Book Reviews

Dayton KEESEE. *Churches of Christ during the Civil War*. Fort Worth: Star Bible, 2006. 123 pp. $12.95.

During the past several years religious historians have given increased attention to the relationship between the American Civil War and the first major division that took place within the Stone-Campbell Restoration Movement. Keesee contributes to this discussion through this volume. His assertion that the Disciples of Christ did not divide during the Civil War is in line with the majority of American Restoration Movement historians. Like them, Keesee admits that the Civil War had a powerful impact on the Movement, but he stops short of claiming that the division was made reality by the epic North–South conflict.

Keesee's volume is broken into six chapters, all focused on the Civil War and the state of the Stone-Campbell Restoration Movement throughout the war. His first chapter deals with pre-Civil War developments and his concluding chapter details conditions in the country and within the Movement in the immediate years following the Civil War.

Though most likely confusing to some, Keesee uses the term "Churches of Christ" to apply to the entire Movement. This designation did not become readily used until after 1906 when it was officially recognized that division had taken place.

As Keesee delves into the subject of pacifism during the Civil War, he makes an interesting distinction between what he terms "religious pacifists" and "realistic pacifists." Keesee writes, "The former have scripture as their foundation, whereas the latter base their plea on arguments . . . from secular history and the horror of war. Most of the members of the Churches of Christ who took this position were "religious pacifists" (25). Keesee elaborates extensively on the pacifist position among the Disciples. He even includes the complete text of the "Missouri Manifesto," as well as lengthy quotes from Moses Lard and E.G. Sewell.

The emphasis on pacifism is attributed to Keesee's belief that it was the pacifists who sustained the fragile unity of the Disciples. He writes, "To say that the pacifists in the Churches of Christ, both in the North and in the South, did not wield a profound influence in the retaining of that unity would be to do them an injustice and leave a missing link in the chain that bound that brotherhood and held them together" (50).

Across from the pacifists stood other Disciples, like Isaac Errett, who believed that they were bound to obey their governing leaders. Keesee does not see any nobility in those who chose to fight. Rather, he claims that those who did so were "victims of the war spirit" (54). When Keesee does deal with a person very much involved in the conflict, such as James Garfield, he portrays a less than favorable impression. Using Garfield's opposition to slavery, Keesee unsuccessfully attempts to read Garfield's mind, as he inserts his commentary directly before a quote from a Garfield biographer. "It seemed to James A. Garfield that the abolition of slavery by force was God's way of showing his disapproval against the sin of slavery. . ." (56).

Another shortfall of the book is Keesee's comments on the slavery issue and its relation to the Disciples. In quoting some of the major voices on both sides of the issue, Keesee makes no mention of James Shannon, who was the most outspoken of the pro-slavery voices. Such an oversight does an injustice to the section on the slavery issue.

Keesee does admit to a sectional loyalty among Disciples during the Civil War. But he maintains that such sectionalism was simply a passing fancy. "This party spirit in the Churches of Christ reached its peak during the war. It lingered for a short time after the war. However, except in a few places and among a few people, it was soon gone" (104). What Keesee does believe is that the War illuminated differences between the Disciples that were not apparent before the War.

Keesee has crafted a book that will aid anyone desiring more information about the Civil War and its influence on the Disciples. He writes from the perspective of a member of the Churches of Christ (a cappella) and this tends to surface in his analysis. This volume contributes to a growing body of writing that will provide better understanding of the connection between culture and church, and how conflict within our own country can so easily lead to conflict within churches.

Ben Brewster
Airline Drive Church of Christ
Bossier City, Louisiana

Randall BALMER. *Thy Kingdom Come: How the Religious Right Distorts the Faith and Threatens America: An Evangelical's Lament.* New York: Basic, 2006. 242 pp. $24.95.

In 1925 Dayton's town fathers saw an opportunity to bring national attention to their little burg in east Tennessee. They met with John Scopes, a supply teacher, to obtain his cooperation in challenging the state law introduced by John Washington Butler that prohibited teaching Darwinism in Tennessee public schools. William Jennings Bryan argued the state's case in *Tennessee v Scopes.* Bryan, a three-time Democratic presidential nominee, led or boosted Progressivist causes: populism, temperance, the social Gospel, and the new Federal Council of Churches.

The quintessential Bryan, an early 20th-century evangelical, opposed Darwinism because he was appalled at the implications of social Darwinism. Bryan won his case, and the *Butler Act* stood till repealed in 1967. Clarence Darrow, however, won over the nation's opinion and cultural leaders. Evangelicals were split between those who withdrew into enclaves with their own schools and organizations and those who joined the ecumenical movement and "mainline Protestantism."

Randall Balmer presents himself as a child of both evangelicalism and "1968." As with so many of his generation, Balmer abandoned Christian faith and, later, returned to it. But he isn't happy that evangelicals oppose Darwinism and abortion, and support private and home-schooling and the "Religious Right" program of the Republican Party. Balmer argues that evangelicals entered the fray only when the IRS attempted to withdraw tax-exempt status from Bob Jones University in 1975. Only later did evangelicals come onside with Catholic opposition to *Roe v Wade* and abortion.

But there are problems. Balmer argues that the separation of church and state was a product of Baptist theology going back to Rhode Island and Danbury Baptists. Balmer wants 21st-century Baptists to act more like the Baptists of 17th-century Rhode Island or 18th-century Danbury. The Baptist separation doctrine goes back to the anabaptist *Schleitheim Confession* (1527), especially articles 'IV' and 'VI.' The articles required anabaptists and their theological heirs to remain separate from "the world" (IV) and from the state (VI). For some, separation even meant abstaining from voting and living in separate communities. Marginalized by the Church of England in Britain and by Puritans in New England, the separation doctrine led Baptists to oppose any established church as in the Danbury, Connecticut, Baptists' letter to Jefferson.

Balmer wants Baptists (and all evangelicals) to be "better Baptists"—to recover the separation doctrine. But he also wants evangelicals to advocate against poverty and for the environment. It's a key, albeit unintended, contradiction and paradox for a child of 1968. Religion in the public square gave birth to the civil rights movement led by Martin Luther King, Jr., a Baptist minister, as well as advocacy of "school prayer" and anti-Darwinism.

Not all evangelicals are anabaptists. At least until the 1920s, evangelicals took leading roles in the public square. The Progressivist movement was informed by an evangelical ethos. "Northern" evangelicals led the antebellum campaign against slavery. We could argue that the American Revolution was as much the offspring of the Great Awakening and the Massachusetts evangelical Samuel Adams, as it was born of the Enlightenment ethos of Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson.

A 1500-year tradition of Christian political reflection preceded *Schleitheim* and informed the 17th-century fathers of Modern political theory. This tradition considered the implications of Christ's "Caesar saying": "Render to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's" (Matt 22:21; Mark 12:17; Luke 20:25). As Oliver and Joan Lockwood O'Donovan show in *From Irenaeus to Grotius: A Sourcebook in Christian Political Thought, 100–1625* (Eerdmans, 1999) this tradition elaborated a theology of "dual authority": church and state. The anabaptist separation doctrine is not the only option.

I am more sympathetic to Balmer's broader concern: that evangelicalism not be synonymous with "the Religious Right" and the Republican Party. As Balmer points out, from January 2001 till this publication (July 2006, and on to January 2007), the Republican Party, its agenda set in large part by the Religious Right, controlled the White House and Congress. Yet Congress failed to pass a bill to overturn *Roe v Wade*. Of course, Congress can't. But could Congress and the President have done more?

As polemic, Balmer offers a stimulating read. His broader point is important. But this book should be read as it was written: in opposition to the Republican Religious Right. Balmer wants a Democratic Evangelical Left. For a graduate seminar on political theology, however, there is none better than the above-mentioned work by the O'Donovans. A better choice for the undergraduate classroom is David Koyzis, *Political Visions & Illusions: A Survey and Christian Critique of*

Contemporary Ideologies (InterVarsity, 2003) that offers critiques of "1789," "1917," and "1968" . . . as well as "1925."

Russ Kuykendall
Work Research Foundation
Laurentian Leadership Centre
Trinity Western University

Steven R. HARMON. *Towards Baptist Catholicity: Essays on Tradition and the Baptist Vision*. Exeter, UK: Paternoster, 2006. 275 pp. $30.00.

A move backwards is occurring towards the ancient ecumenical creeds and the retrieval of the early church fathers and "The Great Tradition" as a resource for renewing evangelical theology and practice today. The earliest Christian tradition is like a rediscovery of something long lost or a "restoration" of the riches and wisdom that has influenced two thousand years of the church's self-identity and mission.

One sees among some evangelicals and even the emergent movement a clarion call to what some identify as an "ancient-future church" from people like the late Robert Webber in worship renewal and the retrieval of ancient liturgies to evangelical publishers like Baker and Eerdmans that both have ancient commentary sets for pastors and church leaders and teachers. InterVarsity Press has published several works by Christopher Hall on the early church fathers and an edited work by Hall and Kenneth Tanner called *Ancient and Postmodern Christianity*.

Baker Books has gone the farthest by publishing a host of books on church history, ecumenicism, and ecclesiology by its subsidiary, Brazos Press, as well as a series of books by Baker Academic entitled *Evangelical Resourcement: Ancient Resources for the Church's Future*. Now Steven Harmon comes along and gives the most comprehensive and detailed examination in how Baptists in particular can renew their tradition and faith by reclaiming its historical roots and "Baptist Catholicity."

Patristic scholars like Harmon among others are realizing the growing importance of tradition as a source of authority along with the ancient liturgies, creeds, and catechistic material. Historically community in the early church exerted a more authoritative role and contributed to a more robust sacramental theology. Harmon persuasively examines his own Baptist history and divergent understandings of biblical authority. He lists a web of authorities and mutual sources: the formative authority of the triune God, the transformative authority of Christ and conversion, the conformative authority of the church in the image of Christ, the illuminating authority of the Holy Spirit, the performative authority of Christian conduct and the imitation of Christ, and the multiformative authority of the priesthood of all believers, the congregation, and the global church.

Harmon challenges Baptists—and really others in the free church tradition like the Stone-Campbell Restoration Movement who have been anticreedal and anti-Catholic. The earliest Baptists and restorationist leaders echoed the patristic tradition of Nicean and Chalcedon orthodox confessions. Alexander Campbell's own aversion to patristic creeds was due to inappropriate use of them to exclude people from church fellowship and not to their proper role in defending orthodox beliefs.

For all the talk of *Sola Scriptura* or "no creed but Christ" (which the Baptist tradition borrowed and coined as "no creed but the Bible"), the patristic tradition not only connects us to the faith of the early church but also its interpretations of Scripture. Scripture has a polyvalence or surplus of meaning that challenges the singular focused exegesis of the more liberal historical-critical methods or the more conservative historical-exegetical models.

Harmon examines the living tradition of the undivided church to which all Protestant denominations and nondenominational churches are rightful heirs. He asks readers to go deeper into the communion of the saints of all generations (both living or deceased). He calls for a cross-fertilization of Christian and Jewish scholarship to gain a larger perspective of church history and its development of dogma and doctrine. He examines the strengths and weaknesses of Thomas Oden's Paleo-orthodoxy, Karl Barth's community faith perspective, and the French Catholics' *La Nouvelle Theologie* resourcement renewal. He also tackles newer theologies like Radical Orthodoxy, liberation theology, and George Lindbeck's postliberal theology to name a few. He is conscious of the troubled waters of postmodernism and uses Barth as an example to navigate through them.

Harmon's thought-provoking proposals opt for a "thick ecumenism" that turns over the stones from the past while charting a course for future Baptist education and pastoral training. Retrieval of tradition should be holistic following the fathers from both East and West. A consensual reading of the fathers can also limit some of the ransacking of tradition or reading all others through the myopic lens of one of the fathers like many have done with Augustine. Catholicity for Harmon should lean towards a fuller realization of a visible-unified church demonstrated in Eucharist fellowship.

This volume ends with a provocative chapter on what keeps him from becoming Catholic. His identity and history is within the Baptist tradition, and he believes he can best serve his church from challenging others from within that tradition. He also does not see the point of moving from one imperfect communion to another in promoting ecumenism. He is sympathetic and understanding to those who have done so but opts for 'staying put' in the tradition that baptized and forged his Christian faith.

Some unaddressed issues and questions in this volume can be raised. How does tradition develop and what distinguishes faithful development from mutations of it? One also wishes Harmon would have explored the issue of Episcopal leadership in the early church. How does this affect his views and practices and the free church tradition? Lastly, most Baptists follow the beliefs and attitudes of the radical anabaptist movement rather than the more catholic British Baptists. This important issue of catholicity is hardly on the radar for most Baptists or Protestants today despite some Christian historians and church leaders who are taking a second look at the earliest Christian tradition and the implications this has on ecclesiology, ecumenism, and discipleship practices.

So far to date, Harmon has provided the most comprehensive study on how churches need to boldly explore its historical connections with the larger church and enrich its own practices by connecting with the earliest Christian tradition and its sources. This book is well written by an excellent patristic scholar and is both

challenging and practical in helping churches drink deeply from the wells of church history as well as rediscovering their own theological heritage place within the larger framework of God's redemptive story.

Chris Criminger
Minister
Vallonia Christian Church
Vallonia, Indiana

Roger OLSON. *Arminian Theology: Myths and Realities.* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006. 250 pp. $25.00.

Until fairly recently, Stone-Campbell biblical and theological scholars have often felt like uninvited and unwelcome guests at the evangelical dinner table—if our presence there was even noticed to begin with. Such seems to be the lot when one belong to a conservative, protestant tradition that speaks about its sacraments in terms more usually associated with Anglicanism (especially baptism) and considers church renewal to be more a process of "restoration" than simply "reform." If these issues have not caused us to be marginalized enough from the evangelical mainstream, add in the dreaded, theological designation, "Arminian," and you undoubtedly have the consummate ingredients that will keep a noble Christian heritage languishing on the sidelines at the *Christianity Today*-sponsored "ball." When Baylor theologian Roger Olson penned an unforgettable column in *Christianity Today* a number of years ago, entitled, "Don't Hate Me Because I'm Arminian" (not his choice of titles, incidentally), one could almost hear a cacophonous "amen" coming from the ranks of Stone-Campbellites, who might arguably be one of the most despised offspring ever brought forth from this misunderstood, *Reformed*, tradition. Did I say, "Reformed," in conjunction with Arminianism and Restorationism? Actually, Olson does, which makes this book a "must read" for those—especially Calvinists—who believe that the "TULIP" and the theology of the Reformation are somehow synonymous.

In this volume, the well-respected and historically-astute Olson offers a compelling yet irenic argument for allowing the theological heirs of Jacob Arminius to have our say in the present-day articulation of evangelical doctrine, since our understanding is as legitimate an expression of *Reformation theology* as that of our Calvinist friends. For too long, we Arminians have allowed ourselves to be defined in terms that characterize us as *adversaries* to the "grace-driven" theological program spawned by Luther and Calvin, due to our *alleged*, Pelagian-like synergism. And herein lies the first of at least, ten major "myths" that Olson exposes that have grown up around Arminianism—uncritically accepted by Calvinist *and Arminian* alike—that continue to inhibit profitable dialogue and fellowship between believers who really belong to the same "family tree." Contrary to popular belief, Jacob Arminius did not deny the sovereignty of God nor the depravity of human beings in favor of some form of autonomous, human freedom; rather, he challenged the extreme, ultra-deterministic readings that were being forced on these concepts by Calvin's later disciples, such as his Leiden colleague, Franciscus Gomarus (21-22). Indeed, Gomarus's unfounded, and often egregious charges of heresy (Arminius

was accused of being a secret agent of the Pope and the Spanish Jesuits) are in large part responsible for the unflattering presentations of Arminianism still present, today (22).

Unfortunately, many of Arminius's theological descendants—including the later Remonstrants, revivalist Charles Finney, and even some Stone-Campbell ancestors—propagated a "vulgarized" Arminianism (23-28) that elevated human reason and free will in a *semi-Pelagian* direction that its Dutch founder (and Scripture!) would have never accepted. Hence, we now find ourselves in an ecclesiastical environment that often confuses the superficial, anthropocentric doctrine preached in popular evangelical pulpits with the robust, God-honoring, and *grace-driven* theology that is genuine Arminianism (and *restorationism*). Other myths that continue to flourish among both Calvinists and non-Calvinists alike, include the notions that Arminians do not believe in predestination, deny justification by grace alone through faith alone, and as a tradition, wholly embrace the "Governmental Theory" of the atonement. By examining the writings of key Arminian theologians—among them Jack Cottrell (Cincinnati Christian University) and John Mark Hicks (Lipscomb University and *SCJ* Editor)—Olson clearly demonstrates that this historic, legitimate, articulation of Reformed theology has much in common with its Calvinist cousins, championing the Protestant Movement's emphases of *sola scriptura*, *sola gratia*, and *sola fide*. Indeed, the place where Arminians part company with Calvinists does not lie in the "Reformed Essentials" but rather in how one is to understand the biblical complexities related to God's providence and human predestination, in a manner that does not suffocate, ignore, or redefine an undeniable theme of creaturely responsibility and accountability (31). Granted, the differences between Calvinists and Arminians on providence and predestination are significant and not easily resolved (suggesting another Olson myth that a "hybrid" of two are possible—a so-called, "Calminianism"), but these are hardly the kinds of issues that should anathematize one group from another. (Have we not learned the tragic lesson of the Marburg Colloquy?). In short, Olson offers plenty of good reasons to call for a "ceasefire in a long-running theological civil war" (David Neff's characterization) and embrace the irenic spirit of a Melanchthon (whose views were quite close to Arminius's) rather than the combative one embodied by a Luther or Zwingli. But will the arguments of this volume be taken seriously enough to facilitate this badly-needed *rapprochement*?

First, in fairness to the author, this 250-page volume does not claim to be an exhaustive articulation of the broad scope of Arminian doctrine; it is *not* the comprehensive, *systematic theology* that Arminians, in my estimation, will have to eventually produce in order to truly compete with Calvinism in the heavy-duty world of theological discourse. Olson's aims are much more modest as he writes that "this book was born out of a burning desire to clear the good Arminian name of false accusations and charges of heresy or heterodoxy" (9). It is essentially an *apologetic* (in the best sense of that term), a charitable and respectful attempt to remove several hundred years of debris that has caused much unneeded fissure in an already-divided Protestantism. It may also rightly be termed an Arminian *primer* (10), in that it lays out the basic outline of what constitutes a "generous Arminianism," given this tradition's diverse expressions from Wesleyan Methodism to Pentecostal-

Holiness to Stone-Campbell Restorationism, indeed, recognizing the contributions of the "Churches of Christ and other denominations rooted in the revivals of Alexander Campbell" (14). Furthermore, this volume is a good, basic *theological dictionary* (albeit in a narrative manner) of evangelical vocabulary that sharpens definitions not only of "Semi-Pelagianism," but also "Reformed theology." (Thanks to Olson's careful historical detail, I have been "cured" of my own tendency to use "Reformed" and "Calvinism" in a synonymous manner.) Finally, this volume offers itself as a "first step" in *constructive theological engagement* (242-246), calling on Calvinists and Arminians alike to do their homework responsibly and "Christianly" and represent each others' positions as they really are, instead of in the unfair and pejorative ways that too often characterize the "discussion."

