

## BOOK REVIEWS

*Zondervan Essential Atlas of the Bible*. By Carl G. Rasmussen. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013, 159 pp., \$16.99 paper.

Carl Rasmussen is professor emeritus at Bethel University, St. Paul, MN. He is well known to scholars and students of the land of the Bible, having himself spent many years in Israel as dean of the Institute of Holy Land Studies (now Jerusalem University College) in Jerusalem. His recently published *Zondervan Essential Atlas of the Bible* is “an adaptation of the more complete *Zondervan Atlas of the Bible*” (p. 5), and as such, fits an important niche for students of biblical history and historical geography who desire a concise summation of the related evidence.

The book features two main sections: a “Geographical Section” (chaps. 1–5) and a “Historical Section” (chaps. 6–22). As the numbers of chapters suggest, the historical section comprises the vast majority of the book, though of course, one cannot absolutely separate the geographical and historical information into these two categories. The two designations are nonetheless helpful as general categories.

The geographical section provides a general introduction to the Middle East, along with chapters on the geography of Israel and Jordan (somewhat longer and treated together), Egypt, Syria and Lebanon (treated together), and Mesopotamia. The chapters are short and to the point; Rasmussen packs a lot of information into relatively little space. The information is well illustrated by full-color photos, maps, and charts; approximately 200 appear throughout the book. A minor quibbling point is that at times one wonders why a particular picture was chosen to illustrate a particular section (e.g. a Roman road in Syria on the “Introduction to the Middle East as a Whole” page, p. 9), or why an illustrative picture is on a different page from the discussion of it (e.g. the hamsin are mentioned on p. 15 but illustrated with photos on p. 16 without referring the reader there). Photos are almost all from Rasmussen’s comprehensive website [www.holylandphotos.org](http://www.holylandphotos.org).

The historical section follows the biblical narrative, beginning with the pre-patriarchal period (chap. 6) through exile and return (chap. 14). Again, Rasmussen does a good job of highlighting key information in relatively few words. A good example is his chapter on “The Patriarchs and the Sojourn in Egypt” (chap. 7), in which he moves back and forth between biblical and ANE references to help readers tie the biblical account to the wider ANE narrative. Clearly, however, the focus is on the biblical account, with links to the ANE as significant to a more complete understanding of Scripture. One often gets the sense when reading that the author has visited the places he describes—which is often true.

Throughout the historical section, Rasmussen also includes color-coded timelines to help readers comprehend the synchronisms (e.g. pp. 53, 76–77, 85, 91). Maps are well marked with cities, routes, and other content designed to help readers make the biblical connections.

Chapters 15–16 cover the intertestamental period, a time about which many Christians know little, despite the abundance of historical data. Noteworthy in chapter 17 is the discussion of Herod the Great (pp. 108–13), whose magnificent architectural work still stands today at Masada, Jericho, Herodium, Caesarea, and more, but who is only known to Scripture because he tried to murder the infant Jesus (Matt 2:1–20).

Chapters 18–21 focus on the NT period, beginning with the life and ministry of Jesus (chap. 18) and including discussion of the early church’s expansion (chap. 19), Paul’s journeys (chap. 20), and a brief chapter on the seven churches of Revelation (chap. 21). As in the OT section, Rasmussen carefully crafts the narrative so readers understand the landscape’s implications on the biblical accounts. This is helpful, for the Gospels do not tell us, for example, that Caesarea Philippi lay about 25 miles north of Bethsaida (p. 117), or that Jesus and his disciples would have had to walk six hours from the Sea of Galilee to Cana (p. 115; cf. John 2:1–11). Such information helps biblical readers see more clearly that biblical towns and villages are more than merely words on a page. Topographical maps (e.g. p. 116) further illustrate the rugged terrain Jesus and others regularly navigated in Galilee.

Chapter 22, “Jerusalem” (pp. 140–49), contains a helpful history of the city from its beginnings around 2000 BC down to the Roman destruction of the city in AD 70. The photos, charts, and maps highlight Jerusalem from a number of perspectives and inform readers about a city the Bible mentions over 800 times, a city that played such a significant role in history and still does.

The book concludes with a Scripture index (pp. 151–54) and a subject index (pp. 155–59). Notwithstanding the book’s stated purpose as a concise summary, I found myself wishing to see at least a few footnotes in places where I wanted to read more or where I wondered about the source of certain information. For such a work as this, a brief, one-page bibliography of suggested readings would have been nice.

In the preface, the author suggests the *Zondervan Essential Atlas of the Bible* “is ideal for use by Bible study groups, adult Bible classes, and travelers to the Middle East, and will serve well as an auxiliary textbook for college, university, and seminary classes” (p. 5). I agree. In my judgment, the book’s usefulness far exceeds the relatively modest price, and I definitely recommend it to the audiences the author lists.

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*Introduction to the OT.* By Bill T. Arnold. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014, xxviii + 409 pp., \$53.99.

The preface indicates that Bill Arnold’s introduction will take a literary approach that will highlight the unique contribution of OT literature and its enduring legacy—its monotheism. The book begins with ten pages of excellent color photographs that illustrate literary, theological, geographic, or historical issues and the

following chapters include many charts, pictures, maps, and informative sidebars. The text starts with three background chapters. The first deals with how Christians, Muslims, and Jews look differently at these monotheistic writings and the evidence for the gradual appearance of “implicit monotheism” in the OT. The second chapter discusses how the spoken words (oral reports) became written, were attributed to “authoritative figureheads” (others would call them “authors”), and were gathered into different canons (MT, LXX, V). The third chapter provides the ANE historical background and concludes that monotheism and ethical religion did not develop until the Axial Age (800–200 BC).

Chapters 4–10 treat the literature of the Pentateuch. Arnold asserts that the “Primary History” (Genesis–Kings) was written by “Yahwists” from Judah who began their work in the 8<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> century BC and finished these nine books around 550 BC (the Pentateuch was based on the earlier sources JEPHD). The text summarizes Genesis, concluding that Israel’s creation story was unique (no conflict between the gods) when compared to other ANE myths. Arnold focuses on the Abrahamic covenant, various approaches to the historicity of these narratives, and the nature of the patriarchal society. After surveying the literature of Exodus, Arnold raises a series of questions that indicate how little we know about what really happened; then he concludes with a summary of what one learns about God from these stories. He views the descriptive laws as “instructions, directions” (Psalm 119) and gifts from God that regulate human behavior (ethics) and man’s relationship to God, especially at the temple. He believes the name Yahweh was first introduced by Moses through his Midianite connections, but editors inserted this name in earlier passages before Moses. He finds Deuteronomy dependent on both Hittite and Assyrian political treaties and he emphasizes its themes of centralization, the name theology, “monolatrous henotheism,” election, retribution, and the origin of the Deuteronomistic history.

The following chapters (11–15) survey the biblical story and then each chapter addresses some historical issues under “What really happened.” Arnold feels it is difficult to be confident about the details of Israel’s history before Joshua, and even after Joshua there is relatively little archeological evidence for the idealized biblical stories. In addition, archeology does not explain religion and scholars do not agree on dating archeological evidence (the high and low chronologies), so it is difficult to verify what really happened. Arnold recognizes a distinction between the “official religion” endorsed by the state, the piety of “family religion,” and “local religion” at country shrines. Although the literature speaks of God’s gift of the land to Israel through Joshua’s military victories, Arnold does not believe the evidence supports a military conquest of Canaan, but rather a migration of newcomers. Arnold suggests that “it is possible that during David’s reign, various Canaanite practices began to coalesce into the worship of Yahweh” (p. 222). This section closes with a review and comparison between the history in Kings and the different perspective of the post-exilic “Chronistic History” (the literature in Chronicles–Ezra–Nehemiah). He distinguishes the theology of Chronicles from Ezra–Nehemiah in relationship to “all Israel,” immediate retribution, and prophecy, so they had different authors. Chronicles differs from Kings in that Chronicles focus-

es on the nation's glorious past and its righteous Davidic kings who worshipped God at the temple. It reassures the reader that the restoration in the post-exilic era was a legitimate continuation of the past.

Chapters 16–18 cover the characteristics of synonymous, antithetic, and synthesizing poetry in wisdom, and hymnic literature. After reviewing some ANE wisdom, Arnold surveys the speculative wisdom of Job and the advice literature of Proverbs, concluding that Job argues against any simplistic explanation of God's retributive justice. While introducing the various genres of form criticism in Psalms, Arnold also introduces the student to the methodologies of redaction, tradition, rhetorical, and canonical criticism in a full page sidebar.

The next major section (chaps. 19–22) deals with ANE prophecy, plus the prophetic and apocalyptic (Daniel) books. He views the prophetic utterances as “sermonic” speeches using several different genres from their culture. He believes the short message of hope at the end of Amos was “probably added later,” does not believe Gomer was a prostitute when Hosea married her, and sees Hosea 3 referring to a different woman. He distinguishes between the Isaiah of Jerusalem (Isaiah 1–39, though 24–27 were added much later), Second Isaiah of the exile (Isaiah 40–55) who also edited 1–39, and Third Isaiah of the post-exilic era (Isaiah 56–66). He views the reference to Gog of Magog (Ezekiel 38–39) as a likely depiction of the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar and views the servant in Isaiah 49 as a “personification of the people of God.” Arnold devotes a whole chapter to the apocalyptic literature of Daniel, but he considers Isaiah 24–27, Zechariah 9–14, Joel 3–4, and Daniel 7–12 as apocalyptic, with the persecution by the little horn referring to the past history of Antiochus IV Epiphanies.

Chapter 23 briefly treats the “five scrolls” and chapter 24 addresses the lasting value of the OT today. He takes Song of Songs as a collection of different human love songs and believes Ruth celebrates God's providence in the life of faithful Israelites. Ecclesiastes is mostly pessimistic, and he takes Esther to be a historical novel. When looking at the lasting value of the OT, Arnold compares the OT to a living organism: the skeletal system is the metanarrative of the Primary History, the nervous system relates to the creeds about God and his instructions to mankind, the cardiovascular system refers to love, worship, fear of God, and ethics, while the muscular system enables people to respond to God.

Arnold's introduction is more of a survey than an introduction. It is engaging, well written, nicely illustrated, and supported by many advanced sidebars, but many teachers will probably find it too advanced for a college survey course, not detailed enough for a seminary introduction class, and somewhat problematic for seminary students who are firmly planted in an evangelical tradition.

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*Violence in Scripture*. By Jerome F. D. Creach. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2013, 286 pp., \$35.00.

This book is essentially a work in biblical theology that focuses on the issue of violence as it appears in the Bible and draws out the teaching of the Scriptures on violence. The brief introduction sets out the nature of the problem, the purpose of the book, a proposed approach to the problematic passages, and a brief summary of the book as a whole. The nature of the problem is that there are many passages in the Bible where violence is at the center of the action. There are other passages that seem to condone violence. And there are other passages that seem to command violence.

In our day, violence visits our homes on a daily basis, not only through the news but through entertainment such as *Breaking Bad* and *Game of Thrones*. This being the case, the apparent message of Jesus directing his followers to a non-violent manner of life seems to be undercut not only by our culture, but by many of these passages in the Bible itself. So, as Creach puts it, “This book is written for those who wish to read the Bible as Scripture and who seek ways to interpret the Bible’s violent passages as integral parts of the Bible’s authoritative word to the church” (p. 3).

Following the introduction, the book is divided into eight chapters, each dealing with specific key passages. Chapter 1 deals with Genesis. Focusing on the creation account in chapters 1–2, Creach makes the point that in Genesis, creation is by fiat rather than by combat. This sets the opening chapters of the Bible against the violent view of origins presented particularly by Mesopotamian creation texts. He then moves, following a brief treatment of Cain and Abel, to the flood narrative, which certainly not only seems violent, but presents God as exercising the violence. Creach reads the flood as an undoing of creation, a starting over again, rather than an expression of violence. Moreover, it is God’s response to the violence with which humanity has inflicted the earth.

The second chapter deals with the “God is a warrior” theme, found especially in Exodus 15 and in some of the psalms (particularly Psalms 24 and 46). Creach sums up his view by saying that “when God is presented as a warrior God acts to correct and counteract oppression and injustice. ... God engages in warfare to counteract the destructive forces at work in the world” (pp. 48–49).

The third chapter deals with enemies of God and Israel, particularly Sodom, Pharaoh, and Amalek. Much of Creach’s treatment of this material is affected by his view that much of this material originated in the exilic and post-exilic eras, times when Israel was without power and without resources. The primary purpose of the stories is then to affirm to Israel God’s continuing action on their behalf against those who would set themselves against God and his people.

Chapter 4 deals with the conquest of Canaan and the ban. His discussion of the ban is particularly interesting, as his close analysis demonstrates that it is a much more complicated issue than is often thought. This was one of the most challenging sections of the book. Creach connects the origins of this material with the

period of Josiah's reform. He sees the "ban theology" as essentially concerned with at the purification of Israel rather than with the destruction of her enemies.

Chapter 5 deals with Judges, clearly one of the most problematic biblical texts in regard to the issue of violence. The theme of the book—"in those days there was no king in Israel"—is usually understood as setting the stage for the rise of the Davidic monarchy. Creach suggests that what might be in the author's mind is rather that Israel has no king because the nation has rejected God as its king. As a result, it has fallen into the sorts of violence and oppression that characterize those who set themselves against God.

The sixth chapter deals with prophetic speech and action. Here, Creach focuses on Elijah and Elisha, as well as the oracles against the nations in the prophetic books. He makes the point that God is not merely *for* Israel and *against* Israel's enemies. Rather, God through the prophets speaks against the violence and oppression that characterize those who oppose God, even those among his own people. This part of his discussion would have been strengthened if he had made more significant use of Gen 12:1–3 with its focus on the blessing of the nations through Abraham.

Chapter 6 concludes with a brief excursus on the final judgment and hell. It is difficult to determine whether Creach prefers an annihilationist view or a universalist view. At any rate, it is clear that he is more comfortable with the theology of Origen on this matter than that of Augustine. This section struck me, however, as misplaced, not only in the chapter, but in the book. My own sense is that it would have functioned better as an appendix. This would also have given him more room to set out his views.

Chapter 7 focuses on the imprecatory psalms, a constant source of difficulty for interpreters. While I would not agree with everything Creach says, he has much here that is suggestive and challenges readers in their own thinking on the material.

The final chapter deals with the teaching of Jesus, and the relationship of the OT to the NT. It strikes me as having been heavily influenced by the work of Stanley Hauerwas.

There is much in this book that reflects the mainstream critical background of its author, and which would then be contrary to the views of many readers of *JETS*. One example would be the setting of the Pentateuch and historical books in the late pre-exilic to post-exilic period. Another example would be the understanding of "righteousness" and "wickedness" in the OT in primarily political and economic terms. However, there is much here also that shows a careful study of and reflection on the biblical text. The discerning reader will find himself both challenged and instructed by this well-executed piece of biblical theology.

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*Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 2: *Numbers to Ruth*. Edited by Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland. Rev. ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012, 1348 pp., \$49.99.

This volume represents the last of thirteen volumes to be published in the revised *Expositor's Bible Commentary* (2006–12). The set's new editors, Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, replace their deceased predecessor, Frank E. Gæbelein. The purpose, audience, and theological tenor replicate the former series (p. 7).

