difference between violence that is arbitrary or selfish and violence that is inflicted under strict control within the moral framework of punishment" (93).

The question, why the cross? receives the attention of chapters six through eight. Chapter six answers the Why and What of the cross. Why the cross? Because God loves us (112). What happened at the cross? Wright briefly explains the concepts of coming home, mercy, redemption, forgiveness, reconciliation, justification, cleansing, and new life. Chapter seven is an excellent defense of penal substitutionary atonement. Chapter eight explains how the cross was the result of both human wickedness and God's judgment.

The final three chapters address the question, what about the end of the world? Wright's amillennial theology helps to form the structure of this section. Chapter nine laments the "folk theology" of the premillennial dispensational theology, particularly as it appears in works like the *Left Behind* series. He then briefly refutes the concepts of a secret rapture and the return of Christ being contingent upon the formation of Israel. Chapter ten explains "the day of the Lord," which includes the return of Christ, the resurrection of the dead, and the judgment. Chapter eleven puts forth a theology of heaven, emphasizing that "the heaven I will go to when I die is not my final destination" (193).

The current volume is written for small groups who are serious about thoughtful study and discussion (there is a printable online discussion guide), Bible college students, and lay people with an above-average interest in theology. He introduces theological terms but defines and explains them well. As such, those well-read in the fields of theodicy, Christology, and eschatology will not find much insight or new ideas, even though what is presented is eloquent and theologically conservative. Wright's honesty and humility to admit he does not understand God is an example to all scholars who need reminding that we ought to embrace mystery about God, even as we strive for greater knowledge and understanding.

ADAM GRAUNKE
Cincinnati Christian University

Anthony C. THISELTON. *The Hermeneutics of Doctrine.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007. 671 pp. \$46.00.

Warning: This book is not light reading, at least for this reviewer. Thiselton has produced a *tour de force* for the worlds of philosophical theology, biblical studies, and hermeneutics. This is an important work for those specialties, but its thoroughness (typical for Thiselton) makes it a tedious read. The 22 pages of front material are followed by 581 pages of carefully organized and researched text and another 68 pages of bibliography and indices.

The first two parts of the book, comprising eight chapters, set the author's justification for the project as he reviews "Reasons to Explore the Hermeneutics of Doctrine" and "Replies to Possible Objections." Here he reveals the sources of his hermeneutical principles in the list of twentieth-century hermeneutists and philosophers of language with whom he has been in dialogue in several of his earlier publications. As one reads the rest of the book Thiselton's respect especially for the thinking of Gadamer and Wittgenstein becomes obvious. The bulk of the book is in "Part III: Major Themes in Christian Doctrine," where he follows the path of systematic theology from human understanding to the eschaton. Each of these fourteen chapters takes a topic of Christian theology, reviews primary positions on the topic through history, and analyzes the hermeneutics used by the represented thinkers, from the church fathers through the major western theologians of the twentieth century. This analysis is not limited to how people have understood the Bible, but includes also how they understood the world, human nature, language, etc. Part III could be used nicely to show students how to read theology critically. It stands as a topical review of the history of Christian doctrine, and it analyzes the understanding of the major writers while revealing an appreciation for all of them. Such a positive critical reading is a good example for college and seminary students everywhere.

Several sections of Part III could be read as stand-alone works. The four chapters (14–17) that focus on the atoning work of Christ read like a book on the subject. Of special interest to *SCJ* readers are chapters 20 and 21. The first of these looks at "The Church and Ministry in Historical Perspective," and the second investigates "The Hermeneutics of Word and Sacraments." Here, in 61 pages, Thiselton gathers together the thinking of the most important theologians on these

subjects and shows the hermeneutical underpinnings of their several approaches. I found myself wishing he had shown some awareness of the thinking of Alexander Campbell on these subjects, but I often resonated from a Campbellian standpoint with the positions of Moltmann, Pannenberg, and Küng on specific topics.

If there is a major weakness in Thiselton's work, it is one common among American and European scholars: a lack of awareness of nonwestern thinking after the early middle ages. It is hard to fault people for that lack, since so very little of the thinking of recent Oriental or African scholars has been published in European languages. However, it is a fault that should be corrected as we progress into this new century. A secondary problem I noted is the author's almost exclusive use of I Corinthians when referring to the thought of Paul. Since Thiselton recently published a major commentary on that epistle (*The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC, Eerdmans, 2000), he has a reason for depending on it, but that dependence shows a glaring lack of balance in references to Paul's writings.

That being said, I highly recommend this book for specialists in the history of Christian thought, in Christian doctrine, and in hermeneutical studies. It should also be included on the reading lists for advanced courses in Christian doctrine and philosophical theology. Also, anybody who has followed the publishing trail of Thiselton will want to read the book and will also be concerned about the author's health. His wife, Rosemary, closes the acknowledgment pages with the note (xiii) that Thiselton suffered a major stroke on August 4, 2007, after he had completed the chapters, but before he could finish the indexing and proof-reading, both of which were done by others.

BRUCE E. SHIELDS

Professor of Preaching and Biblical Hermeneutics
Emmanuel School of Religion

Jason E. VICKERS. *Invocation and Assent: The Making and Remaking of Trinitarian Theology.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008. 235 pp. \$28.00.

While a few journal articles and book chapters have touched on the demise of Protestant Trinitarian theology in 17th-century England, Vickers carefully details this important story in the current volume. Vickers argues that in the patristic church, the doctrine of the Trinity was used to invoke the name of God in prayer, catechesis, demon exorcism, baptism, and worship. In 17th-century Protestant England, on the other hand, the doctrine of the Trinity, and Christian faith in general, became a matter of intellectual assent. Vickers locates three overlapping commitments that facilitated this shift. The first is a gradual change in the "rule of faith" from the doctrine of the Trinity, as seen in the patristic church, to scripture (*sola scriptura*). The second is a transition in the nature of faith and salvation from "coming to know, to trust, and to love God in and through the liturgical and sacramental practices of the church" to "having primarily to do with assent (*assensus*) to clear and intelligible propositions contained in Scripture" (xv). The third is the desire for language to empirically describe the world through such "clear and intelligible propositions."

Vickers reveals these commitments in a number of figures from Archbishop William Laud to Bishop Edward Stillingfleet, particularly as they seek to buttress Protestantism against the dual threat of Catholicism and Socinianism. The primary issue is: if scripture is the Protestant rule of faith, and salvation is primarily a matter of rational assent to clear and intelligible propositions found in scripture, what is the status of the Trinity if the language of the immanent Trinity (“one substance and three persons”) is not a clear and intelligible proposition? The outcome is an “irenic Trinitarianism” which holds that belief in the Trinity is not necessary for salvation, as illustrated by John Locke’s *The Reasonableness of Christianity*. Vickers closes with suggestions for recovering Trinitarian theology today, including emphasizing the Trinity as the “proper personal name of God” and focusing on the economic Trinity—that is, what God has done for our salvation.

One weakness of Vickers’s historical presentation is that his irenic Trinitarianism is too flat-footed. For instance, in addition to a concern for intellectual assent, this tradition also stressed the importance of ethical living. However, an emphasis on ethical living divorced from a Trinitarian vision of God leads to pelagianism, or “boot-strap theology.” Such an observation offers a richer and more convincing presentation of 17th-century English Protestant theology, as well the tragic consequences of losing sight of the Trinitarian vision of God.

This is a minor flaw, though, compared to the value of this work for Stone-Campbell studies. Vickers provides an intellectual backdrop to the theological commitments of Stone and the Campbells on scripture and the Trinity, as well as the biblicism and irenic Trinitarianism that continue to characterize the movement. His own recommendations, especially his challenge of *sola scriptura*, will be difficult for some to accept, but Vickers is correct here. Vickers encourages people to affirm both the canon of scripture and the doctrine of the Trinity, and to view both as leading believers, through the work of the Holy Spirit, to salvation and communion with God. Historians and theologians interested in recovering Trinitarian theology should pay careful attention to this engaging study.

MARK E. POWELL

Associate Professor of Theology

Harding University Graduate School of Religion

John G. STACKHOUSE, Jr. *Making the Best of It: Following Christ in the Real World.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2008. 370 pp. \$27.95.

Stackhouse, Sangwoo Youtong Chee Professor of Theology, Regent College, offers a frank reappraisal of Christianity and culture in this volume lovingly dedicated to his renowned father. While respectively assessing the strengths and weaknesses of three renowned contributors to this field—H. Richard Niebuhr, C.S. Lewis, Reinhold Niebuhr, and Dietrich Bonhoeffer—he cuts his own fresh path through the vexing dilemma every Christian faces: just how to go about being Christian in the chaos and confusion of the real world. How does one decide what is the most Christian thing to decide, to do, to behave, from the little things to the big things. His answer is in the title of the book. He does not mean to encourage just throwing up our hands and doing “whatever,” he means recognizing our lim-

itations plus the fallenness of the world plus our limited resources for knowing what God wants, plus realizing the particularness and uniqueness of our individual situation—and moving forward.

In the introduction, Stackhouse lays down his starting perspectives. First, on the goal of theology as context specific, he defies the position of classical theology: “Theology should not presume to speak timelessly and universally, but only as helpfully as possible in a particular context” (3). Second, on the purpose of ethics, he reacts against common approaches: “Christian ethics, then, is not primarily about what to do rightly or wrongly, but fundamentally about what it is to *be Christian in the world*” (4). Third, on what a theology of culture is, he cuts it down to answering a few, choice questions: “What is our identity and mission in the world? What, in short, is our vocation? *Who are we, for Christ, today?*” (5).

The first half of the volume is taken up by his assessment of the Niebuhrs, Lewis, and Bonhoffer. Surprisingly, he takes his time with each and offers both restatement of their original work as well as critique. H. Richard Niebuhr’s now classic five Christian stances to culture are certainly discussed but refreshingly, not with the normal assumption that they are untouchable. Noting that Niebuhr unfairly stacks the deck toward his fifth category of Christ Transforming Culture by offering no critique of it as he does his other four categories (37), Stackhouse latches on to Niebuhr’s idea that any of the five categories can be a plausible option in certain circumstances (25) to conclude incisively that “different aspects of the same culture can prompt different stances by different Christians” (41).

From Lewis, Stackhouse is drawn to the idea expressed in *Christian Reflections* (ed. Walter Hooper, Eerdmans, 1997, 33), the principle that “there is no neutral ground in the universe: every square inch, every split second, is claimed by God and counterclaimed by Satan.” Lewis, he thinks, would hold a position that Christian culture fulfills the vain longings of other human cultures (51), but offers no help with a perspective on the church and culture, since Lewis’s writings are consumed by concerns for the individual (55).

Stackhouse notes a similar defect in Reinhold Niebuhr, though he seems to admire his urge for Christians to participate in culture as “Christian citizens” (112). In contrast to Niebuhr, who was disinterested in Jesus’ entrance into history, for Bonhoffer, Stackhouse observes, this is at the core of his thoughts on Christians and the church relating to culture (122). Christian identity is inseparable from the church (127).

Despite the absence of the Holy Spirit from Bonhoffer’s thoughts, Stackhouse sees Bonhoffer’s resolution of his dilemma regarding Hitler (to take part in a secret plot to assassinate him) as at times a necessary principle for other believers that the reality of God is disclosed only as it places a person completely into the reality of the world (129), that something can be wrong in terms of a rigid code of ethics, but still be in God’s will for that time and place for that individual (149), that wisdom is always about determining and obeying what God says right now (151), that sometimes a Christian must “trust God’s mercy on his best guess as to how to follow Jesus in this situation” (152).

In the second half of the book Stackhouse formulates his own theology of Christians living in culture based on the principle that the Christian vocation is to

bring “shalom” into every aspect and relationship of life. This is based on his understanding of Genesis 3 that calls for the first humans to take responsibility for the earth and everything in it, including culture, a commissioning God has never rescinded (219). Thus, the measure of a Christian’s fulfillment of her vocation is to assess how what she does contributes to or does not contribute to making the world a better place (229). From the C.E.O. of a corporation to the drummer in a rock band, the measure is the same but obviously variable within their specific lives. To enact such a vocation, Christians need to draw upon the four resources of Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience (170).

As enticing as Stackhouse’s ideas are, key is his view of the earth as the abode of humans now—and more questionably—into the future. He speaks of “the resurrection of the earth” (201) but far too easily dismissing the “newness” of our future abode when he interprets 2 Pet 3:7-13 (296). Some may react against his jibes at the literalist approach to Scripture interpretation (169, 173-179), but he is right, Scripture does come to us in “mediated form” and in reality it cannot be the sole source of a person’s life choices. Some may react against his poke at tradition (170); it does not “provide all that the next age needs in exactly the formulation it needs (173). Wars are presently as he so well says, “downstream of Pentecost” (279) and downstream from the Protestant Reformation too!

Anyone who is trying to figure out how to be a Christian today and do this in a way that is thoughtfully informed will want to read this book. Those who teach students, both undergraduate and graduate, who are in spiritually formational stages, will want to read this book and include it on a resource list.

WILLIAM R. BAKER

Professor of New Testament and Greek

Cincinnati Bible Seminary—Graduate Division of Cincinnati Christian University

David Lyle JEFFREY and C. Stephen EVANS, eds. *The Bible and the University*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007. 328 pp. \$34.99.

“What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?” Tertullian

The Bible was once seen within the university as the unifying Truth. As many have noted, what we have today in higher education is no longer a uni-versity with a unifying Truth but a plural-versity with pluralistic worldviews. The current volume is the eighth and final volume of the Scripture and Hermeneutics Series, edited by Craig G. Bartholomew and Anthony C. Thiselton, supported by the Bible Society (originally the British and Foreign Bible Society). This volume is dedicated to exploring the place of the Bible in 21st-century education and “explores the sorts of steps such a recovery of the Bible for the university might involve” (xiii).

As an academic dean of a Christian college that will by the time of this writing have become a university, I was immediately intrigued by the title of this last volume. As a reviewer I must ask, “Did this volume achieve its intent to explore the steps this recovery might involve?”

Stylistically, the editors divided the Introduction and the Afterword with the former addressing the reasons for such a volume in the series and the latter addressing the strengths or issues in the various chapters. One of the strengths of this vol-

ume is that the chapters may be read singularly. I found reading the Afterword first actually helped me decide which chapters were of most interest to me. And while space here prevents me from speaking to each chapter, I do believe that the book as a whole raises the difficulties and possibilities surrounding such a work.

I recommend this book to university presidents, provosts, deans, and field or department chairs as they think about how they integrate the Bible into a truly liberal arts curriculum, a curriculum that seeks to “take all thoughts captive.” I have been somewhat amazed at the reactions I hear whenever the term “liberal arts” comes up in a discussion, especially as it relates to the changes confronting our Bible colleges. If ever there was a time for the Bible college to grab hold of restoring the true meaning of liberal arts, it is now in this postmodern generation. As Jeffrey points out, “This last volume . . . addresses . . . an increasing tendency to practice the formal disciplines of biblical studies too much in isolation from the other intellectual disciplines of the university” (2). He goes on to quote Richard of St. Victor, “All arts serve the Divine Wisdom, and each lower art, if rightly ordered, leads to a higher one” (8).

I further recommend this book to scholars who attend either or both Evangelical Theological Society or Society of Biblical Literature meetings. This series was started as a reaction to SBL’s perspective that one approach the Bible scientifically, checking one’s own faith assumptions at the door. In fact, the guiding principle of this series has been that one must bring faith into the discussion. There is clearly a postmodern understanding that science alone is insufficient or at least not the only kind of knowledge as Dallas Willard points out in his chapter on “The Bible, the University and the God Who Hides” (304).

Finally, I recommend this book to people who take seriously the Bible as the source of Truth. This book allows even a beginner to read thoughtfully about how the Bible’s place or minimization within the modern university has impacted the world in which we now live. For low-church Protestants who have long given up the reading of the Gospels in the center of the sanctuary, Glenn Olsen’s chapter “The Spiritual Sense(s) Today” certainly reminds us that the Word is rightfully interpreted within the context of worship and the congregation. His chapter alone would be a great discussion starter for an Adult study group in any local church.

For more information on the Bible Society’s work, go to their website: www.sahs-info.org.

KAREN J. DIEFENDORF
Academic Dean
Lincoln Christian University

Jeffrey B. SYMYNKYWICZ. *The Gospel according to Bruce Springsteen: Rock and Redemption, from Asbury Park to Magic.* Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2008. 216 pp. \$16.95.