Given this fourfold "trajectory," this small volume succeeds admirably in fulfilling a preparatory role in constructing more technical works of serious Arminian theology (Olson may very well be one of those authors.) This book is unabashedly "reader friendly" (10) which may put off some of the more scholarly crowd. For those Arminians who view "middle knowledge" as a viable model in accounting for the Bible's divine foreknowledge/human freedom "tension" (such as myself), Olson is too dismissive (76, 195-197), although it is not his intent to become embroiled in this more parochial debate. On the other hand, some Arminians might wish that Olson was "more dismissive" of open theists than he is (197-198). This volume also tends to get a bit repetitive at times, but the author warns in the Preface that this will be an "intentional device" since he assumes many readers will not read the entire book through (10).

But all this is fairly trivial. This work is what it claims to be, and while it might be deemed "simple," it is hardly simplistic. And it may very well be the best "admission ticket" to the evangelical dance since Clark Pinnock's *Grace Unlimited* (Bethany, 1975). Time will only tell if this volume ushers in a new, more mature, and more sustained presence of "our brand" of Reformation thinking; we clearly need to "go beyond Olson." But as we hopefully accept this challenge, let all Arminian theologians—especially Stone-Campbell adherents—*echo* our Baptist brother in doctrinal clarity, historical precision, and Christlike humility and fairness.

Robert C. Kurka
Professor of Bible and Church in Culture
Lincoln Christian Seminary

Bryan A. FOLLIS. *Truth with Love: The Apologetics of Francis Schaeffer.* Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006. 208 pp. $15.99.

Francis Schaeffer was undoubtedly one of the most popular and controversial evangelical thinkers of the latter twentieth century. To his fans, he epitomized the principle of "speaking the truth with love." Long before the term "postmodern" entered the Christian vocabulary, Schaeffer presciently grasped the cultural sea change under way and sought to communicate truth in effective ways to young people skeptical of the very idea of truth. Yet neither was he an ivory tower academician. With a deep love for people and respect for them as image-bearers of God, he and his wife Edith opened their Swiss home to seekers from around the globe,

patiently working with them individually, answering questions and modeling Christian love so that God might become real to them. Their home, L'Abri ("Shelter"), became a world-renowned Christian spiritual renewal center, developing into a multifaceted ministry with continuing global influence.

In this volume, Follis addresses some of the controversies surrounding Schaeffer's apologetic approach. Though a Presbyterian, Schaeffer showed what seemed to some to be a decidedly Arminian enthusiasm for the possibility of fallen man to understand reasonable apologetic arguments. Follis reviews the role of rationality in various strands of the Reformed tradition (Calvin, the Old Princetonians and Abraham Kuyper's Dutch School), showing that Schaeffer's thought is in the range of what has traditionally been considered "Reformed." After summarizing Schaeffer's apologetic argument (which is, to simplify grossly, primarily involved in pressing the nonbeliever to the logical limits of his or her worldview, then presenting basically a cosmological argument for God as a more coherent explanation for reality), he responds to conflicting charges that Schaeffer was either a rationalist or a presuppositionalist. Follis's ultimate conclusion is that, while Schaeffer was influenced by the verificationalist approach, he was primarily an evangelist inspired by an eclectic mix of apologetic strands. One of the author's more significant observations is that an understanding of Schaeffer's apologetics involves looking beyond his writings to see how he lived out the Christian life as his primary apologetic.

Follis is clearly a Schaeffer fan, and his enthusiasm is contagious. A reader unfamiliar with Schaeffer would certainly find an appetite to read his books and pack one's bags for L'Abri. As portrayed by the author, well-known scholarly Schaeffer critics seem ill-informed and petty in their attacks upon someone portrayed as a great man of God concerned with actually doing the work of an evangelist (and succeeding at it). However, it also seems that much of the criticism was the result of Schaeffer's own imprecise use of terminology. If, for example, he is mistaken for a presuppositionalist, it is at least in part because of the way he misuses the word "presupposition," by which Follis says he really meant a "hypothesis" (115). Unfortunately, Follis's own writing also at times lacks some necessary focus and precision. He seems to exhaust much of what he has to say about Schaeffer in the first half of the book and begins to repeat himself tiresomely in the second half, sometimes almost word for word. The book often reads like a promising doctoral dissertation that in some places could just stand a careful re-edit to eliminate redundancy.

Despite these friendly criticisms, this reader in fact found both Schaeffer and Follis himself to be encouraging examples of how God empowers "clay vessels" to encourage and equip the body of Christ. While not perfectly polished, this book has merit as an undergraduate-level introduction to Schaeffer and a reminder to all believers that spiritually fruitful apologetics (as opposed to winning polemic debates) perhaps has less to do with watertight academic arguments and more to do with a Christlike life of love that astonishes and attracts a skeptical world.

ANDREW WOOD
Associate Professor of Urban and Intercultural Ministries
Cincinnati Christian University

Miroslav VOLF. *The End of Memory: Remembering Rightly in a Violent World.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006. 244 pp. $22.00.

Trying to move on with life despite painful personal wrongs people have done to us along the way is a daily struggle familiar to all. Familiar too are the supersensitized feelings of our social groups, whose awareness of burdens and injuries inflicted on us by others go into the makeup of our society, public life, and international affairs. Advice for dealing with these unwelcomed experiences is cheap, and no bargain for its cost—do your best, get over it, negotiate from strength, care for yourself, stick it to them, forgive and forget, never forget. Is there any word of wisdom for Christians to hear and share with others—indeed, any *apt* faith-response at all, in situations as everyday, and yet at once abrasive and heartbreaking, as these? The very question challenges Christians to engage in unusually searching theological reflections. Those of Volf, a theologian at Yale Divinity School, are exceedingly rich and thought-provoking.

Volf recognizes that the challenge more or less peculiar to people of Christian faith is that of embracing "forgiveness of sins" and "love your enemy" without turning God's good news into a counsel of despair by acquiescing in injustice, not resisting evil, or mistaking Christian caring for self-destructive behavior. At the center of attention is the role of memory—memories of wrongs and wrongdoers—in resisting abuses and injustices, recovering from them, and living in hope of some redemptive outcome of the situation and everyone involved.

Far from theoretical, Volf's reflections circle and recircle his own frightful brush with victimization, when, as a young conscript in communist Yugoslavia's military, he was unaccountably subjected to rounds of questioning on charges of political subversion that carried dire punishments. The ordeal of terror, after a time, ended as unpredictably as it had begun, and Volf readily grants that the harm he underwent pales by comparison with that of countless other victims of abuse and persecution. Nonetheless, his real-life account is an occasion to examine the complex tangle of personal, social, and theological factors in living christianly in a violent world.

The intertwining of lines of narrative and argument are too subtle for a book review summary. In any case the experience of thinking through matters along with Volf—and at times perhaps arguing with him—is more important than memorizing his conclusion. Of note, though, is Volf's reprise of modern and postmodern discussions about remembering or forgetting the moral horrors of history, whether large-scale or personal. Following it come meditations on Christian identity, themes from Scripture and tradition, and in contrapuntal dialogue with Nietzsche and Freud, Christian thinking across a wide range from Augustine, Dante, and Kierkegaard and on to Paul Ricoeur and Delores Williams.

The thrust throughout is toward remembering wrongs and wrongdoers *rightly*, meaning above all a living in the present and hoping in a future other than everlasting hurt and enmity. Faith's memories of the Exodus and Passion and its vision of God's ultimate reconciliation of all things, Volf insists, are invaluable resources for pilgrims along this way. To his credit, he never for a moment becomes pollyanish or holier-than-thou in contemplating this prospect.

The book is practical theology not in a new key but in a very ancient one—a quest for a measure of life-wisdom, in distinction to doing ministry or moral hec-

toring. Other forbears are cases of conscience works in Puritanism and Pietism and, beyond, edifying discourses of serious intent, like Kierkegaard's. For this reason, as well as its invitational style of presentation, it can be highly recommended for use in adult church classes and study groups of laity or professional ministers.

JAMES O. DUKE
Professor, History of Christianity
Brite Divinity School

M. James SAWYER. *The Survivor's Guide to Theology.* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006. 640 pp. $34.99.

The field of systematic theology will never be lacking in introductory volumes. Such works of theology often attempt to provide readers a foundation for understanding the discipline of systematic theology, yet fail to include discussions on some of the most significant preliminary issues. Sawyer articulates this problem: "Strangely, in biblical and theological studies, one must have a grasp of the discipline to understand the introductory issues!" (10) Sawyer provides his own solution: a text that does not provide a traditional systematic theology but rather delineates presuppositions, background issues, and methodological concerns vital to the academic study of systematic theology.

Sawyer's work is divided into three major sections. The first focuses on the main introductory issues in theology: the theologian's task, epistemology and truth, sources and authority, doctrinal taxonomy, the interaction between theology and other disciplines, such as science, and divisions of theological study. Flowing from his presupposition that "theology involves far more than doctrine or a straightforward summary of biblical teaching" (11), Sawyer delivers a well-balanced, thorough approach to these issues by exploring them philosophically, historically, and biblically. He commands substantial knowledge over each of these fields and is able to thread them seamlessly into an understandable framework for the student of theology to employ in further study.

The second section is devoted to the survey of major theological traditions. Along with providing brief historical orientation regarding each tradition, Sawyer articulates key theological issues that both link and separate the traditions, including major doctrines, hermeneutics and sources of authority. He brings prominent theologians to the surface and describes their particular contributions to the movement. He also identifies philosophical and historical influences that fostered the development of each tradition, thus presenting a rather complete picture. Finally, Sawyer critiques core presuppositions and doctrines expressed in each tradition, ably uncovering important issues for the student of theology to explore further.

The third section is an alphabetical collection of biographical sketches encompassing major theologians and philosophers throughout church history. This alone would serve as a uniquely helpful research tool, but Sawyer also includes a short dictionary of theological and philosophical terms. Appendices are also provided, which give brief, yet thorough, instructions in doing basic theological research.

Weaknesses are not easily identified in this work. Sawyer sets out to provide an accessible work focused on introductory issues alone, and accomplishes this task in

stellar fashion. The work's weakness is in the limited audience it may reach. It is too complex for the average undergraduate. Therefore, the best usage would likely be in an advanced undergraduate theology seminar or introductory graduate course in systematic theology where the focus is on theological background issues and methodology. Overall, Sawyer is to be commended for writing a thoroughly researched text that will serve as a valuable tool for the theologian or student of theology, both as a detailed guide to introductory issues and as a reference concerning theologians and theological traditions.

Brian D. Smith
Associate Dean of Academics
Florida Christian College

Dale BROWN. *The Book of Buechner: A Journey through His Writings.* Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox. 394 pp. $24.95.

Dale Brown, professor of English at Calvin College, directs the Calvin College Festival of Faith and Writing. Frederick Buechner (pronounced Beekner) was the first writer invited to be interviewed at the Festival, and he returned for a second time some years later. The Festival was not the first time that Brown and Buechner had met, though it helped cement a literary friendship that continues today. Many of Buechner's books appear in Brown's literary courses, and he has written many articles and reviews of Buechner's works and published interviews. For these reasons, Brown offers a unique perspective in this comprehensive and insightful volume.

Taking an interesting approach, rather than tracing the life of Buechner, this volume follows his literary production, allowing readers to get to know Buechner through his writings. Ten of Buechner's books were selected for study in this fine effort.

Three elements stand out in Buechner's writings; his father's suicide, his Christian belief, and his maternal grandmother, Naya. The progression of his faith appears in his works. In his first work, the Christian theme is in the background. However, between his first work and his second he hears George Buttrick speak in a Presbyterian church in New York City. Something clicked within him, and he became more interested in his latent Christianity. The Christian influence grows from that point, informing major themes in his writings, but he is never publicly a Christian writer. Brown does an excellent job of making this clear.

Brown also does an exceptional job of bringing out the influences of Buechner's family. His father's suicide when he was a child, emphasized in Brown's third chapter, continues to haunt him. The main character in Buechner's third novel, Rudy Tripp, deals with an inner vacancy left by his father's death. His maternal grandmother, Naya, whose life had a strong influence on him, appears in characters throughout the novels.

The strongest element in Brown's writing is his ability to give Buechner's characters more life than they have in his stories, showing they are based on real people. The book is difficult to put down. The biggest drawback is Brown's use of namedropping. At the beginning of each chapter people who influenced Buechner's writing of that novel appear along with names of critics and their remarks. Instead

of just using a few of the important ones, Brown provides near-exhaustive lists. In the forward, Brown lists 11 authors who have participated in the Festival of Faith and Writing, immediately followed by another list of 17 more writers involved. This trend continues throughout the volume. In addition, Brown compares one of Buechner's novels to the writings of six known authors, including a constant comparison to C.S. Lewis. The feeling is that perhaps Buechner cannot stand alone and needs these others in order to give credence to his writings.

Over all, though, this volume would make an excellent volume for a literature course.

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

William D. ROMANOWSKI, *Eyes Wide Open: Looking for God in Popular Culture*. Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2007. 269 pp. $19.95.

William Romanowski's volume, originally published in 2001, has been utilized for several years as a textbook for undergraduate classes that dealt with the intersection between Christian faith and popular art. With this in mind, Brazos Press has issued a revised and expanded edition, in which Romanowski has added additional material, clarified his arguments, and updated many of the illustrations to include more contemporary examples. Unlike some "expanded" editions, this volume has actually undergone substantial revision, and Romanowski has added almost one hundred pages of additional material.

This volume is divided into three general sections. In the first section, Romanowski offers a critique of evangelical Christian approaches to popular arts, and provides a biblical and philosophical foundation for the approach he advocates in the book. In the second section, he considers potential approaches to popular art, many of which contribute to his own. He addresses several elements he believes should inform a Christian approach, including an analysis of the cultural ideals presented in the artwork, an understanding of its cultural context, and aesthetic choices made by the author of the artwork. Finally, in the third section Romanowski examines some of the themes present in American culture that inform much of contemporary popular art and discusses themes that might inform Christian popular art.

Romanowski's work has much to commend it. His critique of evangelical approaches to popular arts is insightful. In particular, his observation that evangelicals have tended to view art as Christian only if it serves a distinctly evangelistic purpose is correct. While Romanowski allows that Christian art can indeed serve confessional purposes, he is quick to point out that Christian art can serve other purposes. He argues persuasively that "Christians can serve their neighbors with popular art and criticism that helps us all understand and feel deeply the brokenness of our world and recognize the destructiveness of sin and the joy of forgiveness and redemption" (229). Thus, for Romanowski, Christian approaches to art must allow for the artist to be honest about sin and evil in the world without glorifying them but also offer hope based on a distinctly Christian faith perspective.

This volume has one primary weakness. While Romanowski does attempt to address the biblical and theological foundations for his approach, he spends far too little time in this area. A distinctly Christian approach to the creation and criticism of popular art must necessarily be grounded in the biblical text. While his approach satisfies this requirement, he passes over this critical aspect of a Christian approach too quickly.

Romanowski has produced a valuable contribution to the ongoing debate about how Christians can best understand and interact with popular art. This volume convincingly argues for an approach to art that takes seriously both the artist's perspective and a Christian worldview. Additionally, it is written in an accessible manner without oversimplifying the often complicated arguments that surround discussion of appropriate Christian cultural engagement. This volume is easily recommended for undergraduate level classes, as well as for church people struggling to understand how to think about popular art from a Christian perspective.

JACOB CHRISTIAN
Adult Ministries Pastor
StoneBridge Christian Church
Omaha, Nebraska

Jane Dammen MCAULIFFE, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to the Quran.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006. 332 pp. $75.00.

With Muslims much in the news today, an upsurge in interest in Islam has developed. Any attempt to understand Muslims must give consideration to the *Quran*, Islam's holy book. As a document that influences more than one billion people, it remains something of an enigma to people in the West. Misinformation abounds. While the *Quran* has received some popular attention, little has been done in recent years at a scholarly level to explore its development, translation, and interpretation. In concert with an international collection of European and North American intellectuals with specializations in Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies and Arabic, Jane McAuliffe has made a real contribution to meeting a contemporary need. This volume brings to life many of the issues wrestled with several generations ago by Robert Bell in his now out of print, *Introduction to the Quran.*

After a fascinating introductory chapter by McAuliffe the book falls into five major sections concerning the *Quran*: formation, themes and principle literary features, transmission and dissemination, intellectual traditions interpretation, and contemporary readings, taking note of how women are reading it as well as its use for purposes of supporting political agendas.

Claude Gilliot's chapter on the "Creation of a Fixed Test" introduces the reader to the standard understanding of how the *Quran* was codified as well as noting that no critical edition of the *Quran* has ever been produced. Proposals have been made for both a deductive and an inductive reconstruction of the original text. Neither have been realized. Any attempts like this would doubtless meet with Muslim objections that these are yet are more Western secular approaches to what is in fact "the very speech of God" and so perfect.

Chapter 3, "Alternative Accounts of the *Quran*'s Formation," by Harald

Motzki, focuses on structural dimensions of the "suras" of the *Quran*, suggesting with others some sort of change within the text. He sees two types of texts in the *Quran*: passages that originally were Christian but have been given Islamic meaning and original Islamic passages, the two coming together as the result of several stages of revision.

Of special interest due to the ferment within "modernist" or progressive Islam is the attention given to the way Muslim women are re-reading and re-interpreting the *Quran* today. Traditional uses of the *Quran* to imply male superiority, or female subservience, veiling, polygyny, and gendered language are being questioned. Much of this is due to the growth of Western (Muslim) exegesis of the *Quran*. The introduction of the historical-critical method of textual analysis and the development of new hermeneutical approaches are major sources of contention The authors do us a service by noting these often unknown elements of Islam's turmoil today.

Among its strengths The Cambridge Companion offers students, teachers, and scholars interested in Islam and particularly the *Quran* an indispensable resource. Its chief limitation is the breadth of the topics addressed. Each could be expanded into a volume in itself. It is well written, carefully edited and documented. Its Quranic citation index is especially helpful.

ROBERT C. DOUGLAS
Professor of Intercultural Studies
Lincoln Christian Seminary

David E. GARLAND and Diana R. GARLAND. *Flawed Families of the Bible: How God's Grace Works through Imperfect Relationships.* Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2007. 240 pp. $19.99.

Have you ever spoken to an individual who is interested in what Christianity has to offer; but, because he believes Christians are somehow above pain and suffering, he cannot hear God's message of healing and hope? David and Diana Garland have written a wonderful volume which explores this very issue. The purpose of this clever essay is to illustrate that biblical families, including David's and Jacob's, suffered tremendous loss, grief, pain, and suffering, and how God bestowed grace and love on them even in the midst of their various predicaments.

The greatest strength of this book is that it does an incredible job of adding context and thought-provoking material for the reader to consider. This book has the ability to captivate the long-time Christians and assist them in viewing well-known Bible stories from fresh and practical perspectives. For instance, the authors take a novel look at the historical account of Jacob and his two wives, Leah and Rachel. Rachel is the beloved wife and Leah is arguably the most hard-working, but the book sheds light on some of the feelings Leah must have encountered as a woman and wife living in the shadow of her younger sister, Rachel. Speaking of the torment Leah must have felt at the reality that her husband, Jacob, was going to marry her sister the authors write: "It must have dawned on her quickly that she was trapped now in a marriage that destined her to compete with her sister for her husband's affection, with all the cards stacked against her. The gaping void in her

life, that may have caused her to agree to the midnight swap in the first place, would only grow larger and larger" (56-57).