Ronald B. Allen, senior professor of Bible exposition at Dallas Theological Seminary, updates his commentary on Numbers (pp. 23–456) from the original 1990 edition. Of the other four original contributors, three have died—Kalland, Madvig, and Wolf. “Deuteronomy” (pp. 457–814) by Michael A. Grisanti of The Master's Seminary replaces Kalland's commentary. Hélène M. Dallaire's “Joshua” (pp. 815–1042) supersedes the exposition by Madvig. Dallaire, an ordained minister with the Evangelical Church Alliance, serves as an associate professor of OT at Denver Seminary. She contributed to *A Case for Historic Premillennialism* (Baker, 2009). Mark J. Boda, professor of OT at McMaster Divinity College, contributes “Judges” (pp. 1043–1288), supplanting Wolf's work. In place of Huey's commentary, George M. Schwab offers “Ruth” (pp. 1289–1348). Schwab serves as an associate professor of OT at Erskine Theological Seminary.

From the older edition, Allen (p. 163) changes his view on who killed the firstborns in Egypt from an angel of death to Yahweh himself (Num 8:17). He removes sixteen bibliographic references and adds thirteen. Fifty footnotes increase to 103 in his Introduction. The new edition retains the primitive map (p. 412) and pictorial diagram (p. 101).

Allen's mantra for Numbers—“God has time; the wilderness has sand”—expresses Yahweh's patience for an obedient generation (p. 26). His commentary emphasizes God's grace amidst Israel's repeated rebellions (e.g. p. 227) and worship (“the pulse of the book is worship,” p. 26). The Priestly covenant (Num 25:10–13) rivals the Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic covenants in significance, and serves as a “pivotal section in the theology of the Torah” (p. 346). An unredeemed Balaam (pp. 306–7) predicts the “star” and “scepter” (Num 24:17), namely, God's Son (pp. 330–33).

Allen (p. 218) regards the gigantic stature of the Nephilim as hyperbole since the “real” Nephilim (of partly demonic descent) permanently perished in the flood (cf. Gen 6:1–4; Num 13:33). Concerning Num 12:1–3, Allen believes Moses divorced Zipporah, and the pressures of leadership made him the most “miserable” person on earth (pp. 199–202). With implications for the Abrahamic covenant, he identifies “the River of Egypt” (Num 34:5) as Wadi el-'Arish (p. 437) instead of the Nile's Pelusian branch (H. Bar-Deroma, “The River of Egypt (Nahal Mizraim),” *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 92 [January-June 1960] 37–56).

Deuteronomy, for Grisanti, consists of a “sermonic exposition rather than legislation” (p. 459). The book's literary structure resembles bilateral Hittite suzerain-vassal treaties (pp. 462–63). Grisanti avoids an exclusively messianic fulfillment of Deut 18:15–18 (p. 654; cf. Acts 3:13–24, esp. v. 22). Overall, his work represents

a top commentary on Deuteronomy, and a valuable complement to Merrill's *Deuteronomy* (NAC; Nashville: B&H, 1994).

Grisanti chooses not to elucidate Deuteronomy's eschatological ramifications. Allen expects an earthly future for Israel, but not for gentile nations such as Edom (pp. 331–32, 439). Dallaire avows that the Israelites will inherit their land in the eschaton (pp. 837, 954), despite her suggestion that Israel's land boundaries in Josh 1:4 could convey exaggeration (p. 855).

Without seeking naturalistic explanations, Dallaire accepts Joshua's miracles, such as the collapse of Jericho's walls (p. 896) and the sun standing still (p. 932). Holy war constituted worship (p. 845). Dallaire's series of charts summarize facts about each town or region allotted to the Israelites (pp. 957–1020). Her outline subordinates Joshua 22–24 under a point that only claims to encompass chapters 13–21 (pp. 850–51, 1022). Some readers will find her Wikipedia citations out of place in an academic commentary (p. 900). Dallaire (p. 956) and Boda (p. 1204) surmise that the Philistines entered Canaan in the twelfth century BC, and according to Dallaire, their mention in the Torah constitutes anachronisms.

As Boda points out, predominant themes in Judges include kingship and assimilation (p. 1056). Judah's preeminence foreshadows a distant deliverer: "The book as a whole points to a figure from Judah" (p. 1088). Boda rightly concludes that Jephthah sacrificed his daughter, but he disregards the crux's alternative solutions (p. 1196).

Schwab's outline of Ruth consists of a subjective seven-level literary chiasm with a single central segment: 2:18–23 (p. 1309). In his thinking, immorality pervades the Ruth-Boaz encounter in chapter 3 (pp. 1332–38).

As to authorship, Moses wrote most of Numbers, Allen declares, but writers as late as Solomon's time added sections like 12:3, 15:32–36, 18:21–24, and chapters 22–25 (pp. 39–40, 269–70). According to Grisanti (pp. 461, 811), Moses authored Deuteronomy with the exception of chapter 34 and possible other portions (2:10–11, 20–23; 3:9, 11, 13b–14; 10:6–9). To account for these exceptions, Grisanti appeals to inspired textual updating (pp. 461 n. 12, 466, 500, 512, 812) as he does in his co-authored OT introduction, *The World and the Word* (Nashville: B&H, 2011, pp. 83 n. 18, 85 n. 23, 92, 167 n. 31). For Dallaire, the canonical text of Joshua "reflects a compilation of sources rather than a single piece of literature written by a single author" (p. 820). The editing finally ceased during the monarchical period (p. 831). Boda theorizes that the events in Judges likely pre-date Samuel (p. 1051), and a much later anonymous narrator composed the book (p. 1048). In Schwab's estimation, the book of Ruth as a composition continued evolving until "the final artistic polishing of the postexilic scribes" (p. 1292).

Regarding the exodus, Allen and Grisanti advocate the c. 1446 BC date (pp. 84, 461), Dallaire espouses c. 1260 BC (pp. 827–28), and Boda cannot decide (p. 1051). Dallaire identifies Ai as Beth Aven (p. 900) or possibly et-Tell (p. 949) rather than Khirbet el-Maqatir, as proposed by Bryant Wood and the Associates for Biblical Research. The latter identification supports the older date of the exodus. Allen speculates that the Israelites crossed the Aqaba Gulf on dry ground (pp. 230, 295,



429). In the map of the exodus route (p. 475), however, the Israelites never cross a body of water, contrary to the biblical account.

Many large numbers—such as those in the census lists (Numbers 1, 26)—are exaggerated by a factor of ten, in Allen’s opinion (p. 65). Similarly, the non-literal use of numbers normally suits Dallaire (e.g. pp. 859, 886) and Boda (e.g. pp. 1115, 1162).

On the topic of typology, Allen identifies the following as biblical types: Phinehas (p. 51), the tabernacle items (p. 122), the bronze snake (p. 296), and the high priests (p. 451). For him, even hyperbolic numbers prophetically symbolize future numbers (p. 68). According to Schwab, Boaz typifies Jesus (pp. 1303, 1342).

Attention to literary devices enhances the volume. For instance, the onomatopoeia *מְדַהְרֹת דְּהָרֹת* (“galloping, galloping”) sounds out the horses’ gallop (p. 1133, Judg 5:22). The polysemantic pun *תִּקְוָה* (“cord/hope,” 872) in Josh 2:21 simulates the pun in Job 7:6.

As for editorial (scribal) blunders, *דְּעוּאָל* should read *רְעוּאָל* concerning the MT of Num 2:14 (p. 97) like it does in the previous edition (p. 715). In the electronic version *סוּף* should appear as *סוּף* as it does in the hard copy (p. 429).

Whereas Dallaire and Schwab appear to follow the MT throughout, the other writers sometimes accept material variants. Examples include Allen in Num 25:6 (pp. 342, 245) and 32:17 (p. 418), Grisanti in Deut 32:8 (p. 785), 32:43 (pp. 795–96), and 33:2 (p. 800), and Boda in Judg 5:14 (pp. 1131). Allen, Grisanti, and Schwab maintain the majority (but debatable) view of the *Qere*—that it preserves corrections (pp. 202, 735, 1298) rather than errors (Gordis, *The Biblical Text in the Making* [New York: KTAV Publishing, 1971]).

The weakest bibliography in the volume belongs to Schwab because he excludes excellent textual critical analyses such as de Waard’s “Ruth” in the *BHQ* fascicle (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004) and Brotzman’s “Textual Commentary on the Book of Ruth” in his *OT Textual Criticism* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994) as well as top commentaries such as Block’s *Judges, Ruth* (NAC; Nashville: B&H, 1999), Bush’s *Ruth, Esther* (WBC; Waco, TX: Word Books, 1996), Huey’s “Ruth” (EBC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), Joüon’s *Ruth* (2d ed.; Subsidia Biblica; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1986), Morris’s “Ruth” in *Judges and Ruth* by Cundall and Morris (TOTC; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1968), and Wood’s *Distressing Days of the Judges* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975). The Joshua, Judges, and Ruth bibliographies each omit Davis’s *Conquest and Crisis* (3d ed.; Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 2008). Dallaire’s Joshua bibliography provides only fifteen entries whereas Boda’s Judges bibliography lists ninety-nine. One wonders how publisher specifications affected these decisions.

Three of the book's commentaries are already dated at the time of publication. Allen only cites sources up to 2005 (p. 147), Grisanti up to 2004 (p. 466), and Schwab up to 2006 (p. 1305). More current sources appear in the discourses by Dallaire (2012, p. 838 n. 88) and Boda (2010, p. 1059). To my knowledge, the disparity in dates reflects a delay in the book's publication. At least in Grisanti's case, the publisher did not allow him to update his print-ready work during the delay. Nevertheless, clergy and laypersons alike can benefit from this volume.

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*Reading the Historical Books: A Student's Guide to Engaging the Biblical Text.* By Patricia Dutcher-Wells. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014, xxi + 178 pp., \$21.99 paper.

Engagement is important at Baker Publishing Group. A search of their website ([www.bakerpublishinggroup.com](http://www.bakerpublishinggroup.com)) revealed thirty-five titles that include the word "engaging," either in the title itself or as part of a larger series, such as *Engaging Worship* or *Engaging Culture*. The title under consideration here, *Reading the Historical Books*, is subtitled *A Student's Guide to Engaging the Biblical Text*.

In this volume, Patricia Dutcher-Wells approaches engagement by addressing two very important questions: "How do we read the historical books in the Old Testament well?" and "What do we need to know about this part of Scripture in order to appreciate the beauty and meanings of the text?" (p. xv). She does so in five well-conceived chapters: (1) "Discovering the Context of the Text"; (2) "Listening to the Story in the Text"; (3) "Discerning the Interests of the Text"; (4) "Examining History in the Text"; and (5) "Examining the Shape of History in the Text." The author concludes with a section entitled "Toward a Definition of Biblical Historiography."

Dutcher-Wells has done a great service for those who have the privilege to teach the historical books of the Bible. Her writing is clear and straightforward, her examples are illuminating, and she seems to write as if she is thinking along with a first-year student who has the temerity to take a class called "Old Testament Historical Books," but is not exactly sure why she is taking it. I can easily imagine many undergraduate Bible professors using this book as a course text—either in a "Historical Books" class or in a general hermeneutics class that covers the various genres of the Bible. With helpful charts, discussion questions at the end of each chapter, and "Questions for Careful Readers" side-barred throughout, the book is definitely reader-friendly.

*Reading the Historical Books* follows in the line of books on biblical narrative that became prevalent after the publication of Robert Alter's *Art of Biblical Narrative*. Readers who have not approached the biblical text in this way are sure to enjoy Dutcher-Wells's discussions of character development, conflict within the narrative, dialogue, and setting, just to name a few areas covered. It strikes me that she has taught a generation of students to read the text well.

Moreover, I appreciated the way Dutcher-Wells builds upon her observations of the narratives to establish specific points about the message of the historical books. For example, she offers this interesting summary of the importance of David: “In the books that include David’s time and the history after that (from 1 Samuel on), there are 190 chapters. These chapters cover the history of about six hundred years. In sixty-one of those chapters we hear directly about the life and times of David” (p. 72). She concludes this discussion by suggesting that “it should be evident that these texts are supremely interested in David as a role model and ‘leading man’ and in invoking David’s memory to convey the values and standards of the authors” (p. 72).

Dutcher-Wells does not avoid some of the critical issues facing the readers of the biblical text, but often takes the view that there are real inconsistencies to be found when reading the historical books. Why, for example, does the Chronicler say the poles that carried the Ark of the Covenant are “there to this day” (2 Chr 5:9), when he was writing in the post-exilic period after the poles (and the temple) had been destroyed? Dutcher-Wells responds that “such a clear interest in the texts may have served to validate the origins of the inner sanctuary in the rebuilt temple of the postexilic period” (p. 159).

While I appreciate that Dutcher-Wells does not rush to harmonize texts that appear to be inconsistent, I found myself wondering if everything that seems to be an inconsistency actually is an inconsistency. For example, in comparing Joshua 11’s summary of Israel’s taking the “whole land” with Judges’ observation that there were many nations left in the Promised Land (Judg 1:19, 21, 27–29), Dutcher-Wells observes, “a historiography . . . can live with a certain amount of inconsistency” (p. 153). However, this interpretation overlooks the several verses at the end of Joshua that indicate the tribes of Israel did not thoroughly drive out the Canaanites from the Promised Land (e.g. Josh 13:13, 16:10, and 17:13). These verses offer solid evidence that there is a thoughtful narrative connection between Joshua and Judges, and are not a mark of the inconsistencies of historiography.

Make no mistake: this is a good book that easily reaches its purpose stated in the introduction. Students will want to use their findings from engaging the text to construct a more robust biblical theology—a theology that acknowledges both God’s direct and indirect interactions with his covenant people.

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*The Compilational History of the Megilloth: Canon, Contoured Intertextuality and Meaning in the Writings.* By Timothy J. Stone. *Forschungen zum Alten Testament* 2/59. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013, xiii + 258 pp., €64.00.

Modern scholarly opinion is that the ordering of books in the Writings section of the Hebrew Bible is late, liturgical, and not stable enough to generate meanings that are in any way verifiable. Perhaps the Law and the Prophets form a tight sequence, but the Writings are at best a miscellaneous anthology of compositions

with broad similarities and a smattering of shared vocabulary. In his revision of a doctoral thesis at St. Andrews in 2010, Timothy J. Stone attempts to counter this type of sentiment sometimes present among biblical scholars of the Hebrew Bible.

Stone contends that the books in the Writings were not only collected but also arranged with a particular purpose and with an awareness of a broader canonical context. To make his case, Stone zooms in on the sequence of the “five little scrolls” of Ruth, Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations, and Esther (the *Megilloth*). Stone views the “codification” of these books “into a collection as an integral part of a canonical process rather than a formal feature that is the result of an effort to close the canon, or merely a by-product of technological advances like the long scroll or the codex” (p. 2). More broadly, Stone also seeks to provide a “historical and exegetical investigation into the poetics of canon shaping” (p. 8). Stone thus aims to bring into dialogue the history of canon formation, the hermeneutics of canonical collections, and the function of intertextuality within the Writings.

Before addressing the question of meaningful arrangement of the Writings, Stone lays the necessary groundwork for executing such an analysis. He first deals with the definitional questions about what “canon” means and what the implications of the canon formation process might be for ordering and arrangement (chap. 1). He then describes the collection of the Writings (chap. 2) and also the nature of their arrangement in various textual traditions (chap. 3). Standing on this historical and hermeneutical foundation, Stone addresses the arrangement of Ruth (chap. 4), Esther (chap. 5), and the Song, Ecclesiastes, and Lamentations (chap. 6). In this last chapter and in the conclusion, Stone sketches his understanding of the “macro-structure” of these books within the Writings corpus (pp. 204–12).