In this book, Jeffrey Symnykwyicz—a Harvard-trained Unitarian minister—explores the life and work of Bruce Springsteen and articulates the living legend’s gospel of “defiant hopefulness.” Symnykwyicz believes that one of the many reasons why Springsteen’s music has stood the test of time is because of the community which his “gospel” sustains, and its refusal to give despair the final word.

Being a devout Springsteen fan for decades, Symynkywicz takes the reader through the artist's discography in each chapter. Readers who are new to Springsteen will benefit greatly from the way Symynkywicz introduces each album and uncovers the poignant imagery and metaphors in the songs. Symynkywicz invites the reader to sit next to the stereo and listen along to Bruce as they read. In fact, the reader who is new to Springsteen will gain more out of this book by following along with the actual songs being commented on by having it going in the background.

What this book does extremely well is orient the reader in the literary world of the Boss. The reader is introduced to nearly all of the major songs and characters on each album. Symynkywicz interprets Springsteen's songs as if he were a kind of apocalyptic prophet or situated within the wisdom literature tradition. At the end of every chapter, Symynkywicz offers a reflection based on the various themes that are raised in each album. The author also provides a bibliography at the end of the book which is very helpful for those readers who would want to delve further into other works on Springsteen.

It was difficult to nail down exactly what Symynkywicz means when he refers to Springsteen's "gospel." But Symynkywicz makes it clear that Springsteen is not presenting a systematic theology in his music. However, Symynkywicz does manage to sketch out "~~Ten Commandments~~ Suggestions for Spiritual Living" that he sees emerging in Springsteen's music. Symynkywicz summarizes Springsteen's gospel as the good news that "there is a power which moves through human history transcending differences, liberating that which lies captive, and healing all wounds . . . [and] this divine power lives and moves through indisputably common, fallible, imperfect people like us" (185).

Symynkywicz does such a good job honoring Springsteen's upbringing and outlook on life by taking the reader into the particularity of these songs; however, it is likely that readers will be dissatisfied in his few attempts to take the reader into the particular Catholic faith tradition which informs the imagery in many of Bruce's songs. This book falls short—and falls hard—when the author shifts from writing about Springsteen's life and music to making a reflection about life in general which amounts to a proverbial mix of vague sentimentality. This book will dissatisfy readers because Symynkywicz offers *this* instead of reflecting on the Christian scriptures, i.e. the Gospels. This critique is not leveled at the author's ability to reflect on a gospel text, but rather, his curious omission of its influence and what he substitutes in its place. Had the book included this element, it could have been a more significant contribution that could help fans (or pastors) reflect *theologically* on how to interpret popular culture in light of the biblical narrative which undergirds Springsteen's lyrics.

Another place where this book consistently falls short is in connecting this "gospel" message to a specific community whereby one might experience it. There are few places where Symynkywicz grounds Bruce's "gospel" into a specific, stable community—other than a concert-going fan base. Ultimately, this undoes the great claim of Symynkywicz: that Springsteen's music points us to a deeper hope that will not give despair the final word. To whom might one go to find such a hope? Implicitly, Symynkywicz says that the reader should travel no further than

Springsteen on tour or your local record store. This is a good “suggestion” coming from a music critic, but not from a pastor.

JOSHUA R. FURNAL
University of Durham

Greg FORSTER. *The Contested Public Square: The Crisis of Christianity and Politics* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2008. 254 pp. \$24.00.

Surveying the development of Western Christian political thought from its origins to its present situation, Forster provides a lucid and engaging introductory study. Forster hopes his narration of Christian political thought will help Westerners understand our current political “crisis” and that it will correct popular misunderstandings about Christian political thought. The book provides an accessible but learned account of Christian political thought, guided by this rationale: “I could not explain Madison without explaining Locke; I could not explain Locke without explaining Luther; I could not explain Luther without explaining Aquinas; and I could not explain Aquinas without explaining Augustine, Peter, Paul, Aristotle and Plato” (14).

Forster argues that, while the NT delineates no clear political theory (chapter 1), “The persecution of Christianity, combined with the apostles’ command to obey the state, led the church to develop an apolitical identity” (41). He narrates the origins of philosophy—dealing particularly with Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle—and its influence on early Christianity (chapter 2). The moral philosophy of Plato and Aristotle, which held that “morality is the fulfillment of a structure or plan that is inherent in human nature” (58), became an important idea for Christian political thought.

When Christianity became the dominant religion of the empire, Christians had to develop a political theory. Enter Augustine’s *The City of God* (chapter 3). The consequences of Augustine’s political thought led to the solidification of the medieval natural law philosophy (chapter 4). Forster delineates the respective positions of two major medieval natural law advocates: Thomas Aquinas and William of Ockham. The basic principles of natural law thought developed by these medieval thinkers were already implicit in Augustine: natural law is a moral law revealed to all people through human nature (general revelation).

Because medieval natural law thought argued that the church and government should cooperate to enforce religious laws, the Reformation caused a major political crisis. The church determined who were heretics and the government punished them. Naturally, persecution and killing ensued when Catholics and Protestants shared the same land. To remedy this situation, people proposed new ideas for the boundary between church and state. Where three proposals fell short of stopping the violence (Radical, Luther, Calvin), the theory named “He Who Rules, His Religion” helped end the killings by establishing a law allowing the local ruler to decide which religion their area would follow. Here lies the origin of the modern international political system—the nation-state.

Presenting John Locke in his context (i.e., the Glorious Revolution), chapter 6 describes Locke’s political thought and how it was the foundation for Western ideas

of religious freedom and ideas against state-established religion. Chapter 7 narrates the American appropriation and application of Locke's thought on the right of the people to revolt, and the subsequent development of liberal democracy. Here Forster demonstrates the Declaration of Independence's "utter dependence" on Locke (197). He also describes the development of and reasoning behind the "checks and balances" of the U.S. Constitution.

Finally, Forster describes the modern political "crisis" caused by the internal problems with liberal democracy and the rise of other political philosophies, such as fascism and communism. After depicting several political influences of this era, Forster discusses three discrete Christian responses to the crisis: Karl Barth, Reinhold Niebuhr, and C.S. Lewis. Although Lewis argues for natural law, Barth and Niebuhr rejected the theory, thereby ushering in a new era of Christian political thought.

Natural law is the most important theme running throughout the book. Forster contends that it was important for the development of ideas of religious freedom, liberal democracy, and human rights. Twenty-eight insightful and substantial (each occupies about an entire page) sidebars provide comments on major figures, movements, and schools of thought. Readers looking for bibliographic information will be disappointed: the sparse footnotes contain primary sources but rarely include secondary sources, and there is no bibliography.

Forster's volume is a welcomed and needed addition to the growing field of intellectually responsible Christian political thought. Christians from all perspectives will find these pages full of insight. The book will provide a helpful supplement to history of Christianity textbooks, and it will provide valuable insight to readers of all varieties. It is an extraordinarily rewarding read.

JAMES GORMAN

Director of Student Services
Graduate School of Theology
Abilene Christian University

James R. ESTEP, Michael J. ANTHONY, and Gregg ALLISON. *A Theology for Christian Education.* Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2008. 320 pp. \$34.99.

Estep, Anthony, and Allison have set out to answer the question "What is Christian about Christian Education?" To do this they have written a text that covers theological viewpoints on Scripture, the Trinity, Christology, pneumatology, humanity and sin, salvation, and ecclesiology. Each of these theological views is explained and their importance to Christian Education is shown.

The book is very timely, coming at a time when the subject of theology is rising in importance in Christian Education. Until recent times, theology has been left out of Christian Education majors, or given only a slight introduction. It was actually left to classes that majored in what we believe as a denomination with no connection to Christian Education.

As a part of the theological studies they ask, "What is Christian Education?" Many ask that question wondering if it is actually Sunday School, Youth ministry,

Children’s Ministry, Senior Ministry, Adult ministry, or maybe directing a school within the church. Each of the preceding is a form of Christian Education, and this text shows theology to be the base which makes education Christian.

Theological points are presented simply in about 25 pages each making for quick reading. But, though quick, it is thorough. Theology is explained in a way that supports the education program within the church. Each theological point is applied to teaching, showing how it affects Christian Education and how education is improved when understanding is gained. The application to teaching follows naturally; it is not an added thought.

Also included are methods and ideas for teaching each view. It helps the educator present lessons that students will be able to comprehend and enjoy. Michael Anthony has an excellent section on Jesus as teacher, pointing to how Jesus taught and how He viewed education. This is an encouragement to teachers.

Overall, this is an excellent text, but it does have two problems. The first is that it seems to be as a text for the upper-level student. Juniors and seniors will benefit from the work; however, underclassmen may have a hard time understanding some of the concepts. The authors’ writing style makes the book hard to read unless the student has experience with previous educational texts. Teachers aware of this problem can help the students’ understanding with proper discussion. The problem remains for those outside of schools and colleges. They will need someone who can explain or clarify what they are reading.

The second problem is Greg Allison’s chapter on “Salvation and Christian Education.” In other chapters when a theological viewpoint is discussed, opposing viewpoints are presented. However, in this chapter foreknowledge and predestination are presented as the only correct view. Professors using this as a text need to be aware of this and be prepared to discuss other viewpoints.

The current volume will make an excellent textbook for the college classroom. With a well-trained teacher it would be a valuable text for the church classroom as well. It can be used as a theological text or as support for teachers. I highly recommend this book.

ALVIN W. KUEST
Professor of Christian Education
Great Lakes Christian College

Debra E. HARMON and Barbara J. RHODES. *When the Minister Is a Woman.* St. Louis: Chalice, 2008. 132 pp. \$13.59.

Debra Harmon and Barbara Rhodes note in their introduction that they have written this book to share women’s experiences of ministry. With this as their starting point, they then mix practical cautions, concerns, and considerations with glimpses into the experiences of several women serving in congregational ministry.

To this end, the authors in some ways reach their goal, yet they fall short in a number of others. For instance, the opening chapter shares a number of humorous experiences by several clergywomen, yet a number of men have similar stories (i.e., not only women are five-foot tall and have to face the dilemma of over-the-head waders). Take, for another example, the fourth chapter, “Unique Challenges for

Women in Ministry.” All but two of the “unique” challenges are challenges many men in ministry face. Even the sixth chapter, “Being a Minister and a Woman Too,” addresses issues that face both men and women, albeit from a woman’s perspective. And chapter seven, “The Joys of Ministry” are joys most ministers hopefully get to glimpse from time to time.

This seventh chapter does, however, bring home the joys of saying—and getting to say—“YES!” to God’s call: an affirmation often denied to, and by, women. It is an encouraging chapter, as is the final chapter, “Keep On, Sisters!” which also provides practical suggestions to explore a potential call to ministry. In this vein, chapter five, “Ministry Is a Job,” is perhaps the most practical chapter of the book with employment insights. Herein, too, those who have had the opportunity to have a woman pastor offer keen insights about the special gifts women bring to congregational ministry.

Overall, this is an “uneven” book. It succeeds as mentioned above and in places like chapter two, “Struggling Creatively to Minister,” which finely articulates a number of the systemic and innerpersonal challenges that can compromise a woman’s call and response to ministry, as well as her abilities to minister. It’s also an apt encourager for women considering ministry.

As also mentioned, it falls short in presenting more of the unique gifts and talents women bring to ministry. As well, the third chapter, “The Sacred Feminine” seems strangely out of place and better suited as an article or for another book. Although an important theological topic, it is one that can be terribly divisive. Hence, it is potentially counterproductive in a book that hopes to reach congregations who might consider calling or ordaining women.

The authors note they wish *When the Minister Is a Woman* to be a “conversation.” When read conversationally, each chapter offers insight and inspiration. It would be helpful if Harmon and Rhodes would take the conversation one step further and offer a study guide for small groups and congregational leaders to converse and consider the gifts, strengths, and possibilities that are released when women follow God’s call into ministry.

For women already in ministry, this book may not tell you anything you don’t already know; but you might find it helpful when you are feeling alone or are in need of affirmation. As a short, easy read, it would also be helpful for those interested in learning more about women in ministry: those personally unfamiliar with a woman in vocational ministry, congregations considering calling or confirming the call of a woman, or those who know—or are—a woman whom God may be calling to be a minister.

J. KRISTINA TENNY-BRITTIAN

Northeast Area Minister

Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of Mid-America

Columbia, Missouri

Gary V. NELSON. *Borderland Churches: A Congregation’s Introduction to Missional Living.* St. Louis: Chalice, 2008. 166 pp. \$15.99.

Nelson, the General Secretary of Canadian Baptist Ministries and Vice President of the Baptist World Alliance, seeks to create awareness in churches of the need to

Drop in advertisement:
And the Word Became Flesh
[Wipf&Stock SCJ OCT09.pdf]

actively connect with their local communities. Nelson's thesis is that the church must now move into the uncomfortable "borderland" where "faith and unfaith meet" which requires a "revolutionary" rethinking of the church's approach to reaching their community—namely, moving from the "you come to us" theory of attractional churches to the "we come to you" practice of missional churches.

For anyone who has read widely in the area of missional church discussion, Nelson's book will likely only reinforce the main points of missional writers and thinkers who have gone before. Nelson's Canadian context serves as a bit of a departure from other writers coming from a context within the United States, and his position in the hierarchy of a major denomination provides a unique platform among other contemporary voices in the missional conversation.

Nelson orients the discussion around the concept of the church being first and foremost a change-agent within its own community, bringing transformation by involving itself entirely in the needs and struggles of each congregation's surrounding community. For Nelson and other missional proponents, this stands in stark contrast to the formerly accepted "attractional" model where the local church was a place where people came to be transformed and were not truly affected unless they made their way to a weekend event or other program offered by the local congregation.

In the chapters that follow, Nelson outlines the various elements that are necessary for a congregation to move from attractional to missional, from being a location to a force. Nelson illustrates through various passages the rising awareness of immediate need for world transformation and the resulting quick-resolution mentality that has resulted from the church attempting to respond to that need (30). The transformation of the world will take place, for Nelson, when people see beauty because of a church that lives and loves because of being captured by God as a result of recapturing the narrative God intended of a group of people sent out to reach the world (45-48).

Implicit throughout much of the book, and explicit in some sections, are the active comparisons between the two models of congregational life and function—that is the attractional model of the megachurch movement in America for the last three decades and the burgeoning missional movement that has gained traction only recently. Two major weaknesses appear here. First, Nelson's book is missing some of the critical practical components that other missional writers have given as evidence of a congregational structure that operates along missional lines. Though there are several illustrations of missional ideas in practice, they are not sufficient to move a congregation from attractional to missional.

Second, the lack of practicality affects his discussion on leadership in chapter 5 (aptly titled "Herding Cats") because there is no real ground upon which to build. In other words Nelson only theoretically outlines a congregation's introduction to missional living, and the section on leadership sounds as if it could just as easily fit in leadership books of the last two decades which laid the groundwork for movement from the traditional church model to the attractional church model. It is very difficult not to be caught up in the apparently simple exchange of models.

The question must be asked of Nelson's book: if the true narrative of the church is meant to be a people sent to transform the world, must the model of con-

gregational life really change *en toto* or may attractional churches simply encompass a missional mind-set? Nelson, in addition to other voices in the missional movement, seems to indicate that attractional and missional are incongruent with each other because of the apparent contradiction in narratives. Indeed, there is truth to the idea that attractional churches can become ingrown and oblivious to the community around them and yet there is also a sense that missional churches can follow the same path in reverse. So, with that in mind what really is the difference between the attractional and missional church structures? There is little evidence other than theoretical movements toward missional-only structures within Nelson's book that may adequately respond to the question of distinction between models.

CASEY TYGRET

Spiritual Formation Pastor

Parkview Christian Church, Orland Park, IL

James L. MAYS. *Preaching and Teaching the Psalms*. Patrick Miller and Gene Tucker, eds. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2006. 189 pp. \$19.95.

Dr. James L. Mays is an outstanding scholar. This book explains the Psalms with depth, insight, and practicality. There is plenty of meat for the scholar to chew on and plenty of suggestions for the preacher to preach on.

The editors divided Mays' writings into three major categories: Studying the Psalms, Interpreting the Psalms, and Preaching the Psalms. This process is very helpful for the exegetical/homiletical process. Only a few Psalms appear in more than one section. This approach allows for the multiplicity of Psalms explained, while still giving the principles to apply when not demonstrated for a particular Psalm.

Each chapter is from an essay that Dr. Mays wrote. Some were lectures. Each one is well organized. Helpful conclusions finish each part of the first section after in-depth exegetical analysis. The interpretation section draws from the Hebrew and other biblical scholars. The preaching section gives a short, but helpful synopsis of practical preaching suggestions.