Leah had been inserted into a marriage that would only bring her pain and suffering. How many people today find themselves in the exact situation as Leah? This book reaches out to those individuals and offers them hope because Leah was not forgotten by God but rather allowed to be the mother of the very blood-line that produced Jesus Christ. Some may find little comfort in this after pondering how much pain Leah must have suffered, yet her faithfulness did not go unnoticed by God.

This book is intriguing, gripping and insightful, but from a critical point of view it also could be guilty of reading too much into some of the accounts. At times readers may find themselves thinking 'Can I really buy into that expansion of the text?' One has to question how much literary license is acceptable while maintaining scriptural integrity. Painting a picture that provides readers with a mental image to complete a narrative is powerful, but it must be done with caution so that the intended emphasis of the story is not slanted or confused.

Due to the more practical perspective of this book it may not be as well suited for the scholarly environments, unless the setting is geared toward helping professionals such as counselors and ministers. Having this book in a professional's personal library would enable him to help a person who has never studied the Bible carefully enough to see pain, turmoil, and tragedy in biblical characters. Such a story as Tamar's brutal rape possesses the power to make questioning people believe Christianity has "real people" in their Bible with whom they can identify. Perhaps helping individuals relate to people in the Bible may be what it takes to win them to Christ!

Suzanne Angel
Cincinnati Christian University

Simon CHAN. *Liturgical Theology: The Church as Worshiping Community.* Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 2006. 208 pp. $22.00.

Chan believes the church, specifically *evangelical* Christianity, is in a crisis. Chan believes modern evangelicals are confused about both the significance and mission of the church due to their deficient understanding of its relationship to worship. He further contends that the evangelicals' adaptations of Christian worship to the culture around them, while on the surface having the appearance of success, have actually detached their worship from its theological foundations—thus, causing the crisis. This crisis in turn has brought evangelical Christianity dangerously close to being simply another social organization. However, in Chan's strong critique of the evangelical movement, he does state that it can and should be saved. While most of the world in this postmodern age has dismissed structure and authority as largely irrelevant, Chan argues for a return to them in the practice of the church. His remedy is to articulate an ecclesiology for evangelicals that focuses on the theological aspects of worship more than the sociological ones.

Chan divides his proposal into two sections: foundations and practices. He begins the first section by exploring the ontological reality of the church. He asserts "the church does not exist to fix a broken creation; rather, creation exists to real-

ize the church" (23). Chan builds on this theological premise by discussing the nature of worship and its relationship to the church, calling it the "defining practice of the church" (98). He contends that most evangelicals concentrate on what will "retain a crowd" and be "relevant" more than what is "truly the worship of the triune God" (41). For Chan the true meaning of worship is to relive the salvation story and to imbibe its truth. This type of worship will be transformative, both nourishing the worshipers and acknowledging the sovereignty of God at the same time. He then goes on to discuss what a theologically based liturgy would look like and how it might be incorporated into a local church setting.

The next section outlines three major practices he feels are crucial for the true practice of liturgy in the church: the catechumenate, the Sunday liturgy, and active participation by the church members. In this section, Chan argues that a true understanding of what the church is "needs to be coupled with a strong liturgical practice as the foundation of all other ecclesial practices" (166). A return to weekly communion—a Stone-Campbell practice—would aid in the worship of the church. He asserts that the goal of Christian worship should be to recognize it as an encounter with the living God, and he feels the best way to do this is through the "carefully crafted language, sights, sounds and movements" (166) of the liturgy.

Chan's book is quite easy to read and very engaging in its argument. Support supplied from secondary sources to support his premises is impressive and is coupled with adequate citation of Scripture. His argument that evangelicals need to heed the theological foundations for their worship hits the mark. Evangelical churches do run a risk when they turn over their services to marketing strategies and become primarily consumer or culture driven.

However, Chan does not seem to address the issue of how we use "the liturgy" or "a liturgy" and still "be all things to all people" (1 Cor 9:22) speaking to them in the language of today. Certainly, the first liturgies of the church were an attempt to take the mysteries of God and bring them to the people in words they understood. Consequently, today's church needs to engage people in truth using relevant language and tactics that relate to the culture of the day. Even Paul on Mars Hill (Acts 17) used the pagan idols that he saw around him to explain the gospel message. While Chan argues that evangelicals have gone too far and thrown the baby out with the bathwater when it comes to the liturgy, his book seems an equally polarizing reaction. Surely, a middle ground in the theology of worship that can do justice to both doctrine and cultural relevance is achievable.

TED W. BOOTH
Visiting Assistant Professor of Humanities and History
Milligan College

Marva J. DAWN. *The Sense of the Call: A Sabbath Way of Life for Those Who Serve God, the Church, and the World.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006. 326 pp. $16.00.

If you expect to find guidance on how to "sense" your calling or the biblical basis for understanding the calling of God, you will be disappointed by this book. Dawn's book covers neither of these topics. It is rather a compendium of the

author's thoughts on spiritual, personal, and professional renewal. The book is divided into four main sections: resting, ceasing, feasting, and embracing—an outline that has been extracted from the author's understanding of the Sabbath way of life and is an almost exact repetition of the outline of her earlier book, *Keeping the Sabbath Wholly* (1989). This volume retains some of the value of Dawn's earlier work, but also acquires several irritating defects.

The defects of this book outweigh its strengths; nevertheless, a mention of the latter seems fair. The main strength of this book is the view it provides of ministry and life from the perspective of the handicapped. Being handicapped herself, the author's descriptions of people's rudeness in airports and of her struggles with fatigue and failing health elevate the reader's sensitivity to the handicapped in a way that only personal testimony can do (143).

The deficiencies of the book can be characterized as theological, technical, and logical. From a theological perspective, Dawn manifests a propensity toward imposing a politically liberal ideology upon Scripture. Her treatment of homosexuality can only be described as an attempt to deflect from the biblical treatment of this subject. She claims that neither side is "right" in this debate, and that homosexuality is not treated in the Scriptures (167-168), a surprising assertion to anyone familiar with the biblical text. Her treatment of war does not address the biblical passages that support the use of force, but instead makes the historically inaccurate claim that violence never stops violence (157). From a technical perspective the book serves as a great example of poor writing. Large sections of the book consist of the author's stringing together quotations from other writers. The author also manifests an annoying tendency to use examples to support her reasoning with no supportive citations. She writes, "Somewhere I read of a research project" (40) but does not mention where readers might investigate that research for themselves. She talks about some of her students who "discovered all kinds of medical evidence" (53) but does not cite the evidence. She refers to "major news journals recently reporting" (181) without naming the news journals. Finally, the book has serious flaws in basic logic. The author claims that the U.S. has experienced a rise in food insecurity (183-184) and then, on the next page, claims "a high proportion of citizens have whatever they need" (185). Her demonizing of technology and management principles (165) detracts from what might otherwise be taken as a legitimate call to caution.

The value of this book for those who desire to serve the Lord in Christian ministry or for anyone who aspires to write for the Kingdom of God is primarily negative. The book contains great examples of the misuse of quotations, biased reasoning, and the imposition of ideology upon the hermeneutical task. Its pages may serve as case studies for those who teach either biblical exposition or writing in general.

Gregory S. Waddell
Director of Institutional Improvement
Mid-South Christian College

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Charles DENISON. *The Artist's Way of Preaching*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2006. 116 pp. $16.95.

This volume is a concise work that attempts to convince readers that the "traditional" method of expository preaching fails to connect in a postmodern culture. Denison focuses heavily on the idea of "image," explaining throughout the book what image is, why image is important, and how to mold a sermon around an image.

Denison asserts that the church needs a "right-brained" creative approach to preaching, and uses the first chapter to list differences between right-brained thinking and left-brained thinking. Part I focuses on helping readers connect stories from their life with the biblical stories. Part II discusses how preachers can use metaphor to allow their congregations to draw multiple meanings from Scripture's stories. In Part III, Denison gives three sample sermons he wrote based on the ideas the book covers.

At the end of each chapter, Denison provides reflection activities (which often ask the reader to recall events from their life, read a biblical story, or watch a movie in order to answer the questions). In between each chapter, he provides a story, poem, or event from his life that can serve as a sermon starter (and will probably help the reader to recall some of their own stories to serve as sermon starters). Denison seems to draw from a deep well of knowledge, providing a broad variety of examples, quotes, and history lessons.

Denison's rationale for being creative is to help the audience "feel" closer to the biblical story—for them to identify with it better. The rationale is not to help the congregation understand the story better, just for them to "feel" it. He oddly compares the idea to dissecting a frog: how much more could you learn by becoming a frog than you can by simply cutting one up. His motto is to "become the frog" when interpreting a biblical story (become a character in the story).

While Denison is probably correct in asserting that the last few centuries of Protestant preaching detrimentally has left out "feeling," he seems to have gone too far in correcting the mistake. Denison's hermeneutical method differs from principles such as "the text cannot mean what it never meant." He even admits that his process is subjective and does not relay what the text originally intended. Yet he basically says that the method is okay because the early church fathers and the medieval saints did it.

As a result of the above rationale, the stories which Denison uses to "connect" people to the biblical story often have nothing to do with what the biblical story is trying to say. The methods he suggests may evoke strong feelings, but they do not actually aid the congregation in understanding the text better. Also, Denison's methods consistently turned the biblical stories into self-absorbed "it's about me" stories, rather than stories about who God is and what God has done.

Many of the exercises found at the end of each chapter focused on readers placing themselves as characters in the biblical story, trying to imagine what they would have seen, felt, heard, and smelled. In the last few months, three other preaching books I read listed nearly identical types of exercises, with Denison's being the least helpful of the four.

The three sample "creative" sermons offered at the end did not even seem that creative to this "left-brained" reviewer; but by Denison's definition they

were, because they relied on story and did not follow the pattern of "three points and a poem."

At best, this volume is a basic introduction to "creative" preaching. It covers no area in-depth, and offers mostly cliché advice on how to be imaginative. The volume *might* make the preacher using the "traditional expository method" feel discontent with their method, but it will not go very far in helping that preacher to change.

Brian Durbin
Preaching Minister
Kenney Christian Church
Kenney, Illinois

Robert KYSAR and Joseph M. WEBB. *Preaching to Postmoderns: New Perspectives for Proclaiming the Message*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2006. 272 pp. $19.95.

The twentieth century closed and the twenty-first century has opened with a flurry of new hermeneutical approaches. In fact, little seems less affected by faddishness than biblical interpretation. With overwhelming frequency, new interpretive methods of the biblical texts are advocated. While the scholar may have less difficulty in sorting through the morass of the contemporary interpretive milieu, the preacher may stand bereft of an adequate understanding of those methods or their potential value to preaching in a postmodern context. With the intention to fill the gap in understanding how numerous contemporary interpretive methods may serve as homiletical tools for preachers seeking to communicate to a postmodern culture, scholar-preachers Robert Kysar and Joseph Webb offer their text. Kysar and Webb exclaim, "At the beginning of the twenty-first century, we stand at the epicenter of a hermeneutical earthquake in biblical studies" (xiii).

Robert Kysar (Bandy Professor Emeritus of Preaching and New Testament with Emory University, and author of numerous texts on biblical interpretation with a view toward preaching) and Joseph M. Webb (Professor of Communication with Gardner-Webb University, author of several books on preaching, and President-elect of the 2008 Academy of Homiletics) have teamed to produce a text seeking to answer the question, "How does a [given] method for biblical interpretation help us as preachers?" (vii). Kysar and Webb seek to answer the homiletical value of some widely practiced contemporary biblical interpretive methods. With admitted bias, the authors openly challenge the primacy of and the preference for historical-critical methodologies in the doing of hermeneutics with a view to efficacious contemporary preaching, because the rise of historical-critical methodologies was primarily rooted in the modern era, and, therefore, distanced phenomenologically from our postmodern audiences (xiv and xxx). For Kysar and Webb, the homiletician addressing a postmodern audience ought to employ interpretive methodologies in the study which have risen in the postmodern era. The obvious implication is that preaching in the postmodern era will best be served by postmodern-era interpretive solutions.

Under broad chapter divisions, the authors survey the more prominent historical and postmodern hermeneutical methods of interpretation, with a view to contemporary preaching. Each chapter helpfully concludes with a sample sermon employing the category of interpretive method outlined. In that a detailed survey of each interpretive method would be overwhelming, Kysar and Webb have handily grouped specific interpretative methods under larger rubrics of methodology: historical, social-scientific, literary, liberation, and deconstructionist. In each of those chapters, the authors carefully summarize the value of each methodology for interpreting biblical texts with a view to preaching.

The first chapter, "What Difference Do Historical Criticisms Make?" outlines both the contributions (19-24) and the pitfalls of historical-critical methodologies. While giving a fair history of the emergence of historical criticism, particularly its emphasis on "what the text meant in its original context," the authors again decry the interpretive methodology for postmodern era preachers (18-19). The team does not hide their lack of enthusiasm for the employment of traditional historical-critical methods of doing biblical interpretation, yet concedes that it may yet have some life in the service of preparation for preaching.

Chapter 2, "What Difference Do Social-Scientific Theories Make?" progresses with the explanation "that social-scientific critics seek to understand the cultural values and practices at work in the lives of the [biblical] author and the [original] readers," (30). For Kysar and Webb, contemporary social-scientific methods of biblical interpretation are mostly the result of contemporary efforts "to widen, strengthen, and refocus historical methods," (30). In the third chapter, "What Difference Do Literary Criticisms Make?" the authors describe the potential value of seeking to understand the words and sentences of a text with a historical reconstruction of the text. Rhetorical criticism, narrative criticism, and reader-oriented criticism are surveyed as forms of literary criticism (though, in practice, rhetorical criticism may also be more of a historical-critical method than a literary exercise).

Kysar and Webb, in chapter 4, "What Difference Do Liberation Criticisms Make?" outline the assumptions broadly subscribed to by those who practice liberation criticisms, whether racial and ethnic, socio-historical, feminist and womanist, or ideological. "What Difference Do Deconstruction Theories Make?" the fifth chapter, outlines the poststructuralism in deference to the work of the twentieth-century French scholar Jacques Derrida. Kysar and Webb admirably tackle the connection of deconstruction with potential value for contemporary preaching, though the chapter may be the least helpful of all those in the text. In their defense, any explanation, in just a few pages, of the doing of deconstruction would prove daunting. The final chapter, "What Difference Does the Nature or Meaning Make?" might be better placed between the introduction and the first chapter of the text. The reader will find the final chapter most helpful as an apologetic and explanation of the premises of the text. A bibliography, helpful in pursuing an exhaustive survey of methods of contemporary interpretation with a view to preaching, is appended to the text.

This volume might best be commended to preaching scholars and graduate students most interested in the study of more recent hermeneutical methods as applied to preaching to postmoderns. Kysar and Webb have accomplished, with a view to

contemporary preaching, a readily digestible survey of interpretive methods of the Bible which have arisen in the postmodern era.

BILLY STROTHER
Professor of Preaching and New Testament
Atlanta Christian College

Andy G. OLREE. *The Choice Principle: The Biblical Case for Legal Toleration.* Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2006. 274 pp. $37.00.

Olree, who teaches law at Faulkner University's Jones School of Law, with this volume seeks to resolve the basic question: "What, in God's view, is government for?" (239). The author proposes a bold attempt to resolve the polarity that has developed within the largely American evangelical amalgam regarding the proper relationship between the church and state. His resolution, he contends, would result in a wider range of tolerance among the evangelicals and between them and the secular world regarding the role of religion and politics. Although convinced of its possibilities, Olree notes that the proposal is still a work in progress and would need to be applied over an appropriate length of time before it could be proven on a practical basis.

The author first exposes the tension in contemporary views of church-state relations among the "moral absolutists" (evangelicals who take the Bible as the authoritative standard for all activities and perspectives of Christians) by noting how it has polarized around the Evangelical Right, who agitate politically for legislation against "sins" such as state recognition of homosexual marriage, abortion, prohibiting prayer and Bible reading in schools, physician-assisted suicide, and other such "secularisms," and the Evangelical Left, who are generally more tolerant of allowing governmental leeway for the "sins" mentioned above, but are just as active in agitating for legislative measures dealing with moral issues involving the redistribution of wealth and environmental concerns. Also both sides tend to condemn the other as not representing the "true Christian perspective," even though both base their views on what they contend to be the most accurate biblical principles.

In order to resolve this problem and to provide both a broad and deep background to his Choice Principle, the author ranges over a wide area of historical Christian thought on church-state relations, perspectives of political and moral philosophy and an astute analysis of the sparse scriptural references to politics (especially the NT). He then is able to explicate his Choice Principle, based primarily on a scriptural foundation.

Although Romans 12–13 forms the basis of his proposal, it is perhaps more accurately explained from Genesis 1–2. Olree reasons that the very essence of being human is to have choice: "Hence, Choice is a necessary precondition for righteousness and virtue. . . . And when we limit overall human Choice, by law or otherwise, we restrict righteousness, in a way that might well displease the one who gave us all a wide range of Choice" (155). Thus any legislation in human government having to do with enforcing morals (righteousness, virtue) should be as devoid of coercion as possible, because true righteousness is based on choice and cannot be coerced; it must come from the heart, the free choice of each individual.

Thus, most of the moral issues evangelicals want legislated into law because they are either "righteous" or "prohibitions against sinful things" (abortion, homosexual marriage, Bible reading and prayer in schools, physician-assisted suicide, redistribution of wealth, environmental concerns, and such like) would actually tend to go against God's requirement regarding morals which is choice not law. Christians should contend for righteousness through preaching and behavior much more than trying to legislate righteousness.

On the other hand, the government, as ordained by God (Romans 13), has the right to protect the citizen from harm and to promote peace and order and is allowed by God to use the sword to achieve these objectives. In a paraphrase of what Olree understands the apostle Paul to say in this passage, Olree writes, "It is generally true that the government and its officials are fulfilling functions established for them by God, and pursuant to God's plan, generally their laws end up punishing those who sin against others and protecting those who are sinned against. Therefore Christians should always 'do good to others, pay their taxes, and be good citizens, fulfilling their own legal obligations and giving public officials the honor due their positions.' But Paul, like Jesus, stops short of claiming that Caesar ought to act like God's agent for all purposes" (122).

These are just some of the key ideas in this wide-ranging and carefully reasoned proposal from Olree, who demonstrates an astute understanding of political and moral philosophy as well as a good grasp of theology. Innovative ideas always incite numerous challenges, many of which Olree anticipates and responds to, some more convincingly than others. He invites vigorous and expansive dialog about the Choice Principle. This would be worth pursuing, especially regarding the current tension within the evangelical community to determine "God's Politics" and who is doing it properly.

Wes Harrison
Professor of Bible and Humanities
Ohio Valley University

Robert B. CHISHOLM, Jr. *Interpreting the Historical Books: An Exegetical Handbook*. Handbooks for Old Testament Exegesis. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2006. 231 pp. $19.99.