In a variety of ways throughout the volume, Stone answers three main charges that are often leveled at those that look for meaning in the arrangement of the Writings (and the *Megilloth* in particular). Charge #1: The grouping is late and liturgical. While acknowledging that the evidence for the Masoretic ordering comes from a late period, Stone highlights its “ancient roots” (p. 5). He also argues that the “festival cycle” associated with the Masoretic ordering of the *Megilloth* is actually a development that assumes a previously established sequence (pp. 105–11).

Charge #2: There are too many different orders of the Writings for one to find meaning in any type of arrangement. Stone points out that this assessment is only accurate *after* the twelfth century AD. Before this time, there are essentially only two orderings in the Jewish tradition, namely, the Talmudic ordering found in *Baba Batra* 14b and the Masoretic ordering found in the Aleppo and Leningrad Codices (pp. 102–11). Stone also analyzes the relationship between these orderings and those in the Greek translations (pp. 93–102).

Charge #3: In order to find any meaning in a collection, there must be a *single* and *static* ordering. Stone counters that a single static sequence is not necessary for observable and meaningful connections to exist. For him, “a single order does not appear to be requisite for investigation” (p. 210). Though there are important differences between the Masoretic and Talmudic orderings, they can be explained. “If these arrangements were accidental, or unimportant,” Stone contends, “one would expect to find the books haphazardly arranged—this is not the case” (p. 4). Moreo-

ver, if the logic of the sequence is discernable in both orders, then the case for meaningful association is actually stronger. From Stone's perspective, if one accepts these historical and hermeneutical arguments, then there is ample reason to reconsider the issue of ordering among these books.

In developing a canonical hermeneutic, Stone investigates not only how collections form but also how they function. Stone builds on the work of Brevard Childs (e.g. pp. 10, 208), but he also draws on the insights of recent research that attempts to discern meaning at the compositional and canonical level within the Hebrew Bible (e.g. Christopher Seitz on the Book of the Twelve) and in the Writings corpus in particular (e.g. Julius Steinberg and Hendrik Koorevar). Upon this foundation, Stone develops "a compilational grammar" that encompasses "the various ways in which authors, redactors, and compilers situate and associate books within larger collections" (p. 8). This grammar consists of identifying (1) "catchwords or catchphrases at the seams of contiguous books"; (2) "framing devices" such as *inclusios*; (3) "superscriptions" that may "indicate a collection consciousness"; and (4) "specific themes that are either continued in a similar manner or reversed to create a sharp contrast across contiguous books" (p. 33). Stone uses this set of criteria to distinguish between "merely intertextual links" and ones that are "compilationally conscious" (pp. 134–35; cf. pp. 208–9). By locating these strategic texts, Stone is able to discern and account for the nature of association within the Writings even in the face of shifts in sequence.

In his analysis, Stone provides a number of helpful images and analogies to illustrate the nature of this "compilational logic." He envisions a collection as "a small solar system in which each book exerts, to a greater or lesser degree, a gravitational pull on the rest of the system" (p. 7). Because "size and proximity are important forces in the collection," there is a "kind of magnetism" that exerts pressure on books and draws them "into the orbit of other books" (p. 7). There is movement within such a system, but it is "limited, predictable, and almost always constrained by each book's relationship to one or more books in the Writings" (p. 7). Rather than an "anthology," the Writings corpus is more like "a curated exhibition in which works of art are arranged carefully in relationship to one another" (p. 211). This "mosaic" contains "tiles of different shapes and colors" that when "taken together form a larger, if complicated, pattern" (p. 211). These word pictures contribute to the notion of canon as a mental construct and also help the reader discern the nature of established sequences within a given collection. Accordingly, Esther shifts positions but always follows Lamentations and is juxtaposed to Daniel; Ezra-Nehemiah always appear toward the end; Chronicles and the Psalter move around, but are always structurally aligned either at the head of the collection or as its bookends. For Stone, the fact that these types of movement are limited is "commensurate with the corpus' compilational logic" (p. 6).

Because of his extensive methodological discussions, Stone is not able to work out his observations about the arrangement of each book. Ruth and Esther get their own chapters, but the Song, Ecclesiastes, and Lamentations are treated together. Stone conducts his own "exegetical probes" of the former two while focusing on the secondary literature with the latter three. Many interpreters of these

books will want to see more development in these areas. However, Stone anticipates this element of his work and notes a number of suggestive areas for further development (see pp. 5–7, 211–12).

While Stone acknowledges that his conclusions have not reached their final form, what he offers in this volume is an incisive treatment of the Writings rife with interpretive insight. Along the way, he demarcates the dimensions of this type of discussion and demonstrates the connection between the formation and function of canonical collections. Moreover, Stone’s hermeneutical insights will enable interpreters to plumb the depths of the concept of “canonical intention” more fully than in previous studies. The contours of Stone’s approach and the shape he gives to the analysis of canonical collections represent a considerable contribution to the field. Hopefully, this level of engagement represents the shape of things to come.

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*A Commentary on the Psalms, Volume 1 (1–41).* By Allen P. Ross. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011, 887 pp., \$44.99.

*A Commentary on the Psalms, Volume 2 (42–89).* By Allen P. Ross. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2013, 841 pp., \$44.99.

Students and pastors alike should thank the editors at Kregel for publishing this soon-to-be (I assume) three-volume commentary on the Psalms, by Dr. Allen P. Ross, professor of divinity at Beeson Divinity School. Two volumes have been published so far. I will first summarize and interact with his introductory essays, then discuss the format of the commentary, and conclude by offering a few points of critique.

Ross offers nine topical essays before the commentary proper. He begins, as I think any study of Psalms should, with a brief (five-page) reflection entitled “The Value of the Psalms.” Here he mentions some important moments in church history and offers quotes from prominent interpreters, all of which highlight the importance of this poetic collection for the Christian church. He concludes this brief chapter by noting challenges to a clear explanation of Psalms: textual difficulties and translations; different interpreters’ approaches to the Psalms; the distinctives of Hebrew poetry; and questions of grammar and syntax. These issues he hopes to address in the essays and commentary to follow.

Ross’s next essay is a brief treatment of the “Text and Ancient Versions of the Psalms,” in which he summarizes the characteristics of MT, LXX, and DSS, all to prepare the reader for his discussion of textual variants in the commentary. Ross then treats “Titles and Headings of the Psalms,” in which he discusses the names of the Psalter (Hebrew and Greek), the numbering of the psalms and their versification, notations of authorship (he cautiously accepts, but is not bound by, Davidic authorship), and the various other notations of genre and function. But tucked away in this essay is a wonderful thirteen-page gem in which Ross discusses the

compilation of the psalms. His suggested reconstruction is hypothetical but informed. He concludes with a broad description of the narrative arc of the Psalter, largely but not slavishly following Wilson's "Davidic Dynasty (Books I and II)—Failure (Book III)—YHWH Reigns (Books IV and V)" program. Although he is committed to the idea that "the exposition will be derived from the psalm itself" (p. 62), his discussion provides an important hermeneutical framework for the interpretation of each psalm.

Ross's brief discussion of the "History of the Interpretation of the Psalms" focuses mostly on Gunkel's form criticism and Mowinckel's cultic context and is followed by a helpful nine-page bibliography. In "Interpreting Biblical Poetry," he discusses parallelism—and he is well aware of Kugel's and Berlin's contributions—and figures of speech, in which he analyzes twenty-five different figures. His thirty-five page discussion of the literary forms of the Psalms is efficient and helpful. His review of "Psalms in Worship" avoids preoccupation with historical reconstruction of Israel's cultic worship and briefly notes the influence of the Psalter on Christian worship.

In his essay on the "Theology of the Psalms," Ross asserts that the central theological theme of the book is "the sovereign rule of the LORD God over his creation" (p. 155). Using Eichrodt's category of covenant, Ross then demonstrates how the various types of psalms communicate this theme. He discusses the life to come ("some of the psalmists understood a good deal more than the average Israelite," p. 163), and NT fulfillment, where he summarizes Delitzsch's five types of messianic psalms and reduces them to three: direct prophecy, typology, and application.

In his final introductory essay, "Exposition of the Psalms," Ross offers an eight-step method for psalm interpretation, often using Psalm 2 as an example. He suggests the following: (1) Preliminary Observation of the Text; (2) Resolution of Critical Matters; (3) The Study of Words; (4) Grammatical and Syntactical Analysis; (5) Analysis of the Poetics; (6) Exegetical Synthesis; (7) The Theology of the Passage; and (8) Application. These nine essays present a readable, current, and solid foundation for interpreting individual psalms.

How does Ross structure his commentary? He presents his commentary on each psalm under three main headings: (1) "Introduction"; (2) "Commentary in Expository Form"; and (3) "Message and Application." In the Introduction, he offers "Text and Textual Variants," in which he presents his own translation with bibliographic and linguistic discussion in footnotes, followed by "Composition and Context," which is usually a discussion of literary genre, historical issues, and an introduction to the theological themes of the psalm. The last subheading under the introduction is "Exegetical Analysis," which includes a paragraph summary of each psalm and a descriptive outline. Under the second main heading, "Commentary in Expository Form," Ross comments on the psalm, section by section, using a prescriptive outline. The Hebrew, when he discusses it, whether in footnotes or main text, is usually translated but never transliterated. The final main heading, "Message and Application," consists of a brief discussion of the "expository idea." This structure is imposed on every psalm without exception.

There is much to like here. Ross discusses variants in both Hebrew texts and the versions efficiently; his translations are restrained; and he strikes a healthy balance between scholarly *reportage* and his own exegetical work. His paragraph-length summaries help to clarify the basic message of each psalm. His outlines are rigorous, and the movement from “descriptive” to “prescriptive” outlines (my terms, not his) will help preachers and teachers present the message of a psalm in an engaging way. I provide here an example. In his more descriptive outline, the first point of Psalm 51 reads, “Appealing to God’s loyal love and compassion, David petitions God to forgive him by his grace and cleanse him completely from sin” (p. 178). But in his more prescriptive outline, the first point changes: “Believers can call on God for forgiveness because he is gracious and compassionate” (p. 180). Ross’s exposition, which is based on original language study, the outlines, the summaries, and explanations of the expository idea are all very helpful for understanding what each individual psalm is saying. It is clear Ross deeply respects the biblical text and approaches it as the inspired Word of God.

I have two criticisms, however, neither of which should disqualify his work as a solid evangelical achievement. First, at points, I disagree with his understanding and treatment of a given psalm. For example, in Psalm 73, Ross misses the three-fold repetition (vv. 1, 13, and 18) of *ʾāk* (“surely”), which functions as an author-intended structure marker. These three segments together make the profound theological point that the “good” the psalmist initially expects in v. 1 has been, by the end of the psalm, transformed from “health and wealth” to the goodness of God himself. This is a much-needed message in our current cultural climate where successful careers and healthy bodies are valued above delighting in God for who he is and what he has done. Ross instead focuses on the believer’s glorious future in God’s presence. That is certainly taught in Psalm 73, but it is not quite the same thing; see J. Clinton McCann’s stimulating article, “Psalm 73: A Microcosm of OT Theology,” in *The Listening Heart* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1987).

A major disappointment, at least for me, is that although Ross is aware of current discussion of the Psalter’s redaction and message, he rarely interprets a psalm in its “Psalter context,” that is, in its present context in the book of Psalms. In all fairness, this may have been an editorial decision. But essentially, Ross treats each psalm only as an individual poem, and in this regard, his commentary is quite traditional. In his treatment of Psalm 89, for example, he considers essentially two horizons of interpretation, historical or cultic. He does not consider how this psalm functions *textually* as the final psalm of Book III. It would have been interesting to read a discussion of how Psalm 89 contributes to the message of the Psalter, but Ross does not offer one. He does mention the issue from time to time—see his comments on Psalms 1 and 2—but even in these instances, there is no concerted effort to read the book of Psalms as a coherent whole, as we do with, say, the book of Genesis or the Gospel of Matthew. This disappointment means that, in some ways, Ross’s work is a missed opportunity. I think we still need a full-length, innovative, evangelical commentary that reads the Psalms not just as individual poems but as a collection, with a coherent message.



Nevertheless, Ross's work is an up-to-date Psalms commentary in the historical/grammatical/form-critical tradition, and that is a most welcome thing. His multi-volume commentary on the book of Psalms constitutes a robust evangelical contribution and will be of great help to the Hebrew-trained student, pastor, and teacher.

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*Praying Curses: The Therapeutic and Preaching Value of the Imprecatory Psalms.* By Daniel Michael Nehrbass. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2013, 214 pp., \$25.00.

This book is an exercise in practical theology and application; what makes it interesting is that the passages the author has chosen are the famous (or infamous!) imprecatory psalms. Nehrbass first introduces his study by stating his goals: "This book will offer an updated and comprehensive history of interpretation of the imprecatory psalms, a practical theology, and an extensive application for preaching and for anger therapy" (p. 2). He believes these difficult passages "have relevant contemporary value for preaching and practical life" (p. 3) and that that value is "best expressed in an interpretation . . . which assumes the worshiper is voicing his dependence upon God, rather than taking matters into his own hands" (pp. 3–4). He assumes that "all Scripture" is useful, that progressive revelation plays a role in our interpretation but should not be used to "undo" previous revelation, and that Jesus' teachings and life interpret all other parts of Scripture. All this means that Nehrbass has a job to do—to show how these difficult psalms make positive contributions to life and faith in the church today.

Nehrbass divides his study up into three parts: (1) Part I: Interpretation; (2) Part II: Theology; and (3) Part III: Application. In Part I, he first offers a helpful 40-page review of thirteen different approaches to the "imprecatory psalms," in which he summarizes and evaluates each approach, noting both advantages and problems. In summary, here are the thirteen approaches: (1) allegorical approach (the enemy is abstract); (2) allegorical-historical (the curses are stock expressions based on divine warrior imagery from the ANE); (3) historical-inspired (the curses are inspired but wrong); (4) historical non-inspired (the curses are historically conditioned, not inspired by God, and wrong); (5) sociological-historical (the curses were acceptable in their original social context); (6) catharsis/poetic form (the curses are expressions of natural human emotion, in poetry, not teaching); (7) pre-NT dispensation (the curses were acceptable under that dispensation but not now; Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount has replaced cursing); (8) quotation hypothesis (the curses are quotations of enemies); (9) spells (the curses are remnants of ancient magical practices); (10) prophetic (the curses are divinely sanctioned oracles of judgment); (11) messianic (the curses are prayers to be uttered by the coming messiah, Jesus); (12) covenantal theory (the curses are requests for God to keep his covenantal promises); and (13) dependence theory (the curses are expressions of dependence on God for justice). This final approach is the one Nehrbass

endorses. In chapter 3, “Interpretation of the Imprecatory Psalms through the Eyes of Victims,” Nehrbass writes, “The therapeutic and theological value of the imprecatory psalms . . . is that we identify with the oppressed and the victims of violence” (p. 54). He argues that the imprecatory psalms give hope for the hopeless, power for the powerless, validation for the invalidated, victory for the vanquished, and prayers for the prayer-less. In an interesting discussion of David Augsburger’s work on forgiveness, he notes that “hatred is a necessary facet of a reconciling attitude” (p. 67). Further, “to refuse to hate means that we remain in denial, and cannot move toward reconciliation” (p. 67).

In Part II, Nehrbass discusses theological issues. In chapter 4, “Tension in the Canon,” he attempts to begin dealing with the tension between the curses in Psalms and the teaching of Jesus. Throughout his work, Nehrbass faithfully embraces two ideas: (1) the psalms endorse cursing; and (2) Jesus tells his followers to love their enemies. This creates the tension. He suggests “mystery” (we do not have to solve every problem in Scripture), “literary form” (genre), the different purposes of the Sermon on the Mount and the curses, the idea that biblical authors can present a variety of ways of dealing with a situation, and finally the differences in context, all as steps involved in solving the tension.