A major theme is that the Psalms are prayers. Most can identify with his struggle in searching for the meaning of prayer, "Prayer remains a great mystery. I do pray. I believe in prayer as an essential dimension of my faith in God. . . . But I do not understand it in the sense that I can explain just how it works. . . . But I gave up. No more research. Just pray. How does prayer work? I don't know." (3) In regard to the Psalms, he asks this penetrating question, ". . . can the poetic pray for us?"(6). I respond, "Hopefully, so!"

In reference to Psalm 22, Jesus' cry on the cross, Mays writes, "What does it mean that our Lord in his deepest agony prayed as OT men prayed and in a way we do not usually pray?"(103) He goes on to explain that Jesus' prayer was one of hope in the midst of despair. The Psalm ends with praising God in the faith community. There is hope for the afflicted even when one feels forsaken!

An intriguing analysis is given for Psalm 133. Mays can find no NT allusion. However, church history from Augustine to Calvin to the "Book of Common Prayer" to the Second Presbyterian Church in Little Rock, AR (145, 146) have

drawn upon the beauty and hope of verse one, “How good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell in unity!” Such a word speaks to today!

Mays points out that “Isaac Watt’s carol ‘Joy to the World’ is a Christian version of Psalm 98.” (155) He then gives suggestions how to preach it. Such insights sprinkle throughout the book.

Upon reflection, I found “Preaching and Teaching the Psalms” to be brilliant! The organization, insights, analysis, and practicality regarding the Psalms will help any educator have meat to serve from the pulpit or lectern!

JOE GRANA

Chair of Church Ministries

Hope International University

Stanley E. PORTER, ed. *The Messiah in the Old and New Testaments*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007. 268 pp. \$29.00.

As anyone who has studied the NT and its contemporary literature in any great detail knows, there was no singular definition of messiahship in the expectation of first-century Jews. This collection of essays springs from a colloquium on the subject held at McMaster Divinity College in 2004. The contributors are comprised of some “heavy-hitters” in the field of biblical studies, and they bring their considerable experience and expertise to the table when tackling the difficult questions concerning messiahship. The various topics of essays include the exploration of messiahship in the OT books of the law, the writings, and the prophets, the messiah at Qumran and early Jewish extracanonical literature, and the presentation of Jesus as the Messiah in the Gospels, Pauline literature, and the general epistles. Although each essay writer examines the issue from his or her allotted era or Jewish group, there are some key questions that are addressed by all, which brings cohesiveness to the collection which is often lacking in other such books. Does the term “messiah” have to be present in order for the figure to be referred to in that particular text? Was there a relatively cohesive Jewish conception of a messianic figure by the time of Jesus? Is there a common thread that weaves together the messianic views and expectations of the OT and intertestamental writers and those of the NT? In other words, did the NT writers introduce an entirely new and radical interpretation of the messiah of the OT *in light of* their belief in Jesus Christ? The book concludes with a response to each of these essays given by Craig A. Evans.

Particularly helpful is L. Stuckenbruck’s approach to the question of the existence of a cohesive Jewish picture of the messiah. He discusses four characteristics of the messiah which are shared by diverse early Jewish writings, highlighting the common motifs associated with this type of figure. This fluidity in Jewish messianic thought leaves room for the NT writers to interpret these messianic passages faithfully and creatively. A related issue is also addressed by T. Longman, who acknowledges the constant reinterpretation of the OT that took place both from within and in later eras; the NT writers were not abusing the OT messianic texts in attributing them to Jesus of Nazareth, but were rather following a long line of Jewish interpreters who faithfully reinterpreted texts in light of historical events that bore meaning to those texts.

Overall, this is an excellent and helpful work. The one rather obvious lacuna is the absence of any significant discussion of the Messiah in the book of Revelation. Perhaps it would have sparked an interesting discussion on how Jesus' messiahship in the Gospels compares and contrasts to his portrayal as the Messiah at the anticipated Parousia, particularly in terms of the function of that role in victorious judgment over his enemies.

All who are interested in this topic will benefit from reading this book. Pastors, lay persons, and undergraduate students would find particularly helpful essays on Jesus as the Messiah in the NT. NT scholars would benefit from a study of the issues raised in the essays dealing with the function of messiahship in Jewish belief prior to the first century. All contributions were thoughtful and provocative approaches to a very central issue in Christian thought.

HOLLY J. CAREY

Assistant Professor of Biblical Studies
Atlanta Christian College

Bob EKBLAD. *Reading the Bible with the Damned.* Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2005. 203 pp. \$17.95.

Ekblad's work, which shares its title with a course that he often leads at Regent College, is an attempt to help "sensitize and form Christians for the specific task of communicating the good news" (xiv) to those in the margins of society. This volume, an anthology of sorts for Ekblad, flows from his discomfort with both the typical "white, middle-class, Christian family" (xiii) as well as the ongoing struggles and sufferings of society's shunned—those ignored by the "empire-like" (7) mainstream culture.

Operating out of a liberation theological paradigm, Ekblad draws on such noted thinkers as Paulo Friere, Thomas L. Campbell, and James L. Kugel to bolster his work. Written in an easy-to-read, narrative form, this composition is divided into nine chapters—with the shortest numbering ten pages and the longest thirty-six. The first chapter sets the tone for the book. Largely influenced by the Latin American movement known as *lectura popular de la biblia* (grassroots reading of the Bible), Ekblad employs a teaching style that helps marginalized readers "identify contemporary equivalents to the biblical narrative (location, characters, verbs, and other details) in their own lives and world" (5).

Ekblad begins with the Emmaus narrative and readers are asked to leave their comfortable Jerusalems and expose themselves "to encounters with strangers through whom God can open [their] eyes" (3). Following that, the audience meets a praying Abraham and is pushed to relate with the patriarch's lack of concern for the lost of Sodom. Ekblad writes, "If Abraham had only been courageous enough to intercede for Sodom in the absence of even one righteous person" (3).

In chapter two, readers find themselves interpreting Genesis with prisoners in a rugged jailhouse and ex-inmates in a crowded, low-income house in the projects. Turned off by the creationist/evolutionist debate, Ekblad's hermeneutic allows him to approach Genesis in a less historical and more theological way, a way that helps those "in and out of jail" (11) sense the presence of a respectful and loving God.

He teaches them that this God longs to know them and create new beginnings in the midst of their dark, chaotic, and often hopeless situations. While many of these societal “outsiders” consider themselves unholy and thus unworthy of being in the presence of a holy God, Ekblad often reminds them that “most of Genesis takes place outside the garden of Eden and outside the ‘Holy Land’” (11); it was in those places that God created new beginnings for His people.

Ironically, the third chapter is titled “Getting Back into the Garden.” The focus however, is not on reentering Eden per se but on receiving God’s grace. This section of the work is rich with theological insight as it digs beyond surface readings of the Edenic and Cain & Abel narratives—stories that oftentimes lead to negative images of God. The metaphor most discussed here is that of judge, which, for prisoners Ekblad argues, is an inherently debilitating and unconstructive image. In fact, he argues that this inappropriate representation of God has its origins in none other than the serpent. One remedy to these harmfully, pessimistic ideas, is to begin to see and understand God not as a judge, but as a physician—a gracious and loving God who is ready and willing to heal.

A similar concept is utilized in the next chapter when Ekblad envisions God as a “therapist” (68). While such a thought is certainly not foreign to the biblical witness, to replace “judge” with “therapist” seems unnecessary. While those serving time frequently feel as though the “system” is out to get them, this is not always the case. Instead of adding fuel to the fire of negativity towards judicial authorities, Ekblad could cast judges in a more positive light by focusing on their dedication to justice, protecting society, loving discipline, and power to free. Each of these images can shed favorable light on the nature and person of God—who is both judge and therapist.

In chapter five, the audience finds themselves encountering God in Exodus—a fine parallel for immigrants trekking through the desert and heading for the Promised Land. Identifying with Moses—whom Ekblad argues is no “hero figure” (110)—prisoners and readers alike perceive that God often chooses excuse-making nobodies as His leaders and mediators. Moving from Pentateuch to Prophets, chapter six reiterates this point. In his survey of Isaiah, Ekblad asserts that, while prophets were “often called from what would have been the mainstream of their time, [many] were raised up from among the exiles themselves” (113). To those viewed by the dominant society as “damned losers” (126), this is often empowering and liberating news.

Chapter seven, the last OT-centered study, focuses on how to read and pray the psalms. Ekblad makes an intriguing move here when he teaches that the psalms can be used as weapons in spiritual combat. Almost in a Peretti-like-fashion, he argues that behind every negative option is an evil spiritual force. Asserting a body/spirit dualism, Ekblad writes, “Jesus teaches us to pray for and love our flesh-and-blood enemies even as we cry out to God to combat the deeper spiritual enemies” (140).

The eighth chapter, one of two concerned with the NT, deals primarily with the Gospels. Ekblad discusses Gospel readings such as: Jesus’ call of Matthew the tax collector; Jesus’ encounter with the Gerasene demoniac; the parable of the lost sheep; Jesus’ meeting with the Samaritan woman; and the meanings of suffering, election, and atonement. Ekblad is careful to stress the fact that Jesus meets people

where they are and there embraces them. As far as the Gospels go, nowhere he says can one “find a single negative word coming out of Jesus’ mouth toward the people on the margins of His day” (156).

Given the current discussion regarding immigration in America, chapter nine, which focuses on the Pauline epistles, employs powerful imagery and elicits numerous thought-provoking questions. Of all the chapters in this tome, none seem as timely as this one. Ekblad’s analogy of Christ as a law-breaking rescuer of aliens in a foreign land, resonates deeply with illegal immigrants seeking freedom and opportunity. Though it can be eye opening, it has the potential to be politically and ecclesiastically controversial.

This volume is a commendable work. Despite numerous grammatical errors and frequent offensive language, this book is theologically adept and socially active. Ekblad reminds his readers of their call to minister to “all peoples,” especially those in the margins. While there is much to applaud, this work also warrants a few critiques. Much of Ekblad’s agenda is to counter traditional teachings of the faith; he seeks to do away with mainstream readings in the name of his liberation paradigm. However, his focus on God as “therapist” aligns him with mainstream American Christianity—for whom “therapist” is the dominant metaphor (e.g., Joel Osteen and the Word of Faith Movement).

This reviewer’s main concern was Ekblad’s attempt to dismiss repentance. One wonders how persons can be liberated from their sin without being made aware of their guilt? That said, Ekblad does not forthrightly water down the Scriptures. His exegesis is theologically responsible and he offers numerous insights from passages often glossed over. This publication is creatively written, easy-to-read, informed, and passionate. Fit for both the scholar and layperson, Bob Ekblad’s work is artistic and resourceful as it seeks to unite theology with service in the name of Jesus.

T. MICHAEL W. HALCOMB
Asbury Theological Seminary

Scot MCKNIGHT. *The Blue Parakeet: Rethinking How You Read the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008. 240 pp. \$18.99.

Scot McKnight’s current volume argues for a “third way” of reading the Bible (as over against fundamentalist and liberal approaches), one that McKnight associates with the term “Story.” This argument is developed in the book’s four parts: (1) “Story: What Is the Bible?” (2) “Listening: What Do I Do with the Bible?” (3) “Discerning: How Do I Benefit from the Bible?” and (4) “Women in Church Ministries Today.” The last section is intended as an illustration of the approach McKnight is presenting. None of the chapters in the book is at all technical—not even the one McKnight calls “the boring chapter”—but I leave it up to readers to decide whether that is good or bad.

The book’s title refers to an encounter that McKnight had with an escaped blue parakeet that appeared at his bird feeder, and the reaction of the ever-present sparrows to this brightly colored visitor. At first the sparrows were frightened by the new bird, but then they warmed to it, and began following it around. Based on this experience, McKnight uses the term “blue parakeet” to refer to certain biblical pas-

sages. At times the term appears to denote an overfamiliarity that weakens the impact that a verse should have. Each stream of Christian piety does its own “picking and choosing”—*viz.*, it has a set of passages that it does not view as definitive of its own understanding of the faith. (I am reminded of the characterization of Eastern Orthodoxy as being “found in all the verses you didn’t underline.”) At other places, however, “blue parakeet” seems to refer to *McKnight’s* reaction to the new bird at the feeder—in which case a “blue parakeet” passage is simply one that makes us stop and think.

The volume is very readable—written, one might say, on a magazine level. Its rhetoric is trimmed, its examples are neither high-brow nor low-brow, and it moves briskly enough to keep the reader interested. McKnight seems to be at home in writing a book of this kind, but one senses that he was not merely writing on autopilot but rather devoted to the task. Readability is not everything, however, and I have some qualms about what the book sets out to accomplish.

Whether McKnight makes his case for reading the Bible as “Story” ultimately depends on what he means by that term—a term that is very much in vogue in theological discussions, where it refers to a radical design against the concept of truth as *propositional*. McKnight’s argument that Christians should pay closer attention to the literary wholeness of literary wholes is clear enough, but he does not come anywhere near establishing (or even arguing) any of the central tenets of what today’s theologians mean when they refer to the Bible as “Story.” Thus it is not clear what McKnight is really up to—learning to read the Bible as a continuous narrative is not the same thing as reading it as “Story” (as commonly understood). Is McKnight then promoting a watered-down version of “Story” theology (which, in so doing, would miss the main points of that theology), or is he just cashing in on the popularity of a few popular terms (“Story,” “third way,” etc.)? (For a fuller account of “Story” theology, see Francesca Aran Murphy, *God Is Not a Story: Realism Revisited*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). The reader of this book is thus in a curious situation: the book’s language is clear as a bell, and its arguments are easy enough to follow, but it is nevertheless confusing in its choice of terminology. Is McKnight leaving a lot of things unsaid, or has he just made a poor choice of terminology?

The examples McKnight gives of “picking and choosing” are sometimes odd. He mentions (several times) the idea of keeping the Sabbath, pointing out that Christians fail to do what the Bible says Sabbath-keepers must do: “The Bible I read both instituted and did not appear to back down from the *Sabbath*” (13). But he gives no mention of Paul’s argument (in Galatians) against Gentile Christians observing the Sabbath. McKnight’s next example of “picking and choosing” (14–15) is equally puzzling: he complains that no one tithes according to the scriptural formula—but surely he knows that scriptural tithing applied only to farmers living in the Holy Land and to Levites, so it seems disingenuous to speak of tithing in terms of something we should do anyway. Again, McKnight points out that “the first Jewish Christians probably kept kosher” (28), but he finds the disconnect between their practice and our own in the principle that “[t]hat’s not for today,” rather than in the Pauline principle that Gentile Christians are not to keep distinctively Jewish regulations. I am not saying that McKnight’s fundamental claim that

we all “pick and choose” is unsound—but there are far too many nonstarters among his examples. One might say that many of McKnight’s “blue parakeets” are really red herrings.

More important is the question of what McKnight says we should do about our “picking and choosing.” His solution is to read the Bible as “Story,” but it is not clear if this is a strategy for helping us to see the “blue parakeets,” or just a concession to the fact that they are all around us. Reading the narrative parts of the Bible as narrative makes good sense, of course, but McKnight is arguing for more than that: he insists that the *whole* Bible is *one story* comprised of many smaller “wiki-stories.” (Where this approach differs from the old “salvation-history” approach lies in all those aspects of “Story” theology that McKnight omits to discuss.) It is not clear to me how this approach might help with the “blue parakeets.” In the examples McKnight gives of facing and resolving “blue parakeets,” it does not seem to be a particularly narrational mode of reading that saves the day, but rather simply better historical-critical exegesis. This is particularly the case in McKnight’s discussion of the question of women in ministry, which fills several chapters. Scripture’s status as “Story” does little to resolve the issue; in the end, it is simply a better knowledge of the cultural context of 2 Timothy 2 that makes the difference. In this connection, McKnight’s discussion of 2 Timothy is particularly good.

This book is not for those who want to engage the deeper theological aspects of reading Scripture. Nevertheless, those who need to have the dangers of a “proof-texting” approach to Scripture explained to them will greatly benefit from reading this book. If this volume gets readers to stop treating the Bible simply as a collection of prooftexts, it will have performed a tremendous service.

JOHN C. POIRIER
Chair of Biblical Studies
Kingswell Theological Seminary

Walter C. KAISER, Jr., Darrell L. BOCK, and Peter ENNS. *Three Views on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament.* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008. 256 pp. \$16.99.