This series aims at two needs for graduate-level exegesis courses: "to present the reader with a better understanding of the different OT genres (principles) and provide strategies for preaching and teaching these genres (methods)" (17). The inaugural volume in the series, this volume follows the six-chapter structure set by the editors. In the first chapter, "What is Narrative Literature?" Chisholm focuses on the genre of story and its exegesis with considerable detail: basic elements of a story (setting, characterization, plot), structural features (discourse structure, dramatic structure, paneled sequences, chiasmus), quotation and dialogue (discourse types, speech function), gaps and ambiguity, the narrator's authority and perspective, macroplot, and intertextuality (foreshadowing, parallelism and narrative typology, allusion, echoing, repetition of keywords). The second chapter provides a succinct summary of the primary themes of each of the historical books and concludes with

a synopsis of the themes of the Deuteronomistic History and the "Postexilic Literature." Chapter three provides basic information to prepare readers for doing exegesis: the chronology of events reflected in the historical books, a primer on textual criticism, translation, and bibliographic aids for secondary literature. The fourth chapter, "Interpreting Narrative Texts," appeals for a synchronic "exegetical-literary method" of interpretation over against diachronic methods, regarding which Chisholm has few to no positive comments. The fifth chapter proposes a simple homiletical strategy: find the principle of the text and apply the principle. And the final chapter offers two fairly complete samples of Chisholm's exegetical/homiletical method (2 Kgs 2:23-25 and Ruth 1).

Chisholm writes from an evangelical perspective that affirms the historical accuracy of the stories and their theological dimension as a "unified message from its divine Author" (167). As a result, he is highly critical of "shopworn" (180) diachronic methods and postmodern philosophical trends. His own approach to the narratives is decidedly technical. And while he warns that his process "should not be viewed as formulaic" (185), the book does send this message. Chisholm opens the volume with 64 pages (almost ⅓ of the book) that present a very mechanical process for narrative analysis with meticulous technical criticism. (Most helpful in this chapter is the text's use of bold type to identify key words defined in the glossary.) While I appreciate what Chisholm is trying to do ("illustrate the importance of recognizing the literary dimensions" of narratives), the art of literary analysis is lost in favor of a scientific approach that dissects a story without any clear gains.

This book may well find a place among required readings for my own courses. I would, however, have the students read the contents in almost reverse order beginning with the third chapter ("Preparing for Interpretation") because it does, in fact, prepare the beginning student for reading by giving an excellent summary of key dates and events and introducing issues of textual criticism and translation. I would then have the students read the fourth chapter (on diachronic versus synchronic interpretation) and work to give diachronic analysis a fairer hearing in class discussions. Next, as we worked through the historical books, students would read Chisholm's excellent thematic summaries (chapter two). If students read the first chapter, the teacher will need to break up this material into manageable bite-size pieces and demonstrate in class how this data and approach significantly helps interpretation (not especially clear in the book). Otherwise, students will have little tolerance for what will initially appear to be irrelevant and overly detailed literary analysis. Finally, while sound, the homiletical strategy and examples in chapters five and six are basic and not very creative. I expect homileticians would challenge the reader to be much more imaginative in developing sermons from narrative texts.

Glenn D. Pemberton
Associate Professor of Old Testament
Abilene Christian University

William D. MOUNCE, ed. *Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words.* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006. 1136 pp. $29.99.

In this volume, Mounce (*Basics of Biblical Greek*, Zondervan, 1993) is aided by Miles Van Pelt (*Basics of Biblical Hebrew*, Zondervan, 2001) to update the classic

Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of the Old and New Testament (Nelson, 1968). It begins with two short sections guiding English-only readers and those with only a little Greek and Hebrew to make use of the volume. The value is that word studies for preaching and teaching need to be based on the wording of original languages in order to be accurate. It then explains how to proceed through a word study.

The heart of the volume is the English to Hebrew/Greek lexicon with short entries for each word. These entries start with the OT or NT usage of the word, then supplies what part of speech it is and spells out the word in Hebrew or Greek, followed by a transliteration, "GK" number (which relates to the end of the volume's Hebrew/Greek to English lexicon), Strong's number, and the number of times the word appears. After this, each submission has definitions, and expositions relating to the Hebrew or Greek are listed along with the biblical references of where the word appears in the Bible. The volume finally includes a Scripture index and a Hebrew and Greek to English lexicon.

A strength of this volume is the ability to take an English word and find it quickly in Hebrew or Greek. In addition, the section describing how to do a word study is very informative for those who have little to no experience in the original languages. In this section, the most important part concerns "common mistakes" (xxi), where it looks at the problems of anachronism and etymological fallacies that can creep easily into a word study.

One of the critiques is the incompleteness around some entries. In the entry for "Satan," for instance, only the Greek word, *Satanas* is listed (612). Only the definition from the 2nd temple period is given in the first paragraph. The second paragraph leads into a discussion of "Satan" in the OT. The Hebrew usage of "Satan" is introduced within the Greek part of the passage. This is counter to the purpose of the overall work, which is trying to show both the Hebrew and the Greek words used behind the English text. There should have been an entry concerning the Hebrew word, *Hasatan* within this work. This is especially the case since the OT's uses of Satan bring up the question of the definite article prefaced to the word Satan, and have caused some scholars to think of Satan as a title in the court of God.

The positives of usage of this volume are the ability to look at an English word and be able to go back to the Hebrew or Greek word behind it. This volume may be a tool for the student or preacher who wants to go from the English back to the original language. Looking through this volume, the saying, "he knows enough Greek and Hebrew to be dangerous" comes to mind. As any dictionary, this work should only be the beginning of research into a word of a text and needs to be tempered with other resources that work with the text.

MATTHEW SHEPHERD
Emmanuel School of Religion

George ATHAS, *The Tel Dan Inscription: A Reappraisal and a New Interpretation*. New York: T & T Clark, 2005. 331 pp. $49.95.

This book is a slightly reworked version of George Athas's dissertation, submitted to the University of Sydney, Australia, in 1999. It deals with the three fragments

of a broken stela discovered during the 1993 and 1994 excavation seasons at Tel Dan. When I was a graduate student, the initial publication of the inscription, published by Avraham Biran and Joseph Naveh ("An Aramaic Stele Fragment from Tel Dan," in *Israel Exploration Journal* 43: 81-98), was required reading. Since then, more than 200 articles, usually focused on some specific aspect of the inscription rather than the whole, have been published. Publication of this volume is significant in that it is the first book-length treatment of the inscription as a whole.

After an introductory chapter setting forth the methodology to be utilized in the study (pp. 1-4), chapter 2 then analyzes the archaeological context of the fragments (5-17). Based on the ceramic evidence associated with the secondary locations of the stela fragments, Athas argues, contrary to the conclusions of Biran and Naveh that the original inscription had been broken in the mid-ninth century BC, that "we can date the fracturing of all three fragments to the early eighth century BCE" (16).

In chapter 3 (18-93), Athas closely analyzes the physical characteristics and state of preservation of Fragments A and B, after which he makes a detailed epigraphical analysis of each line of the text. While Athas's analysis leads him to conclude that "the accusation of forgery against the Tel Dan fragments is groundless and should be summarily dismissed" (72), it also leads him to suggest that "the original inscription was not on display for very long at all before its destruction and reuse as building material" (73), and that Fragment B should probably be placed below Fragment A (93) instead of to the left of it, which was where Biran and Naveh had originally situated it.

Chapter 4 (95-174) consists of an in-depth paleographical examination in which every letter of the inscription(s) is scrutinized. He argues, again in contrast to Biran and Naveh, that Fragments A and B should both be dated, on paleographic grounds, to about 800 BC (136, 163-164).

In chapter 5 (174-191), Athas analyzes the arrangements of the fragments. The fit between the two smaller pieces, Fragments B1 and B2, is undisputed, and they are combined simply as Fragment B. The relationship of Fragment A and Fragment B, however, is disputed. Whereas Biran and Naveh had situated Fragment B to the left of Fragment A, Athas places B underneath A, thereby invalidating all previous interpretations based on the previous positioning.

Chapter 6 (192-244) analyzes the inscription textually. In this section, Athas reviews previous interpretations of the phrase *bytdwd*, after which he concludes that it is a geographical designation—a toponym—and "not a reference to a Davidic *dynasty*" (226). He explains his argument fully in chapter 7 (254-315), which is a historical commentary on the inscription. Athas's argument for a toponymic interpretation of *bytdwd* is built on the foundation of the absence of the word divider, an unstable foundation at best since nouns in construct do not always contain them.

This book is an important contribution to the study of the Tel Dan Stela. Athas's epigraphic and paleographic analyses are impressive and may be helpful to those working with inscriptions. In chapter 4, each letter is situated in a table including a photograph of the letter, its location in Fragments A and B, and the word(s) in which it occurs. Each table is followed by a detailed discussion of the paleography of the letter in which it is compared with other inscriptions. I would,

however, make the following critical notations. Athas's redating of the inscription to the eighth century BC is unconvincing. His discussion of archaeological context is only valid in relation to the date of secondary usage and not original composition. His paleographic dating is inconclusive, and other authorities have argued for an earlier date. Athas's repositioning of Fragment B beneath Fragment A is completely speculative. And, again, the foundation of the toponymic interpretation of *bytdwd* is unstable. This volume seems to follow in the tradition of biblical deconstructionism, and readers of *SCJ* may therefore prefer to utilize it in the library rather than adding it to their personal collections.

RALPH K. HAWKINS
Assistant to the Minister
First Presbyterian Church
Niles, Michigan

Christopher J.H. WRIGHT. *Knowing the Holy Spirit through the Old Testament*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006. 159 pp. $15.00.

One controversial topic that may be undervalued, and even often avoided, is the identity of the third person of the Trinity. The Holy Spirit is controversial because of the wide-ranging opinions of his place in the life of Christians and the church. The Stone-Campbell Restoration Movement can sometimes be seen as steering clear of the subject for fear of being classified as charismatic. Pentecostals are often seen as overemphasizing the Holy Spirit and the role of emotion. The Stone-Campbell and the Pentecostal movements should strike a balance between the two extremes. One step toward achieving that balance is by becoming educated about what the Bible says about the Spirit's role.

This volume is a great resource for understanding the OT conception of the Holy Spirit. The book is outlined into five chapters corresponding to five different roles of God's Spirit

In the first chapter, "The Creating Spirit," Wright juxtaposes the meanings of *ruakh*: "wind," "breath," and "Spirit (of God)." While in Genesis 1–2, *ruakh* may mean "Spirit of God," other passages bring the meanings together in speaking of creation. The study focuses mainly on Psalms 33, 104, and Romans 8.

In the second chapter, "The Empowering Spirit," Wright defines power as "the desire to have an influence, make an impact, change things in some way through our involvement" (36). He gives character studies of Bezalel and Oholiab, the judges, and Saul to explain how the Spirit combines power and ability. He also studies the character of Moses in Numbers 11–14 to highlight the Spirit's use of power with humility.

In the third chapter, "The Prophetic Spirit," Wright looks at the Holy Spirit's activity in the life of the prophets. He says, "God's Spirit, then, is the agent of communication from God's mind, with God's words, through God's prophets, to God's people." (63). Wright contrasts the characteristics of false prophets with those of true prophets. Wright concentrates on Jer 23:9-32, Ezekiel 13, and Micah 2:6-11 to describe false prophets; and Numbers 22–24, with various passages from the prophets peppered throughout, to describe the true prophets.

In the fourth chapter, "The Anointing Spirit," Wright deals with God's mission in the world through the historical kings and the coming servant-king. God's intension for his mission was to create a "kingship exercised through servanthood" (97). Wright gives the examples of Saul, David, and the future missions of the Coming Servant, Jesus, and the church to describe the Spirit's anointing.

In the final chapter, "The New Age of the Spirit," Wright emphasizes that the OT looks forward to a day "when God fully established his reign over his people and over the earth, there would be a fresh and unprecedented outpouring of God's Spirit" (121). Wright examines three passages that describe the coming Spirit: Isaiah 32; Ezekiel 36–37; and Joel 2.

Wright provides very strong exegesis of important passages for understanding the Holy Spirit in the OT. The volume also gives a brief overview of the OT using the Holy Spirit as a guide. Wright moves from creation to Moses to the judges and historical kings to the prophets, and then ends with the coming servant, Jesus and the church, and eschatology. It also includes key connections to the NT.

Wright gives no bibliography and very sparse footnotes. Some of the footnotes do contain references to other works. However, there is a good Scripture index.

This book would be very helpful in the Christian college or seminary classroom. It would provide a great supplement to a survey of OT or OT theology class and be valuable for preparing sermons on the Holy Spirit. Despite the use of original languages and complex theological themes, Wright conveys his ideas in language accessible to all. I recommend this volume.

Aaron Cantrell
Lincoln Christian Seminary

Kenton L. SPARKS. *Ancient Texts for the Study of the Hebrew Bible: A Guide to the Background Literature*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005. 608 pp. $39.95.

Sparks writes this volume to help the reader understand and appreciate the generic character of the Hebrew Bible by comparing it to similar texts written by Israel's ancient neighbors. Individual chapters (2–14) are devoted to the following genres: wisdom literature; hymns, prayers, and laments; love poetry; rituals and incantations; omens and prophecies; apocalyptic texts; tales and novellas; epics and legends; myth; genealogies, king lists, and related texts; historiography and royal inscriptions; law codes; treaty and covenant. The first chapter offers an overview of the archival and library materials from the world of the ancient Near East. This chapter alone makes his work a must read. The concluding chapter (ch. 15) details epigraphic sources from Syria-Palestine and its environs. In this chapter Sparks also notes the inscriptions whose authenticity is in doubt, as well as those that are almost certainly forgeries.

The expertise of this volume is readily apparent. Sparks moves easily within the catalog of ancient texts from Egypt to Mesopotamia to Anatolia to Syro-Palestine. The work represented here is staggering. A casual glance at the massive bibliographic detail is proof enough.

Sparks consistently explains the generic similarities as examples of cultural diffusion, the transfer of ideas or practices from one culture to another, either directly or

indirectly. Sparks works with four basic types of diffusion: direct connection (A is dependent upon B), a mediated connection (A knows from B from source C), a common source (A and B utilized a common source, C), and a common tradition (A and B have no immediate connections but participate in a common tradition).

A good number of readers of *SCJ* will likely disagree with a number of the conclusions reached by Sparks. Here are examples that run counter to my teaching. The visionary materials in Daniel are pseudoprophetic and were composed in response to the Hellenistic oppression experienced by Jews during the second century BC (241). Sparks considers the Joseph story, Ruth, Jonah, Esther, and the tales of the first half of the book of Daniel to be fictional works (267). The Hebrew writer took up the Sargon Birth Legend and applied it to Moses in order to portray Israel's lawgiver as a hero of Sargonic proportions (280). The Jewish Daniel began his career as a Ugaritic hero before he was adopted by Diaspora Jews as a sage and then apocalyptic prophet (296). The final editor of the Pentateuch conflated two different compositions: one composed by the Yahwistic author (J), and the other by the Priestly writer (P) (339). The later author sought to enhance Jewish identity by composing a history that mimicked the traditions of his more powerful and influential Mesopotamian neighbors (347). The description of Nebuchadnezzar's madness in Daniel suits the life and reputation of Nabonidus better than Nebuchadnezzar (380). The Pentateuch was composed mainly during and after the Babylonian exile (409). The repetitions, tensions, and differences within the laws of the Pentateuch imply that they are the work of several authors (431). The Persians played a prominent role in either supporting or sponsoring the codification of Hebrew law (432). Similarities between Deuteronomy and the Neo-Assyrian (not Hittite) treaties are particularly close. This is so, according to Sparks, so that the author can polemicize against Neo-Assyrian oppression (446).

This volume is best suited to the graduate student who is looking for a literary survey of the genres of the ancient Neat East, including, of course, the literature of ancient Israel.

MARK J. MANGANO
Professor of Old Testament
Lincoln Christian College & Seminary

Ralph K. HAWKINS. ***While I Was Praying: Finding Insights about God in Old Testament Prayers.*** **Macon: Smith & Helwys, 2006. 196 pp. $17.00.**

Many Christians are aware that prayer is a vital part of their spiritual growth. Although many agree with this, exactly how to pray is still a question. Prayer is important, but people feel powerless in prayer. How does a person pray effectively? How does a person pray passionately? These are questions that race through the minds of many.

Hawkins has written a fabulous guide that answers many questions concerning prayer. Wisely he leads readers to the Bible. Where do the insights about prayer come from? Readers might be surprised to scan the table of contents in Hawkins's book to find that his guidelines for prayer come from the OT. This is a wonderful book about prayer that contains great principles from people of faith in the OT:

Abraham, Moses, David, Daniel, Jonah, Habakkuk, and more. Many Christians moralize their stories but most do not examine how they incorporate principles of spiritual growth into their lives like this volume does.

It is not possible to disclose the entire book adequately, so I will explain one chapter and add a brief comment about the rest of the book. This chapter focuses on Abraham and the three visitors (Gen 18:22-33). The Lord and two angels wanted to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, but Abraham bargained with the Lord. That the Lord tarried with Abraham after sharing the news with Abraham stirs the reader's curiosity: "Did the Lord remain behind as the two angels left in order to invite more conversation with Abraham?" Hawkins believes so and draws from this that God is always open to the queries of sincere people.

The chapter also includes a great section about the understanding of pagan gods in the times of Abraham. That knowledge helps the reader understand the method that God used to present himself to Abraham. He graciously approached Abraham in ways that reinforced God's superiority over the pagan gods' capricious and malicious natures. God is patient and understanding in his dealings with Abraham. Abraham humbly bargains with God, and God interacts with Abraham.

The chapter concludes with self-reflection that focuses on a Christian worldview. He makes his readers reflect on their passion for God. Do Christians really pray as if God can make a difference?

This book would be a great tool for any Bible study group. As a preacher, I would recommend it as a great source for a sermon series on prayer.

DOUG PHILLIPS
Teaching Pastor
Kinmundy Christian Church
Kinmundy, Illinois

Clyde M. WOODS and Justin M. ROGERS, *Leviticus–Numbers*. The College Press NIV Commentary. Joplin, MO: College Press, 2006. 393 pp. $32.99.

The College Press NIV Commentary series seeks to benefit preacher, professor, and disciple as a responsible and respectful preparatory resource for Bible study. To that end its volumes are reputedly a combination of solid biblical scholarship and practical usefulness as affordable, reference-worthy commentaries. By design these study tools are self-described as: biblically sound exegesis, clear exposition, objective approach, concise introductions, key words of the NIV emboldened, key word translation, easy-to-use format, practical footnotes, quality work, and fresh style and format. The College Press aims to produce the very best, something that is reliable, useful, and handy.

This commentary is the sixteenth in the OT in the College Press series. The fact that it is not the first does not explain why it lacks any series introduction or preface by the editors Terry Briley or Paul Kissling. There is a word from the publisher but that does little to orient the reader to the presuppositions that ground this work from beginning to end. Clearly very conservative evangelical views control the content and exposition regarding issues of authorship, redaction, form, tradition,

and source criticisms. Although many abbreviations for standard reference works and journals in biblical studies are listed at the beginning, they hardly qualify as user-friendly nor are the majority of them very accessible to the typical reader of this level commentary. Moreover, the "simple guide to Hebrew writing" suggests that the book will deal frequently with the translation of significant Hebrew words requiring a brief pronunciation chart if one will be able to follow the philological discussion throughout. This initial intentional inclusion mistakenly set up the impression that the commentary would offer more than it really delivers.