In chapter 5, “A Theology of God in the Imprecatory Psalms,” Nehrbass argues that the curses in the Psalms are consistent with OT covenant promises, imprecatory prophecy, the warnings of Scripture, NT imprecation, and, with some qualifications, a biblical doctrine of God.

In chapter 6, “Human Nature in the Imprecatory Psalms,” Nehrbass lists fifteen theological propositions in the psalms about humanity. Humanity is: (1) with regard to God: known, loved, judged by God, in need of redemption, used as instruments for punishment of others, and are destined for eternal life; (2) with regard to oneself: frustrated in their quest for holiness, blind to their own faults, and experience angst; (3) in relation to others, humanity is organized in nations, polarized as either good or evil, exerts dominion, needs humility, and is capable of becoming oppressors; and (4) in general, human life is fleeting. This complex understanding of humanity gives a larger theological background and context for a therapeutic understanding of the imprecatory psalms. Chapter 7, “A Practical Theology of the Imprecatory Psalms,” is an attempt to apply Thomas Groome’s paradigm of doing practical theology to the problem of contemporary churches failing to discuss, teach on, and pray the imprecatory psalms.

In Part III, “Application,” chapter 8, “The Therapeutic Value of the Imprecatory Psalms,” Nehrbass offers several imperatives: (1) concern yourself with God’s reputation; (2) let God take care of your problem; (3) appeal to the things God cares about; (4) make your complaint clear; (5) pray for the plans of the wicked to be foiled; (6) take responsibility for your part; and (7) get passionate. He also discusses the therapeutic limits of catharsis and the case against and for anger.

In chapter 9, “Preaching the Imprecatory Psalms,” Nehrbass presents five brief sermons that illustrate most of the imperatives listed in his chapter 8. A conclusion (chap. 10) reviews his argument. The volume ends with an appendix containing Matthew 5 and a bibliography.

Nehrbass's work is helpful but it is far from the last word on the subject. He devotes almost no space to a discussion of the actual texts, which would seem necessary in a work of application. Also, it is not always clear how his chapters relate to each other or help make his argument. For example, the fifteen theological propositions about biblical anthropology from chapter 6 are never heard from again in subsequent chapters. How exactly did those propositions help make his case? Nevertheless, Nehrbass brings to the discussion of a difficult portion of Scripture a welcome understanding of victims of abuse and oppression, especially in parts of the world other than North America. Those of us living comfortably need to appreciate this. Also, he is to be commended for attempting to think through pastorally how one could appropriate curses against one's enemies. Nehrbass may not get everything right, but he has helped move forward the discussion of imprecatory psalms.

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*Obadiah: The Kingship Belongs to YHWH.* By Daniel I. Block. Hearing the Message of Scripture: A Commentary on the OT. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012, 128 pp., \$19.99.

The Hearing the Message of Scripture series takes an ambitious aim: to "help serious students of the Bible to hear the message of Scripture as it was intended to be heard" (p. 9). The editors hold the conviction that today's pastors and teachers need to go beyond textual eisegesis and discover the "rhetorical agenda" of the biblical authors. So, the theology of each biblical book is distilled and the literary strategy employed by each inspired author is clarified. In addition, each commentary chapter includes the following format: "The Main Idea of the Passage"; "Literary Context"; "Translation and Outline"; "Structure and Literary Form"; "Explanation of the Text"; and "Canonical and Practical Significance."

This commentary on Obadiah, written by the renowned Wheaton Professor Daniel Block, is the first in the series to be published. For Block, the shortness of this prophetic book allows him to discover the prophet's profound theology of hope as well as his sophisticated literary style.

Block's lengthy introduction surveys options regarding the book's historical background and provides an insightful discussion of the prophet's audience. Obadiah's prophecies occurred just before Edom's demise in the sixth century BC. Block keenly understands the situation of the prophet's principal addressees—the Judeans from the "house of Jacob" (vv. 17–18) who remained in the land during the exile after the Babylonian destruction. These Judeans underwent severe depression, experienced "theological shock," and were being taunted by their Edomite neighbors. However, they understood YHWH's obligation to rescue them based on their covenantal history (Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic). Obadiah initially warns Edom of her own coming doom, but his basic message is to rekindle Judean hope

in YHWH. Obadiah's literary style shows transparent passion while being careful to appeal to proper authorities—both divine and prophetic.

In chapter 1, Block neatly sets the stage for the four “days” of Obadiah, which are then covered in chapters 2–5:

- A. Introduction: Setting the Stage for the “Days” (v. 1)
- B. The Judgment: Esau's Humiliation on his “Day” of Doom (vv. 2–10)
- C. Esau's Crimes on the “Day” of Jacob (vv. 11–14)
- D. The Demise of Esau on the “Day of YHWH” (vv. 15–18)
- E. The Restoration of Jacob on the “Day of YHWH” (vv. 19–21)

In chapter 1, Block shows how the prophet sets up his “days” (v. 1). The call for the nations to “rise up” against Edom is striking. Block is enthralled with the way Obadiah utilizes earlier prophets—especially how Obadiah nearly copies Jeremiah's warning from Jer 49:14, only making subtle changes to reflect the situation after Jerusalem's destruction.

In chapter 2 (vv. 2–10), Block explains that the use of “Esau” (v. 6) aims the oracle against the people who had actively participated in Jerusalem's fall (rather than against the land of Edom). Esau is the “Target of Divine Fury” (vv. 8–10); at the hand of YHWH Esau will receive retribution for his murdering and violence (v. 10). Block illuminates this retribution theme with passages from Amos, Joel, Micah, and even Genesis 4 (Cain and Abel).

Chapter 3 (vv. 11–14) reviews the heinousness of Esau's crimes against his brother Jacob (including rape, slaughter, and gloating) and then announces the “retributive justice” ordered against him. Jacob has paid for his sins; now Esau must do the same. Jacob must be defended in order for YHWH to protect his “Covenantal Triangle,” which integrates YHWH (at the apex), the people of Israel, and the land.

Chapter 4 begins discussion of the “Day of YHWH” (vv. 15–18). The tone is now one of “distributive justice” for all the nations along with a holy hope for the house of Jacob—those who will re-possess their own land.

Chapter 5 specifies two restorations at the “Day of YHWH” (vv. 19–21)—Jacob's land and YHWH's rule. Block catches the sense of surprise in the statement: “from Mount Zion the ‘saviors’ will govern Mount Esau” (v. 21). Now “Esau” represents all nations, and “saviors” serves to “give concrete expression to the kingship of YHWH” (p. 102). Israel is high above all the nations of the earth, which places YHWH over all ancient gods, and makes him king over all.

The commentary concludes with a section entitled “The Canonical and Practical Significance of Obadiah.” This prophet is critical in biblical studies in that Obadiah “links the demise of Edom with the ‘day of YHWH’ that is approaching for all nations” (p. 107). Edom's destruction, however, “is paradigmatic of YHWH's ultimate vindication of his people and his triumph over all who oppose him” (p. 108). More importantly, Obadiah offers a full-orbed vision of YHWH, especially of YHWH's eternal kingship over Israel. In Obadiah, we witness YHWH's determination to bring down the high and mighty; yet, something is even more critical than this. The supreme rights of YHWH's dominion are not to be lost—even in the struggles of contemporary political affairs. The kingship of God

motif is then extended into the NT. In Christ, the “Day of YHWH” prophecies of Obadiah are fulfilled. The dominion of YHWH is incarnate in Jesus Christ alone.

As a seasoned commentary writer, Block integrates biblical theology, literary analysis, Hebrew analysis, and spiritual insight with a pastoral style. Though nothing is exceedingly groundbreaking in this work, its overall lucidness regarding an obscure prophet and his place in prophetic history will be, as advertised, useful to pastors and teachers looking to hear the prophet’s heart and intended message.

In summation, this commentary can enhance preaching and teaching by helping present a concrete conviction of YHWH’s kingship in world history. It can also help to instill a vision of his future ‘Day of the Lord’ toward which all things are moving. Such a vision is critical for placing prophetic literature, and indeed all of Scripture, within its proper eschatological context.

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*Hosea: A Commentary Based on Hosea in Codex Vaticanus.* By W. Edward Glenny. Septuagint Commentary Series. Leiden: Brill, 2013, x + 204 pp., \$140.00.

The presently reviewed work on LXX-Hosea is by W. Edward Glenny, endowed professor of NT studies and Greek at the University of Northwestern in St. Paul, MN. This commentary is part of the Septuagint Commentary Series under the editorial oversight of Stanley Porter, Richard Hess, and John Jarick. It is Glenny’s third book on the Greek OT, all of which are published by Brill. He is contracted with Brill for all of the LXX-Minor Prophets volumes and the LXX-Ruth volume in this series.

This series first appeared in 2004 with A. Graema Auld’s commentary on the Greek text of Joshua. The series breaks ground in Septuagintal studies by being the first commentary series in English specifically on the LXX texts (the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies also has a series forthcoming [SBL Commentary on the Septuagint], albeit with a differently expressed method, purpose, and goal). Beyond its original contribution, however, one will be hard-pressed to find an official statement from the editors on the impetus behind the publication of this series or its method and goal, either printed in the commentaries themselves or on Brill’s website. Yet Glenny and other authors in this series make the method clear enough in their respective introductions for this review to report with relative clarity what the editors may have intended for the series.

From the beginning, each commentary in this series has been based exclusively on the text of Vaticanus (B). For Glenny, this distinguishes the series in two ways. First, he notes that instead of appealing to a modern edition of the Septuagint (a composite edition, presumably), this series is based on a single manuscript of the Greek OT. Second, and more specifically, this series seeks to examine the Greek OT of Vaticanus as “an artifact in its own right and primarily for its own sake” (p. 25). According to Glenny, this enables an investigation of “[what] the text of Hosea [B] would have meant to an early Greek reader of it, who did not know Hebrew

and possibly did not even have access to the Hebrew text of the book” (p. 25). Put negatively, the method of this series is expressly *not* concerned with the comparison of the MT and the LXX. Nor is it concerned to discover any supposed *Vorlage*.

The Hosea commentary at hand is presented in three sections: introduction(s), text and translation, and the commentary proper. First, the reader will quickly find that there are actually two respective introductions in this volume. This is because Glenny both introduces the LXX-Minor Prophets and LXX-Hosea B. As a side note, I just read Glenny’s latest commentary on Amos, and the reader should know that the introduction to the LXX-Minor Prophets is apparently assumed for the rest of his commentaries on these texts.

In his introduction to the LXX-Minor Prophets (pp. 1–23), Glenny covers the latest scholarship on the “[LXX] Twelve Prophets.” This introduction is a real treat for the interested reader because it covers a large breadth of current scholarship on the LXX-Minor Prophets in an economy of space, and importantly it introduces the reader to how Glenny understands the LXX-Minor Prophets as a corpus. He discusses issues related to the order of the LXX-Minor Prophets, literary and canonical readings of the Twelve, the place of the LXX-Minor Prophets in the Jewish Scriptures and the reasons for the differing order of the first six books of the LXX-Minor Prophets, the date and provenance of the LXX-Minor Prophets scroll, and finally the theology of the translator of the LXX-Minor Prophets.

A couple of issues are salient in this introduction. First, Glenny affirms the current majority stance concerning the literary unity of the Minor Prophets. He does this in dialogue with the recent scholarship of both Seitz and Jones. Like these two scholars he says literary unity can be observed in the LXX-Minor Prophets, though expressed differently than its Hebrew counterpart.

Second, Glenny’s conclusions about the translator of the LXX-Minor Prophets are insightful and thought-provoking. He concludes after a breathtakingly fast yet appropriately thorough review of nearly 100 years of scholarship that the LXX-Minor Prophets are from the hand of one translator. The translator was, for Glenny, a mid-second century BCE, Egyptian “scholar-scribe” who was “well acquainted with the biblical texts” (p. 21). What is fascinating is that, for Glenny, the translation of the LXX-Minor Prophets is *ad hoc*, or probably better put, opportunistic, in that “the translator seems to take the topics emphasized in the *Vorlage* and work from what he finds there and use opportunities he finds in it to express his own concerns and to make his text relevant for his audience” (p. 22). That the setting and needs of the translator’s audience would guide the translation is contrary to recent conclusions made by Boyd-Taylor and others of a broadly characterized interlinear persuasion.

Interestingly, for Glenny, the opportunistic *Tendenz* of the translator does not lend itself to an “overall theology” of the LXX-Minor Prophets (p. 23). That is, though there is an observable internal coherence and logic, this does not transfer to a theological cogency. This conclusion gives me pause in light of the many motifs in the LXX-Minor Prophets that carry significant theological import, especially associated with the day of the LORD. As I see it, this conclusion like the last, will also find many who do not agree.

The second introduction is on Hosea (pp. 25–29). The only concerns raised by Glenny in this introduction are text-related. Glenny discusses briefly how the scribe divided up the prophecy in B, and he examines issues on the Greek text already noted above. I presume there is no discussion on common introduction issues here because Hosea is part of the LXX-Minor Prophets, and this corpus has already been introduced. Yet this is only my assumption. It was not stated by the author. Subsequently, this introduction seems to me to be quite thin. It is hard to critique solely the author for this, since as a reader of this commentary series, I do not know what the expectations of the editors were for Glenny. Again, it would seem that without the aid of an overall method for the series, it will up to those referencing these commentaries to deal with the content they find in these volumes at face value. This notwithstanding, if Glenny's supposition is that an overall theology of the LXX-Minor Prophets does not exist, it seems reasonable to imagine that a discussion of major theological themes and emphases found in LXX-Hosea B would have been helpful for the reader of this commentary.

The second section of the commentary is on the text of B and its English translation (pp. 32–65). The layout of this section is especially attractive. Like the rest of this series (that I have seen personally), the formatting of this section is similar to what one sees in the Loeb Classical Library. In other words, this section gives the author's Greek text printed on one page and on the adjoining page is the author's English translation. The upside of having both Greek text and English translation in one section, and not divided up within the commentary, is the ease of quick access to one author's take on the Greek in B and on the English translation of the Greek. The downside is that when one begins reading the commentary there tends to be a lot of flipping back and forth. The upside outweighs the downside, for me.

Of course, basing a series on one Greek manuscript, textually speaking, is still not without its own problems and certainly does not obviate the need for certain levels of textual criticism. Doubtless, like other commentaries in this series, textual decisions needed to be made in order to reconstruct the original LXX-Hosea B for this section.

Glenny's own method of gaining access to what he believes to be the original B employs Swete's edition as his foundation along with an examination of two facsimile editions of the Vaticanus text (a digital copy of Codex 1209; and *Bibliorum Sacrorum Graecorum Codex Vaticanus B* [Rome: Istituto Poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato, 1999]). Footnoted at the bottom of each Greek page are textual notes by verse that document "the differences between the original B and the correctors of it, the main differences between B and other manuscripts, and the main differences between the three modern editions of the Twelve that were consulted for this work (Swete, Rahlfs, and Ziegler)" (p. 27). The notes are written in prose and are quite straightforward. They are not technical like Göttingen, probably since text-criticism is not the prescribed methodological emphasis of this series. In the end, however, by Glenny's own admission, most of the differences concern small variations of spelling caused by the evolution of pronunciation (p. 27).