This recent addition to the Counterpoints Bible & Theology series is a welcome addition. In it, Kaiser suggests that the NT authors mean and refer to the same thing as the OT authors. Though he only addresses two NT passages in support of his approach (John 13:18; Acts 15:13-18), Kaiser certainly consults the text more frequently than the other three contributors. Darrell Bock suggests that the NT authors mean the same thing as the OT authors but the referent or context may be expanded. In support of his position, Bock examines Acts 4:25-26; Rom 10:6-8; and 2 Cor 6:16-18. Peter Enns suggests, based on his work with second temple hermeneutics, that NT authors may add new or “fuller” meanings to OT texts but that both share the same goal. In support of his position, Enns examines Gal 3:15-29; Gal 3:19/Acts 7:53/Heb 2:2; and Matt 2:15. Each author outlines his argument differently. Kaiser spends a great deal of time attacking the idea of *sensus plenior* as a way of supporting his own position. Bock follows the five guiding ques-

tions outlined in the introduction while Enns outlines second temple hermeneutics, examines three texts, and then turns to the guiding questions.

Readers will most likely be familiar with the format of the Counterpoints series. Two strengths of this particular volume are its introduction and conclusion. General editor Jonathan Lunde wrote a 35-page introduction intended to introduce the reader to the key issues of the debate, key terminology, and five questions that each of the essays would need to address in order to sufficiently answer the issue of the NT use of the OT. Similarly, general editor Kenneth Berding concluded the book with an eleven-page conclusion where he summarized each of the three positions and further summarized each position in light of each of the five questions. Perhaps most beneficial was his brief comment regarding each of the positions suggesting a benefit of the position, a weakness, and a probing question designed to provoke the reader to continue to address the topic. Both the introduction and conclusion to the book stand out as strengths of this particular volume of the Counterpoints series.

Two weaknesses come to mind when evaluating this volume. First, and this is an editorial issue, it would be very interesting to see a short rejoinder given to the author of each section to follow the responses of the other authors. More specific to this volume, it would have been helpful for the editors to impose some restrictions on the NT examples used by the contributors. With 200-400 OT citations in the NT, the contributors had many options to choose from. The difficulty is that the contributors could pick citations that easily supported their position. Additionally, had the editors chosen the texts for the contributors to use, the reader would have been given the opportunity to more clearly see the differences between the three views as each contributor would have applied his perspective to the same texts.

Three Views of the NT Use of the OT succeeds at meeting its goal. It would be a helpful addition to anyone beginning to address the question of the NT use of the OT, especially at the college or seminary level. Those familiar with the discussion may find its treatment here slightly introductory compared with the more standard works, but on the whole this is another success for the Counterpoints series.

J. BLAIR WILGUS
Ph.D. Candidate
University of Edinburgh

James K. HOFFMEIER. *The Archaeology of the Bible.* Oxford: Lion Hudson, 2008. 192 pp. \$29.99.

Hoffmeier, professor of Old Testament and Ancient Near Eastern History and Archaeology at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, has authored a colorful little hardback that will appeal to a wide audience. If his *Ancient Israel in Sinai: The Evidence for the Authenticity of the Wilderness Tradition* (Oxford University Press, 2005) is celebrated for its depth, Hoffmeier's latest work will likely be celebrated for its breadth. Here, footnotes are replaced by photographs and starch is swapped for gloss. Such exchange should not be measured as a loss of academic gravity, but instead, as a demonstration of how able communicators (and publishers!) know

their audience. With Hoffmeier, this is hardly surprising; his diverse roles as university lecturer, archaeological excavator, and evangelical spokesman demand that he be both deep and wide.

Readers will immediately recognize the outline of this volume. It is drawn from a chronological arrangement of biblical moments. These are organized into 13 chapters and grouped into three equal parts. Excluding introductory comments, the author uses this space to lightly retell the biblical story. This narrative string, in turn, leads a parade of archaeological discoveries that contextualize, complement, challenge, and confirm a study of the Bible (31). Some of these discoveries are classic, such as the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III. Others are fresh, such as the 2007 announcement of King Herod's tomb. Still others are controversial, such as the "Solomonic stables" at Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer.

Part 1, "Introduction to Archaeology and its Application to the Old Testament," establishes the direction of the book by presenting two surveys. The first is an overview of the development of archaeological investigation of Bible Lands. The second is an overview of Bible versions and manuscripts. The author's commitments are obvious throughout. He is optimistic about the possibility of recovering the History of Israel (Hoffmeier is no minimalist) and expresses confidence in the received text. With this introduction in place, the balance of Part 1 addresses the earliest narratives of Israel's memory, up to and including the Exodus event. Some of the issues raised here include parallel accounts of creation and flood in the ANE, patriarchal customs, the path of the exodus, and the location of Mt. Sinai.

Part 2, "The Land and Kings of Israel," surveys the remainder of the OT story. A "small-scale" conquest taps into current thinking about the emergence of Israel in Canaan, while religious practices are illustrated by discussions of altars, sacred stones, temples, and sacrificial remains. Hoffmeier gives a much-needed boost to the historicity of the United Monarchy, then races through the centuries of turmoil that follow, noting the presence of inscriptions, seals, and ostraca. Limited evidence from the period of the exile and return is mustered.

Finally, Part 3, "New Testament Times," completes the volume by contemplating not just select finds from Israel-Palestine, but evidence from first-century Cyprus, Turkey, Greece, and Rome.

While this reviewer was initially skeptical that so much ground could be covered in so little space, I walked away from the book pleasantly surprised. The text is exceptionally well-written and lavishly illustrated on nearly every page. Hoffmeier even manages to insert pieces of his own personal experience into the story (the opening line of the Preface is delightful: "I was born in Egypt."). This judicious use of the first-person draws the author and audience together in moments of amazement, and, more subtly, buttresses the authority of the presentation. Title pages for each section and coordinated color schemes throughout help keep the reader organized. A time-line is offered up front, while a helpful index in back makes for easy searching. Those familiar with *The Lion Atlas of Bible History* by Paul Lawrence (2006) will recognize the high standards of graphic design offered from the folks at Lion Hudson. Unfortunately, the reader who is stirred to pursue items of interest will find little help here. A page and a half of general references cannot replace the missing footnotes or endnotes.

Some will welcome Hoffmeier's suggestion that the Genesis account of creation has a polemic edge in the Ancient Near Eastern world. Others will be disappointed by his "Late Date" Exodus stance. This reader found the discussion of the route of the Exodus to be compelling and anticipates further news from Hoffmeier on the excavations he has directed at Tell el-Borg, Egypt.

This volume is a popularly written survey of archaeological finds. It is just colorful enough to be a "coffee table" book, just academic enough to function as supplementary reading in a college classroom, and just confessional enough to be used apologetically. I recommend it without reservation.

MARK ZIESE

Professor of Old Testament

Cincinnati Bible College & Seminary

Davis A. YOUNG and Ralph F. STEARLY. *The Bible, Rocks, and Time.* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2008. 509 pp. \$30.00.

What challenges do Christians face evangelizing our postmodern culture? Some would say one is the predominant adherence to a six 24-hour day creation among Bible-believing Christians—and with it, a belief in a "young" Earth (6000 or so years). This belief—despite strong scientific evidence to the contrary—undercuts the credibility of other Christian claims. Anecdotal evidence abounds, of students from strong Christian families falling away in college, of scientists who need salvation rejecting any consideration of Christianity, and in both cases, the reason is Christian belief in a young Earth.

Young and Stearley, two Calvin College geology professors, share this concern and have written the current volume to address it. Troubled that belief in a young earth is so prevalent in evangelical churches and in the home school movement, the authors present detailed arguments to demonstrate that devout, Bible-believing Christians *can* believe earth is about 4.6 billion years old and in fact *should* believe in an "old" earth.

About half the book focuses on geological evidence for an old earth. But the balance is devoted to other apologetics for Christian belief in an old earth, including a historical review of the subject and a discussion of biblical and cultural issues. The authors examine how people, Christians in particular, have interpreted the age of the earth from the time of Greek science to the present. They emphasize that belief in an old earth predated Darwin, and hence cannot be considered an outgrowth of or even related to the theory of evolution.

As far as the geology is concerned, the authors discuss the two competing theories: *catastrophism* (young earth flood geology) and *uniformitarianism* (old earth). They acknowledge that geology is not an exact science, that some geological phenomena cannot be explained by current theories, that some phenomena are best explained by catastrophism, and that not all methods of dating the earth produce exactly the same results. Nevertheless, they describe overwhelming evidence for an earth that is millions or billions of years old—not thousands.

The book attempts a detailed refutation of young earth arguments. While acknowledging the scientific credentials of many flood geologists, the authors claim

they are forcing science to fit a preconceived biblical interpretation, combining some scientific fact with a heavy reliance upon speculative theory and miracles.

How, then, do the authors think a Bible-believing Christian should approach science? With humility! We must resist any urge to elevate current scientific theories above the Bible. Less than 50 years ago, the dominant theory was an eternal universe, which would have forced Christians to disbelieve the universe had a “beginning”; yet since 1965, scientists have increasingly accepted a beginning for the universe, as declared in Gen 1:1. On the other hand, Christians must be careful about claiming that “superior knowledge” based on an interpretation of the Bible allows us to ignore overwhelming scientific evidence. There are more than a dozen credible Christian interpretations of Genesis 1, many of which fit nicely with an old earth! (The authors, for instance, believe Genesis 1 is a seven-day literary structure, similar to other epic literature of the Ancient Near East.)

The book is actually a revision and four-times-expansion of Young’s 1982 book, *Christianity and the Age of the Earth*. It is well written and comprehensive. If there are any negatives, they would be that it is at times too technical for most nonscientists and goes into more detail than necessary. Those things are also a strength for many readers.

HUGH HENRY

Lecturer in Physics

Northern Kentucky University

Carol M. BECHTEL, ed. *Touching the Altar: The Old Testament and Christian Worship*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008. 235 pp. \$18.00.

The current volume is a compilation of essays that delve into particular aspects of worship represented in the OT. Six of the seven authors are OT professors, and their enthusiasm for its wealth of valuable insights for today’s world is evident. They deftly consider actions and attitudes that are often ignored in contemporary worship practices. The reader looking for a “how to” book on planning worship will not find it here. Rather, these essays provide theological underpinnings for further study. That is not to say that they are without relevance.

For example, Dennis Olson examines the Sabbath biblically and historically with an eye toward recovering some of its intent and usefulness. He does this by bringing it into a NT world and reflecting on its broad themes. Thomas Boogaart presents a fascinating take on the relationship of drama to worship in the context of biblical narrative. He contends that biblical stories are not just about reciting history, but also about dramatizing God’s work. Rather than merely describing the process of discovering narrative as drama and leaving us to our own devices, he chooses a text and walks through it.

John Witvliet, the only worship professor in the group, discusses the book of Isaiah, which he calls the “workhorse of Christian liturgy.” He does not dwell on the commonly used texts from Isaiah, but urges the church to give attention to the anti-idolatry theme of the prophet, which may seem antithetical to worship in this age. Always practical as well as philosophical, Witvliet offers specific examples of using these passages in worship gatherings.

Working from the assumption that preachers sometimes spend too much time explaining the OT rather than allowing it to speak for itself, Ellen Davis offers her insights in the form of two sermons, while Corrine Carvallio searches for a theological map to give us insight into sacred space by painting a picture of the Jerusalem Temple as seen in 1 Kings and Ezekiel.

Worship and justice are connected by J. Clinton McCann Jr., who examines their relationship to one another as seen in the Psalms. This chapter is particularly useful for the church today as the subject matter, although long ignored, is becoming one of the most talked about topics in worship circles.

Carol M. Bechtel concludes the essays with a study of Job, an unlikely candidate for a treatise on worship. She journeys through the dialogue between God, Job, and his friends, emphasizing the limits of human wisdom. We must worship, she suggests, even though we do not fully comprehend God's ways. In fact, reverence and obedience are the natural result of our limited understanding. Bechtel draws several conclusions about worship in North America today, resulting in some practical applications.

Each chapter begins with stunning woodcuts by Margaret Adams Parker and ends with a set of hymn texts that give corporate voice to the concepts previously explored. These touches are artistic reminders that while the book provokes new insights and questions, it can also be read as intensely devotional. Each of the chapters stands alone and could be the basis for group or individual study. Equally valuable are the suggestions for further reading that conclude each chapter.

It should be noted that the authors are from various denominations that would often be labeled "liturgical." It may be tempting, therefore, to set the book aside as irrelevant to nondenominational, NT traditions. A better approach would be to recognize sound exegesis and ponder the implications for one's own context. The result might be surprising and fulfilling.

DINELLE FRANKLAND
Professor of Worship
Lincoln Christian Seminary

M. Daniel CARROLL R. and Jacqueline E. LAPSLEY, eds. *Character Ethics and the Old Testament: Moral Dimensions of Scripture*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2007. 260 pp. \$29.95.

This collection of essays is the second volume to appear based on the annual sessions of the Society of Biblical Literature's Character Ethics and Biblical Interpretation Group. The latter term is defined as a "way of thinking about and interpreting the moral life in terms of a particular vision of and a passion for life that is rooted in the nurture, formation, and socialization of a particular self-conscious community" (vii). As such, one underlying presupposition of the essays is the suspicion of appeals to universal criteria in the formation of ethical thought. Another is a form of resistance to the constructing of codes, rules, and commandments which are to be applied without consideration of the circumstances. Instead a social vision and disciplined patterns of behavior rooted in the OT supply the resources for engaging moral issues.

The volume is divided into two unequal parts, the first and by far longest, “Biblical Interpretation,” is composed of twelve essays covering much of the canon by OT specialists. The shorter second part is comprised of four essays by practitioners who read “for and with the powerless” in AIDS-stricken Africa, violence-laden Guatemala, and Latino and itinerant farm worker communities in the U.S.

The first subsection in the Biblical Interpretation section is comprised of three essays on creation. Theodore Hiebert’s “Beyond Heilsgeschichte” catalogues and critiques the Hegelian assumption that history rather than creation or nature should have priority in OT interpretation. He advocates a conscious paradigm shift as nature is moved from the periphery in OT study to the center. This will particularly impact our approach to the relationship of humanity to nature and even the relationship between God and nature traditionally conceptualized in terms of divine transcendence.

William P. Brown attempts to flesh out the distinct moral cosmologies behind the various OT accounts of creation, “whether oriented toward stewardship or play, toward holiness or kinship” (23). Ultimately, however, Brown sees continuity in the accounts which supplement each other morally and theologically. Humanity bears both God’s image (Genesis 1) and the ground’s (Genesis 2). Animals have wide freedom (Job) and yet can sometimes be domesticated for human use (Psalm 104). He notes, “In the cosmic temple, human beings carry on God’s work in the world for the sake of universal life and order.”

Thomas B. Dozeman analyzes the influence of creation and environment in the character development of the early life of Moses. Moses is born (created) a Hebrew but raised in an Egyptian environment, although by his own Hebrew mother. Dozeman thus reflects on the nature and nurture conundrum in the formation of Moses’ character. In evaluating Moses’ slaying of the Egyptian in defense of a fellow Hebrew, Dozeman concludes that Moses is expressing the influence of his environment, answering Egyptian violence with his own. It is only after his time in the wilderness that Moses has the right balance restored.

In the subsection on Torah, Cheryl B. Anderson subjects the OT ethics of Waldemar Janzen, Christopher J.H. Wright, and John Barton to the criticism that in various ways their approaches to OT ethics marginalize the powerless concluding, “When biblical scholars consign any discussion of women, the poor, and non-Israelites to a footnote, to an appendix, or ignore them altogether, these groups and their experiences remain marginalized” (46). Dennis T. Olson compares the laws which Moses promulgates concerning leadership (Deuteronomy 16–18) with narratives in which Moses functions as a judge and prophet (Numbers 11–12; Deuteronomy 1, 34). The first of these passages “outline the decentralization and limitations of authority among multiple offices of judges, kings, priests, and prophets” (52). Olson sees a polarity between the heroic Moses and humble servant Moses. Contrary to Machiavelli and his heirs, human leaders are to be honored, but only God is to be worshiped. Samuel Balentine, noting Kauffman’s observation that temple liturgy was carried out in total silence plays this off against the book of Job where Job has many angry words for God before submitting in silence. Balentine suggests that silence in liturgy, even if one has a clenched fist in one’s pocket to remember one’s questions of God, may be the height of spirituality.