In keeping with the goals of the series the introductions to the biblical books are extremely brief. Oddly, however, an inordinate amount of space is devoted to peculiar views that are simply dismissed in the end. A number of these "theories" seem to be selected to undergird a remote but self-serving aspect of the authors' analysis: Mary Douglas's "ring structure" matching the layout of the tabernacle was selected because she defends the literary integrity of Leviticus; her chiastic proposal for the structure of Numbers is approved since she argues that the book is a unified whole. While virtually no critical OT scholar has taken seriously Douglas's idiosyncratic views, Woods and Rogers devote a few pages to her in order to emphasize a single thread of literary integrity. The typical uninformed reader of this commentary may misunderstand this, especially given the brevity of the introduction.

Particularly disturbing given some of the objectives for the commentary are the following problems that severely limit its usefulness for the average reader: (1) an obscure reference to a D.A. Dorsey whose name and works are not listed in either of the bibliographies for Leviticus and Numbers (17, n. 14; 166, n 4), whose work *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament* (Baker, 1999) and influence appears to have been more widespread than credited; (2) the lack of indices for Scripture references, the names of scholars, or subjects mentioned makes the commentary much less user-friendly or helpful that it could be; (3) extensive footnotes, up to half a page long, offer a level of discussion several notches above the body of the commentary and seem to be aimed at a different audience. These are far from practical and at times give the impression for the common reader that Woods and Rogers have written the definitive final word. The use of secondary references, however, demonstrates both dependence on and cursory inclusion to impress (19, n. 17, reference Frank Moore Cross on the Priestly school). Unfortunately there is little to recommend about this commentary for either the scholar or the novice.

Craig D. Bowman
Professor of Old Testament
Rochester College

David Toshio TSUMURA. *The First Book of Samuel*. New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007. 698 pp. $50.00.

With this commentary Tsumura has added a significant contribution to the highly regarded NICOT series. His commentary on 2 Samuel in the series is forthcoming.

An examination of the introduction to any commentary reveals much about the author's presuppositions and about the methodology that will govern the daunting

task of preparing a commentary. Concerning the books of Samuel, a commentator's presuppositions regarding textual matters are crucial because of the difficulties that one encounters in this area. One of Tsumura's strengths (and a welcome one it is) is his willingness to defend the integrity of the Masoretic Text (MT), which through the years has come under intense scrutiny in Samuel studies and has often been "weighed in the balances and found wanting." As a rule scholars have been all too hasty and eager to offer an alternative to a questionable reading, viewing the MT as inferior. Thus it is encouraging indeed to read in Tsumura's opening comments on textual matters that the MT of 1 and 2 Samuel is "*allegedly* [emphasis mine] 'in extremely poor condition' because of its peculiar and often unintelligible spellings and grammatical forms. Hence, scholars have 'corrected' it [his quotes] in the light of LXX and other versions, and recently using the Qumran biblical texts" (3). Tsumura rejects the "eclectic" approach advocated by McCarter in the latter's *Anchor Bible* commentary on Samuel, noting that "unlike the case of the NT, there are not enough manuscript witnesses to reconstruct a primitive text of Samuel" (6).

In advocating a "reevaluation" of the MT, Tsumura suggests the following guideline: "When there is not enough evidence to draw the solid conclusion that the text is corrupt, the best thing to do is to leave the MT, an ancient artifact, unaltered, and to explain it with minimal speculation" (10). Tsumura maintains that "textual critics have a tendency to watch carefully the formal aspects of the text . . . and often suggest that there were deliberate 'corrections,' but they often overlook phonological and grammatical features" (9). What many have declared to be "scribal errors," says Tsumura, "may be in fact phonetic spellings or Hebrew grammatical constructions that have been misunderstood" (9).

Tsumura also rejects the tenets of biblical minimalists, who question the historicity of much that is in not only the books of Samuel but in the OT as a whole, and whose principles have been embraced to some extent in evangelicalism. He makes the case linguistically that the author of these books "was writing in an early period, much earlier than exilic or postexilic times" (31). History writing, according to this perspective, "did not have to wait in ancient Israel until the appearance of 7th-century or postexilic 'Deuteronomistic' historian(s)" (32). How refreshing!

Another noteworthy contribution of Tsumura's work is the particular methodology that he proposes for studying Hebrew narrative materials. This involves the approach known as "discourse analysis," which Tsumura claims has not yet been applied thoroughly to the text of 1 and 2 Samuel (50). This approach, as explained by Tsumura, "helps to solve some long-standing exegetical problems by directing the reader's attention to linguistic units larger than a sentence and focusing on the narrative flow" (55).

Tsumura's own assessment of his commentary as a "small contribution" to the study of the books of Samuel (1) is an acknowledgement of the enormity of the task and of his indebtedness to previous commentators. But it is also a patent understatement. To witness Tsumura's blending of respect for the MT and respect for the historicity of the biblical record is most encouraging and makes his commentary a "large contribution" to the resources on 1 Samuel.

Douglas Redford
Associate Professor of Old Testament
Cincinnati Christian University

Stanley PORTER, ed. *Hearing the Old Testament in the New Testament.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006. 316 pp. $ 29.00.

This volume is a major contribution to the study of the NT use of the OT. It represents papers read at a Colloquium at McMaster Divinity College in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada in 2003. The Colloquium had the intriguing title, "Hearing the Old Testament through the New." Eight of the ten contributors live and work in Canada. The editor, as well as several of the contributors, has already published significant works in the field.

The volume has twelve essays, which include an introduction by the editor and a concluding reaction to each essay by Andreas Kostenberger. Thus the volume includes two summary essays on the content of the papers, a somewhat repetitive exercise. Kostenberger's evaluation of each essay raises issues of concern to him, and point to some important areas that have had and continue to merit discussion.

The book begins with an essay on methodology by Dennis Stamps. He proposes that a useful way of analyzing the way the NT authors used the OT is to use the grid of first-century Greek rhetoric. Rhetoric is an attempt to persuade, so we should ask how the authors use OT texts to persuade their audiences. The second essay by R. Timothy McLay examines the tentative status of Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic texts and the canon in the first century, and its bearing on the text of the OT quotes. He illustrates the issue by doing a case study on Heb 1:6. The succeeding essays each examine a NT book, or grouping of books, regarding the biblical author's particular usage of the OT. Michael Knowles looks at Matthew; Craig Evans at Mark; Stanley Porter at Luke–Acts; Paul Miller at John; James Aageson at Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, and Galatians; Sylvia Keesmaast at Paul's shorter epistles; Kurt Richardson at James; and Andreas Kostenberger at the Pastoral, General Epistles, and Revelation. Kostenberger wrote this last essay after the conference to provide comments on the NT books not covered. It is understandably brief on the numerous books covered and the weakest essay in the book.

The strength of the papers is that they cover theory and practice. Most of the authors give an overview of their topic, suggest some methodological steps for assessing how the author uses the OT, and then examine a specific text or two to apply their suggested method. This provides the reader with an opportunity to gauge the strength of the proposals. This volume provides valuable insight into the wide variety of issues involved with study of the NT use of the OT. It shows how indebted the NT is to the OT. For example, Richardson's study on the influence of Job on James is fascinating. The footnotes in each essay provide important bibliographical material. Stamps, and others, introduce the perplexing issue of developing criteria for distinguishing quotes, allusions, and echoes of the OT in the NT.

The book has two indices, one on modern authors and the other on ancient sources (including the Bible). A very helpful addition would have been a bibliography at the end. As it is, one has to scan the footnotes for the resources.

Understanding the relationship between the Testaments is crucial to biblical theology and to the church. This book is an important guide to the interested stu-

dent and would be most useful to Bible scholars and graduate seminars. High level college students could also profit from the essays.

GARY H. HALL
Professor of Old Testament
Lincoln Christian Seminary

Walter BRUEGGEMANN. *The Theology of the Book of Jeremiah.* Old Testament Theology. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007. 213 pp. $18.99.

In what sense does a book that is well over 2,500 years old address the crises of a global society that seems to be on the eve of destruction? This is the primary question that Brueggemann, William Marcellus McPheeters Professor Emeritus of Old Testament, Columbia Theological Seminary, seeks to answer in this volume. This latest, thought-provoking work is one of the initial offerings in a series attempting to bridge the gap between traditional OT theologies and verse-by-verse commentaries by providing a format in which the theological emphases of individual books can be examined in much greater depth than in the other genres.

Higher critical conclusions regarding this prophetic book are accepted and assessed by Brueggemann. He concludes that the book of Jeremiah in its canonical form is the production of several distinctive prophetic and scribal voices. It is "rooted in an imaginative prophet and developed in elongated fashion by a passionate, ongoing community of interpreters." While this conclusion shapes some of the discussions of the book's theological development, the canonical form of the book is respected throughout the work. As a result, this volume has value for those who are committed to more traditional views of the authorship of the prophetic book.

The introductory section of this volume orients the reader to basic issues in the study of this prophetic work. Brueggemann admits that scholarship has been confounded by the complex and somewhat incoherent manner in which the oracles in the book have been organized. He attempts to make sense of this by identifying three primary voices (assumed words of Jeremiah, scribal prose, and Deuteronomistic prose) that recur throughout the book. He then moves from these observations to discuss the influences that helped shape these voices and, in turn, the canonical book. Of particular interest is his discussion of the place of the book of Jeremiah in the development of a scribal theology that later was to dominate Judaism. In evaluating these voices and the influences behind them, Brueggemann concludes that the prophetic book is an attempt to "make theological sense out of a geopolitical crisis." In doing this, the prophetic voice strongly challenges those political and prophetic advocates of the status quo in Judah.

The book of Jeremiah challenges those advocates of complacency with a strong affirmation of the sovereignty of God. The bulk of the remainder of this volume addresses the way in which the canonical book develops this theme, making particular note of the absolute power of God to "pluck up and to pull down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant," as well as to "stir up" the nations to accomplish his purposes. He notes that God's sovereignty is demonstrated (1) in *prophecy* as Jeremiah is the prophet "like Moses" who speaks God's uncompromis-

ing word in contrast to the prophets of the monarchical establishment, (2) in *judgment* as first Jerusalem and then Babylon will experience God's unconstrained ability to "pluck up," and (3) in *promise* as the book assures that YHWH is "a sovereign God who practices fidelity."

The final two chapters of this volume address the significance of the book of Jeremiah within the biblical canon. Brueggemann's discussion of the place of Jeremiah within the OT collection is more strongly colored by the assumptions of higher criticism and may be of less value to those holding more traditional views regarding the OT. The final chapter which discusses the continuing influence of the book reminds the reader that with events like the Jewish shoah and 9/11, this age needs the same type of thoughtful and uncompromising reflection on loss and hope that is seen in the book of Jeremiah.

Not every reader will be entirely comfortable with the approach to the book of Jeremiah Brueggemann adopts in this volume. However, this work does provide a challenging stimulus to further thought on the power and relevance of the book of Jeremiah in his day and ours. As such it is a valuable supplementary resource for upper-level Bible college and seminary students, as well as ministers and teachers who desire to think afresh about the significance of the prophet Jeremiah.

MICHAEL PABARCUS
Professor of Old Testament and Urban Ministry
Saint Louis Christian College

Ronald E. HEINE. *Reading the Old Testament with the Ancient Church: Exploring the Formation of Early Christian Thought.* Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007. 204 pp. $18.99.

Those familiar with accomplished professors among Christian Churches (independent) in the Stone-Campbell Restoration Movement circles will be aware of the stature of Heine as a patristics scholar. His latest offering brings that scholarship down to a college level, where student and church leader alike can glean the extraordinary insights of the Nicene and Ante-Nicene church fathers. In a nutshell, Heine demonstrates that the early church relied heavily, if not at times exclusively, on the OT to prove that Jesus is the Christ, and that the Law, the Prophets, and especially the Psalms looked forward to the Christian era through their language, symbolism, and typologies. This book is fourth in Baker's Resourcement series that examines how evangelicals can and should be influenced by the theology and praxis of the church fathers. Series editor D.H. Williams describes the series as "ancient sources for the church's future," and Heine's book fits quite comfortably into that description.

Heine begins with a brief recounting of the history of scholarly attitudes toward the OT, from Erasmus to Bultmann. He then gives a synopsis of the versions of Scripture used by the first- and second-century church, namely the Septuagint, but he covers other extant versions as well, including Latin translations and the targumim. Heine then categorizes the rest of his discussion of the church fathers' approach to the OT in four key areas: the Law, the Exodus, the Prophets, and the Psalms. He concludes with a short chapter on how the church fathers devoted their

lives to "Living in the Text." The book has a helpful listing of patristics resources, both print and online, and a subject index. It is disappointing that the book does not include a Scripture and ancient sources index. However, in three of the four central chapters, Heine focuses on one or two church fathers at a time, so someone studying Origen, for example, could fairly easily locate those sections.

Heine's area of specialty with respect to the fathers is clearly Origen, and Origen's writings are prominent throughout the book. But Heine has an excellent balance of the works of other Fathers as well. In chapter 2, "The Struggle Concerning the Law in the Second Century," Heine breaks up his discussion into three major sections focusing on the Fathers' apologetic for defending the Christian application of the law against the objections of the Jews, the Gnostics, and the Marcionites. The key question driving the discussion is this: "In what way could Christians, who were not Jews, claim that the Jewish Bible was their Scripture when they understood it so differently from the Jews?" (47). Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew* is the highlight of the discussion regarding Jewish understanding of the law, while Irenaeus carries the torch against Ptolemaeus the Gnostic.

In the chapter on the Exodus, Heine successfully establishes a "responsible and relevant" (76) reimagining of the Exodus. In addition to Origen, John's development of Exodus themes in his Gospel and Gregory of Nyssa's *On the Life of Moses* figure prominently in this chapter, with the latter approaching Moses as a model of Christian virtue. Heine details how these authors used symbolic themes of the Exodus for application to the Christian life.

Chapter 4, "The Gospel in the Prophets," breaks from the pattern of focusing on one church father at a time. Heine instead organizes his discussion around key prophetic and messianic Scriptures, including those that Christians argued predicted a divine, preexistent Messiah and the characteristics he would demonstrate. The key Scriptures Heine focuses on are primarily from the Psalms and Isaiah. His discussion of Psalm 22, for example, confirmed for me that Jesus' quote of Psalm 22:1 on the cross (Matt 27:46) was not so much a feeling of despair as it was a calling to mind of the entire psalm (126–127). This chapter was by far the most difficult to work through, if only for the sheer weight of scriptural and patristic documentation. However, if one works through the chapter carefully, the profound exegetical and theological significance of the Fathers' early struggles and victories to prove and hold fast to Jesus as Messiah becomes clear.

The most practical and powerful chapter on a devotional level, for church people and scholars alike, is chapter 5, "Praying the Psalms." Heine documents how the Psalms were central to Christian worship, praxis, and devotion in the early church. He places a great deal of emphasis on how the Fathers identified the "speakers" in each of the psalms. Several of the fathers see Christ as the speaker, and this has a profound impact on how they understand and pray the Psalms. He includes an extended discussion of the pervasiveness of the Psalms in Augustine's writings. In the final chapter, Heine describes how Gregory of Nyssa understood the Psalms to be arranged to lead the Christian from penitence to praise.

This volume has value as a main text in any patristics course, or as a supplemental text in an early church history course. The chapter on the Psalms might just revolutionize one's prayer life. Those outside of academic circles might be a bit

intimidated by the numerous citations of the church fathers, but one can trust that Heine has faithfully mined their riches and presented them for easy consumption by those who have a solid biblical foundation. Preachers and teachers alike cannot afford to bypass the value of this book—Heine has packed his immeasurable wealth of knowledge of the church fathers into this valuable paperback.

Scott Stocking
Adjunct Professor of Biblical Languages
Lincoln Christian College

Darrell L. BOCK and Buist M. FANNING, eds., *Interpreting the New Testament Text: Introduction to the Art and Science of Exegesis.* Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006. 480 pp. $29.99.

This book is a *Festschrift* in honor of Harold Hoehner, longtime professor of New Testament at Dallas Theological Seminary. The word *Festschrift* is enough to discourage many readers, since most books of this genre are very loosely connected essays that the authors already had roughed out before the invitation to publish came along. This one, however, is an exception. The editors have arranged the essays in a helpful way. This volume is divided into two parts, the first consisting of chapters on various methods of exegesis and the second offering exegetical essays on NT texts as examples of the procedures outlined in Part One.

Anyone who has taught exegesis probably would identify something or other missing from Part One: Exegetical Methods and Procedures. As I approached the end of these chapters I missed references to orality studies and performance criticism, as well as any mention of liberation, feminist, or third-world approaches. Having said that, I am pleased with what is there—a fine introduction to the actual process and hands-on methods of analyzing NT texts in their contexts. Along the way various authors have done a good job of pitching their assignments to educated beginners while getting into some surprising detail. These essays are written as descriptions of the actual work of exegesis instead of dealing with a lot of abstractions.

Bock himself, one of the editors, wrote the opening chapter that deals with preliminary issues. Here he gives this concise definition of exegesis: "setting forth the authors'/text's meaning by interaction with the original language through the use of sound hermeneutics with a view to applying the text to the contemporary church and the world." (24) The reader gets the impression that this definition with perhaps the subsequent exposition of it was used as a guide for each of the instructional chapters. This common understanding unifies Part One quite well.

I was especially pleased with Chapter 3: Grammatical Analysis. Early on, the author, J. William Johnston, warns beginning exegetes, "Making an observation about the syntax of a Greek text does not magically provide the right interpretation. Statements that begin 'In the Greek, it really says . . .' do not provide ample evidence for a view. . . . The proper use of Greek syntax involves testing grammatical identification by careful, contextual exegetical validation. When an interpretive difficulty involves a grammatical issue, statements about the nature and meaning of a construction must be based on sound method." (61) He then proceeds to detail and illustrate "sound method."

Another important statement lies in the background of the volume until it is stated on pages 277-278: "We read the Bible as God's abiding and inerrant revelation to his people, and we must submit to its authority and allow its message to judge us rather than vice versa. But we must understand it in terms of the particular language, history, culture, conceptual background, and literary style of the human writers through whom God has chosen to reveal his truth." This is written by Fanning, the other editor, and indicates a common understanding of the nature of Scripture that, to a great extent, unites the various authors. The balance of the human and divine in this theological position is apparent in each chapter, but the weight of the inerrancy position appears to rule out any interpretation that would tend to apply something against the text. This chapter, "Theological Analysis," left me a bit confused. I expected to find in it some analysis of the effect of a theological position on the exegete, along the lines of the movement called theological or canonical interpretation. However, the chapter deals mainly with the use of Scripture in building a biblical theology, without the self-critical questions I was hoping for.

I had an odd sensation as I read the last few chapters in Part One—a sensation that led me to reread the lists of works for further reading at the end of each chapter. When I did that, I saw that the publishers represented there are almost exclusively conservative presses: Baker, Broadman & Holman, IVP, Zondervan, and Eerdmans. The exceptions are in the chapters that deal with lexical and grammatical issues. The more mainline publishers, like Westminster John Knox, Fortress, Abingdon, Scholars Press, and Chalice, as well as the main European presses are conspicuously absent. Then I turned to Part Two, where the exegetical work is shown. Even though the authors of these essays do not offer lists for further reading, their footnotes reveal that they depend primarily on works published by the very presses that the earlier lists neglected. This is a dissonance easily resolved, although I have the feeling that the authors of Part One would have trouble recommending books with a more liberal bent, even though they probably own and use them.