The final section of this volume is the commentary proper (pp. 67–186). In the commentary, Glenny follows the original 21 divisions of the translator witnessed in B. What this means is that Glenny comments on literary sections already set out by the translator, and not his own division of the text. Still, at times, Glenny has to make judgments about the text divisions. For example, 5:8–7:12 is only divided once in B (between 6:3 and 4). Yet due to the overall length of the section and the transition between the sins of Samaria and the blessings and judgment of Israel, Glenny marks another division (between 6:10 and 11). Nevertheless, following the markings of B in the majority of the cases reflects on the method of this commentary, namely, treating B as an artifact.

Overall, Glenny's commentary is strongly literary and theological in focus, with relevant lexical and grammatical interaction with the Greek. Again, this commentary is not meant to be text-critical, with comparison of the Greek and Hebrew or of B with other Greek MSS. Thus only rarely will the reader find any reference to other texts outside of B (but cf., e.g., Glenny's discussion of 8:12 where B strongly differs from the MT).

A recommendation for this commentary is difficult because Glenny's work and the overall method of the series both have so many positives, but at the same time two negatives will limit the influence of any book in this series. First, the positives. Glenny's work, overall, is accessible, clear, concise, and relevant. Additionally, the series is a welcome contribution to Septuagintal studies, and its formatting is attractive. In general accessibility, these commentaries have a certain analogy to NICOT, for example. This series is for the student and specialist alike, and Glenny's contribution is no exception. However, the negatives begin with the series' prohibitive price and end with the relative ignorance of the series. Concerning the latter, for example, I live in Columbus, OH. Locally, there are 12+ local universities, and about four seminaries, but the two closest libraries to me that have this commentary are both 100+ miles away. It is only mildly better when I search for Auld's 11-year-old Joshua commentary. This means for me that purchase is unlikely and that simply running into the series seems just as improbable. Yet, in the end, this is no reflection on Glenny's work. It is a well-executed volume, and the introduction on the LXX-Minor Prophets alone hopefully will orient many to the multifaceted issues currently facing this area of scholarship. I am excited about this commentary and those still to come from Glenny's hand.

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*The World of the NT: Cultural, Social, and Historical Contexts.* Edited by Joel B. Green and Lee Martin McDonald. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013, xxiv + 616 pp., \$49.99.

When this volume came to my attention, I felt that it had two strikes against it. First, there have been a number of volumes published recently on the contexts of the NT. What could this volume add? Second, it is often the case that a collection



of articles from many authors lacks cohesion. Would this volume contain a diverse collection of uneven articles with no noticeable connection or purpose?

The volume begins with a short introduction by both editors (pp. 1–6) and an article on chronology by McDonald (pp. 7–22). The introduction immediately sets the tone for the book. Students of the Bible are often taught the importance of context (sometimes called “backgrounds”) for interpretation; this volume is intended to provide this (p. 2). As the editors state, “Although we need more than cultural, social, and historical context in order to attend well to the NT message, we certainly do not need less” (p. 2). This refreshing approach rightly acknowledges the foundational role that contextual information should play in our exegesis. Further, one realizes the importance that this volume places on primary sources, including those not directly associated with Judaism and Christianity (pp. 3–6). This emphasis is further indicated by the twelve-page index of ancient sources (pp. 587–98). McDonald’s article on chronology is well-placed and provides a brief discussion of generally established dates for certain key events; these include: the birth of Jesus, 4–3 BC (p. 9); the death of Jesus, AD 30–31 (p. 12); Paul’s trial before Gallio at Corinth, AD 51–52 (pp. 12–13). Of course, not all will agree with these dates; however, helpful discussion is provided. The chapter concludes with a chart containing a brief chronological overview of major events from the time of Alexander’s rise to power (334 BC) through Irenaeus’s *Against Heresies* (AD 180–85) (pp. 18–22).

These introductory chapters are followed by five well-planned parts concerning the various contexts of the NT. The first two parts are devoted to “setting the context” of the NT, with part 1 focusing on the Jewish heritage of the NT. First, Nicholas Perrin discusses the role exile played in the cognitive environment of the first-century Jewish world-view (pp. 25–37). This helpful survey is necessary at the present time because of the influence of N. T. Wright. Larry R. Helyer and Everett Ferguson contribute excellent historical articles on the Hasmonean and Herodian reigns (pp. 38–53; 54–76). Helyer’s article helps one to understand the events that shaped our period, and Ferguson’s serves to fill in many details that would have been understood by the narrative participants and earliest readers of the NT. Nathan MacDonald has written an illuminating piece on monotheism that clarifies a theological concept taken for granted by most evangelicals (pp. 77–84). MacDonald suggests we need to use the term with care (p. 78) and then explores the meaning in ancient Israel, the Hellenistic and Roman periods, and briefly in paganism (pp. 78–83). Many students of Scripture have a simplistic idea of this concept (it is interesting that the label “monotheism” was not coined until AD 1660 [p. 78]). For example, four strands are seen in the OT itself: (1) an emphasis on Israel’s unique relationship with God primarily seen in Deuteronomy through Kings, Jeremiah, and Isaiah 40–55; (2) a more “inclusivist vision” from a priestly perspective with God as the creator of mankind and the Israelite cult as the center of God’s world, found primarily in Genesis through Leviticus and Ezekiel; (3) wisdom instruction in the Wisdom literature; and (4) an apocalyptic expression emphasizing God’s sovereignty (pp. 79–80). Thus, there is room in this system for the existence of other deities and beings that are somehow between God and man. The final article in this part by Lidija Novakovic discusses Scripture, canon, and various Jewish methods of

interpreting Scripture including the interpretation of the OT in the NT (“The Scriptures and Scriptural Interpretation”; pp. 85–101). Those not familiar with Jewish interpretive methods will benefit greatly from the section on this topic (pp. 90–96).

The second part is devoted to setting the Greco-Roman context of the NT. This section includes an excellent introduction to imperial cults by Nicholas Perrin (pp. 124–34). At a time when NT scholars have tended to go to extremes on this topic, Perrin provides the reader with a clear perspective that shows both the significant influence of imperial cults and the moderation needed by interpreters. S. Scott Bartchy’s article on Roman slavery is helpful (pp. 169–78); however, given the short length of the article, too much space is devoted to comparing ancient slavery to modern and describing slavery from a primarily legal perspective (pp. 172–74). This is all good information; however, too little space was given to the topic of slave experience and treatment (pp. 175–76). The consequence (although likely unintentional) is that Bartchy’s article seems to minimize the terrible existence of a Roman slave. His comments in the bibliography about his own book are important to provide balance here (p. 176; the notes on books in Bartchy’s bibliography are all excellent). Lynn H. Cohick has contributed a nice article on the Roman family in which she highlights differences between ancient and modern families (pp. 179–87). This is helpful because sometimes familiar topics are never pursued in detail, which can lead to undetected misunderstandings. Other important topics in this section include Greek religion (Moyer V. Hubbard; pp. 105–23), philosophical schools (John T. Fitzgerald; pp. 135–48), associations (Michael S. Moore; pp. 149–55), economics, taxes, tithes (David J. Downs; pp. 156–68), and education (Ben Witherington III; 188–94).

The third part of Green and McDonald’s book covers the Jews in their Roman context. Michelle Lee-Barnewall’s contribution on the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes will meet a need for a concise description of these groups (pp. 217–27). The origin, influence, and doctrines and practices are covered for the first two groups, and doctrines and practices, relationship to Qumran, and influence on the NT are explored for the Essenes. Lee-Barnewall concludes that, although there are similarities, there is not enough evidence to see direct Essene influence on the NT. Nevertheless, knowledge of this group contributes to our understanding of the NT world (pp. 225–26). Other articles in this part cover temple and priesthood (David Instone-Brewer; pp. 197–206), Jews and Samaritans (Lidija Novakovic; pp. 207–16), Dead Sea Scrolls (C. D. Elledge; pp. 228–41), prophetic movements and zealots (James D. G. Dunn; pp. 242–51), apocalypticism (Larry R. Helyer; pp. 252–64), synagogue and Sanhedrin (Kenneth D. Litwak; pp. 264–71), diaspora (David A. deSilva; pp. 272–90), noncanonical writings (Daniel M. Gurtner; pp. 291–309), identity, beliefs, practices (Archie T. Wright; 310–24), Jewish education (Kent L. Yinger; pp. 325–29), and health issues (Joel B. Green; 330–41).

The fourth part focuses on the literary context. The first article, “Reading, Writing, and Manuscripts” by E. Randolph Richards covers literacy, manuscript construction, secretaries, and the writing of the NT books (pp. 345–66). This article is packed with valuable information. For example, Richards suggests Jewish men

may have had a higher literacy rate than most but feels that the estimate of 15% is probably too high (p. 348). Additionally, given cost of materials and labor, in today's currency, books such as Romans and 1 Corinthians would have cost over \$2,000 to produce (\$101 for Philemon! [p. 361]). The composition of NT books cannot be seen as anything less than a serious commitment. In "Literary Forms and the NT," Thomas E. Phillips describes five common genres in the NT: biography, history, letters, sermons/tracts, and apocalypse (pp. 379–89). The remainder of the articles in this section describe types of literature and their impact (or lack of impact) on the NT: pseudepigrapha (Lee Martin McDonald; pp. 367–78), Homer (Thomas E. Phillips; pp. 390–97), Josephus (Michael F. Bird; pp. 398–404), Philo (Torrey Seland; pp. 405–12), Rabbinic literature (Bruce Chilton; pp. 413–23), post-NT Christian writings (Nicholas Perrin; pp. 424–35).

The fifth and final part of this collection focuses on geography. This section begins with James H. Charlesworth's "Jesus Research and Archaeology" (pp. 439–66). This article describes significant contributions archaeology has made to Jesus studies. For example, archaeology has demonstrated that synagogues were buildings during the time of Jesus (pp. 460–61). The remainder of the articles describe specific geographic areas of interest: Egypt (John D. Wineland; pp. 467–73), Palestine (Thomas R. Hatina; pp. 474–89), Syria, Cilicia, Cyprus (Mark Wilson; pp. 490–500), Asia (Paul Trebilco; pp. 501–21), Galatia (Mark Wilson; pp. 522–31), Macedonia (Gene L. Green; pp. 532–43), Achaia (Gene L. Green; pp. 544–56), Rome and Roman provinces (Thomas R. Hatina; pp. 557–70).

By design the articles in this volume are introductory. Thus, interested readers must consult each article's bibliography for further information. One weakness of the volume is that many of the articles are not well documented. Both in-text citations and footnotes are used; however, I consistently found myself looking for support for various points made.

Despite the above criticism, my original concern that this volume was a collection of independent articles may be its greatest strength. Generally speaking, the topics covered here are too diverse and specialized for any one author to address with authority. Of course, valuable single-author volumes exist. However, the multiple-author format allows for scholars to write specialized studies in their areas of expertise. Many of the authors have written substantial works on the topic on which they were tasked to write. Others are capable scholars who could devote themselves to a specific article in an area close to their main area of research interest. Further, the articles do a nice job of covering important topics that will enhance any NT student's understanding of the text. Although there are 44 articles in this book, further suggestions can always be made. For example, although Hubbard's helpful article on Greek religion covers Roman religious experiences, another article on Roman religion specifically would have provided more space to expand on this area (including further discussion of mystery religions). Also, although covered in various ways throughout, a specific article on Jews and hellenization would have been helpful.

My other original concern that this volume was simply another book on NT contexts and would sit my shelf with other similar volumes seems unfounded. The

articles in this collection are generally short, most less than twenty pages, many less than ten. Thus, this volume is manageable for anyone interested in the subject of a specific article. As individual contributions, one need read only the chapters of interest, and this strategy will not detract from a narrative that a single-author volume often has. All these positive characteristics suggest this work will make an excellent required text for a class or a volume of choice for independent study.

Each article concludes with a helpful annotated bibliography. Additionally, there are approximately one hundred black-and-white photographs, maps, and diagrams throughout the book. The volume is further enhanced with three additional resources: brief discussions on money (pp. 573–75) and measurements (pp. 576–78), and an eight-page glossary (pp. 579–86). There are four indexes: ancient sources, biblical texts, modern authors, and subjects (pp. 587–616).

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*The Archaeology of the Holy Land: From the Destruction of Solomon's Temple to the Muslim Conquest.* By Jodi Magness. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012, xiv + 385 pp., \$32.99 paper.

*The Archaeology of the Holy Land* is a book that Magness has wanted to write for twenty years, the time during which she has been teaching the content covered in this volume (p. xiii). Those who are familiar with her expertise can thank Cambridge for the publication of this volume, in which she makes the fruit of her labor—in both the classroom and the field—available to colleagues and students alike.

The volume includes seventeen chapters. Chapter 1 (pp. 1–19) is an introduction in which Magness presents a brief overview of the discipline and methods of “biblical archaeology.” She also presents a brief discussion of the fundamental principles of archaeology, which is “the study of the past as evidenced by human material culture—that is, built features and artifacts such as architecture, works of art, tools, and vessels that were manufactured and used by people” (p. 7). She teaches the principles and methods of archaeology, as well as methods of dating, including: (1) radiocarbon dating; (2) coins; (3) inscriptions; (4) ancient historical or literary sources; and (5) pottery. Finally, she emphasizes that, although Indiana Jones films have created “a highly romanticized and grossly inaccurate image of the discipline,” real archaeology is not about treasure hunting but is “a journey of discovery” that “involves piecing together all available information, not just one artifact taken out of context” (p. 17).

After the introduction, chaps. 2 through 17 include studies of the following topics: (2) the topography and early history of Jerusalem (to 586 BCE) (pp. 20–45); (3) the Babylonian (586–539 BCE) and Persian (539–332 BCE) periods (pp. 46–62); (4) the early Hellenistic period (332–167 BCE) (pp. 63–91); (5) the late Hellenistic (Hasmonean) period (167–40 BCE) (pp. 63–91); (6) the archaeology of Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls (pp. 108–32); (7) the early Roman (Herodian) period (40 BCE–

70 CE): Jerusalem (pp. 133–69); (8) the early Roman (Herodian) Period (40 BCE–70 CE): Caesarea Maritima, Samaria-Sebaste, Herodian Jericho, and Herodium (pp. 170–91); (9) the early Roman (Herodian) period (40 BCE–70 CE): Jesus' birth and Galilean setting (pp. 192–203); (10) the early Roman (Herodian) period (40 BCE–70 CE): Masada (pp. 204–29); (11) ancient Jewish tombs and burial customs (to 70 CE) (pp. 230–55); (12) from 70 CE to the Bar-Kokhba Revolt (132–135/136 CE): the Second Jewish Revolt against the Romans (pp. 256–70); (13) Aelia Capitolina (Hadrianic Jerusalem) (135 to ca. 300 CE) (pp. 271–85); (14) Roman and late antique period synagogues in Palestine (pp. 286–319); (15) the Byzantine (early Christian) period (313–640 CE): Jerusalem (pp. 320–32); (16) the Byzantine (early Christian) period (313–640 CE): Palestine under Christian rule (pp. 333–48); and (17) epilogue: early Islamic Jerusalem (638–750 CE) (pp. 349–56).