Drop in advertisement:
Cincinnati Bible Seminary
[CCU SCJ09 Ad BW.jpg]

In the subsection on the prophets Kathleen M. O'Connor expositis how the book of Jeremiah serves to “reconstruct the community in the aftermath of disaster” (82) and suggests that even the book’s confusing structure “performs the collapse of the world” in order to make way for hope of a new one. Jacqueline E. Lapsley engages Ezek 24:15-27 where the prophet is commanded to not mourn over the death of his wife. For Lapsley, “Ezekiel holds to a purely negative view of the relation between love, desire and the moral life. These emotions will always lead you astray. Desire, at least in practice, is always idolatrous desire.” Only faint glimpses are given of the possibility of a different future. M. Daniel Carroll R. uses insight from virtue ethics to reflect on Micah 3:1–4:5 and 6:1-8. The “good” is to be lived out in deeds of justice which are central to the practice of proper worship, something Micah does not denigrate. J.J.M. Roberts argues that some of the classic peace texts in Isaiah and Micah do not imply the absolute renunciation of lethal force for self-defense and that the situation of western Christians is closer to the people of Israel than to the early Christians.

In the subsection on Diaspora and Exile Daniel Smith-Christopher suggests a direct connection between the clever wisdom of Proverbs which avoids violence and brutality and the various stratagems of Tobit, Daniel, Esther, Jacob, and others. The implicit laughing at empire unites these two streams of OT literature which are often thought to be at odds. He suggests a nonviolence of the marginalized is implicit in this literature.

This wide-ranging set of essays expresses the breadth of the discussion about ways to appropriate or not the OT for the formation of ethical character. The subjectivity of many of the readings is both the strength and weakness of the volume. The inclusion of essays from practitioners in the second section makes for fascinating reading even if one is not always persuaded of their foundation in the texts which are ostensibly addressed.

PAUL J. KISSLING
TCMI Institute
Heiligenkreuz, Austria

Mark D. FUTATO. *Interpreting the Psalms: An Exegetical Handbook.* *Handbooks for Old Testament Exegesis.* Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2007. 234 pp. \$20.99.

This volume is the second volume to be completed in Kregel’s series *Handbooks for Old Testament Exegesis*, edited by David M. Howard, Jr. The first in the series was Robert B. Chisholm, Jr.’s *Interpreting the Historical Books* (2006). Each book in this series is arranged in the same manner, first analyzing the genre under consideration, summarizing the contents of the books (or in this case, book) that display this genre, explaining what proper interpretation of the genre involves, and then demonstrating how to exegete a specific text (or texts) from that genre.

Futato’s coverage of these subjects is very informative and highly practical. The first section (“Appreciating the Poetry”) provides definitions of key terms, which is essential in any study of Hebrew poetry given its unique qualities. Such analyses can often become overly pedantic and confusing to a reader. Futato’s is neither. His

frequent use of biblical passages to illustrate the points he makes reflects a solid familiarity with his subject matter. A Scripture index may have been worth including, given the numerous citations in the book. A glossary is included, providing a handy summation of many of the key terms.

The most informative portion of the book is probably the section entitled “Viewing the Whole” in which Futato examines the overarching purpose and structure of the book of Psalms. He sees the kingship of God as the dominant theme of the Psalms. This theme is closely linked to the fate of the “anointed king,” David and his descendants. The five “books” into which the Psalms are arranged highlight, according to Futato, crucial stages in the history of the Davidic dynasty. Futato’s framework is not the same as the “cantata” structure advocated by John H. Walton (see *A Survey of the Old Testament*, by Walton and Andrew E. Hill, 2nd ed., 2000, 346-351), which can seem forced in spots; Futato’s approach allows for a bit more latitude in what the books can include since his framework does not appear to have the strict historical delineations that Walton’s does.

In his chapter on “Interpreting the Categories,” Futato does not provide the degree of background information that he does to the earlier study of parallelism. (Names such as Gunkel and Mowinckel are not mentioned, whereas Lowth’s contribution to parallelism is acknowledged.) The section on categories seems to be a bit more “hurried” than the others, with six basic categories listed. “Royal psalms” are treated in an excursus; one wonders why they were not included within the main categories. Futato’s manner of linking Christ to the Psalms is noteworthy; rather than propose a category of “messianic psalms,” he links each of his suggested categories to Christ and explains how such a process can enhance our understanding of both Christ and the Psalms.

The final two chapters of the book use Psalm 29 to encompass the actual process of preparing for and doing the exegesis of a specific Psalm. Preachers and teachers will find these guidelines helpful in striking a balance between respecting both the historical setting of the Psalms and their timelessness.

Overall, Futato has provided a solid addition to the *Handbook* series. The aforementioned editor of this series, David M. Howard, Jr., notes that the handbooks in this series “are primarily intended to serve as textbooks for graduate-level exegesis courses that assume a basic knowledge of Hebrew” (14). This is true of Futato’s volume, though, as previously noted, the chapter on “Viewing the Whole” can be read with profit by anyone desiring a better grasp of the purpose and structure reflected within the Psalms.

DOUGLAS REDFORD
Associate Professor of Old Testament
Cincinnati Christian University

Constantine R. CAMPBELL. *Basics of Verbal Aspect in Biblical Greek.* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008. 160 pp. \$16.99.

Campbell has written several works on verbal aspect in the Greek language. In addition to the current volume, Campbell has written two monographs on verbal aspect published by Peter Lang, (2007) and (2008). Also, he has written a chapter on

verbal aspect in an edited work. He is also an accomplished musician and public speaker. The current work can be understood as a simplification of material from his earlier works, as well as an attempt to find congruence in the Porter/Fanning debate.

Campbell's take on verbal aspect seems to develop from several concerns D.A. Carson pointed out while analyzing Porter (1989) and Fanning (1990) main works on verbal aspect published by Peter Lang, in "Introducing the Porter/Fanning Debate," *Biblical Greek Language and Linguistics: Open Questions in Current Research*, edited by Stanley E. Porter and D.A. Carson, JSNTSup: 80, Sheffield: JSOT Press, 2003. Carson stated that Porter needed to develop how pragmatics of a verb result from its aspect (24) and that Fanning needed to make a clearer distinction between semantics and pragmatics while illustrating pragmatics (25).

Campbell appears to address both of these concerns in the current volume. He makes a clear distinction between semantics and pragmatics, labeling aspect as semantic and *aktionsart* as a pragmatic value (22-24). This answers Carson's statement concerning Fanning. In the discussion on aspect, he makes a helpful distinction between verbal semantics and lexical semantics. Verbal semantics are tied to the conjugation, while lexical semantics are tied to the verb stem. This causes him to use four elements in describing the action of a verb: semantics, lexeme, context and *aktionsart*. He discusses verbal semantics (aspect) under "semantics," and lexical semantics under "lexeme." The time of the action enters the discussion under "context." The kind of action involved is discussed under "*aktionsart*." In the four-stage process used throughout the work, he illustrates how pragmatic function flows from the semantic aspect of the verb, thus answering Carson's statement concerning Porter.

Within the Porter/Fanning debate, Porter has received criticism from several scholars concerning his decision to call the Greek Perfect and Pluperfect tense-forms "statives" in reference to aspect, placing them into a third category. Most scholars recognize only two verbal aspects, "perfective" and "imperfective." Campbell decides to call them "heightened proximity" and "heightened remoteness," respectively. This serves to eliminate the debated third verbal aspect, "stative," and makes his position amenable to more scholars. Campbell treats "stativity" under lexical semantics, rather than verbal semantics. In other words, "stativity" is encoded by the verb stem rather than by its conjugation.

Another debated item concerns the treatment of the Greek Future tense-form. Campbell treats it as perfective aspect (83), linking it to the Aorist. However, he notes that it is a true tense in that all occurrences are future referring (84). He distinguishes the Aorist from the Future in reference to aspect, by calling the Aorist tense-form "aspectual-spatial" and the Future tense-form "aspectual-temporal." This means that both are "remote" tense-forms, with the Aorist being remote spatially and sometimes temporally, while the future is only remote temporally.

Campbell emphasizes the tense-form determines aspect and not time. In this, his view is similar to Porter's. Campbell also emphasizes two aspects and one true tense. In this, his view is more like Fanning's. Because of these two emphases, Campbell may be seen as taking a position between Porter and Fanning.

This volume contains an introduction which points out the significance for verbal aspect to the exegesis of the NT. The main body is laid out in two main divisions

of five chapters each. The first division outlines the nature and history of verbal aspect in the study of the Greek language. Most of the theory in this volume is in the first division. The second division discusses the tense-forms and how pragmatic functions are derived from each form based on the four-step model. Campbell also discusses nonindicative forms in this section. Campbell provides exercises at the end of three of the chapters in this section. The postscript provides a helpful explanation of the development from aspect to tenses in a language over time.

This volume is an excellent and readable introduction to verbal aspect in the Greek language. Campbell's grasp of both semantics and pragmatics make this work useful for providing consensus among scholars. Any future work explaining how *aktionsart* follows from aspect will have to address this work. This volume is useful for pastors, both undergraduate and seminary Greek students, and Greek professors. This volume is best suited as a supplementary text for an advanced Greek class.

JAMES SEDLACEK
Cincinnati Christian University

John H. ARMSTRONG, ed. *Understanding Four Views on the Lord's Supper.*
Counterpoints: Church Life. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007. 224 pp.
\$14.99.

The current volume is part of Zondervan's Counterpoints series, a helpful set of books that addresses controversial issues in the church through the interaction of scholars representing divergent viewpoints. In this work, Baptist, Reformed, Lutheran, and Roman Catholic scholars present their understandings of the Lord's Supper, in addition to brief responses to each other's viewpoints. The book could effectively be termed "Five Viewpoints," in that the editor takes the introduction and conclusion to present his own (evangelical) understanding.

Each chosen scholar represents a "living conservative" position. Each is theologically consonant with the historic position of his group but with concern to see that theology lived out authentically in the present. Present practice is criticized or defended relative to how it lives out each theological commitment.

Russell Moore presents a Baptist (memorial or Zwinglian) understanding of the Lord's Supper: as a "sign," and not merely a "symbol," the Lord's Supper forms a powerful memorial that points to Christ's victory and return. I. John Hesselink explains a Calvinist understanding: Christ's body and blood are spiritually present in the Lord's Supper, being communicated to the receiving believers by the Holy Spirit. David Scaer defends the (Missouri Synod) Lutheran position: Christ's literal body and blood are present in, with, and under the bread and wine. Thomas Baima gives a Roman Catholic interpretation: in the Tridentine formula, there is the true, real, and substantial presence of Christ as the elements of Communion.

Despite these divergent ontologies of the Lord's Supper, the authors show a high degree of consonance concerning aspects of its meaning and practice. Each sees it as pointing backwards to Christ's sacrifice while being a foretaste of Heaven's banquet. Each sees it as a powerful indicator of the present unity of believers. They also universally encourage regular (at least weekly) celebration of the Lord's

Supper. And each insists on care with selection of the elements of Communion, with theological and historical concerns strongly outweighing practical convenience.

However, the Protestant authors do criticize the Catholic doctrine that the Mass is a sacrifice. Also, the Reformed, Lutheran, and Catholic authors question the Baptist view: while Communion points back to Christ's victory and forward to his return, is *only* a sign of Christ "really present"? Additionally, the authors predictably vary on who may celebrate the Lord's Supper and on the degree to which it is an open celebration.

In addition to the four (or five) viewpoints presented, this work has two appendices containing selected documents and quotations concerning the Lord's Supper drawn from the Church's history. It also has sections containing discussion questions and resources for further study. Taken together with the thorough indices, these sections enhance the work's value for students beginning serious study of the Lord's Supper.

The main value of this work is that it concisely presents the major Communion theologies of the Western church, along with passages from the historical debate in the appendices. The main weakness is the short length of each contribution and response. Without the extra matter (appendices, introduction, conclusion), the four views and twelve responses total only 120 pages. This is only enough for a basic (conservative) statement of each author's position in conjunction with cursory responses.

The main hesitation in recommending this work to an upperclassman or seminary student (for whom it would otherwise be most helpful) is that the format and participants chosen therefore emphasize the intractable nature of Communion debate, despite the editor's obvious ecumenical intent. "Ways forward" take more space, and one should not expect many here. The book would, however, make a good basic text for a class on or study of the Lord's Supper, in conjunction with more expansive texts.

STEVEN D. CONE
Assistant Professor of Theology
Lincoln Christian University

Russell PREGAANT. *Knowing Truth, Doing Good: Engaging New Testament Ethics.* Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008. 388 pp. \$35.00.

Pregeant's aim in the current volume is to "explore ways in which the ethics of the NT might legitimately inform the attempts of contemporary Christians to apply their faith to the difficult issues confronting them in a very confusing environment." Pregeant, professor of Religion at Curry College, isn't offering a defense for using the NT in ethical decision making but rather starts with the acceptance of the NT as occupying a central role in that process. What Pregeant believes is needed is a more accurate definition of the nature of the NT's role.

The volume is divided into twelve chapters under four major parts: Part one focuses on the presuppositions and methodology Pregeant will utilize to discover how the NT can have relevance to the actual lives of Christians. Pregeant notes that

all interpretations of texts engage the imagination of the interpreter. Characterizing his hermeneutical method as an “alternative form of postmodernism,” Pregeant contends that neither the author of a text nor the text itself is fully determinative of meaning. The interpreter brings to the task of interpretation certain considerations that guide them into discovering meanings that when viewed collectively construct a cohesive theology. Because texts are by nature “open-ended,” the interpreter must participate in the creation of a text’s meaning. By this assessment Pregeant does not mean that texts can mean “just anything” but rather texts contain within themselves constraints on the creation of meaning.

In the first chapter on methodology Pregeant reviews the contributions of seven authors’ postmodern approaches: A.K.M. Adam’s dissent from the historical-critical method; Richard Hays’s use of the focal images of Community, Cross, and Creation; Willi Marxsen’s Bultmannian existentialist model; Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza’s feminist reading; Brian Blount’s African-American perspective; and Daniel Harrington and James Keenan’s Roman Catholic moral theology focus on virtue. Of these approaches Pregeant values most that of Harrington and Keenan because it focuses on the virtues of reconciliation, mercy, and hope which more effectively engages the interpreter towards a right understanding of a text’s meaning and restores “Love” as a central ethic in the NT.

Part two examines the ethics of the Jesus movement. Pregeant’s Jesus is a prophet whose ministry and teaching must be interpreted in light of the economic deprivation of Galilean Jews caused by Roman rule. The Jesus that Pregeant constructs comes primarily from the earliest records of Jesus’ ethical teaching as indicated by “original Q” (specifically the first three beatitudes, the command to love one’s enemies, the priority of Jesus over family, the call to forgiveness in the Lord’s prayer, concern for the poor, and nonjudgmentalism). Pregeant gives special treatment to two teachings of Jesus which are thought by many to belong to the earliest Jesus material: divorce and remarriage and Jewish purity issues. Pregeant’s interpretation of Jesus is decisively influenced by the work of E.P. Sanders.

In part three, Pregeant covers broadly the ethic of the canonical writings with chapters on Matthew, Mark, Luke-Acts, John’s Gospels and Letters, undisputed Pauline epistles, post-Pauline epistles (which include all non-Pauline letters plus Ephesians, Colossians, and the Pastoral epistles), and Revelation. While noting the diversity of ethical teaching in this material, Pregeant isolates one major theological presupposition of their authors which shape their ethic. These authors believed that there would be a cataclysmic end to the present age, which will be accompanied by the literal return of Christ and God’s final judgment. Yet this clear apocalypticism stands in tension with another major theological conviction, namely that God manifests radical love and offers forgiveness freely. Pregeant rejects the traditional resolution of this tension which claims that God’s final judgment shows that there are limits on God’s forgiveness. He believes that such a theory undermines the NT ethic that portrays God’s love, grace, forgiveness, and mercy as radical. To limit in any way these attributes of God make them no longer radical and are unworthy of the God represented by the teaching of Jesus for compassion and nonviolence.

The final part is entitled “Engaging New Testament Ethics.” After briefly summarizing the points he makes in earlier chapters, Pregeant moves on to describe

“the truth” to be known and “the good” to be done that are the theological and ethical framework of NT ethics. The NT’s “truth” is that God is represented in Jesus’ obedient self-sacrificing life that serves as a model for others to imitate in order to reconcile with God and experience new life. The NT’s “good” consists of the command to love (which Richard Hays denied is central to the NT ethic), the theme of liberation of the poor and the oppressed, and the *imitation Christi*. Pregeant concludes by examining how his engagement with this ethic would apply to concrete concerns for gender roles in Christian communities, divorce and remarriage, homosexuality, the church’s relationship to the government, the use of violence, economic justice, and “Eco-justice” for creation.