Having said all that, I can recommend this book as a helpful introduction to the process of exegesis. It could be well used in seminary courses where the instructor can supplement it and lead the students in exegetical practice of their own. It should also be a useful review and reminder for working preachers and teachers of the detailed work necessary to thorough analysis of NT texts.

Bruce E. Shields
Professor of Preaching and Biblical Hermeneutics
Emmanuel School of Religion

Leen RITMEYER. ***The Quest: Revealing the Temple Mount in Jerusalem.*** **Jerusalem: Carta and The Lamb Foundation, 2006. 440 pp. $60.00.**

Ritmeyer's project is the result of over three decades of archaeological work in Jerusalem, especially in the vicinity of the Temple. His dedication to "unraveling the mysteries of the [Temple] Mount" became a "personal quest" (12), which he transformed into the title of the book. He garners evidence from archaeology, the

Bible, rabbinic sources, and travelers' accounts to weave a tapestry of data and interpretation. Overall his quest succeeds; he has produced an impressive volume replete with almost four hundred illustrations. One should not infer from the array of illustrations and photographs that this is a casual pictorial guide; instead it is a detailed, scholarly effort to retrieve and interpret as much of the information and data as possible relating to the Herodian, Zerubbabel, and Solomonic Temples.

The author's archaeological association with the Temple area began as a field architect with Benjamin Mazar in the areas to the south and southwest of the Temple area as well as additional work with Nahman Avigad in the Jewish Quarter of Jerusalem. As a field architect, he inevitably would be engaged in long and detailed discussions with the principal investigators as well as the need carefully to interpret the stratigraphic relationships of the remains. Additional studies gave him privileged access to areas that usually are closed.

Ritmeyer refreshingly brings a high view of Scripture to the work. However, there is little critical evaluation of the sources. Biblical references are usually taken at face value, like the proposed date of the Exodus from 1 Kgs 6:1 (284), even when other biblical remarks imply the need to nuance them, like the implication of Exod 1:11. He uses the biblical information meaningfully and suggests that the differences in the Temple descriptions in Kings as compared with Chronicles reflect alterations in the Temple from its construction under Solomon to the reality of the Temple in Hezekiah's reign (305-306).

One of Ritmeyer's more sensational claims focuses on a depression on the stone scarp under the Dome of the Rock that he believes served as the foundation for the Holy of Holies. The dimensions of the depression roughly correspond to those of the Ark of the Covenant. He argues (247-250, 268-277) that this depression was where the Ark rested and that the dimensional disparity accommodates the copy of Deuteronomy that was to reside next to the Ark (Deut 31:26). While the evidence he marshals is viable, the thesis remains a working hypothesis at best, but a tantalizing one nonetheless.

As a visitor to the Temple area numerous times in the last three decades, I have wondered how well a reader who had never seen the Temple area firsthand would follow Ritmeyer's detailed descriptions. He provides numerous illustrations to supplement the text, but even with basic firsthand familiarity with the site, it is necessary to read through the descriptions carefully to remain properly oriented to the guided tour. Regretfully, some places in the text are in error or confused, like where the direction in the photo caption should be northwest corner and not northeast (43) and where the narration jumps confusingly from Roman construction in southeast Jerusalem to an Assyrian camp northwest of the city (81).

This volume is a wonderful contribution to the study of Jerusalem and especially the Temple. Its complexity, however, is such that it will probably be poorly suited for the popular reader, but will be indispensable for serious and scholarly study of the Temple.

Dale W. Manor
Professor of Archaeology and Hebrew Bible
Harding University

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James BIELBY and Paul R. EDDY, eds. *The Nature of the Atonement: Four Views.* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006. 208 pp. $20.00.

Recent feminist critiques of the penal substitution theory of the atonement led to a renewed discussion on the atonement within evangelical circles, of which this book is a product. Some of these feminists argue that traditional views encourage "tolerance of abuse" and "foster the idea that 'cosmic child abuse' . . . is the divinely ordained path to salvation" (10).

Due to these critiques, further attention has been given to other motifs of the atonement used in the Bible. The editors follow Gustaf Aulén's *Christus Victor* (Wipf & Stock, 1931) by summarizing the motifs into three paradigms: Christus Victor, objective, and subjective. They chose a particular motif and representative of each paradigm. The contributors do not believe their view is the only valid motif, but they believe their motif is central. The editors also chose a contributor who holds to a "kaleidoscopic view," which does not believe any view can claim primacy. Each contributor had an opportunity to respond to the other writers.

Gregory Boyd begins the discussion by summarizing his information in *God at War* (InterVarsity, 1997) and *Satan and the Problem of Evil* (InterVarsity, 2001) to argue for centrality of the Christus Victor view. Boyd begins his argument with a discussion of "the broader spiritual warfare motif that runs throughout Scripture" (25), of which Jesus' death and resurrection plays a pivotal part. Boyd believes that the cosmic dimension of the atonement, characterized by the defeat of the powers, allows for the reality of the anthropological and soteriological dimensions and best inspires Christians to follow the ethical imperatives of Christ.

Thomas Schreiner argues that penal substitution functions as the "anchor and foundation for all other dimensions of the atonement" (67) and defends the view precisely because it is "scandalous to some scholars" (72). Schreiner defends the centrality of penal substitution based on the sinfulness of humanity, the need for human perfection, the holiness of God, and sacrifice of Christ in fulfillment of Israel's sacrificial system.

Bruce Reichenbach defends the healing by pointing out that the NT sees the law as "a preamble, not as salvific." He shows that the biblical authors see healing not only as physical, but as restoring a state of holistic shalom. Reichenbach demonstrates the healing perspective by using the suffering servant song in Isa 52:13–53:12 as a prophecy of Jesus' taking on our pains and sufferings, Jesus as physician, and Jesus' commands to his disciples to heal people.

Finally, Joel Green argues for the kaleidoscopic view. He begins his discussion by demonstrating that Jesus' ministry cannot be understood apart from historical context of the Roman world. He then emphasizes the diversity of perspectives on the atonement within the NT, both as sacrifice and revelation, and then concludes that while certain motifs better communicate to certain cultures and times, no one model can claim primacy.

While the contributors excel at introducing major perspectives of the atonement within evangelical circles, one wonders why the editors only cited the works of the feminists who have critiqued traditional perspectives of the atonement instead of including one of the feminists in the work. A similar weakness of this vol-

ume concerns the fact that the contributors each come from within evangelicalism, so the book does not include perspectives from other segments of the church.

Also, while the book includes a Scripture index, this volume lacks a subject or author index and a bibliography.

Despite these problems, this volume is a good introduction to current evangelical conversations concerning the atonement for pastors, interested lay people, undergraduate, or seminary students.

SHAUN C. BROWN
Emmanuel School of Religion

Tim PERRY. *Mary for Evangelicals: Toward an Understanding of the Mother of Our Lord.* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006. 320 pp. $24.00.

Perry offers here a Marian historiography, tracing the ever-increasing devotion toward Mary, the mother of Jesus, and the corresponding restraint suggested by the theological study which followed. Perry's survey begins with the earliest epistles of Paul, in which Mary, never named by Paul, gives birth to the human Messiah. Her humanity is further developed by Mark who demonstrates that her motherly instincts to protect Jesus hinder her discipleship. Matthew portrays her as a woman embroiled in the scandal of illegitimate pregnancy, while Luke shows her to be a pious devotee of God's will (even though she "ponders" it until the time when she can fully understand it). John has the least to say about her, for she only appears twice in his Gospel, and in each case the glory of the Father and exaltation of his son Jesus are in play. Perry takes great care to delineate what is properly known about Mary from the biblical text and carries that forward as a canon of measurement against the literature written in her honor in subsequent centuries.

Perry then turns his attention to the evolution of Marian devotion in Christian literature. The legendary nature of the *Protoevangelium of James* forms the basis for much speculation about Mary's life in the early church fathers and beyond. There her Davidic descent is established and the legends about her perpetual virginity begin to develop. Perry traces themes through a chronological survey of Marian literature, showing how all the major cornerstones of Mariology are laid. Devotion to Mary rose through the early church period and the Middle Ages, as each theological development built upon the previous foundation to articulate something new about her (262). During the Reformation's return to biblical foundations devotion to Mary returned to more biblical roots, but with quite disparate conclusions: sensible piety for Protestants and increasing veneration for Catholics. In the modern era Mary has been exalted as a model of faith and devotion among Protestants, especially among feminist theologians.

The highest value of Perry's work lies in his sweeping review of Mariography. Perry covers every major contributor, making references to individual authors and their thought easy to trace. Perry's significant contribution here is not simply in the recitation of sources, but his understanding and presentation of the circumstances behind the literature. For example, Perry insightfully points out that the first use of the term *theotokos* ("mother of God") was used, not to justify the divinity of Mary, but as a reaction against Athanasius's Arian opponents and was intended to ground

Jesus in humanity, not to promulgate Mary's divinity. Once the circumstances are articulated, the reader finds it easy to understand how theology in this area occasionally misunderstood the intent of the argument(s) and asserted theological conclusions, however imprudent. This comprehensive survey of Marian literature makes this text an interesting read as well as a significant reference point.

Perry is intent on submitting Mariology to the foundation of Scripture at the expense of fanciful legend. On this point he is at best inconsistent. After articulating his intention to "continue to assert the priority of Scripture" to guide his conclusions (115), he believes that to conceive of Mary as the New Eve, though "not a deduction from a particular passage (or set of passages) from Holy Scripture, it does summarize and accurately express Mary's place in salvation history" (289). When speaking of the birth narratives, Perry suggests that, though they are based on historical events (276), they do not constitute history in their final form (46, 88).

Perry concludes his work with a proposed theology of Mary covering three major areas: the incarnation, her person, and her work. He continues to affirm the major theological doctrines associated with Mary, but in allegorical fashion. Mary was the Virgin, and as far as the text is concerned, is *still* the Virgin (274). She is an agent of grace, but only insofar as God worked throughout her entire life (285), not just the Immaculate Conception. This allows Perry to speak of Mary "full of grace" and refer to her perpetual virginity without compromising biblical values.

This volume does what it intends and presents a historiography of Marian literature, tracing the development of the major Mariological doctrines and demonstrating their effect upon subsequent generations. It helps those unfamiliar with the issues understand the nature of the doctrines, the circumstances under which they were first articulated, and their value for modern believers. As a rebuttal of Mary's status of co-redemptress, it offers a quite sympathetic viewpoint, making it accessible and inoffensive to Protestants, Catholics, and Orthodox believers alike.

Les Hardin
Associate Professor of New Testament
Florida Christian College

Thomas R. SCHREINER and Shawn D. WRIGHT, eds. *Believer's Baptism: Sign of the New Covenant in Christ.* Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2006. 364 pp. $19.99.

This volume is a clear and forthright presentation of believer's baptism by an excellent array of scholars. The book is hardback, beautifully presented, nicely documented with indices of author, subject, and Scripture. The purpose of the book is clear from the outset. The editors say, "The book is written to correct a certain form of infant baptist theology . . . to respond to evangelical paedobaptists, primarily in the Reformed tradition, who baptize infants . . . because they believe that baptism brings the child into the covenant community where he or she will have the blessing of hearing the gospel preached as they grow up as members of the church" (6-7).

The book's ten chapters survey the biblical (1–3), theological (4, 8, 9, 10), and historical (5–7). Andreas Köstenberger covers the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and

John), and Robert Stein's study on Luke–Acts is particularly well done. He states, "We shall seek to demonstrate that repentance, faith, baptism, and the reception of the Spirit are integrally related components in the conversion-initiatory rite of water baptism" (41). The Epistles are covered by Schreiner himself and the coverage is thorough and theological. Schreiner's article illustrates the irenic spirit in which this book is written. He states, "We do not consider those who proclaim the gospel of justification by faith yet practice infant baptism to be heretics; we consider them brothers and sisters in the Lord. Still, it does not follow that the matter is 'unimportant'" (96). Thus, even though the book seeks to correct another view, it is presented in a winsome way.

Chapter four is Stephen Wellum's critical reflection on Reformed Theology's "covenant of grace" as it relates to the paedobaptist discussion. Wellum argues that Covenant Theology's position is inconsistent and will not stand. All those related to the Stone-Campbell movement will find this particularly interesting.

Historical chapters 5–7 are "Baptism in the Patristic Writings" by Steven McKinion and Jonathan Rainbow's "'Confessor Baptism': The Background Doctrine of the Early Anabaptists." McKinion finds no evidence for an early practice of infant baptism, answering Jeremias's arguments and siding with Kurt Aland, while Rainbow brings in the Reformers as well as Hubmaier who sought to clarify the importance of "confessor's baptism" as he states it. Shawn Wright's chapter, "Baptism and the Logic of Reformed Paedobaptists," returns to the Reformers for their explanation of infant baptism. He pleads, "We thus end by appealing to our evangelical brethren to be biblically consistent in their doctrine and practice of baptism" (254).

In chapter 8, Duane Garrett, deals with Meredith Kline's unusual position on baptism, while *SCJ* readers will appreciate chapter 9 by A.B. Caneday, who provides a welcomed, balanced critique of Alexander Campbell, leading figure of the early Stone-Campbell Restoration Movement. It includes good coverage of Campbell, his history, some major debates, and the use and abuse of the believer's baptism he came to practice. Overall, this is an excellent volume with very little not to appreciate.

As is obvious, this is a volume with great interest for those related to the Stone-Campbell movement. It will also interest Baptists, Reformed, and Christians of all kinds concerned with the place of baptism in conversion and the life of the church. Though not all conclusions will necessarily win universal approval, there is much of value here. This volume does a great service in clarifying the issues and should be on the shelf of all those who share the "faith once for all delivered to the saints."

Jon H. McFarland
Professor of Bible and Theology
William Jessup University

N.T. WRIGHT. *Judas and the Gospel of Jesus: Have We Missed the Truth about Christianity?* Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006. 155 pp. $18.99.

This volume is Wright's response to *The Gospel of Judas*, edited by Rodolphe Kasser, Marvin Meyer, and Gregor Wurst with additional commentary by Bart

Ehrman, reviewed in *SCJ* 9.2 (2006) 304-305, a work which, according to Wright, gives "the clear impression that ancient Gnosticism is not only a fascinating topic for historians to study but also an exciting option which we badly need to revisit today" (11). In this brief book, Wright, Bishop of Durham in the Church of England and former professor at Cambridge, Oxford, and McGill, intends to make three points (13-14): (1) the newly published Gospel of Judas reveals nothing about the real Jesus or the real Judas; (2) the enthusiasm for the Gospel of Judas derives from the promotion of scholarly and popular propaganda against the classic understanding of Jesus and Christian origins; (3) the teaching of the Gospel of Judas, by revealing the impoverished worldview of Gnosticism, thus calls attention to certain aspects of NT Christianity.

The volume consists of seven chapters. The first tells the story of the discovery and publication of the Gospel of Judas, a document referred to by Irenaeus (*Haer.* 1.31.1) in AD 180. The second describes the ideological background for the Gospel of Judas, which, like the Nag Hammadi materials discovered in the 1940s, expresses some basic tenets of Gnosticism: the world is wicked and so also is the god who made the world; thus humans should seek escape from the world through secret knowledge about the world and their own true identities. The third contrasts the presentation of Judas in the canonical Gospels with that in the Gospel of Judas, which asserts that Jesus predicts Judas will transcend the Twelve, though they reject him, and Jesus commands Judas to hand him over to the authorities so that Jesus can experience escape from a material body. The fourth evaluates whether the Gospel of Judas is rightly considered a "gospel," judging it bereft of the important themes found in the canonical Gospels and of any insight into the historical Jesus or the historical Judas. The fifth distinguishes the implications of the NT language of "kingdom of God" with the Gnostic notion of "escape from political confrontation into a world of private spirituality" (89), explaining in part the reason that the Gnostics avoided persecution and attributed no value to martyrdom. The sixth and seventh chapters expose the opposition of the worldview of Gnosticism, presented in the Gospel of Judas (the Jewish people worship the wrong deity) to the basic convictions of Judaism and the appeal of this same Gnostic worldview in the modern world (the quest for self-discovery in religious existentialism, the future hope for escape from a wicked world in dispensational fundamentalism, the embrace of a spiritual individualism in conservative Christianity, and the privatization of religion in liberal, post-Enlightenment Western Protestantism).

This volume is significant in that it provides the first book-length response to *The Gospel of Judas.* It should be read as a corrective to their work and others more recently published, such as Bart Ehrman, *The Lost Gospel of Judas Iscariot: A New Look at Betrayer and Betrayed* (Oxford University Press, 2006), and Elaine Pagels and Karen King, *Reading Judas: The Gospel of Judas and the Shaping of Christianity* (Viking, 2007). Regarding the scope and success of Wright's work itself, most readers of *SCJ* will find compelling his assessment of the newly published Gospel of Judas, its similarities with other Gnostic writings and its doubtful contribution to an understanding of the historical Jesus and his disciple named Judas Iscariot. Nonetheless, Wright will challenge some readers with his evaluation of the enthu-

siasm for the Gospel of Judas and of the similarities between the worldview of Gnosticism and certain aspects of Protestant Christianity.

Clay Alan Ham
Professor of New Testament and Preaching
Dallas Christian College

Stanley E. PORTER and Gordon L. HEATH. *The Lost Gospel of Judas: Separating Fact from Fiction*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007. 135 pp. $16.00.

The well-timed, synchronized release of the *Gospel of Judas*, a television documentary by the National Geographic Society, and a number of books on the Gospel in the days leading to Easter in 2006 generated a high level of public attention to the declarations made about the document. The trailer for the National Geographic Society's documentary, for instance, was filled with exaggerated assertions that the document tells a story that could "challenge our deepest beliefs" and create a "crisis of faith." The sensationalized claims about the *Gospel of Judas* seem to represent the latest version of claims about lost Christianities and secret first-century Gnostic teachings that promise to revise our understanding of Christ and the founding events and history of early Christianity. The hype not withstanding, what are nonexperts to think about the *Gospel of Judas* and its purported importance and implications?

Two scholars from McMaster Divinity College in Hamilton, Ontario—Stanley E. Porter (president, dean, and professor of NT) and Gordon L. Heath (assistant professor of Christian history and director of the Canadian Baptist Archives)—collaborate to create this volume. The subtitle of the volume is apt as Porter and Heath expertly sift through all the relevant evidence to set the record straight. Concise, it opens with an introduction to initial responses to the discovery of the *Gospel of Judas*, including fair appraisals of various media and book contributions. Porter and Heath recognize many cases of thoughtful and balanced reporting while lamenting the extravagant claims that were made and the resultant uphill task to refute them.

After the introduction, Porter and Heath follow with nine succinct but informative chapters (along with a brief interview of themselves as the conclusion) as they attempt to set the record straight. The NT portrays Judas as the culpable and cursed betrayer of Jesus, a depiction commonly shared throughout church history. The representation of Judas as doing Jesus' bidding in the *Gospel of Judas* fits with a variety of sympathetic interpretations of Judas's life that has been a minority voice historically (ch. 1). Chapters 2–3 situate the *Gospel of Judas* in the context of Gnosticism and the early church's response to this diverse movement. A survey of the content of the *Gospel of Judas* shows that it fits within the key convictions that characterize the Gnostic movement (ch. 5). It further belongs within the subcategory of Gnostic rehabilitation documents that try to promote marginal figures to central positions (ch. 7). However, when it is considered in the context of other relatively recent discoveries—ancient papyrus manuscripts, the Nag Hammadi Coptic library, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and ancient ossuaries—the *Gospel of Judas* pales in importance (ch. 4).