Scattered throughout the text are thirty-one sidebar articles, which provide focused studies of the terms BCE and CE (p. 19), the nature of a temple (p. 26), the alphabet (pp. 41–42), Charles Warren's exploration of Hezekiah's Tunnel (pp. 43–44), Zenon (p. 84), Greek architecture (pp. 86–89), ancient Egyptian Jewry (pp. 90–91), the Heliodorus affair and the Zadokite high priests (pp. 106–7), women at Qumran (pp. 130–32), Wilson's Arch (p. 167), Herodian Jerusalem's water supply (pp. 168–69), Roman places of entertainment and spectacle (pp. 179–80), Roman concrete technology (p. 190), Ehud Netzer (p. 191), Yigael Yadin (p. 228), how the Roman legionaries were equipped (p. 228), the Talpiyot tomb (pp. 250–52), the James Ossuary (pp. 252–53), Beth Shearim (p. 254), Capitoline Jupiter and the God of Israel (p. 259), the Green Line (p. 269), the temple mount and the Capitolium (p. 284), Hamilton's excavations by the North Wall of Jerusalem (p. 284), Diaspora synagogues (pp. 316–17), women in ancient synagogues (pp. 317–18), Samaritan synagogues (p. 318), the temple mount (p. 329), the Garden Tomb (Gordon's Calvary) (p. 330), the Golden Gate (p. 331), Martyria (p. 347), and the question of the location of the first and second temples (p. 355). Each chapter includes numerous maps and charts, and each ends with a recommended reading list. The volume concludes with a glossary (pp. 357–75), a timeline (pp. 377–78), and an index (pp. 379–85).

There is much in this volume that will be of interest to those working in the fields of Second Temple Judaism, NT studies, and early church history. Since the volume deals with the archaeology of the Holy Land, virtually every chapter includes a discussion of Jerusalem archaeology, examining the data from each period. Several chapters are entirely devoted to the archaeology of Jerusalem, including: chapter 2, which provides an overview of the topography and early history of Jerusalem to 586 BCE; chapter 7, which examines the archaeology of Jerusalem in the Herodian period (40 BCE–70 CE); chapter 13, which studies Hadrianic Jerusalem (135–ca. 300 CE); and chapter 15, which deals with Jerusalem in the Byzantine period (313–640 CE). Chapter 6, which explores Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls, may be of special interest, since Christians have always been interested in how the site and the scrolls relate to John the Baptist, Jesus, the Jesus movement, and early Christianity. Chapter 9, which examines Jesus' birth and the Galilean setting of much of his ministry, may also be of particular interest. Magness argues that the

inhabitants of Roman Galilee lived “just above the subsistence level,” that Jesus himself “came from a lower-class Galilean family,” and that lower-class Jews “seem to have been Jesus’ target audience” (p. 192). The subject of Jesus’ socio-economic background and how it influenced his ministry is complex and goes beyond the scope of Magness’s book. Recent archaeological work suggests that the Galilean economy may have been more complex and diverse (e.g. D. A. Fiensy and R. K. Hawkins, *The Galilean Economy in the Time of Jesus* [Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013]). Chapter 11, which deals with ancient Jewish tombs and burial customs, will be of special interest in light of recent claims that the Talpiyot Tomb is the lost tomb of Jesus and his family, and that the James Ossuary contained the remains of James the Just, the brother of Jesus. After exploring Jewish tombs and burial customs in general, Magness examines the Talpiyot Tomb and the James Ossuary specifically. Chapter 14, on synagogues, and chapters 15 and 16, both on the Byzantine period, will all be of interest to readers for their illumination of Jewish and Christian life and worship. These are just some examples of the topics dealt with in this book. There are many more.

Those involved with either teaching or studying biblical archaeology know that there are few textbooks sufficient for either college or seminary-level courses in the subject. Most books that deal with archaeology are written for other archaeologists, such as Magness’s *Jerusalem Ceramic Chronology (c. 200–800 CE)* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), *Debating Qumran* (Leuven: Peeters, 2003), and *The Archaeology of the Early Islamic Settlement in Palestine* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003). In this volume, however, Magness culls the wealth of her archaeological knowledge for the essentials, which she presents in easy-to-understand language. This volume would make a terrific textbook for a course dealing with the archaeology of the period from the destruction of Solomon’s Temple all the way to the beginning of the Muslim conquest.

Some readers may take issue with Magness on certain points, such as her identification of the book of Daniel as a pseudepigraphic work comprised of *ex eventu* prophecy (p. 68), or her view of the narratives of Jesus’ birth as fictitious attempts to establish Jesus’ messianic status (p. 193), or her interpretation of the Galilean economy (pp. 197–201), or even her criticism of Indiana Jones. As for this latter point, one must admit that the Indiana Jones movies have drawn many younger viewers into the field of archaeology. On the other hand, Dr. Jones himself was always weak in the area of publication, an area in which Magness flourishes. Despite these minor points of potential disagreement, the publication of *The Archaeology of the Holy Land* is yet another feather in her fedora, one that archaeology enthusiasts—specialists and non-specialists alike—will want to have available on their bookshelves.

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*Making Sense of Sex: Attitudes towards Sexuality in Early Jewish and Christian Literature.* By William Loader. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013, vii + 168 pp., \$24.00 paper.

William Loader, Professor Emeritus of NT at Murdoch University in Australia, has established himself as an expert in the field of ancient Jewish and Christian views on sexuality. *Making Sense of Sex* is the culmination of Loader's ten-year research project on the theme of ancient sexuality, from which five monographs were produced, including *Enoch, Levi, and Jubilees on Sexuality* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), *The Dead Sea Scrolls on Sexuality* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), *The Pseudepigrapha on Sexuality* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), *Philo, Josephus, and the Testaments on Sexuality* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), and *The NT on Sexuality* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012). The current text gathers together the findings of these five volumes in order to make the conclusions as easily accessible as possible. Secondary literature is not discussed in this volume and references to primary texts are placed in the footnotes to make the text easier to read.

The author provides several important clues in his introduction about his scope, goals, and presuppositions. His goal is to summarize early Jewish and Christian views of sex from around 300 BCE to 100 CE (p. 1). Loader deliberately takes the broadest possible view by examining "everything which had to do with sex," and not just "sex" but also "sexuality" (p. 2). He treats the various ancient texts without privileging any in particular and by applying "the disciplines and methods which have achieved validity among contemporary scholars" (p. 3).

After a brief introduction, Loader groups the ancient material about sexuality into four categories that serve as the book's chapters. These include "In the Beginning," "Households," "Sacred Space," and "Passions and Person." Each chapter is divided into subsections. The chapter "Sacred Space," for example, includes the sections "dealing with impurity," "purity and temple," "against intermarriage with foreigners," "for intermarriage with foreigners," "holiness beyond the temple and sexual abstinence," "sex and the future," and "celibacy now and then." Each of these includes a healthy dose of references to primary sources, but in no particular order. The reader is thus continually wading through references to the OT, NT, Qumran, pseudepigrapha, and a handful of other Jewish texts. Loader concludes by briefly discussing the distance and proximity between modern culture and the ancient texts. Here, he brings up modern themes like contraception, hierarchy in marriage, virginity, teenage romance, adultery, polygamy, divorce, the age of the universe and evolution, and homosexuality.

Several strengths can be noted in the text. First, Loader manages to balance texts' complicated perspectives on sexuality, even when these perspectives seem contradictory. For example, he recognizes how Ben Sira disparages women for their beauty while at the same time extolling their sexual attractiveness and a wife's beauty (p. 129). Similarly, Loader observes how the *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs* takes a very negative stance towards sexual passion while at the same time affirming sexual intimacy (p. 131). Loader thus avoids the common trap of forming opinions based on isolated sayings in a text. By considering the sources' overall contexts, he accounts for their various, sometimes conflicting, views on sexuality.

Another of Loader's strengths is the thoroughness with which he approaches his task. He seems to have left no stone unturned during his ten-year, five-volume, 2,400-page research project. He clearly is fluent in the realm of ancient Jewish literature concerning sexuality. His thoroughness is illustrated, for example, when he describes trying to find an answer to a question by hosting consultations (plural!) with gynecologists (p. 60).

Nevertheless, the book could have been improved in several ways. First, what exactly qualifies as "sex" so as to merit a discussion is unclear. When the author speaks of sex, is he talking about "the act of being male or female" or about "sexual intercourse" (both of which are viable definitions according to Merriam-Webster)? Early on, the author explains that he deliberately uses "sex" and "sexuality" "in a very broad sense of everything which had to do with sex, even if only indirectly" (p. 2). This definition's ambiguity is immediately clear: Loader essentially says that sex broadly includes everything that has to do with sex! Such a lack of clarity causes the author to delve into areas that have nothing to do with sexuality. These side tangents are often interesting—such as the description of brides' dresses, garlands, and veils (p. 44) or the distance that toilets were placed outside of the camp (p. 92)—but contribute little to the discussion of ancient sexuality. The same is true of the book's many references to women's head-coverings in Paul (e.g. pp. 37, 62), a practice that certainly gives modern readers fits but that has little to do with sex.

Loader deliberately casts a broad net into the expanse of Jewish-Christian literature. As a result, he seems to interact with a large quantity of texts but to do so at the cost of quality. For example, he mentions (p. 59) Sarah producing sperm (cf. Heb 11:11) as if this were an unquestioned interpretation, when in reality this passage is highly complex and deserving of a lengthy analysis (as illustrated by Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993] 586–88). Elsewhere, Loader informs the reader that Matt 5:28 has been perpetually misread. Instead of depicting all women as dangerous, Jesus was really talking about lusting after married women. Loader, however, does not base this assertion on a careful exegesis of the text, but simply on Jesus' general acceptance of women (p. 67). Loader often uses texts' silence as an opportunity to offer speculations (e.g. pp. 71, 73, 96).

In seeking to cast a broad net, significant texts slip through the cracks. One could have mentioned sexual overtones in James 1, where desire is said to produce sin and death. Loader does not mention Heb 13:4 ("honor the marriage bed and keep it pure") or Paul's discussion in 1 Thessalonians 4 about avoiding pagan passions and keeping one's vessel in sanctity. Fourth Maccabees, which focuses extensively on passions related to sexuality, is virtually absent from Loader's investigation. Yet, despite omitting relevant Jewish and Christian texts, several Greco-Roman authors are included that fall outside the scope of Loader's investigation (e.g. pp. 11, 97, 110).

At times, Loader seems most interested in identifying which texts influenced others. This is especially the case with Paul, who is more often discussed in relation to the Jewish authors he echoes than in his own contexts and arguments. So, for



example, Paul “agreed with Philo” (p. 7), “reflects his society” (p. 37), “parallel[s]” the *Testament of Naphtali* (p. 94), “reflected those Jewish understandings of the age to come” (p. 101), “mirrors Stoic values” (p. 109) and the book of *Instruction* (p. 127), and “borrowed” from the Book of Wisdom (p. 137). To be sure, asking how Paul echoes contemporary sources is a worthwhile endeavor, but this should not be done before seeking to understand Paul’s arguments and contexts in their own right.

A more serious concern relates to Loader’s regular judgments about the texts he examines. He identifies racist ideologies in the story about Lot’s daughters (p. 53). Commenting on Jesus’ prohibition of divorce, he states, “It was hardly adequate to be treated as a rule for all occasions. Taken as such it could trap people in abusive and destructive marriages” (p. 74). Elsewhere, Paul’s remarks about homosexuality are considered judgments that fall wide of the mark. “But we should not blame Paul for that. He wrote according to his own understanding” (p. 139). Numerous biblical accounts are said to be myth (e.g. pp. 23, 142, 146). Such recurring statements make the reader wonder if the author really considered the texts in an unbiased manner.

The text concludes with a surprising twist. The reader expects to find a succinct description that draws together the ancient texts’ various viewpoints on sexuality. Perhaps their shared perspectives and differences will be proposed. Instead, however, Loader offers his own opinions about ancient and modern views on sex. The conclusion gives the impression that the author finally gets his chance to offer his two cents on the topic he just spent ten years chronicling. He lists numerous aspects where “secular wisdom” (p. 145) has brought about changes in contraception, virginity, hierarchy in marriage, and divorce (pp. 142–44). He lobbies against discrimination against homosexuals, who should be allowed to express themselves like everyone else (p. 147). Such discrimination should be dropped, just as it was towards slaves and women. Loader seems to assume that his research into ancient sexuality gives him the expertise to approve modern “developments” and to disregard texts that differ. This raises an important question: If someone is an expert about ancient sexuality, does this also make one an expert about modern sexuality? Loader seems to think so, since he freely offers his opinions about modern sexuality, yet without the backing of any scientific research on the topic.

In summary, this text is useful for how it gathers together a variety of early texts related to sexuality. Due to its nature as a summary of the author’s previous research, the reader should not expect careful exegesis or interaction with secondary literature. For this, the reader may refer to Loader’s previous volumes. Those who are able to maneuver through the book’s numerous details and the author’s various opinions will find *Making Sense of Sex* a helpful overview of ancient Christian and Jewish views on sexuality.

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*How We Got the NT: Text, Transmission, Translation.* By Stanley E. Porter. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013, xviii + 222 pp., \$21.99 paper.

Since his 1988 Sheffield dissertation on the aspect of Greek verbs, Stanley Porter has been an important voice in discussions on Greek language and manuscripts. In three decades of studies, he has produced a prolific cache of books, essays, and articles, including two recent volumes co-edited with his wife, Wendy, on the NT papyri and majuscules in the Austrian National Library. Porter currently is president, dean, and professor of NT at McMaster Divinity College in Hamilton, Ontario.

*How We Got the NT* originated as the 2008 Hayward Lectures delivered at Acadia Divinity College in Wolfville, Nova Scotia. The book is comprised of three large chapters on text, transmission, and translation. Even though Porter holds a mostly traditional perspective on these subjects, each chapter includes significant and novel proposals for bold, new approaches in each area.

In the opening chapter on the text, Porter addresses two major topics of recent debate. Regarding the goal of NT textual criticism and the problem of an original text, Porter argues that the goal is to establish the “original text,” which is the “published text that goes forth as the author’s, is circulated in the Christian community, and is found in the Greek New Testament” (pp. 35–36). Next, Porter surveys the history of print editions and the manuscripts themselves and addresses the thorny issue of the number and nature of variant readings. *Contra* Ehrman, Porter does not find evidence that would “destabilize” the NT into an unreliable text (pp. 65–72). At the conclusion of the chapter, Porter offers a bold new proposal to “move away from an idealized eclectic text” based on readings from a variety of manuscripts and to seek a text found in an individual manuscript used by a Christian community, and for this he opts for Codex Sinaiticus (pp. 72–76).

To support this proposal, Porter argues that the problem with an eclectic text is simply that it does not match any known manuscript used in the church at any point in history. It is true that even individual verses are often comprised of a combination of readings culled from various witnesses and not a single source. However, to dismiss an eclectic text and to insist instead on a single manuscript would create more problems than it solves. By itself, Sinaiticus is at best only a fourth-century example of the text, and only in one locale. Without corroboration with other manuscripts, the printed text of Sinaiticus would reproduce hundreds of singular readings that can be quite idiosyncratic and surprising, such as the feeding of the “three thousand” (John 6:10) or that God makes all things “vain” (Rev 21:5). If one accepts Sinaiticus’s text *in toto*, one must also wonder if that should extend to include the *Epistle of Barnabas* and the *Shepherd* of Hermas which follow the text of the Apocalypse in the manuscript.

Porter’s proposal on the text is staggering because essentially it dismisses centuries of effort in which textual critics, including himself, have compared manuscripts and analyzed readings to determine the initial text behind the manuscript tradition. Producing an eclectic text did not begin with Nestle, or Westcott and Hort, or Tischendorf. The very scribes themselves compared manuscripts and

made textual decisions as to which reading to adopt as they produced new manuscripts. Essentially, we have never been without an eclectic text. Even the very manuscript Porter proposes as his text—and his choices are limited since Sinaiticus is the only copy of the entire Greek NT extant from the first eight centuries—is a critical edition itself. Sinaiticus exhibits “block mixture” in sections so that whether in its production stage or that of one of its ancestors, multiple manuscripts were combined together to form the text that was inked in the fourth century. Furthermore, as arguably the most corrected manuscript in the world, when Christian communities used this codex, they did not use its original text because that ended up buried under thousands of corrections as scribes edited and updated its text to match their own contemporary manuscripts. To dismiss our modern critical text in favor of Sinaiticus would unnecessarily privilege one peculiar manuscript and silence the entire rest of the manuscript tradition including the papyri.