Pregeant assumes the reader is knowledgeable of ethical theorists, philological discussions, and Hays, *Moral Vision of the New Testament*, and therefore would probably not be of use in undergraduate introductory biblical ethics courses. However, a graduate course in biblical ethics designed to expose students to alternative postmodern interpretations and applications of Scripture to modern ethical dilemmas could use this work to challenge students to evaluate critically traditional Christian assumptions about the nature of Scripture and what constitutes “good” hermeneutical practices.

JOHN HARRISON

Professor of New Testament and Ministry
Oklahoma Christian University

Rita N. BROCK and Rebecca A. PARKER. *Saving Paradise: How Christianity Traded Love of This World for Crucifixion and Empire.* Boston: Beacon, 2008. 552 pp. \$34.95.

Readers of *SCJ* will find interesting that Brock is an ordained minister in the Disciples church, while Parker is president of a Unitarian Universalist seminary. Their research is as thorough as it is provocative. They introduce their study abruptly with the following statement: “It took Jesus a thousand years to die. Images of his corpse did not appear in churches until the tenth century. Why not? This question set us off on a five-year pilgrimage that led to this book” (ix). Based more on iconography than theology, they claim that since there were no images of the crucified Christ until well into the early Middle Ages, the early church must have viewed the crucifixion quite differently than that of the later medieval period, in fact quite differently right into modern times. Their contention is that Jesus intended for his kingdom to reclaim much of the Adamic paradise for the here and now through the application of Christian principles. Surprised by the lack of pictures of the cross and its depiction of death, they were equally surprised at the more frequent portraiture of a very present heaven/paradise in this world. The portrayal of the cross in one cathedral, Rome’s St Giovanni in Laterano, serves as a pictorial summation of their thesis. Here Jesus stands before, not on, the cross, surrounded by scenes of paradise, which viewing for the first time, they noted, “This image penetrated our consciousness until, at last, we understood: we stood in paradise” (xiv).

From such experiences they extrapolate a theology of the need to “save” this view of paradise from the succeeding distortions that arose in the later Middle Ages

which also continue to the present. A virtual paradigm shift in Christian theology is in order, so they proclaim. The church moved from an awareness of the ever-present paradise on earth through the transformation of the teachings of Jesus to a more masculine gendered desire to rule the earth through empirical power, a growing “obsession with atoning death and redemption through violence.” This culminated in the Crusades where paradise was distanced from the cross and could only be achieved as a reward for violently expanding the Kingdom of God. Late medieval piety sought to develop “escape routes” from this world rather than trying to reclaim the paradise available to them through a proper yet long lost understanding of Scripture. The authors assert further that similar distortions were introduced by the Calvinist perspective of trying to achieve a Christian nation in the new world through violence perpetrated against the resistant native populations. The modern social gospel movements were an effort to redress these distortions and, combined with a theology of “saving paradise for the here and now,” were able to make strides toward realizing God’s Kingdom on earth. Following the wilderness cries of such liberal theological prophets, who perhaps themselves did not fully realize the patristic echoes they emulated, the authors claim to have discovered and clarified enough information to significantly change some 1500 years of Christian theology. “The apprehension of paradise now provides a foundation for emotional aliveness and moral clarity—it fuels outrage, protest, and social critique. At the same time, it provides a basis for sustained activism in its acknowledgement of beauty and joy” (408). To transform the world into this theology is the new gospel of the kingdom.

Although Brock and Parker did discover some surprising iconography regarding portrayals of the cross or lack of it, to request a monumental paradigm shift in Christian theology on that basis is as audacious as it is unfounded. Their thesis is basically an articulate restatement of the social gospel in which traditional biblical perspectives are reshaped in rather unique spiritualized forms. For example, more traditional biblical views of afterlife and the souls awaiting there, according to this perspective, are blended in with the here and now, thus literally bringing heaven to earth: “The beloved departed who have come before us draw near. The veil lifts between the living and the dead” (420). Paradise loses its spiritual distance as it conflates with the present. I think there is a point at which it is unwise to rob heaven of its treasures to share that booty in a world whose prince is the devil. There will always be enmity between God and Satan’s kingdoms, though God’s Kingdom will always have a profound and ameliorating effect on Satan’s, but a paradise will never be achieved. For now, as a blind poet once said, Paradise is lost.

WES HARRISON

Director of Interdisciplinary Studies
Ohio Valley University

John PIPER. *The Future of Justification: A Response to N.T. Wright.* Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007. 239 pp. \$17.99.

The cover of John Piper’s current volume features a portrait of Martin Luther at the Diet of Worms. His left hand on books, presumably one of which is the

Bible, Luther's right hand is held in the air. Directly above his hand is a crucifix, and he looks heavenward. Between the crucified Lord and the holy text, and with God as his witness, Luther pleads his interpretation of Paul. If ever there was a book that one could judge by the cover, Piper's refutation of Wright is it.

The central argument of this book is that the reinterpretation of Paul and the doctrine of justification in light of the New Perspective are dangerous for the church. As an influential proponent of this way of reading Paul, Wright is, for Piper, public enemy number one. In the Introduction, Piper states: "My conviction concerning N.T. Wright is not that he is under the curse of Gal 1:8-9, but that his portrayal of the gospel—and of the doctrine of justification in particular—is so disfigured that it becomes difficult to recognize as biblically faithful" (15). If nothing else, Piper's book shows that the implications of the New Perspective on Paul have filtered down from scholars to the pastoral leaders of the Reformed tradition.

In this particular vein, Piper is to be commended for writing this book. Were there not more clergy who took NT scholarship seriously and bothered to engage it! With that commendation made, however, the rest of this review will focus on why Piper's overall argument is unpersuasive or, more specifically, fails to convince readers that it is a true argument. In my capacity as reviewer and in my own fledgling academic career, I have no stock in N.T. Wright or the New Perspective on Paul, and this review is not an attempt to support either.

The biggest problem for this study is that often Piper's criticisms of Wright amount to highly-questionable exegetical and theological method. For example, while gently but clearly stating his support for systematic theology over biblical theology (a crucial factor itself for understanding Piper's complaints), Piper surprisingly warns readers *against* (!) appealing to the first-century context of the NT for understanding its texts: "The claim to interpret a biblical author in terms of the first century is generally met with the assumption that this will be illuminating. . . . But common sense tells us that first-century ideas can be used (inadvertently) to distort and silence what the NT writers intended to say" (34). This dangerous approach is again on display when Piper says, "We all need to be reminded that the last two hundred years of biblical scholarship is the story not just of *systematic* categories obscuring the biblical text, but, even more dramatically, of a steady stream of *first-century ideas* sweeping scholarship along and then evaporating in the light of stubborn clarity of the biblical texts" (35; emphases original). True enough, evidence has as much capacity to confuse as it does to illumine. And Piper is willing to acknowledge that systematic categories can obscure the text. But, Piper's noting that the dangers of appealing to the first-century context are "more dramatic," his subtle enlisting of "common sense" and "the stubborn clarity of the biblical texts" on the side of those who give primacy to systematic categories over the text's historical context, who are not swept away by the "steady stream" of first-century ideas, is seriously problematic and a clear attempt to allow theological categories to have the final say in matters of interpretation. That one should consider this as loading the dice for his engagement with Wright is an understatement.

Similarly, elsewhere Piper claims with regard to the doctrine of justification, "There is as much riding on this truth as could ride on any truth in the Bible" (14). This is hardly true for Christendom. Could one honestly say that there is as much

riding on the biblical teaching on justification as there is, say, the biblical teaching on Jesus' resurrection?

Furthermore, with these statements in mind, consider Piper's criticism of Wright: "One of the impressions one gets in reading N.T. Wright is that large conceptual frameworks are brought to the text of the NT from outside and are providing a lens through which the meaning is seen" (38). This criticism of Wright, in a book on justification with Martin Luther on the cover, and whose author identifies his "fathers" in the faith as Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Owen, Jonathan Edwards, et al. (11), is so ironic that it borders on the absurd.

These statements and others like it make one hesitant of Piper's argument before he or she ever gets to his interpretation of Pauline texts. Piper's overall problem with Wright seems simply to be that the latter has attempted to talk about Paul and justification in a language and theological framework other than that of Luther and the Reformed tradition. In this sense, the book as a whole has a very reactionary and defensive tone rather than one of true intellectual engagement. Since there are some very fine full engagements on this important issue from those within the Reformed camp, Piper's book is a disappointment.

CHRIS KEITH

Assistant Professor of New Testament and Christian Origins
Lincoln Christian University

David Alan BLACK, ed. *Perspectives on the Ending of Mark: 4 Views*. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2008. 145 pp. \$19.99.

This addition to Broadman & Holman's Perspectives series springs from a conference held in April 2007 at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina, where the editor and three other scholars defended four different views of the text critical problem at the ending of Mark's Gospel. Daniel B. Wallace argued that Mark deliberately ended the Gospel at 16:8, while J.K. Elliott supported the lost ending theory. Maurice A. Robinson defended the originality of 16:9-20, and Black presented a complicated reconstruction in which the bulk of Mark's Gospel represents a live transcription of Peter's speeches and 16:9-20 represents a Marcan postscript to Peter's reminiscences. The book concludes with a response to the four essays by Darrell L. Bock, in which he agrees with Wallace that the Gospel originally ended at 16:8 by the author's choice.

The four main chapters retain aspects of their oral presentation, a feature that makes for easy reading. The book leaves it unclear whether Bock presented his paper at the conference or wrote it later in response to the others' chapters; internal evidence suggests he wrote it later. The book shows signs of careful editing, typesetting, and proofreading; and it contains a useful index to the names of scholars cited in the text.

The first three essays contain little that will appear new to readers familiar with the issues. Wallace, Elliott, and Robinson defend the three major views: short ending, lost ending, and long ending, respectively. Their able summaries of the best evidence for their views will make the book worthwhile as an introduction to the subject. However, readers new to the topic should know that Black's reconstruc-

tion (especially 116-120) represents a minority view to say the least. In fairness to Black, one should note that he organized the conference but did not intend to make himself one of the speakers until his seminary's president urged him to.

Bock's summary chapter presents a clear, direct analysis of the subject, along with an argument for the originality of the shorter ending that seconds Wallace's conclusions. Bock also spends three pages (138-140) refuting Black's view, a refutation which Black to his credit lets stand without comment.

Bock cites *SCJ*'s own Lee Magness with hearty approval for his work *Marking the End: Sense and Absence in the Gospel of Mark* (134-135). In addition, Bock twice uses the wonderfully descriptive term "brittle fundamentalism" (126-127) to describe a way of thinking that bases faith on particular text critical conclusions.

CARL B. BRIDGES
 Professor of New Testament
 Johnson Bible College

Craig R. KOESTER. *The Word of Life: A Theology of John's Gospel*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008. 245 pp. \$21.00.

A place for systematic theology certainly exists, though without proper caution it can result in the erosion of the various textures of the documents, diminishing the diversity of the writers. In the current volume, Koester preserves the distinctiveness of the fourth Gospel, engaging it fully and expounding what it has to say. A multitude of subjects are considered from John's perspective. The reader ends up with a theology that is not forced into a prefashioned mold but rather one that reflects John's sentiments as revealed in his writing.

The book begins with Koester dealing with some preliminary matters relating to the origin of John, the literary devices therein, the perspective of the author, etc. These issues are not belabored since they are not overly pertinent, though ample resources are provided for further reading. Attention is also given to questions that have been considered throughout the history of the church as Christ's followers have sought to understand the implications of what John says regarding things like Jesus' identity and the work of the Spirit.

Chapters 2–8 are the real meat of the work. In them, Koester expositis John's theology of God, the world and its people, Jesus, the crucifixion and resurrection, the Spirit, faith (present and future), and discipleship in the community and the world. His familiarity with and cohesive synthesis of John is refreshing. Though some of his deductions seem to be a bit of a stretch, Koester regularly provides insightful reflections on how John viewed different subjects. These claims are grounded in numerous passages, the contexts of which are consistently recognized (and skillfully laid out).

When topics come up that are notoriously divisive, such as man's role in the salvation process or the activity of the Spirit in the life of a believer, Koester does not betray a commitment of his to either side. Instead, he frames the issue in light of what can be gleaned from John. The thing is, John often is not concerned with the questions that are brought to the text. Koester does not make him answer questions that he did not directly address.

This volume serves as a valuable tool in helping one get inside of John's head and make sense of the more confusing passages in the fourth Gospel while also seeing new depth to those that are more seemingly simple. It is not always the most exciting of reads and, largely due to the topical nature of the book, occasionally repeats certain points, but it evidences a solid grasp of John and fairly catalogues his theology.

STUART PAUL
Cincinnati Christian University

Tom THATCHER, ed. *Jesus, the Voice, and the Text: Beyond the Oral and the Written Gospel*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2008. 317 pp. \$39.95.

This volume celebrates the twenty-fifth anniversary of Werner Kelber's *The Oral and the Written Gospel*. Thatcher opens with a summary of Kelber's work and then reports a short interview with Kelber in which he explains his current thinking on a number of media-critical issues. Unfortunately, Thatcher asks more than one interesting question that Kelber never answers, and these questions relate especially to problematic aspects of the former's work (35, 39-40).

Richard Horsley examines the implications of Kelber's work for Markan composition. As in his previous work, Horsley focuses intensely on the text's political and economic dimensions. Horsley, like Kelber, risks reifying some concepts (oral tradition, orality) even as he demonstrates the inappropriateness of other reifications (reading, written text). The problem, however, may be rooted in Horsley's focus on composition; his comments regarding Mark's appropriation—its reception—helpfully open up avenues for investigating the confluence of written text, cultural tradition, oral performance, and social context.

Joanna Dewey provides a point-by-point rebuttal of Kelber's thesis that Mark displaces pre-Markan oral Jesus tradition, first by arguing that Mark does not reject "oral authorities," then by challenging the notion of a "dearth of sayings in Mark's gospel" (78). Finally, she deconstructs Kelber's opposition orality/life and scribality/death. Despite her persistent opposition to Kelber's reading of Mark, Dewey acknowledges significant points of agreement with Kelber. Like Kelber, Dewey unhelpfully essentializes certain concepts (orality, oral tradition) and assumes a Great Divide between writing and speaking: "[Mark] remains fundamentally on the oral side of the oral/written divide" [!] (86).

In her analysis of the textual remains of oral and written storytelling in ancient Mediterranean contexts, Holly Hearon explores the language used to refer to storytelling, the media dynamics at play in various genres and contexts of storytelling, and the functions storytelling performed. Hearon allows the oral/aural dimensions of written texts to extend beyond merely "reading aloud" and asks how written traditions functioned in ancient contexts. She identifies three distinctions between oral and written media (103-106) but also acknowledges a greater complexification "than simply movement from one medium to another" (109).

Jonathan Draper examines the vice lists in the *Didache* and parallel traditions from the perspective of the Luba "memory board." Draper identifies "a series of verbal pegs" that hold the lists together as instances of the same tradition and which

are “positioned in relation to the others purposively and yet capable of being read as chains in several directions” (119). Thus textual expressions of the vice lists do not “freeze” the tradition or lock it into a specific form but are instances of the tradition which relate to other instances in multiple ways.

April DeConick emphasizes the role of human memory in the transmission and transcription of Jesus tradition and laments the failure of biblical scholarship to engage in empirical experimentation in its theorizing the dynamics of ancient traditioning processes. DeConick reports the results of two experiments and focuses on two general points. First, she insists that experimentation provides limits that theorizing alone cannot. Second, she suggests that the use of written sources can be detected (i) when sayings material appears more stable than surrounding narrative material, and (ii) when we find “verbatim strings of sixteen or more words and exact reproductions of sayings and narratives” (178; see the work of McIver and Carroll).

Arthur Dewey’s essay locates *euangelion* (“gospel”) “within the imperial atmosphere of the Roman Principate” and draws *euangelion*’s “primary meaning from the propagandistic activity of the Roman Empire” (182). While imperial dynamics clearly contextualize every facet of NT discourse, Dewey’s analysis distorts the relationship between early Jesus and Pauline traditions and their Roman environs by neglecting wider and equally relevant contexts. For example, surely Septuagintal uses of *euangelizō* and *euangelizomai* also provide relevant “echo chambers” in which the Pauline *euangelion* resonated among his readers.