Despite questions about the manuscripts' discovery and early trail, the *Gospel of Judas* is likely not a modern forgery and was probably written sometime between AD 300 and 350. It may even be the document Irenaeus referred to in his *Against Heresies* (ch. 6). Nevertheless, an examination of its contents demonstrates that the *Gospel of Judas* uses all four canonical Gospels in one form or another and so its material cannot be dated earlier than the second century (ch. 8). Chapter 9 brings together the cumulative case built so far to critique claims that recent discoveries of Gnostic (and other) texts are the equivalent of the recovery of lost Christianities (by evaluating the biased perspective of a representative proponent, Bart Ehrman) and to defend (by reason of dating, authorship, and reliability) the canonical documents as representing the true teachings of the apostles.

Porter and Heath ably equip readers with the relevant background and evidence needed to properly evaluate the content and significance of the *Gospel of Judas.* They also make a strong case that "Gnosticism has no claim to the earliest Christian texts, creeds, documents, or tradition, nor was Gnosticism remotely close to affirming any core convictions of the orthodox church" (112). Brevity and clarity are two virtues evident throughout their informative discussion. To separate fact from fiction about the *Gospel of Judas*, the reader will be hard-pressed to find a better resource.

RANDALL K.J. TAN
Assistant Professor of Biblical Studies
Kentucky Christian University

Charles H. TALBERT. *Reading the Sermon on the Mount: Character Formation and Ethical Decision Making in Matthew 5–7.* Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004. 181 pp. $17.99.

This work is part of a series called "Reading . . ." involving various books and parts of books of the NT. All volumes published in the series are written by Talbert: on Acts; 1 and 2 Corinthians; John; Luke; Matthew; Romans; and one volume on Colossians, Ephesians and 2 Thessalonians. Written for the nonspecialist—for the informed layperson and college or seminary student—Talbert hopes to get at the "religious message" of each book. He wants the readers to understand the NT better and be able to communicate it more competently. He looks at large units of thought and notes basic ideas and rhetorical devices. He does not intend to write a detailed commentary on Scripture, but he does relate the biblical material to Christian, Jewish, Greek, and Roman cultural background.

Part One is a brief introduction to the study of the Sermon on the Mount dealing with such subjects as its setting, context, structure, and function. He calls it getting ready to read the Sermon. Part Two is the "Reading" of the Sermon to see its literary structure, its large ideas, and its religious teaching.

Talbert follows the same scheme in considering each unit of the Sermon on the Mount. He first does a literary analysis, showing both the relation of the unit to its immediate context and giving a detailed outline based on the inner relationships of the passage. Next he reveals what the passage means for the formation of Christian character. He calls his approach in this segment the drawing of a verbal icon of the

truth of the passage. He seeks to draw out the ethical principle for living in the passage without putting it into a commandment form. As art, it is to be understood subjectively and may be capable of more than one interpretation. In this section he gives a verse-by-verse analysis in which he mainly notes parallel sayings and ideas in Jewish writings between the writing of the OT and NT and in pagan philosophical and religious writings of the period. He often includes parallels from the apostolic and early church fathers. He analyzes how Jesus' words are like these parallels or different from them. Talbert believes that this section is the unique feature of his approach to the Sermon as opposed to taking the Sermon as a direct ethical guide for Christian living as he thinks most do: "In the Sermon Jesus proclaims the unconditioned divine will apart from any historical conditioning factors—as such it is not to be taken as law that tells Christians what to do but rather demands that we be something—and creates a new type of person; in the light of one's historical circumstances, then, one accepts responsibility for compromises and detours in what is done" (30). He concludes the study of each unit with a section on what the passage means for decision-making. This shows how to apply the truth of the passage to the reader's life. In doing so he invariably refers to three contexts for the passage: other parts of Matthew, the rest of the NT, and the OT. Often he finds relevant truths in these remote contexts that limit and guide the application of the basic ethical principles of the formation of character section. The value of this approach is especially seen in the application of the ethically difficult passages in the Sermon like turning the other cheek and lending to anyone who makes a request to borrow from one.

One of the strengths of this volume is that it deals directly with Matthew's text as an authoritative source of teaching for Christians today. True, he sees it as representing Matthew's portrait of Jesus, which he hints is different from the distinctive portraits of Jesus in the other canonical Gospels. He is also aware of the documentary source theories regarding the writing of the Gospels and is mostly accepting of them. However, one finds very little mention of them in the book.

Another important strength of the book is Talbert's excellent grasp of the literature of Jews, pagans, and Christians just before and after the beginning of the Common Era and his skillful presentations of parallels in these writings to the words and ideas of the Sermon on the Mount. One has to conclude that the Sermon includes very few original ideas or sayings. Jesus' originality is in his emphases, in his ranking of values, and in the materials in the Jewish and pagan writings he omits.

Talbert's basic approach to the ethics of the Sermon is sound. The Christian reader will often find himself or herself searching the heart and reflecting on how the teachings of the Sermon ought to be applied in character, thinking, and living. Most of Talbert's conclusions ring true. He can be excused if he sometimes leaves the scholarly third person viewpoint for the personal and self-revealing one of the first person plural.

Talbert's volume has very few weaknesses, though in a few places his reasoning seemed illogical. When he dealt with Matt 6:22-23 on the healthy and unhealthy eye, his use of OT parallels was inappropriate and his entire treatment was confusing. He would date the writing of Matthew at around AD 100, a time when he

asserts that Matthew's segment of the church still considered itself an integral though distinctive part of Judaism.

As to the proper use of Talbert's volume, one needs to remember that it is not a commentary. It has great value in personal Christian character-building and understanding of the meaning of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. Preachers will find the book helpful in preparing sermons and lessons.

Donn Leach
Professor Emeritus and Adjunct
Manhattan Christian College

Francisco LOZADA, Jr., and Tom THATCHER, eds. *New Currents through John: A Global Perspective*. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006. 248 pp. $29.95.

As they have indicated by their choice of title, Lozada and Thatcher have attempted to provide the reader with several essays that represent areas of significant contribution within the field of Johannine studies. Combined in one volume, this collection truly lives up to the designation "New Currents," as each brings fresh, unique perspectives to the table of discussion. This is due, no doubt, in large part to the fact that they reflect a "Global Perspective." The editors have deliberately sought out contributors from around the world. In so doing they allow the reader to hear voices from both within and outside of the western tradition of scholarship.

The "launching point" for the book is established by Thatcher in the first chapter. He takes as his point of departure John A.T. Robinson's paper, "The Four Gospels in 1957." This paper represents a turning point in Johannine scholarship at which time old perspectives and assumptions give way to a "new look" which questions the underlying presuppositions of traditional Johannine studies. Since each of the essays to follow interact in some way with Robinson's "new look," Thatcher provides a summary of Robinson's interaction with the "five pillars of the old critical orthodoxy" in order to provide the reader with the necessary context.

The first essay, written by Jaime Clark-Soles, explores the anthropology of the Fourth Gospel. It is her hope that an understanding of Johannine anthropology (how the Fourth Gospel deals with the issue of what it means to be a human being) will serve to illuminate one's understanding of Johannine eschatology. The first half of the essay is a presentation of her conclusions regarding the Fourth Gospel's understanding of the compositional elements, such as flesh, spirit, heart, body, etc, of the human being. The second half addresses the eschatological fate of human beings in general, both believers and nonbelievers, and Jesus specifically.

In the second essay, Carsten Claussen argues for the literary unity of chapter 21 and the rest of the Fourth Gospel. He begins with a brief summary of the arguments that argue chapter 21 is an interpolation. Claussen then launches into his challenge of this position based on what he believes are unifying elements common to both chapter 21 and the rest of the Fourth Gospel.

Mary L. Coloe uses the opportunity of the third essay to further develop the thesis of a previous book, that one of the major defining characteristics of the

Johannine community's identity was the sense of being the "household of God." The pericope of the foot washing is used as a test case and is examined in light of this framework. Underlying Coloe's essay is the question of sources. Her conclusion is that the Johannine community itself is the primary *Ur*-text of the Fourth Gospel.

Brian D. Johnson explores the relationship of Judaism to the Fourth Gospel. In this fourth essay, he challenges the traditional notion that conflict with Judaism served as the impetus for the writing of the Fourth Gospel and that antagonism toward Judaism is a central feature of the book. Johnson explores the themes of Temple, Jewish Titles, and Jewish Festivals and how they are used by the author of the Fourth Gospel. Based on this examination he concludes that the situation is more complex than this. The Fourth Gospel represents both acceptance and rejection of Judaism. The author, while accepting Jewish institutions themselves, rejects current Jewish understandings of them. Instead, he replaces the old understanding with one that is based upon Jesus.

In the fifth essay, Beth M. Sheppard explores the relationship between Roman culture and the Fourth Gospel. Specifically, she examines the Roman family and how it may inform our understanding of Jesus' relationship to God in the Fourth Gospel. The main issue she addresses pertains to the paradox in the Fourth Gospel where Jesus is at times portrayed as equal to God, while at other times he is subordinate. Her thesis is that this tension may be resolved when viewed in light of the Roman family structure.

Next, Armand Barus presents a narrative reading of John 2:12-25 in which he argues that the central message of the temple incident is to communicate "the universality of the body of Christ as God's new temple in which Jews and Gentiles are united." This is accomplished through an analysis of seven dimensions of the narrative: intratextual links, literary design, setting, narrator and point of view, characters and characterization, plot, and literary devices.

Matthew Kraus addresses Jewish approaches to the Fourth Gospel. In his essay he presents the work of four different Jewish scholars, each with a unique take. His concern is not so much with *what* Jewish scholars say about the Fourth Gospel but with *how* they go about handling it. His conclusion is that the central role of Jewishness is manifested in teaching, rather than research, on the Gospel of John.

In the final essay of the main body of the book, Yak-hwee Tan argues that the Johannine community is one that is "caught in two worlds." The first is "this world" (the place Jesus leaves his disciples), being the Roman Empire ("the world below"). The second is the "other world," the place to which Jesus goes ("the world above"). In light of this, he examines the vine discourse, which reflects the intersection of these two worlds.

Two essays provide the concluding remarks in which the authors attempt to look ahead in order to provide a forecast regarding the direction of Johannine studies. Lozada explores the question of the social location of the reader and its impact on his or her approach and understanding of the Fourth Gospel. R. Alan Culpepper concludes with a reflection on Johannine studies since Robinson, a synopsis of the preceding essays, and a very cautious, general forecast of where Johannine studies may be headed based on his observations.

Whether one is engaged in the task of interpretation or critical scholarship, the impact of cultural conditioning will inevitably have a limiting impact on the endeavor. By listening to the voices of interpreters from different cultures, we open ourselves to potential insights we may never have been capable of reaching on our own. This volume affords the reader just such an opportunity.

RONALD D. PETERS
Instructor of New Testament
Great Lakes Christian College

Dale C. ALLISON. *Resurrecting Jesus: The Earliest Christian Tradition and Its Interpreters.* New York: T. & T. Clark, 2005. 404 pp. $39.95.

Dale Allison, Errett M. Grable Professor of New Testament Exegesis at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, has once more made a substantial contribution to the study of the historical Jesus. The title of this volume is somewhat misleading, for the first 197 pages, comprising five of the book's six chapters, address issues not directly related to Jesus' resurrection. Earlier forms of these five chapters, save chapter two, were published earlier. Chapter six, "Resurrecting Jesus," along with two substantial excurses, "Joseph of Arimathea," and "The Disciples and Bereavement," were written as the basis for the Zarley Lectures at North Park University in Chicago (2003). Though Allison did not intend to write another book on Jesus in addition to his well-known *Jesus of Nazareth: Millenarian Prophet* (Fortress, 1998), he views the present work as a kind of sequel, which permits him "to clarify, qualify, and expand upon things said earlier" (ix).

Chapter one, entitled "Secularizing Jesus," rightly in my opinion, critiques a current tendency to offer interpretations of Gospel texts that are not "explicitly religious" (19). His examples are secularizing interpretations of the Parables of the Sower, the Unexpected Burglar, the Wheat and Weeds, the Tenants of the Vineyard, and the Hidden Talents, as well as Matthew 10:26/Luke 12:2 and Jesus' use of "the Son of Man." Much of the article, however, is occupied with demonstrating that the typology of "three quests of the historical Jesus" is so misleading as to be unhelpful. In particular, Allison draws attention to how much historical work on Jesus was conducted between the so-called first and second quests.

"The Problem of Audience," chapter two, is a hermeneutically instructive attempt to distinguish between Jesus' audiences (disciples, crowds, adversaries) and to suggest how such distinctions would have a bearing on the interpretation of various Gospel logia.

The third chapter tackles the difficult historical and theological "Problem of Gehenna" in Jesus' teaching. Though a belief in Gehenna cannot be excised from Jesus' authentic words, Allison argues that we can and must "(1) observe that the later Christian lore about hell . . . goes far beyond anything that . . . Jesus taught, . . . (2) [d]ecline to purchase the divine justice at the expense of the rest of God's attributes . . . . [a]nd (3) urge that Jesus' characteristic teaching about nonviolence and love of enemy deconstructs the retributive postmortem torture chamber of our tradition" (96). "Retributive" is the operative word, for Allison proceeds to make a case for *remedial* postmortem suffering.

In "Apocalyptic, Polemic, Apologetics," the fourth chapter, the author offers an enlightening analysis of the rationales by which historians since Schweitzer and Weiss have either embraced or expelled the Jesus who proclaimed the imminent advent of the resurrection of the dead, the Day of Judgment, and the consequent assignment of each person to the Kingdom of God or Gehenna. This chapter allows Allison to defend succinctly his reconstruction in *Jesus of Nazareth* to address the theological problem of a Jesus whose prophecy of an imminent end failed, to caution against speculation as to the motivations of scholars who find or fail to find the Schweitzerian Jesus, and to chronicle his own path to a sometimes mistaken, apocalyptic Jesus.

"Torah, *Urzeit, Endzeit*," chapter five, tackles the complicated problem of Jesus' conduct and teaching vis-à-vis the Law of Moses. At the end of a stimulating discussion, Allison concludes that Jesus was complex: "He was . . . neither a radical who spoke against the God of Moses nor a traditionalist confined to conventional readings of the Torah. He rather lived with an eschatological vision in which the God of the future had begun to act differently than in the past" (196). Allison demonstrates that this vision is partially explained by Jesus' appropriation of a Jewish expectation that the coming kingdom would mark a return to the conditions of Eden and would thus differ from the post-Edenic world that called forth the law.

The title for this volume is taken from the final, 155-page chapter, in which the author offers a learned and thorough historical assessment of the evidence for Jesus' resurrection epiphanies and for the discovery of the empty tomb. This historical investigation is then followed up by a discussion of the evidential limitations of the historical findings. Allison's primary contribution to the historical analysis is his use of cross-cultural evidence that many people have reported seeing recently deceased loved ones. It is especially striking that there are numerous reports in which the deceased was both seen and heard, was seen by more that one person—in some cases at the same time, appeared solid and, in some cases, touched the observer, and suddenly appeared and disappeared. From such evidence Allison correctly deduces that the Gospel accounts of christophanies should not be easily dismissed as pure fictions. Moreover, this evidence, with its many reports of tangible and solid apparitions, militates against a common typology according to which the appearances of Jesus in an ordinary-looking body are viewed as a later development of visions of Jesus in a light-filled, celestial body. On the other hand, the cross-cultural evidence fails to settle the question of whether the appearances of Jesus were purely functions of the disciples' brains or whether they were caused by an objective stimulus, namely, the risen Jesus.

In the wake of a searching examination of the empty tomb traditions, Allison concludes that "the slightly stronger possibility" is that Jesus' tomb was actually *found* unoccupied as opposed to it having been *imagined* empty on the basis of belief in Jesus' bodily resurrection. Allison, moreover, is confident that some of Jesus' disciples saw him after his death. Nevertheless, the professor remains much less sanguine than does N.T. Wright in the historian's ability to compel the rational person to accept the resurrection of Jesus as the most probable explanation of the evidence. Other factors come into play: one's assessment of the life and activi-

ty of Jesus and, most importantly, one's *Weltanschauung*, one's stance on whether the cosmos is a closed system. Allison's vibrant belief in Jesus' resurrection is therefore not based on historical or empirical warrant, but on religious/theological warrant—"practical Christian reasoning" (342). Although Allison did not write this essay as an apologist, it would, nevertheless, present an honest unbeliever with the evidence that forbids a facile dismissal of Jesus' resurrection on historical grounds.

This volume, with its obvious depth and breadth of scholarship, is a major contribution to Jesus studies and, in particular, to serious historical and theological reflection on Christian belief in Jesus' resurrection. I find it especially refreshing that Allison is not content to remain in the domain of history but is willing to venture forth into the theological issues that arise from it. In so doing, however, Allison has entered two caves that I dare not follow him into. First, I can see no way to reconcile Nicea and Chalcedon with a Jesus who taught error along with truth. Granted, no one can accuse Allison of Docetism, but in such a matter as this, I will trust the wisdom of the holy fathers rather than relatively recent theological constructions (as that proposed by Pannenberg) that can accommodate a Jesus whose teachings include error. Secondly, I cannot dispense with my hope for *bodily* resurrection, as opposed to a postmortem existence in which there is no "material continuity with our present physical body" (225). Surely if one accepts the reality of Jesus' resurrection, the best explanation of the story of the discovery of the empty tomb (the truth of which Allison favors slightly over the converse judgment) is that Jesus' corpse was quickened and glorified or was transformed into his risen body. Of course it is difficult to understand how the same continuity could obtain for a person long dead, but *some sort* of continuity between our present and future bodies is not more difficult for me to conceive than "a future existence free from the constraints of material corporeality as we have hitherto known them" (225). As Allison himself admits, modern physics has taught us that our physical world is far more mysterious than anyone could have dreamed. Moreover, that God should redeem, as opposed to negate, the present created order is far more theologically satisfying.

I sincerely hope that this work will be widely read by seminary students and experts in the field; most undergraduates would find it tough sledding. As Jesus stands at the center of our faith, Allison is to be congratulated and thanked for having produced yet another study that will aid the Church in her never-ending quest to understand, and thus faithfully follow, our Lord and Master.

Barry Blackburn
Professor of New Testament
Atlanta Christian College

Mikeal C. PARSONS. *Body and Character in Luke and Acts: The Subversion of Physiognomy in Early Christianity.* Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006. 191 pp. $21.99.

In his fourth publication on Luke–Acts, Mikeal Parsons, New Testament professor at Baylor University, points out that Luke recurrently introduces characters into the narrative through physical descriptions. For example, as Jesus was passing through Jericho, it is said that a rich man named Zacchaeus was trying to get a

glimpse of him, though on account of the crowd and "because [Zacchaeus] was *short in stature*" he could not (Luke 19:3). Parsons argues that such a physical description serves as more than just a passing detail or a throw-away statement; rather, it interplays with the ancient science known as "physiognomy" and is an important way in which Luke develops the theme of universal salvation as was anticipated in the Abrahamic covenant.