Porter’s second chapter focuses on the transmission of the NT, emphasizing the pre-Nicene period when textual evidence is sparse before the rise of the major codices. Besides the NT papyri, Porter includes evidence gleaned from diverse other early sources such as fragments (0212, P.Vindob. G 2325, P.Oxy. 4009, P.Egerton 2), Tatian’s *Diatessaron*, an early textual addition (Mark 16:9–20), Marcion, and the apostolic fathers. Porter concludes the chapter with another controversial proposal in which all Greek NT manuscripts are reorganized into two large categories: continuous text intended as at least one whole book (whether papyrus or parchment, majuscule or minuscule) and everything else that was not clearly continuous text.

This proposal is considering more than just the lectionaries that are already separated out from the other papyri, majuscules, and minuscules. Porter wants to extend this category of non-continuous texts further by including as many as 63 of the NT papyri since the nature of these fragments is unknown and their text is shorter than most lectionary units anyway. Also, he amasses 67 additional examples that are possibly non-continuous: early lectionary and liturgical texts (5), miniature codices and amulets (6), Johannine manuscripts with interpretive comments (7), apocryphal texts (4), excerpts and ostraca (44), and even 7Q5 from the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Certainly, additional information from witnesses that are not direct continuous texts can be important. Our earliest tangible evidence for Matt 3:16 is a fragment of Irenaeus (P.Oxy. 405), which quotes the verse and is dated to *ca.* 200. Yet Porter’s proposed recategorization is ill-fated as an unnecessary and disproportional dichotomy. Few if any of these 63 papyrus fragments can be cited as textual evidence, and if that occurs, their fragmentary nature is taken into consideration. The additional 67 examples that Porter gathers are a dissimilar hodge-podge of indirect witnesses and should not be the basis for dividing in half the entire manuscript tradition. Pottery fragments have little in common with liturgical papyri, not to mention apocryphal texts or 7Q5, which in and of itself does nothing to strengthen the proposal. If Porter’s reorganization were followed, little would change in the critical apparatus of a Greek NT since the same categories of papyri, majuscules, and minuscules would be utilized, but only now subsumed as sub-categories under

a broader and unnecessary over-arching umbrella separating continuous and non-continuous texts. Instead, if anything, maybe unusual textual witnesses (e.g. ostraca, amulets, excerpts, etc.) should be grouped together as a separate category (similar to what Ernst von Dobschütz did in the early twentieth century) without rearranging all the textual evidence.

Porter's final chapter surveys the translation of the NT. The first half summarizes early versions (Greek LXX preceding the NT, and then Syriac, Latin, and Coptic) and English translations (Wycliffe, Tyndale, AV/KJV, RV/ERV, and more recent translations). The second half of the chapter focuses on important issues in translation and surveys differing theories: literal/formal equivalence translation, dynamic/functional equivalence translation, functionalist translation (Catford; possibly CEV and NLT), discourse analysis/text-linguistics-based translation (Hatim, Mason), relevance theory (Sperber, Wilson), descriptivist approaches (Hermans, Campbell, Bassnett-McGuire), and cultural/postcolonial theory (Venuti). Porter's summaries show how complicated the process of translation can be and how it is important to move beyond the debate between formal and dynamic equivalence and consider other approaches for expressing the NT. While Porter's interaction with these newer theories is fascinating, more examples of the translational results would help the reader grasp their implications.

Overall, Porter summarizes a wide swath of textual and translational history in an economy of space and from a fresh perspective. Even though the survey is rather cursory at times, depth and detail still abound. Nearly all of the 127 NT papyri end up being cited at least once, not to mention extensive numbers of other textual witnesses, including many lesser-known items from the periphery of the extant evidence. Porter also must be commended for offering maverick proposals, which is how scholarship reexamines itself, avoids areas of neglect, and in the end advances. Despite the critiques in this review, students of textual criticism should read Porter's book because it offers a fresh look at old evidence and will stimulate much further thinking as to how we got the NT.

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*The Story of Jesus in History and Faith: An Introduction.* By Lee Martin McDonald. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013, xx + 393 pp., \$29.99 paper.

Little time in Jesus research is needed to see the tension between history and theology. Some look at their theological belief as a liability to their historical enterprise and try to set it aside as they would any other prejudice or bias. Others attempt to back into the historical context from their theological conventions, using history to validate their theology. Neither approach is helpful. Rather, when the historian situates the Gospel narratives within the appropriate social, political, and religious context, a coherent narrative begins to emerge. When history is done well the reader is able to see the story of Jesus as the Gospel writers intended. *The Story of Jesus in History and Faith* does this for the reader. McDonald divides his work into

three parts. The first part addresses historiographical issues and historical method. The second part discusses the sources that historians can access. The third part investigates various events in the life of Jesus.

In the first part, chapter 1, McDonald presents the historical method specifically related to the historical Jesus. The religious context of Jesus creates a tension between history and faith for modern Jesus historians. After the Enlightenment, historians only considered events that were a part of a causal relationship or analogous to our present day to be historical. This type of historical writing omits any type of divine interaction from the record and limits how the historian can read the Gospels, which ground early Christian faith in the life of Jesus. McDonald resolves this tension by distinguishing what we can know as historians and what we can know through faith. The historical-critical method can illuminate the past and help us appreciate the context of the events, but it cannot nurture faith. For McDonald, there are several events in the life of Jesus that are not “historically credible,” which “does not mean that they did not happen, but that they are beyond the scope of historical inquiry” (p. 22). McDonald ends this section with an overview of Jesus research and the criteria of authenticity.

The second part surveys the sources that the historian can access. Chapter 2 provides an analysis of the canonical Gospels and their faith perspective, the greatest hurdle for the historian to cross. McDonald is hopeful that the Gospels can provide some historical data, but the post-Easter perspective and writers’ desire to evangelize and edify the community stand in the historian’s way. This does not necessarily mean that the stories are invented, but that the Gospel writers simply selected the stories that lent themselves to their specific purpose. McDonald provides a helpful discussion on the relationship between the Gospels and on introductory issues involved with each Gospel. The point of discussion is the reliability of each canonical Gospel, even the Fourth Gospel, which earlier critics have not accepted as historically reliable. His conclusion concerning John could easily be applied to the Synoptic Gospels: “History does not yield to theological interpretation in John, but instead becomes a vehicle for conveying it” (p. 120).

Chapter 3 examines nonbiblical material. He concludes that the significance of this material is that it demonstrates that Jesus lived and died. It can corroborate the Gospels but provides nothing new. Two of the more recent lines of research within the Third Quest research are archeological finds and the Dead Sea Scrolls. This material does not produce new sayings or traditions, but it contextualizes the Gospel narratives. Since Jesus’ followers and the Qumran community were both first-century Jewish renewal movements, they potentially shared common views on the temple, the high priest, and messianic expectation. McDonald’s extensive knowledge and application of Jewish background material to illuminate the Gospel narratives is the real strength of the book. The reader is able to see the real value of this material as McDonald applies it to specific stories in the third part of the book.

The final part provides an overview of Jesus’ ministry focusing on his death and the resurrection. Chapter 4 discusses the social context of Jesus’ ministry and his message. McDonald provides helpful background information to understand the expectation that Jesus’ followers would have had for him. For example, he

shows that Qumran had expectations for the end-time prophet (4Q521 2:1–13) that were similar to those of John the Baptist (Luke 7:18–23). Chapter 5 investigates Jesus' last week. The triumphal entry and the cleansing of the temple provoked messianic expectations. This, along with Jesus' use of the title "Son of Man" to highlight a special relationship with God, escalated tensions with the religious authorities. The Romans would have viewed Jesus as disrupting the local peace, but a Jewish audience would have interpreted his actions as an affront to the religious leadership. Jesus would have explained his role privately to his disciples, but it also became public at his trial before the high priest (Mark 14:60–62). Jesus' claim to be the Messiah, along with his rejection of many of the Jewish traditions and his popularity, led to his rejection and execution. McDonald finishes the chapter by looking at Jesus' death and burial. He concludes that the Roman Empire was responsible for the execution but most likely on the recommendation of the Jewish leadership. Rome used crucifixion as a deterrent leaving executed bodies to decompose on the cross, calling into question the validity of the burial narratives. However, the background literature confirms that Jews were allowed to remove crucifixion victims. Several have raised historical inconsistencies about Jesus' trial, death, and burial. McDonald shows how these are resolved by carefully situating the narratives within the specific cultural and political context in which Jesus was crucified. The Gospels narrate the events, as we would expect, in the context of that timeframe.

The resurrection, which McDonald deals with in chapter 6, is the foundation for early Christianity. However, due to the nature of the resurrection, it is inaccessible to the historian. The Gospel writers themselves do not narrate the resurrection, but they describe the events that come about as a result: the empty tomb and the appearance stories. The resurrection reports are inconsistent, but all four reports agree that the tomb was empty. The appearance narratives, including Jesus' appearance before Paul in Acts, suggest a bodily resurrection, but something different from resuscitation, which would have appeared as former life and susceptible to the same limitations. "Jesus' new mode of experience was a first among human beings and yet for those who follow him . . . not the last!" (p. 326).

McDonald provides a concluding chapter that draws the reader to the initial thesis: as historians, we can know quite a bit about Jesus, but these details do not lead to "a full affirmation of Jesus as Lord or any of the major church confessions regarding the identity of Jesus of Nazareth" (p. 334). However, what we can affirm as historians does not contradict the early church confession.

The volume is a clear example of how history and theology can be used in a complementary manner to provide a better understanding of the biblical narratives. While history and theology can be used complementarily, McDonald delineates the two by showing that what we can know from one is distinct from what we can know from the other. One drawback of the volume is McDonald's lack of attention to postmodern historiography. Compared to current historiographical discussions both within and outside of biblical studies, McDonald's approach will appear dated. Nonetheless, the volume will help orientate the reader to the issues and questions that Jesus historians have traditionally raised. One particular issue, which preoccupies Third Quest historians, is Jesus' Jewishness. McDonald provides an excellent

example of how the Jewish background can supplement and expand how we read the Gospels. This contribution shows the value of background literature, particularly for students who are new to Jesus research.

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*Sermon on the Mount.* By Scot McKnight. The Story of the Bible Commentary. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013, xv + 300 pp., \$29.99.

In this work, the first of the new The Story of God Bible Commentary Series, Scot McKnight takes on the greatest sermon ever preached and attempts to help readers understand what Jesus/Matthew intended to communicate in three of the most famous chapters in the Bible. This is a “mid-level” commentary series. In other words, the authors have certainly engaged the original languages and earlier work on the text; however, the language study and earlier discussion are present not in the main text, but in the footnotes. This does not mean that the footnotes are overwhelming, only that they show that McKnight has done his due diligence in his work on the Sermon.

Every book must be judged by what the author intended to accomplish. McKnight does not intend for this to be the last word on the Sermon, but “a word” to those who are seeking to understand and apply the message of Jesus. McKnight states that “this commentary has been written with the simple goal that God will use this book to lead us to become in real life the portrait that Jesus sketched in the Sermon” (p. 1). Thus the review should not blame McKnight for failing to deal with some of the more technical issues (though the careful reader will see that those issues have been considered).

The Sermon on the Mount and Jesus’ use of the law are currently debated issues in evangelical Christianity, with various disagreements about “the Gospel” tracing back to how one views the third use of the law and Jesus’ words in Matthew. This is an important issue and one that drives our view of many other matters in the NT (particularly the use of imperatives by Jesus). McKnight feels—and this is front and center in his interpretation—that many have “softened, reduced, recontextualized, and in some cases abandoned what Jesus taught” (p. 1). It is for this reason that he quotes Karl Barth’s famous words on the Sermon as an example of this softening. The biggest problem that McKnight sees is that many have so recontextualized the demands that they “end up denying the potency of the Sermon,” causing them to turn to Paul rather than Jesus for their ethics.

In light of these issues, McKnight speaks to the question of Jesus and ethics early in the commentary and shortly after giving an overview of historical ethical theory (p. 7). He begins by stating that no matter how hard one tries, it is impossible to squeeze some texts into making Jesus say “first grace, then obedience.” He goes on to sketch Jesus’ ethics by arguing that Jesus did ethics from several angles: above, beyond, and below (p. 8). One can gain a hint of McKnight’s view of the Sermon by listening to how much he loves the work of Bonhoeffer (see pp. 8–9).

McKnight himself is not far from accepting completely the analysis of Bonhoeffer, who, though being Lutheran, speaks differently from most of his past and present Lutheran brothers and sisters.

The introductory section of the commentary ends with a few “preliminaries for reading the Sermon on the Mount.” McKnight quickly examines the question of authorship (he is inclined to trust the attribution of the early church, but not by much), date, use of sources, and finally the structure of Matthew. All of these could take a monograph in themselves, and the reader is pointed to other works for more information.

The actual comments on the text are, of course, divided by pericopes. Then the comments on each pericope are divided into three sections: “Listen to the Story,” “Explain the Story,” and “Live the Story.” The first of these sections attempts to point out biblical echoes, contextual clues, historical background, and some major exegetical points. The second section desires to make clear what all of this meant to the original hearers, and what it means today. The last section is application and here McKnight extends his gifted exegetical skills to clear and often very pointed evaluation of how the text calls modern readers to live out the truth in their own lives.

In the section on the Beatitudes, McKnight argues that those who are pressing Luther’s dialectic between law and gospel have created “something [that] has gone terribly wrong” in the church (p. 53). He points to Eph 2:8–10 as a statement that “Christians are created by God ‘to do good works’ (which is performance by any other name)” (p. 54). Thus there is no secret about where the author stands in the current debate about the law and its uses, and the responsible reader is fully aware of the sort of application this view brings with it. Readers of McKnight’s *The King Jesus Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011) will hear many echoes in this work.

Perhaps the key to understanding this view of the Sermon comes from the interpretation of Matt 5:17–20. While the work on this important passage takes up a number of pages, McKnight’s analysis can be understood by looking at his explanation of the “least” and the “great.” McKnight states that it is likely that Jesus is using this language to show “who will enter the kingdom (the doer) vs. the ones who will not enter the kingdom (the nondoer) ... [thus] following Jesus really means following Jesus, and it matters eternally” (pp. 69–70).

Some will call this reading of the Sermon “legalistic,” arguing that for one’s salvation to require any action is to miss the point of grace and the gospel. I believe that McKnight would respond that anyone who can make Jesus’ words in the Sermon mean that nothing is required of them has not been honest with the text and has allowed their system of theology to overcome their basic understanding of what Jesus’ words mean. If one wants to regard Jesus’ use of imperatives to speak to his followers as “legalism,” then that is fine, but the problem, McKnight would argue, is not with him, but with Jesus.

Asking whether or not this view of the Sermon and Jesus is correct is, I believe, the wrong question. One should look at the Sermon through this lens as well as through the lens of Luther, Stott, Barth, and others. It is only by looking at this



Sermon from a variety of perspectives that one can hope to begin to understand Jesus' words for themselves. This work by McKnight is, however, a fine place to start.

This review will not solve the problem of Jesus' view of the law or controversies over the nature of sanctification. In terms of full disclosure, I must openly state that I am a great fan of McKnight, that I am one of his former graduate students, and that I read his work with pleasure. This admission should not be taken to mean that I agree with all of his conclusions or that I buy into his "Anabaptist" view of the law. It should be taken to mean that this work is well written, clearly organized, and helpful to students of the Sermon. McKnight's work will not replace commentaries like that by Davies and Allison, but it will be a good starting point to students entering the discussion on the Sermon.