Chris Keith and Tom Thatcher address Kelber’s thesis that Mark’s passion narrative is out-of-place in an oral milieu and reflects text-based agenda. They accept Kelber’s rejection of a fixed, stable, pre-Markan passion narrative but disagree that Mark, four decades after the historical Jesus, disrupts the oral Jesus tradition by inventing the passion genre. Keith and Thatcher provide comparative and concrete arguments that they either faced squarely the memory of Jesus’ death early on or found their social world dissolved into meaninglessness.

Alan Kirk examines the interface of orality, writing, and memory. Though much of this essay concerns the textual transmission of written tradition, Kirk demonstrates that the flexibility and multiformity encapsulated in Paul Zumthor’s *mouvance* (originally applied to oral poetry) characterizes scribal phenomena as well. Kirk takes seriously the communal function of scribes as more than Xerox machines—and defective ones at that!—but rather as embodiments of their communities’ traditions and the identities sustained thereby.

Finally, Kelber himself closes with an autobiographical retrospect summarizing the aims and results of his work and briefly responding to select points from earlier essays. This closing essay makes vivid the development and maturation of Kelber’s theoretical perspective from 1983 to the present, though Kelber also takes pains to note (and document) the scholarship that preceded and enabled his own media-critical program.

This volume provides a helpful look at media studies, which have been slowly but steadily gaining momentum and attention in the academy. These essays also make important contributions to media studies, especially those that complicate and nuance the function of written texts in first-century cultural perspectives and the oral/aural appropriation of traditions mediated by, among other things, those

texts. For anyone looking for a concise introduction to media studies and Christian origins, or for those of us already engaged in such studies, this volume provides helpful and accessible discussions of many of the significant issues.

RAFAEL RODRÍGUEZ
Assistant Professor of New Testament
Johnson Bible College

David A. FIENSY. *Jesus the Galilean: Soundings in a First Century Life.* Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2007. 296 pp. \$89.00.

It is a rare (and fun) occasion when a book makes its readers wish that they had written it. That is precisely what David Fiensy's latest volume does. This masterpiece of a monograph is sound in a multitude of ways. It draws on a wide array of sources from ancient Jewish and Greco-Roman literature to modern social-science approaches, it is sensitive to ancient culture and conversant with modern biblical scholarship—it is, in a word, thorough.

Segmented into seven sections, after the preface, Fiensy offers an introduction, he follows that up with four chapters (each focused on a select passage from Mark's Gospel account) and then concludes with a denouement-like postscript. In the prologue, Fiensy remarks, "The key to understanding Jesus is in the sources" (xv). From there, Fiensy reasons that "those who aspire to interpret the New Testament must face two principle difficulties. The first is learning the biblical languages; the second is becoming familiar with the cognate literature" (6).

Unsurprisingly, Fiensy excels in these areas. This is seen immediately in chapter one where Fiensy offers an in-depth survey of archaeology in Galilee. As he notes, "The quest for the historical Jesus is at the same time a quest for the historical Galilee" (26). Thus, Fiensy's research comes to bear on the text of Mark 6:1-4. He is concerned, in the main, with the question: What was it like for Jesus, a carpenter, to grow up in Galilee? (27). In addition to his explanation of carpentry as Jesus' trade, Fiensy adds further insights such as: a) due to his employment, Jesus must not have experienced poverty or destitution, and b) as an itinerant carpenter, Jesus became familiar with travel routes and made many personal connections that later benefited him in his formal ministry.

The second chapter, which seeks out the context of Mark 10:17-22, asks which interpreter had it right, Anthony of Egypt who took it literally and sold all he owned or Clement of Alexandria who rejected such an approach and attempted to read it on a "higher theological plane"? (90). Drawing heavily on the work of E.P. Sanders and Max Weber, Fiensy concludes that as a "charismatic leader," there were three tiers (130) of discipleship that Jesus instituted: (1) closest disciples—who were called to abandon family, land, and more; (2) slightly more remote followers—called to support the ministry but not to abandon all; (3) still more remote sympathizers or supporters—who were bidden to simply help sustain the ministry. According to Fiensy, Jesus was asking the rich young man to be part of group one, but the fellow declined. From this standpoint, then, Fiensy suggests that Anthony was more on target with his interpretation than Clement. Though Fiensy's conclusions add up well, at the end of the day, it seems that he too easily discounts infor-

mation, which suggests that Jesus was neither poor, homeless, or contrary toward wealth. As Fiensy himself notes, even ‘level three followers’ were often wealthy supporters of the movement.

In the third chapter, Mark 7:1-5 is analyzed. This is one of the most valuable portions of the book as Fiensy illustrates how Mishnaic texts help make sense of this Markan passage. In short, Fiensy contends that contrary to popular opinion, Jesus valued and maintained purity laws. In the pericope mentioned above, Jesus is simply criticizing Pharisaic *halakah* which He disagrees with. Again, in this chapter Fiensy’s offerings of archaeological, inter- and extratextual evidences as well as his sociological insights are noteworthy. Chapter four also proves that both Fiensy and his scholarship are nothing short of first rate. In this final chapter, Fiensy mines the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha for insights into Mark 11:15-17 and 14:57-58. In addition to these resources, he builds on his work in the previous study and shows that Jesus was a law-observant and temple-appreciating Jew. Though many may reject Fiensy’s conclusions here—for example, the reason for Jesus’ anger and Jesus’ eschatological understanding of Himself—one must take into consideration the mass of evidence that he founds his deduction upon. The final portion of the book is a helpful postscript where Fiensy “connects the dots” and combines the results of all of his findings.

In conjunction with the great amount of research put into and offered in this volume, Fiensy provides helpful tables, photos, and points of application. Highest praise is offered on behalf of this book, and though it is rather costly, it is a ‘must have’ for anyone with an interest in Markan or NT studies. And while many might wish they had written this book, it is certainly a good thing that someone of Fiensy’s caliber produced it—he did an excellent job!

T. MICHAEL W. HALCOMB
Asbury Theological Seminary

Charles B. PUSKAS and David CRUMP. *An Introduction to the Gospels and Acts.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008. 210 pp. \$19.00.

Scholarly introductions to the Gospels have traditionally excluded any discussion of the book of Acts, even though scholarly consensus holds that Luke-Acts was a two-volume work. Puskas and Crump have attempted to fill a niche in the market with an introduction to the Gospels that includes Luke-Acts as one (two-part) literary unit. The book begins with two critical chapters that set the stage for study of the Gospels: discussion of the historical backgrounds of the first century, and presentation of the major elements of Gospels criticism (source, form, redaction). With the historical foundation set, the authors then proceed to offer literary and thematic overviews of Mark, Matthew, Luke-Acts, and John respectively.

One of the great contributions of this book is the first chapter, “The Historical Context of the Gospels and Acts.” The authors provide a fantastic introduction to the culture and history of both Greco-Roman and Jewish societies. The authors claim that a sketch of both is necessary, and they provide a rich panorama of detail. Readers will no doubt expect more developed presentations on various topics (e.g., emperor worship, socioeconomic diversity). But this is not a book of specialties. It

is an introduction, and they provide exactly that, including all the pertinent details for the first-century novice to grasp the complexities of the time in which the Evangelists composed their Gospels.

One of the primary purposes for the collaboration of Puskas and Crump was to provide a healthy tension between an evangelical viewpoint (Crump) and a more mainline approach to historical criticism (Puskas). Their intent is to withhold their own opinions, present the facts, and let the reader determine the best conclusion. In their own words, “we have decided that rather than asserting a certain set of conclusions, whether liberal, conservative, critical, or traditional, we will invite our readers to share in the debate. We believe that this approach will better serve the purposes of education as opposed to indoctrination” (ix).

While the ambition is noble, every author comes to a writing project with a set of assumptions that naturally warrant defense, and this text is no different. Herein lies the major weakness of this book. This text often drops the subtle seeds of mainline biblical studies without any warrant, explanation, or opposing conservative viewpoint. Assumptions about multiplicity of authors in Isaiah (27, 131), the existence of the controversial Q document (51-55), a single anointing of Jesus developed in two traditions (156-157), and conclusion about only a single disruption in the Temple by Jesus (72) all make their way into the presentation. More conservative readers will find themselves challenging these assumptions and possibly the conclusions they warrant. Savvy readers will come to this text understanding that authors naturally defend their positions in spite of claims to objectivity. In spite of its major weakness, this is a good text for introducing the complex issues involved in NT criticism. Conservative readers and teachers must simply be aware of the mainline viewpoint from which it originates.

With this in mind, the current volume will serve well as a course text on the Gospels and Acts for entry-level seminary studies, and a complementary viewpoint for those in more conservative settings. Puskas and Crump do provide a formidable defense for their overall positions, and any serious student of the NT will benefit from the presentation they provide. At every turn the ideas presented here are supported with credible argumentation and supporting historical and literary evidence. Even long-standing students of the Gospels and Acts will find the ideas presented here challenging and informative.

LES HARDIN

Associate Professor of New Testament
Florida Christian College

Michael F. BIRD. *Introducing Paul: The Man, His Mission and His Message.* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2008. 192 pp. \$20.00.

Convinced that the issues Paul confronted in his churches have much to say to today’s church, Michael Bird offers an introduction to Paul’s life, work, and theology. His target audience includes undergraduates, laypersons, and ministers seeking a refresher on Paul.

To begin, Bird briefly explores Paul’s roles as persecutor, missionary, theologian, pastor, and martyr, which forms somewhat of a skeleton for the remainder of

the book. These sections include cautions—especially helpful for readers new to Pauline studies—against tendencies to reduce Paul’s background to either Jewish or Greek and to forget the occasional nature of Paul’s letters. Bird then unearths the stories beneath Paul’s letters by delving into the narratives of creation, Adam, Abraham, Israel, Jesus, and the church. These discussions function as a foundation for the later chapters on Paul’s theology. Before proceeding there, however, he dedicates a chapter to brief summaries (anywhere from one-half to three pages) of each of Paul’s letters (including all of the disputed letters), in which he touches on issues such as the historical background, purpose, and unity of each.

Bird then dedicates four chapters to an exploration of Paul’s gospel. This involves an explication of what Paul’s gospel is not (namely, a list of linear propositions), the conclusion that Paul’s gospel is the story of both the person and work of Christ (based on 1 Cor 15:3-5, Rom 1:1-4, and 2 Tim 2:8), and an engaging discussion on the gospel in the Roman Empire. He probes the significance of the concepts of righteousness, reconciliation, and redemption, to name a few, and reflects on Paul’s eschatology and “messianic monotheism” (125).

In the final two chapters Bird discusses Paul’s ethics and spirituality. On ethics, he unpacks Paul’s understanding of the law and grace, explores four areas from which Paul draws his ethics, intimates Paul’s distinction between convictions and commands, and lays out Paul’s view on women and sex. Paul’s spirituality, he says, breaks down into two parts: cruciformity, or being “shaped in accord with the cross of Christ” (162), and anastasisity, or being “made alive by the power of Christ’s resurrection” (166). Bird emphatically reminds the reader that the cross cannot be reduced to a means of salvation—it is also the pattern of life that Christians are called to follow. Furthermore, in order to balance out evangelical theology’s “healthy fixation on the cross” (166), he points out that the resurrection is more than simply proof of the work of the cross; it enables Christians to experience life-giving power in the present and hope for the future.

Bird presents difficult concepts with clarity and accessibility through diagrams and charts (Paul’s chronology) and creative analogies. He prevents the reader from information overload by looking at the big picture (the stories behind the story and summaries of the epistles) before moving to the more complex issues. He introduces the important concepts and terms (e.g., eschatology, Gnosticism) with enough information to orient but not enough to overwhelm. At times, however, he refers to ancient people (Livy, Plutarch, Philo) with little, if any, introduction. Bird incorporates important components of Pauline scholarship (Paul’s knowledge of the historical Jesus, difficulties in reconstructing Paul’s chronology from Acts and the epistles, various atonement theories) while avoiding burdensome technicalities.

Although Bird includes an explicit list of Pauline issues that are relevant today, “divorce . . . , confronting aberrant doctrines, fund-raising, fostering unity” (14), he makes only a few parallels with such issues today (homosexuality being a notable inclusion). He discusses Paul’s advice on such issues but does not adequately address hermeneutics, which seems necessary in light of his desire “to show that what Paul has to say to the church today is both relevant and riveting” (5). An appendix with recommended readings would not only inform the reader of the

diversity of views amongst Pauline scholars but also would prove helpful for a curious reader who wants to dig more deeply than Bird does. Surprisingly, Bird offers no more than a footnote on the topic of disputed authorship in the Pauline corpus. Although this note sufficiently presents the debate over the Pastorals, it lacks a discussion on the other disputed letters. A declaration of his position on Pauline authorship is unnecessary in a book of this nature, but his unreserved use of all the disputed letters is telling.

This book would be a useful and accessible resource for Bird's target audience (laypersons and undergraduates), though probably only lower-level undergraduates or non Bible-majors. While the book's strengths are numerous, its weaknesses remain problematic in light of the multitude of other high-quality books written as introductions to Paul.

HEATHER GORMAN
Ph.D. Candidate
Baylor University

Yung Suk KIM. *Christ's Body in Corinth: The Politics of a Metaphor.* Paul in Critical Contexts Series, Fortress, 2008. 256 pp. \$29.00.

Kim, assistant professor of New Testament and Early Christianity, Samuel DeWitt Proctor School of Theology of Virginia Union University (Richmond, VA), balances his interest in Jewish and Christian theology with a deep passion for cultural applications of such interests, especially pertaining to groups often marginalized. Kim's new book reflects this balanced passionate concern. Excluding the introduction and conclusion (chapter 6), the core of this work (chapters 1–5) focuses on two primary concerns: methodology and historical context.

With regard to methodology, Kim outlines three common ways in which the "body of Christ" (*soma Christou*) metaphor has been interpreted and applied to the community in Corinth. Kim labels these approaches as: "boundary-protected," "boundary overcoming," and "apocalyptic" (11). The first represents a *soma Christou* that is self-focused, exclusive, and elitist, thus making identity with Christ the sole possession of those within the community (chapter 1). The second characterizes *soma Christou* as others-focused, expansionist, and welcoming of all who wish to become one, thus making identity with Christ universally available but with some conditions (chapter 2). Finally, the third denotes a *soma Christou* that is God-ordained, participatory, and spiritually liberating for all people, thus establishing an atmosphere conducive for diversity (chapter 3).

With regard to the historical context, the cultural setting in which the "body" metaphor typically occurred receives due attention (chapter 4). For Kim, the educational or political elite generally employed the metaphor in order to advocate a hegemonic unity (39-49). As a result, the socially marginalized go unheard in spite of the legitimacy of their protest against those in power (49-50). Kim then sees the disturbance in Corinth as a microcosm of this larger socially oppressive tendency and portrays Paul as the one who intercedes for the marginalized (51-54). Accordingly, powerful individuals within the community are advocating a *soma Christou* that is hegemonic and oppressive. Paul responds to these individuals and

exposes their abuse of power (56-63)—an abuse that reflects their disconnect from living “up to Christ’s life and death” (54).

Kim then turns his attention to the *soma Christou* metaphor as understood by Paul, especially in 1 Corinthians (chapter 5). At this point, the argument of the book takes a distinctive turn—one that contains a number of significant features: the metaphor’s use in Paul’s undisputed vs. the so-called Deutero-Pauline letters (65-66, 69); the ways in which Paul nuances the term *soma* (66-67); the ethical and theological implications of reading *soma Christou* in a particular way (68-71)—namely, “as an attributed genitive” thus producing the idea of a “*christic* body” (67); an outline for reading 1 Corinthians according to a “discursive structure” (70, 71-73), followed by an explanation of the implications that emerge from this reading (73-78); and finally, a theological exploration of two sets of interrelated Pauline themes related to the *soma Christou*: cross/faith, community/love, and transformation/hope (80-95).

The positive aspects of Kim’s work, especially with regard to Pauline studies, can be found within his conclusion (chapter 6). Kim carries forward the critical hermeneutic that seeks to hear from the marginalized by clearing away obstacles (i.e., interpretations) that otherwise hinder their voice from being heard. This hermeneutic therefore seeks to provide an atmosphere in which all are welcome in Christ. “As long as there are others who are not part of the community, the community is undone” (98). This represents a hermeneutical move that needs serious and careful consideration.