Though the term "physiognomy" may not ring familiar to most, the practice continues to be quite common. It refers to an old science of associating outer characteristics with inner qualities. Up until the development of modern psychological theories, people assumed that they possessed the ability to discern a subject's moral character based on their outward appearance. Parsons argues that such a practice was especially pervasive in the ancient Greco-Roman world. With a perceptive eye toward the ancient sources, he strongly argues that the types of profiling characteristic of physiognomy are subverted throughout Luke–Acts as a literary technique to highlight the radically inclusive nature of the new Christian community. The people of God, as first announced by Jesus and then continued through his apostles represent the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant where all are invited, not just sinners and social outcasts but also those judged negatively based on their physical anomalies and deformities.

Parsons systematically builds his argument from the ground up. He begins with a series of chapters that attempt to define ancient conceptions of physiognomy and what was thought to be the body-soul relationship. In order to accomplish this he surveys Greco-Roman, Jewish, and Christian literature. The reader will appreciate that most texts, whether they be popular or obscure, are dated and set into their respective contexts before elaborated upon. Throughout the analysis, the antiquated material is shown to possess a high level of fluidity as to how exactly physical traits were thought to have signified inner states. For instance, bowed legs or small hands would not have meant the same to all people in all provinces at all times. Therefore, Parsons does a commendable job refraining from forcing the data into too narrow of categories and allowing it to represent the diversity that exists among such sources.

The remaining four chapters evaluate separate instances that illustrate the way in which Luke interacts with physiognomic issues. An entire chapter is dedicated to each episode, beginning with the crippled woman's bent back (Luke 13:11), followed with the stories of Zacchaeus's shortness (19:3), the man who was lame from birth (Acts 3:2), and the Ethiopian Eunuch (8:27). In each case it is shown how the theme of the Abrahamic covenant frames the stories to elucidate the acceptance of individuals in spite of any physical attributes which would have normally put them on the outside of normative society. Throughout the argument, it is shown how Luke subverts the marginalizing and exclusion inherent in physiognomy by narrating entrance into faith, and by extension, the people of God, to people suffering from physiognomic discrimination.

I would strongly recommend this book to scholars, students, and ministers alike. It is an incisive study that provides a plethora of primary source material, written in an accessible style with key theological points to cap. The book would prove to be an extremely beneficial sermon/lesson series that could shine light on issues

pertaining to disabilities or discrimination within the local congregation. Above all, however, it will illuminate the radically inclusive ideals of the earliest Christian communities, which provide the precedents upon which we were commissioned to build our churches.

Drew Billings
Union Theological Seminary

Gordon D. FEE. *Pauline Christology: An Exegetical-Theological Study.* Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007. 707 pp. $39.95.

Every now and then the field of biblical studies experiences a milestone work of monumental proportions. In perhaps his finest work to date, Fee has proven this to be the case. Founded on many decades of sound textual, exegetical and theological research, Fee's volume—the first full-length study of its kind—promises to bear an abundance of fruit for many years to come. Teeming with insightful essays, helpful appendices and rich commentary, this work is, as any Pauline scholar will readily admit, long overdue.

This mammoth volume of over seven hundred pages is divided into two major sections. The first part is largely exegetical and examines the thirteen Paulines (the "church corpus" and "the pastorals"), while the second is more theological and offers a synthesis of the earlier data. Though an in-depth analysis of the whole volume cannot be offered here, it goes without saying that much of what is found in the first section is reiterated and elucidated by Fee in the second. Therefore, this review will focus chiefly on the initial portion of the volume and offer only a few comments in passing on the subsequent section.

In his introduction, Fee sets much of the stage for the coming chapters as he contends quite forcefully that there are, "scores of 'intertextual' uses of κύριος (*kyrios*, "Lord") in the Pauline corpus, where the language of the Septuagint has been taken over by Paul so as to become a part of his own sentence" (22). Fee, in chapter two, meticulously mines 1 and 2 Thessalonians for Septuagintal echoes and repeatedly shows how among other titles, the term κύριος, which is a referent to YHWH (= the Father) in the OT (LXX), is now being used by Paul to refer to none other than Jesus (44). This argument emerges throughout the entire book and Fee correctly places much of his stock in this contention.

Chapters three and four offer an in-depth survey of Christology in 1 and 2 Corinthians. Two of the most sophisticated and illuminating chapters in the whole work, Fee argues at-length here for the preexistence of Christ (88) and offers some discussion on the nature of the Trinity (124-127). He also maintains, and rather vehemently, that any suggestion of Paul owning a "Wisdom Christology" is far-reaching and incredibly tenuous (102-105). In fact, he sees this subject as so problematic that he includes an entire treatise in the appendix that aims to refute any attempts at such a Christology (594-626). While he's at it, Fee also attempts to poke holes in J D.G. Dunn's "Spirit Christology" (116-119), which he regards as highly "suspect" (118).

Indeed, Fee disputes many of Dunn's claims throughout the book, but many settle in his analysis of Galatians in chapter 5 (214, 218), where Fee questions the

New Perspective. He also contests the subjective genitive of πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (*pistis Yesou Christou*, "faithfulness of Christ") (223-226). While one of the shining moments of this chapter is Fee's defense of the historical Jesus (211-217), a weak spot is in the following chapter on Romans when he fails to consider the Law of Moses in light of the New Perspective. For Fee, the emphasis still seems to be on *obeying* versus *disobeying* the Law (222, 246), where obeying is viewed as a strenuous task—a view that E.P. Sanders has effectively discredited.

In chapter seven, Colossians and Philemon are coupled together for review, though there is scant mention of Philemon. In his analysis of the Colossian hymn, Fee asserts that this is perhaps the only intentional christological moment in the entire Pauline corpus (248-303); all other occurrences are simply "implied" by Paul (370)—hence the need for this book: to bring these occasions to light. Chapters eight and nine focus on Ephesians and Philippians, and in both, Fee has a great deal to say about the christological hymns—especially in Philippians, where such discussion takes up the majority of the chapter (372-400). In chapter ten, which closes out the first part of the book, Fee focuses on Christology in "the pastorals" and as is characteristic of the entire volume, leaves no exegetical stone unturned. An added bonus here is Fee's discussion of the authorship of these letters, which he suggests, against majority consensus, are probably from the hand of Paul (472-473).

While in the past scholars tended to debate a handful or two of passages concerning Christ's divinity, this is no longer possible; they must now contend with this colossal volume that provides scores of such instances. Indeed, Fee's work is to be taken seriously. Just as well, Fee is to be commended and thanked for this study, a groundbreaking and pioneering contribution to both the field of biblical studies and the Christian movement. While the common reader might find this volume a bit deep, the serious scholar and exegete will undoubtedly welcome it with an open mind and open arms.

MICHAEL HALCOMB
Senior Minister
Sadieville Christian Church
Sadieville, Kentucky

Herbert W. BATEMAN IV, ed. *Four Views on the Warning Passages in Hebrews.* Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2007. 480 pp. $29.99.

This volume grew out of the Evangelical Theological Society's Hebrews Study Group, November, 2004. Four scholars offer a position paper, and each responds to the others. The four are: Garreth Lee Cockerill (Wesley Biblical Seminary); Buist M. Fanning (Dallas Theological Seminary); Randall C. Gleason (International School of Theology—Asia); and Grant R. Osborne (Trinity Evangelical Divinity School). Editor Bateman (Moody Bible Institute) provides an introduction to the "warning passages" themselves, and George H. Guthrie (Union University) contributes the conclusion.

After the brief preface that oddly reproduces ETS statements on inerrancy and the Trinity, the editor introduces the warning passages. While the exact extent of each passage is a matter of discussion, Bateman identifies them as: 2:1-4; 3:7–4:13;

5:11–6:12; 10:19-39; and 12:14-29. He discusses their general makeup, and the relationships which he perceives unite them into a coherent whole. Guthrie's clear and hopeful conclusion ends the book on an irenic note.

The four main contributions are: "Classical Arminian View" (Osborne); "Classical Reformed View" (Fanning); "Wesleyan Arminian View" (Cockerill); and "Moderate Reformed View" (Gleason). Contrary to expectations created by the headings, however, these are not studies in the history of doctrine, but investigations by representative individuals. This fosters questions about how representative are certain contributions and leaves the reader wondering what "classic" means here. The narrow scope of the study is justified on the grounds that these are the traditions for which the passages are controversial. How can today's Reformed and Arminian believers deal with these passages that assert the possibility of apostasy?

In light of long-standing disagreements between Calvinists and Arminians, these scholars address the issues raised by these passages. These include "election," "eternal security," "sanctification," "assurance," "perseverance of the saints," "sovereignty of God," and "once saved, always saved, if saved" (all these phrases appear in the book). While the book "seeks to expose existing tensions and provide various ways in which . . . differing theological (positions) interpret (these passages)," its "greater purpose" is to "help our brothers and sisters in Christ to think through these important matters and *how* such matters should be discussed." Apparently these are mainly Reformed and Arminian "brothers and sisters," whom the editor admonishes by underscoring the harmonious spirit of the contributors. But this harmony is surely due in part to the lack of real distance between certain of these views. More than once respondents expressed difficulty finding something to disagree with in a position paper.

Though much can be gained from a careful reading of the presentations, problems do exist in this volume. In spite of some helpful exegetical work, the authors exhibit tendencies toward anachronism, especially by reading their biases back into the text. Too often exegesis succumbs to theologizing which assumes that for which it allegedly argues. Occasionally this is cloaked in the guise of "pastoral concern" for those for whom these are burning issues. Whatever the rationale, dogmatism regularly trumps exegesis.

Methodological imprecision and tradition-driven interpretation detracts from the volume. "Red flags" include arguments based on what a text "naturally" means, and the repeated appeal to the "straightforward" reading of a passage. Ideologically charged notions include labels like "quasi-Christian," "true believer," "genuine believer," and "believers who refuse to believe" (!). Were these concepts that were used (or even would have been recognized) by the author of Hebrews? The inadequately explored assumption that these five passages belong together, and the presumption that, whatever they mean, they have unqualified significance for present-day Christians, make the study problematic (none of the contributors suggests that the unique identity and situation of the audience of Hebrews might possibly make these passages applicable only to them and not to us in our vastly different contexts).

Though one must look elsewhere for background on this discussion, the book could be used in the classroom or preacher's study as a good overview of those traditional views. For sake of balance, however, I recommend it be read in conjunc-

tion with other materials. It could also be helpful as a hermeneutical study examining the impact of theological bias on interpretation.

Finally, lest "outsiders" too easily find fault, we are reminded that we are all blind to our peculiar biases, and can best identify and address those blind spots through discussion with those with whom we disagree. In that sense, this book gives cause for thanksgiving. It is hoped that its stated goal will be met for its target readership. For the rest of us, may we find encouragement to wrestle with our own interpretive bias, and vigilance in our attempts at exegesis that hears the text above the echoes of our traditional interpretations.

THOMAS SCOTT CAULLEY
Director
Institute for the Study of Christian Origins
Tübingen, Germany

Philip H. TOWNER. *The Letters to Timothy and Titus.* New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006. 885 pp. $52.00.

Towner's new commentary on the Pastoral Epistles is the best of a flood of recent commentaries on the letters. It is the largest commentary ever written on the Pastorals and is a model of detailed and judicious exegesis and application of these important and often marginalized texts.

In the late twentieth century, Bible students in need of a critical treatment of the Pastoral Epistles in English had few real options. The most recent English commentaries—Karris, Kelly, Hanson, Fee, Guthrie—were not detailed enough, and frequently were so caught up in the authorship question that they did not sufficiently explicate the text.

At the other extreme, the most detailed modern critical treatment was Martin Dibelius and Hans Conzelmann's offering in the Hermeneia series. Dibelius and Conzelmann's commentary was erudite, detailed, and learned. It offered a wealth of information from literature parallel to the Pastorals. It was also tendentious, blindly Hegelian in its reconstruction of the early church, and (being translated from the 1966 revision of Dibelius's German commentary from the 1920s) seriously out of date.

This drought turned into deluge at the end of the 1990s, however. Major English language commentaries were published by I. Howard Marshall (with Towner as co-author), Jerome D. Quinn (separate volumes on Titus and the letters to Timothy, the latter completed after Quinn's death), William Mounce, Luke Timothy Johnson (on 1 & 2 Timothy); and Raymond Collins.

Now, Towner's large commentary (not to be confused with his shorter commentary on the Pastorals in the IVP New Testament Commentary series) has joined the group. As noted above, Towner's offering is the largest and nearly the most detailed commentary available on the Pastoral Epistles. His only real rival in scope is Mounce. Towner's introduction to the letters covers 89 pages (Mounce with 119 pages, Marshall with 108, and Johnson with 119 *sans* Titus.) A side-by-side comparison of Towner's and Mounce's introductions was especially interesting. They

cover the same materials and arguments, and generally arrive at the same conclusions. Mounce's introduction, and indeed the commentary that follows, are more dense and detailed than Towner's. Towner's introduction and commentary are more readable and "user-friendly" than Mounce's.

Towner argues against the pseudonymous authorship of the letters, and ultimately discards even Marshall's "allonymity," although he does not critique Marshall's proposal in detail. This points to an interesting trend, at least among English language commentaries on the Pastorals: with the exception of Collins, all the major commentaries on the Pastorals since 1990 have argued for some form of Pauline authorship (direct or indirect) and against the critical orthodoxy.

Chief to Towner's reading of the letters is his assertion that the title, "Pastoral Epistles," is misleading and should be marginalized. Along with Johnson, W. Richards, and Stepp, Towner intentionally treats the letters to Titus and Timothy as three separate yet closely related documents, a "cluster" or texts that share strong similarities while maintaining their individual identity.

As for his reading of the letters themselves: Towner argues that the center of 1 Timothy is the οἰκονομία θεοῦ, (*oikonomia theou*, "God's plan" or "pattern"), a "divinely organized pattern of life" (68). This theme holds the letter together. The mission of the Church in 1 Timothy is "to give expression to the reality" of this pattern. Paul thus outlaws practices and behaviors that endanger this expression (Christian women behaving in ways that the Roman culture around the church found scandalous) because they cause pagans to refuse to hear the gospel.

In keeping with this center, Towner's reading of 1 Timothy 2 steers a middle ground between modern feminists who would deny authority to Paul's restrictions on women in the church and modern hierarchists who would flatly universalize said restrictions. Towner argues: in his paraenesis, Paul is addressing issues raised by ancient critics of the "New Roman woman" (see Bruce Winter, *Roman Wives, Roman Widows: The Appearance of New Women and the Pauline Communities* [Eerdmans, 2003]). From this foundation, he interprets 2:8-15 against the whole of chapter 2, which is centrally concerned with deportment in the public worship service, how said deportment affects the public perception of Christianity, and how this perception helps or hinders the spread of the gospel.

In Titus, Paul depicts God in ways that oppose local Cretan myths/depictions of Zeus ("God who does not lie" vs. Cretan stories about Zeus's deceptiveness.) Paul responds to these myths by describing God, his character, and the life of honesty to which he calls his people. His response amounts to a caustic but indirect challenge to these myths, and the Cretan society's acceptance of deception and dishonesty—cultural baggage that the new Cretan Christians had brought with them into the church.

The center of 2 Timothy is Paul's farewell to his faithful disciple and son in the faith. Paul challenges Timothy to follow him in facing and overcoming suffering and opposition, and officially charges Timothy before the congregation (see the plural pronoun in 4:22) to faithfully lead and care for Paul's churches by the way he uses Paul's gospel.

In sum: Towner's commentary is excellent, evenhanded, and exhaustive. It is more readable than Mounce and slightly more readable than Marshall, though not

quite as detailed as either. It is less quirky than Johnson's commentary on 1 and 2 Timothy but less inventive as well. Preachers and expositors will especially benefit from "Theological Perspectives, Structure, and Message in the Letters," Towner's fifteen page exposition of the message of the three letters (in the introduction), and his judicious treatment of theological and practical matters in the commentary itself.

Serious students of the Pastoral Epistles, when faced by this shelf full of recent commentaries, will probably turn to Towner first. They will not be disappointed.

Perry Stepp
Associate Professor, Biblical Studies and Theology
Kentucky Christian University

James W. THOMPSON. *Pastoral Ministry according to Paul: A Biblical Vision*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006. 176 pp. $17.99.

What is a minister and what are the goals of the ministry? In the present era, the minister's roles are often defined more by the pragmatic needs of the hour than by a theologically coherent understanding of the purpose(s) of ministry. As Thompson notes, in a competitive religious market, search committees often look for "someone who is a combination of, for instance, Jay Leno, Lee Iacocca, and Dr. Phil" (9). Thompson offers a compelling portrait of Paul's vision of ministry through an illuminating study of the undisputed Pauline letters. The definition of ministry that emerges is that "*ministry is participation in God's work of transforming the community of faith until it is 'blameless' at the coming of Christ*" (20, author's emphasis). The result of this redefinition is a pastoral theology that is more inclusive and comprehensive than traditional models that concentrate almost exclusively (incorrectly in Thompson's opinion) on justification by faith and grace.

Philippians and 1 Thessalonians (studied in chapter 2) show that Paul's pastoral ambition is to work with God in transforming his readers into a community that follows Christ's example of love and self-denial. Galatians (examined in chapter 3) reinforces this picture, depicting Paul as aiming to create an others-centered community shaped by the crucified Christ. In his study of Romans in chapter 4, Thompson continues his *tour de force* against the backdrop of shortcomings in traditional appeals to pastoral theology in Romans. While Paul is confident that God, who initiated the work of community transformation, will complete it, the test of Paul's ministry is his success or failure in this work and the threats and challenges to completion are very real. Chief among these "enemies" are the "cultural forces of individualism, materialism, and ethnic and national pride" (148) that continually threaten the pastoral task (highlighted in the study of the Corinthians letters in chapter 5).

This volume is a marvel of brevity and profundity. Thompson managed to combine insightful interpretation of the Pauline letters and convincing support of his thesis about the pastoral task into a condensed volume that can easily be digested in a short afternoon by most readers. The readability of the book (both in length and clarity of prose) is a significant asset, making it a highly-recommended volume for all readers interested in the issue of pastoral ministry. Upon reading it, I decided on the spot to use it as a textbook in one of my NT introductory courses next year.

Thompson succeeds admirably in demonstrating that Paul's pastoral ambition represents one of the strongest strands of coherence in Paul's letters, bringing unity in the midst of themes articulated under a variety of circumstances. The evidence he presents, however, is insufficient to substantiate his claim that "a pastoral theology of transformation emerges as the center of Paul's thought" (20). Further demonstration is needed, and it is hoped that the author may endeavor to provide that, perhaps in the form of a thorough Pauline theology (including the other disputed Pauline letters and significantly extending the analysis of the undisputed letters).

This volume is an invaluable guide to Paul's pastoral vision and deserves careful attention from all levels of the worldwide Christian community. While accessible to a general readership, Thompson's work also exhibits quality (albeit abbreviated) interaction with contemporary scholarship on Paul. As such, it is hoped that Thompson's little gem will not escape notice in the halls of academia as well.

RANDALL K.J. TAN
Assistant Professor of Biblical Studies
Kentucky Christian University