While varied, the weaknesses of Kim’s work are related to methodological decisions. Kim’s designation of a “two-step” indicative-imperative ethic being found in the Deutero-Pauline letters and a “one-step” embodiment ethic in the undisputed letters is difficult to maintain. The indicative-imperative tension emerges as well in the undisputed letters (Rom 6:22 and 6:12; Gal 5:25; 1 Cor 5:7). Also, Kim argues against the notions of unity, body, and communal harmony, or “concord” (*homonoia*) (42-44), and their application to the Corinthian community because such ideas emerge from the powerful elite (71; cf. 4) and they do not allow for differences and diversity (3). However, Kim overlooks scholarly treatments that argue for a modified notion of a unified body—one that embraces diversity and does so in a harmonious and Christ-like manner (M. Volf, *Exclusion & Embrace*), thus remaining in step with Paul’s argument. As a result, Kim downplays the programmatic statements of 1 Cor 1:10 and 12:27, which do suggest a unified, harmonious existence that allows for diversity. This then causes him to miss the apologetic implications of a harmonious society in the ancient world, especially a society claiming allegiance to a particular God.

Kim’s book might be best served within an academic setting as well as for those desiring to engage with critical issues in Pauline scholarship. While some may disagree with various lines of argument in the book, Kim’s overall plea for the loving embrace of all people in the name of Christ cannot be ignored. Thus, the motivation behind Kim’s book will certainly have a bearing on discussions related to Christian mission—both locally and globally.

CARL S. SWEATMAN
Ph.D. Candidate
University of Gloucestershire

Ben WITHERINGTON III. *1 and 2 Thessalonians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006. 318 pp. \$30.00.

Ben Witherington, one of biblical scholarship's most prolific exegetes, has done it again: he has published a promising commentary that abounds with fresh and invaluable insights. In what has become a sort of signature mark for Witherington, this one-volume work on Paul's two Thessalonian correspondences is cast in a socio-rhetorical mould. One of the motives underlying Witherington's study is that, in the past, commentators have often overlooked and undervalued both the social and rhetorical features of these Pauline documents; thus, he intends to curb such oversights. Expectedly, then, Witherington's cadre of innovative findings often lead him to critique popularly held views and theologies that, at least in part, are claimed to have been extracted from the Thessalonian works. Yet, while Witherington occasionally attempts to untangle such misinterpretations, readers are never left second-guessing where he stands on a given passage or topic.

For example, from a rhetorical standpoint, Witherington argues—quite aggressively—that in order to correctly understand 1 and 2 Thessalonians, the epideictic character of the first work and the deliberative tenor of the second, must be grasped (21). Further, and just as unabashedly, he contends that these writings are neither pseudonymous (13) nor strictly epistolary (16-21). In fact, he asserts that while the initial text is representative of a homily (albeit with epistolary elements, 29), its counterpart is to be taken as a deliberative argument that both reiterates the homily and addresses new issues that have cropped up since its composition and delivery. Witherington also argues that after Galatians, these Thessalonian texts are Paul's earliest works—the first written from Corinth in AD 51 (10) and the second a year or two later, from Ephesus (or Corinth; 35).

As for context, it is Witherington's contention that both Silas and Timothy partnered with Paul in founding the Thessalonian church (9). Yet, their missionary efforts did not go unhindered; idleness and idolatry were major hurdles they would have to face. In fact, the idle whom Paul refers to in these texts are occasionally also the idolaters. Thus, the social situation, according to Witherington, resembles a type of trickle-down patronage system where many of the wealthy in Thessalonike were allegiant patrons and devotees of the Roman Empire. As such, and as society's elite, they were not *only* patrons but *also* themselves benefactors. Thus, one of their duties in such roles was to acquire clients who, for a quick buck, would spread the fame and honor of the Empire. Paul viewed such a job as idleness. Yet, the apostle's main sticking point with such a vocation was that it often led to idolatry: paying homage to and promoting an Empire that stood in stark contrast to God and His mission (247-250).

Other points of interest in Witherington's commentary come at junctures, such as his discussion of "the Restrainer" in 2 Thess 2:6. Expanding on the work of C.R. Nicholl, Witherington argues that the Restrainer—who is holding back the Lawless One—is none other than the archangel Michael (208-212). Also worthy of note is Witherington's thoroughgoing critique of Calvinistic and Dispensationalist readings of the Thessalonian correspondences—such critiques are sprinkled throughout the entire book. Just as Witherington denies any pseudonymous links to these

works, he also rejects both interpolation theories (82-83) and suggestions that Paul's eschatology was evolutionary in nature (235-237).

One of the major strengths of this commentary is that, while it is erudite, it is also accessible. On the one hand, Witherington provides his readers with "Closer Look" sections, which are often excurses that offer the reader in-depth insights into the ancient context of these documents. On the other hand, he includes a number of "Bridging the Horizons" segments, portions of the work that, being more homiletical in nature, seek to provide the reader with modern-day principles of application. While, homiletically speaking, a number of the "Bridging" sections might be tightened-up (see for instance, pages 201-204 where nearly the entire discussion is focused on Romans 12, not necessarily 2 Thess 1:11-12), all in all, Witherington's efforts here are greatly appreciated. Besides tidying up a few typographical mistakes that occur in both English (16, where "strength" should be "strengthened") and Greek (72, where *thilipsis* should be *thlipsis*), the only other thing that might make this commentary more functional is a subject index—though such indices are atypical of Witherington's works.

As with the majority of Witherington's works, this volume is an example of excellent biblical scholarship. Witherington's expertise on Paul, his fair treatment of both the Jewish and Greco-Roman backdrops, sensitivity to the oral and aural contexts, and his knowledge of both primary and secondary sources all contribute to making this an outstanding commentary. As Witherington closes in on completing his set of commentaries on the entire NT, we celebrate his achievement with him and hope to benefit from many more years of his wisdom and labors.

T. MICHAEL W. HALCOMB
Asbury Theological Seminary

Craig L. BLOMBERG and Mariam J. KAMELL. *James. Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament.* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008. 280 pp. \$24.99.

The publication of this volume introduces a new commentary series. While it is difficult to produce a new commentary today that provides something unique against the backdrop of many commentary sets in circulation, Zondervan has achieved this by creating a concept that blends elements evident in several commentary series. This concept also eliminates some of the elements that cause commentaries to be either inaccessible or laborious to laymen.

In its effort to be brief, this series does not detail all of the scholarly research, all of the theological insights, nor all the ranges of meaning for the words. This results in the series being more accessible to laymen and perhaps beginning students of the Greek language, without being a laborious task. On the negative side, this also "cuts short" many discussions which are longer in other commentary series.

This volume follows a similar pattern for exegesis that Blomberg has been using for many years while teaching exegesis through the Epistle of James. Blomberg, from Denver Seminary, has written many books and articles, especially on the Gospels, the parables, and the teachings of Jesus, written a commentary on 1 Corinthians, and

edited works on hermeneutics. Kamell, a Ph.D. candidate at University of Saint Andrews, draws from knowledge of James gained in her M.A. thesis from Denver Seminary and current research for her Ph.D. dissertation on soteriology in the book of James at the University of St. Andrews.

The “front matter” contains a series introduction, a cowritten preface, and a list of abbreviations. The main body of this volume contains a short introduction followed by a short bibliography, the main commentary, and a short summary of the theological content of the letter. The “back matter” contains three indices: scripture, subject, and author. The brevity of the introduction is offset by a number of footnotes that point the reader to resources for further discussion.

The main commentary is laid out in paragraph sections. Each paragraph is then examined using seven components. In the first component, “literary context,” the authors show the reader how the current paragraph connects to the broader letter. In the second component, “main idea,” the reader finds a concise statement highlighting the central thought of the paragraph. The third component, “translation and graphical layout,” provides the reader with the author’s translation combined with a function of each clause in a graphical form. The fourth component, “structure,” details the author’s understanding of how the clauses fit into the paragraph. The fifth component, “exegetical outline,” gives the preacher or teacher an outline from which to prepare a lesson or sermon. The sixth component, “explanation of text,” provides a verse-by-verse analysis of the paragraph. The section includes the Greek text, syntactical decisions, and scholarly discussion. An English translation precedes the Greek text every time a Greek word is referenced in the text, so that a background in Greek is not necessary to appreciate this volume. The final component in each paragraph of the main commentary, “theology and application,” highlights various theological aspects brought out in the paragraph. It is in this final section that the authors apply the themes of the paragraph to contemporary situations.

This volume is laid out in two columns, and the English and the Greek fonts are both easy to read. The footnotes occupy the bottom $\frac{1}{5}$ – $\frac{1}{2}$ of the page. Often, the footnotes are used to outline opinions that are different from the authors’. At other times, these footnotes are used to cite scholarly sources for syntactical decisions. Sometimes the footnotes also point to resources for further discussion. Few excursuses exist within this volume, but the ones that do exist address interpretative questions that arise from the paragraph.

Several features serve to recommend this volume to the serious biblical scholar. This volume approaches the book of James by treating it as a unified letter. This is a welcome feature when many commentaries treat the Epistle of James as a disjointed letter. Also, this volume provides a fairly conservative interpretation of James, while making several connections with Liberation Theology. At many key junctures in the text, this volume discusses the Greek syntax in detail, even reaching decisions that appear to be an improvement over other commentaries.

A couple of items stand out as problems within the volume. At several junctures the discussion of the Greek text is rather light, so that thoroughness enjoyed at the key junctures is not balanced throughout. This volume does not develop word studies in detail and merely summarizes the data or references another source for

the reader. Most of these limitations are most likely due to the structure imposed on the series.

Serious biblical scholars cannot ignore this volume, since it develops syntactical understanding in new directions in several places, but they will need to supplement this volume with other volumes which cover the introductory matter, scholarly debates, and word studies in greater detail. This volume can be used in a variety of settings, including sermon preparation, lesson preparation, small group study, and scholarly research. It is easily read and can be read by a person with no background in Greek, and yet offers the serious Greek student many exegetical insights as well. This volume is best used in an undergraduate or seminary setting either as the main text or as a supplementary text for an exegetical course on James.

JAMES SEDLACEK
Cincinnati Christian University

LIST OF BOOKS REVIEWED IN THIS ISSUE

- Richard J. Chero, *Debating for God: Alexander Campbell's Challenge to Skepticism in Antebellum America* (Bob Ritchie, Florida Christian College)
- Garth M. Rosell, *The Surprising Work of God: Harold John Ockenga, Billy Graham, and the Rebirth of Evangelicalism* (Richard J. Chero, Cincinnati Christian University)
- Barry Hankins, *American Evangelicals: A Contemporary History of a Mainstream Religious Movement* (Michael Hines, Consortium of Christian Colleges for Distance Learning)
- Camille K. Lewis, *Romancing the Difference: Kenneth Burke, Bob Jones University, and the Rhetoric of Religious Fundamentalism* (Mark S. Joy, Jamestown College)
- Thomas S. Kidd, *American Christians and Islam: Evangelical Culture and Muslims from the Colonial Period to the Age of Terrorism* (Craig D. Katzenmiller, Lipscomb University)
- Antony Flew and Roy Abraham Varghese, *There Is a God: How the World's Most Notorious Atheist Changed His Mind* (Richard J. Chero, Cincinnati Christian University)
- Thomas C. Oden, *How Africa Shaped the Christian Mind: Rediscovering the African Seedbed of Western Christianity* (Gie Vleugels, Evangelische Theologische Faculteit)
- Jeff Vines, *Dinner with Skeptics: Defending God in a World That Makes No Sense* (David Paddick, Jr., 17th Street Christian Church)
- Ron Highfield, *Great Is the Lord: Theology for the Praise of God* (John Castelein, Lincoln Christian University)
- Christopher J.H. Wright, *The God I Don't Understand: Reflections on Tough Questions of Faith* (Adam Graunke, Cincinnati, Ohio)
- Anthony C. Thiselton, *The Hermeneutics of Doctrine* (Bruce E. Shields, Emmanuel School of Religion)
- Jason E. Vickers, *Invocation and Assent: The Making and Remaking of Trinitarian Theology* (Mark E. Powell, Harding University Graduate School of Religion)
- John G. Stackhouse, Jr., *Making the Best of It: Following Christ in the Real World* (William R. Baker, Cincinnati Christian University—Graduate School)
- David Lyle Jeffrey and C. Stephen Evans, eds., *The Bible and the University* (Karen J. Diefendorf, Lincoln Christian University)
- Jeffrey B. Symynkywicz, *The Gospel according to Bruce Springsteen: Rock and Redemption, from Asbury Park to Magic* (Joshua R. Furnal, University of Durham)
- Greg Forster, *The Contested Public Square: The Crisis of Christianity and Politics* (James Gorman, Abilene Christian University)
- James R. Estep, Michael J. Anthony, and Gregg Allison, *A Theology for Christian Education* (Alvin W. Kuest, Great Lakes Christian College)
- Debra E. Harmon and Barbara J. Rhodes, *When the Minister Is a Woman* (J. Kristina Tenny-Brittian, Christian Church of Mid-America)
- Gary V. Nelson, *Borderland Churches: A Congregation's Introduction to Missional Living* (Casey Tygrett, Parkview Christian Church)
- James L. Mays, *Preaching and Teaching the Psalms* (Joe Grana, Hope International University)
- Stanley E. Porter, ed., *The Messiah in the Old and New Testaments* (Holly J. Carey, Atlanta Christian College)
- Bob Ekblad, *Reading the Bible with the Damned* (T. Michael W. Halcomb, Asbury Theological Seminary)
- Scot Mcknight, *The Blue Parakeet: Rethinking How You Read the Bible* (John C. Poirier, Kingswell Theological Seminary)
- Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., Darrell L. Bock, and Peter Enns, *Three Views on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (J. Blair Wilgus, University of Edinburgh)
- James K. Hoffmeier, *The Archaeology of the Bible* (Mark Ziese, Cincinnati Christian University)
- Davis A. Young and Ralph F. Stearley, *The Bible, Rocks, and Time* (Hugh Henry, Northern Kentucky University)
- Carol M. Bechtel, ed., *Touching the Altar: The Old Testament and Christian Worship* (Dinelle Frankland, Lincoln Christian University)
- M. Daniel Carroll R. and Jacqueline E. Lapsley, eds., *Character Ethics and the Old Testament: Moral Dimensions of Scripture* (Paul J. Kissling, TCMI Institute)
- Mark D. Futato, *Interpreting the Psalms: An Exegetical Handbook*, Handbooks for Old Testament Exegesis (Douglas Redford, Cincinnati Christian University)
- Constantine R. Campbell, *Basics of Verbal Aspect in Biblical Greek* (James Sedlacek, Cincinnati Christian University)
- John H. Armstrong, ed., *Understanding Four Views on the Lord's Supper*, Counterpoints: Church Life (Steven D. Cone, Lincoln Christian University)

- Russell Pregeant, *Knowing Truth, Doing Good: Engaging New Testament Ethics* (John Harrison, Oklahoma Christian University)
- Rita N. Brock and Rebecca A. Parker, *Saving Paradise: How Christianity Traded Love of This World for Crucifixion and Empire* (Wes Harrison, Ohio Valley University)
- John Piper, *The Future of Justification: A Response to N. T. Wright* (Chris Keith, Lincoln Christian University)
- Dale C. Allison, Jr., *The Historical Christ and the Theological Jesus* (Chris Keith, Lincoln Christian University)
- David Alan Black, ed., *Perspectives on the Ending of Mark: 4 Views* (Carl B. Bridges, Johnson Bible College)
- Craig R. Koester, *The Word of Life: A Theology of John's Gospel* (Stuart Paul, Cincinnati Christian University)
- Tom Thatcher, ed., *Jesus, the Voice, and the Text: Beyond the Oral and the Written Gospel* (Rafael Rodriguez, Johnson Bible College)
- David A. Fiensy, *Jesus the Galilean: Soundings in a First Century Life* (Michael Halcomb, Sadieville Christian Church)
- Charles B. Puskas and David Crump, *An Introduction to the Gospels and Acts* (Les Hardin, Florida Christian College)
- Michael F. Bird, *Introducing Paul: The Man, His Mission and His Message* (Heather Gorman, Baylor University)
- Yung Suk Kim, *Christ's Body in Corinth: The Politics of a Metaphor*, Paul in Critical Contexts Series (Carl S. Sweatman, University of Gloucestershire)
- Ben Witherington III, *1 and 2 Thessalonians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (T. Michael W. Halcomb, Asbury Theological Seminary)
- Craig L. Blomberg and Mariam J. Kamell, *James*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (James Sedlacek, Cincinnati Christian University)