I do hope that this book will cause more readers to look carefully at the Sermon on the Mount. I hope that it will cause readers to "imagine a different world and, as a result of that imagining, to become a different people" (p. 273). If the work simply causes the reader to examine the Sermon more carefully because of disagreements with McKnight, it has served a wonderful purpose. If, however, it causes readers to think more carefully about their own lives and actions in light of Jesus' words, the Kingdom will benefit greatly.

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*Characters and Characterization in the Gospel of John*. Edited by Christopher W. Skinner. Library of NT Studies 461. London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013, xxxii + 288 pp., \$130.00.

The editor of this collection of essays by a group of Johannine scholars is Associate Professor of Religion at Mount Olive College in North Carolina. This is his second major work published in the field of Johannine studies. The first was a revision of his doctoral dissertation that was entitled *John and Thomas—Gospels in Conflict? Johannine Characterization and the Thomas Question* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2009). The authors of the essays in this volume are an ensemble of both seasoned scholars and up-and-comers in the field of Johannine studies. The editor does a fine job of providing the reader with the background and context for this book in the preface and the introduction, which he entitles, "Characters and Characterization in the Gospel of John: Reflections on the *Status Quaestionis*." The collection of essays in this book explores characters and characterization in the Fourth Gospel, important topics within the broader discipline of narrative criticism. In the helpful introductory chapter of the book, Skinner provides an excellent survey of the birth and growth of scholarly interest in characters and characterization in the Gospel of John. He rightly begins with R. Alan Culpepper's seminal work, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983) and traces some thirty years of significant published works that blossomed following Culpepper's work.

According to the editor's own words, "The essays in this volume seek to articulate theories of character, provide interaction with and critique of contemporary views, and offer fresh analyses of Johannine characters" (p. xxx). The book is divided into two main sections. The first section is methodological and explores various theories about characterization and models for reading character. The second section is more exegetical and consists of character studies from diverse perspectives within a narrative-critical framework. The two sections each contain seven essays.

In the introduction of the book, the editor provides a brief abstract of each chapter and its contribution (pp. xxx–xxx), which is summarized here. In chapter 1, James L. Resseguie (Winebrenner Theological Seminary, Findlay, OH) provides an elegant primer on a narrative-critical approach to characters and characterization showing how rhetoric, point of view, setting, and master-plot contribute to our interpretation of characters in the Fourth Gospel. In chapter 2, R. Alan Culpepper (McAfee School of Theology, Mercer University, Atlanta, GA) reflects upon the surge of interest in Johannine characterization and uses recent research as a launching point to discuss how characters impact the thematic development and rhetorical plan of the Gospel. In chapter 3, Cornelis Bennema (South Asia Institute of Advanced Christian Studies [SAIACS], Bangalore, India) follows up on his recent work on methodology by proposing what he calls, "a comprehensive, non-reductionist theory of character" as it applies to the Gospel of John. Chapter 4 features a discussion of characters, eyewitnesses, and current psychological research. In 2010, Judith Christine Single Redman (Uniting Church of Australia) published a critique of Richard Bauckham's eyewitness thesis that was set in the context of contemporary psychological research on eyewitness testimony. In her essay for this book, Redman returns to Bauckham's theory using contemporary research on eyewitness testimony, this time set within the framework of a narrative hermeneutic. In chapter 5, Raymond F. Collins (Brown University, Providence, RI) takes a closer look at the roles that comparison and contrast play in several character groups and how this contributes to the rhetorical scheme of the narrative. In chapter 6, Susan E. Hylan (Candler School of Theology, Emory University, Atlanta, GA) returns to the theme of ambiguity and shows how three elements—historical context, the implied reader, and the nature of faith—impact our reading of John's characters. In the final chapter of the first section, Christopher W. Skinner (Mount Olive College, Mount Olive, NC) discusses the prologue (1:1–18) as a reader-elevating device that places the reader in a position of privilege; this provides the reader with a greater awareness and appreciation of the role of misunderstanding in the Gospel story and constitutes a key component of the Gospel's approach to characterization.

In the second section, Stan Harstine (Friends University, Wichita, KS) begins with a study of God as a character in the Fourth Gospel from a rhetorical perspective in chapter 8. In chapter 9, Sherri Brown (Niagara University, Niagara Falls, NY) examines John the Baptist against the backdrop of the prologue with specific emphasis on the Baptist's role as witness. In chapter 10, Craig R. Koester (Luther Seminary, St. Paul, MN) uses the concept of "theological complexity" to explore Nicodemus's role as a figure that provides readers with glimpses of how the revela-

tory work of God is done in the world. Turning to the Samaritan woman in chapter 11, Mary Coloe (Australian Catholic University, Melbourne, Australia) examines her narrative and theological significance and highlights her role as a vehicle of the evangelist's ideological point of view. In chapter 12, Dorothy A. Lee (Trinity College Theological School, MCD University of Divinity, Melbourne, Australia) surveys the Lukan and Johannine portraits of Martha and Mary as understood in history, sacred literature, and art. Drawing on his previous work on anonymity and discipleship, David R. Beck (Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, NC) looks at the beloved disciple's relationship to the related themes of belief and witness in John in chapter 13. In the book's final chapter, Cornelis Bennema looks at Pilate from a historically informed narrative approach. Emphasizing Pilate's response to Jesus and his impact on the development of the Gospel's plot, he concludes that the common portrait of the Johannine Pilate as weak and vacillating is incorrect. Finally, in summarizing these chapters, the editor concludes that, "Taken together, these chapters combine substantive insights on method and individual characters from leading interpreters of the Fourth Gospel. These reflections are meant to provide a comprehensive interaction with contemporary models of approaching character in a way that will influence the direction of future conversations of Johannine characters and characterization" (pp. xxxi–xxxii).

The editor is to be commended for the ensemble of distinguished contributors from a wide spectrum of geographical, theological, and academic backgrounds to focus on character and characterization within the broader discipline of narrative criticism. The diversity of contributors includes essays by seasoned Johannine scholars such as Alan Culpepper, Raymond Collins, and Craig Koester, while also including essays by newer and up-and-coming scholars in Johannine studies such as Cornelis Bennema, Susan Hylan, and Christopher Skinner. These "lesser-known" yet capable scholars provide fresh insights and significant contributions to this area of study.

One of the most significant points of contribution in the recent development of character and characterization is recognizing that there is much greater complexity in John's characters than scholars of last century acknowledged. In the past, John's characters were often understood as "flat," where now more recent studies have argued that John's characters are more complex and ambiguous (Hylan, p. 97). Hylan concludes, "John's characters emerge as something of a mixed bag. They display misunderstanding alongside remarkable statements of faith" (p. 97).

While this book contains much to be commended, there are a couple of minor criticisms. First, while the diversity of backgrounds of the contributors can be a positive point for a book like this (for reasons mentioned above), it can also be a weakness. Even with a specific focus on character and characterization within the broader discipline of narrative criticism, there is no uniform consensus on either the methodology of character and characterization or the study of any of the Johannine characters within the Gospel. This leads to my second criticism. When one delves into a character study of a specific character within a Gospel, much of what one observes and concludes may be largely conjectural and outside the biblical author's focus. I will provide just one example of such speculative conjecture. In her

essay, “Martha and Mary: Levels of Characterization in Luke and John,” Dorothy A. Lee observes and concludes concerning the symbolic representation of Martha and Mary that “the Johannine Martha may be said to represent the believer, the friend of Jesus, who struggles with the tragedy of death in the light of faith, and who ‘exemplifies for the reader the substance of the Gospel’s overriding purpose (20:31).’ She stands for the typical disciple, whose faith is open to development, who believes yet does not fully comprehend, and whose faith needs to grow in strength” (p. 208). She concludes shortly thereafter, “The Johannine Martha and Mary, in other words, act in counterpart to confess the faith of the believing community. Martha’s confession is in *word*, in the ‘I believe’ of her response to Jesus’ self-disclosure, while Mary’s is in *deed*, in the anointing of his feet, with all its implications of dedication and love” (pp. 209–10). Yet, their responses to Jesus’ self-disclosure and promise of eternal life in the resurrection are precisely the same. Hence, it seems speculative and conjectural to conclude different symbolic meanings behind the two characters as mirroring the two traits of believers. In short, while one should avoid the extreme of being too simplistic in studying the characters in John’s Gospel, one should also be cautious in reaching too far with speculative conjecture beyond the biblical text.

These minor criticisms aside, there is much value in the study of character and characterization in the Fourth Gospel. It is indeed a significant focus within the broader discipline of narrative criticism in biblical studies. The authors in this volume do a great service in raising awareness of the profundity of the Fourth Gospel and the complexity of its characters. The editor is to be commended for this helpful volume.

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*Paul and the Miraculous: A Historical Reconstruction.* By Graham H. Twelftree. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013, xxv + 390 pp. \$32.99 paper.

In this work, Twelftree explores the issue of the miraculous in Paul’s life and ministry. While miracles, especially exorcisms, seem to have been a central part of Jesus’ ministry, the miraculous seems to have had little or no place in Paul’s ministry. The author seeks to solve the “riddle of the profound difference” between the place of the miraculous in Jesus’ ministry and in the early church as reflected in the Gospels and Acts and its place in the letters of Paul. The book has ten chapters divided into five parts.

Part 1 contains chapter 1, which provides a brief survey of the history of scholarship on Paul vis-à-vis the miraculous and argues that, with few exceptions, Paul’s interpreters in critical scholarship have paid little attention to this topic, with Jacob Jervell and Gordon Fee being the primary exceptions. Next, Twelftree offers a definition of “miracle” that would have made sense to Paul, to other Jews, and generally to inhabitants of the Greco-Roman world. A miracle was something extraordinary and impossible for humans, and required a deity to perform it.

Part 2, chapters 2–5, focuses on “Paul’s Inheritance.” Twelftree considers the views held by Jews on miracles and the miraculous (chap. 2). Although Paul was a highly educated, Hellenized Jew, he was nevertheless shaped more by Scripture than by his Greco-Roman environment. The author looks at the Dead Sea Scrolls and Josephus, which present a paradigm that Paul almost certainly shared, and Philo, who rejected miracles in his own day. Like these educated Jews, zealous, pious Jews as represented by Pseudo-Philo’s *Biblical Antiquities*, *2 Maccabees*, and the *Psalms of Solomon* represent a number of views concerning miracles, but most of these Jewish texts roughly contemporary with Paul’s letters not only affirm miracles in the past but affirm experience with and expectation of miracles in their own time. As a Pharisee zealous for tradition and as one who was regularly in synagogues, Paul probably expected God to intervene in the lives of people in his own day. Since Paul clearly saw himself as a prophet, Twelftree in chapter 3 considers what Paul would likely have believed and expected concerning “Prophets, Prophecy, and the Miraculous.” Paul often quotes the OT prophets, aligning himself with them (1 Thess 2:25), portraying himself as sharing in their failure, and announcing the nearness of salvation as they did. In these and other ways, clearly Paul saw his ministry as rooted in and continuing the tradition of OT prophets. Twelftree examines several Jewish texts, from Pseudo-Philo’s *Biblical Antiquities* to *Ezekiel the Tragedian* to show that writings from around the same time as Paul connect prophecy with the miraculous. Despite all of this, Paul did not claim the title “prophet” for himself, probably because he wanted to avoid being labeled a false prophet and because, at least for Paul and the Teacher of Righteousness, a mediating role seemed more appropriate.

Chapter 4 examines what Paul likely believed about the connection between proselytizing and the miraculous, in light of his missionary work and his self-understanding of his ministry. The author concludes from looking at Jewish and Greek evidence that there would not have been any expectation on the part of Paul or his readers that a traveling preacher would work miracles. Chapter 5 examines the place of the miraculous in the Christianity that Paul inherited. Twelftree concludes that it is “demonstrable” that Paul knew traditions about Jesus as a miracle worker and knew of the miraculous in early Christianity. This may be the most informative section of the book, though some will want to question Twelftree’s assertion that there were not Jewish missionaries to Gentiles in Paul’s day.

The “second step” in the argument, part 3, examines Paul’s letters to see how he views his experience and how that might relate to his understanding and expectations of the miraculous in his ministry. Chapter 6 considers how Paul describes his experience vis-à-vis the miraculous. He claims to have had a range of miraculous experiences, from healing to *charismata*, “extraordinary and meaningful experiences he attributed to God” (p. 176). Chapter 7 examines what Paul has to say about his ministry and the experience of his readers. Paul associated salvific miracles with his ministry, while at the same time focusing upon his own weaknesses. Twelftree concludes that the solution to the puzzle of why Paul never stated that he performed a miracle is that “Paul neither set out to perform them nor orchestrated those that took place” (p. 225). Rather, as Paul preached, the Spirit’s powerful pres-

ence was manifested in the miraculous. It was Christ by the Spirit who performed miracles, not Paul.

Part 4, which is the third step in Twelftree's argument, looks at how Paul was understood by his interpreters relative to the miraculous. This part begins with the Acts of the Apostles (chap. 8), followed in chapter 9 by pseudepigraphical letters and later Christian writings beyond the canon. Twelftree states that Acts must be seen as a secondary source and we should not allow Acts to exercise any "decisive control" over understanding the relation of Paul to the miraculous. Only Paul's letters offer Paul's own perspective on the miraculous. However, the author notes, quite rightly, that we must read Paul critically too, as he had specific agendas that affected his selection of material, his language, and his objectivity (a point that seems often overlooked when Paul in Acts and Paul in his letters are compared). Twelftree begins with Acts because it is probably the earliest interpretation of Paul, and Acts presents a different picture from that which Paul provides of his involvement in the miraculous. After arguing that a cautious, critical, though not necessarily skeptical, approach is needed for assessing every story in Acts, the book examines the stories in Acts that present Paul's involvement with the miraculous to determine what can be traced back to initial reports concerning Paul's ministry. For example, in discussing the story of "The Blinding of Elymas the Magician" (Acts 13:4-12), Twelftree concludes that, "although Luke probably has some traditions of Paul and Barnabas on a mission trip to Cyprus ... what Luke has given his readers is a redactional construction in which we can no longer trace the contours of a recognizable story that can be associated with the historical Paul" (p. 248). In making his case, Twelftree describes the parallels in Luke-Acts between Jesus, Peter, and Paul, and he asserts that the existence of these parallels indicates that those in Acts are Luke's invention. One needs to ask if that is the obvious conclusion to these parallel lives. His analysis points to an issue of method in the book. In some cases, Twelftree works through available sources from the larger Jewish and Greco-Roman literary context. At other times, he relies heavily upon the opinions of other scholars. Certainly, no one book can do everything, but when making a major assertion about an aspect of Acts as a source of information, for example, should not writers roughly contemporary with Luke, such as Plutarch, be considered? Moreover, Twelftree acknowledges that in recent years, historiographers have observed, rightly, the selectivity and shaping of historical narratives by all writers of history. Yet this important observation seems to play no role in the book's treatment of Acts. Overall, the author concludes that there is little in Acts that reliably associates Paul with the miraculous, a conclusion that coheres with Paul's own presentation of himself.

Twelftree's analysis of Pauline pseudepigraphical letters includes Colossians, Ephesians, 2 Thessalonians, and the Pastoral Epistles, but also Hebrews and James. The analysis is governed by the premise that, if these interpreters of Paul knew traditions about his involvement with the miraculous and if it suited their purposes, they would *surely* have used this material. Twelftree follows with a treatment of *1 Clement*, the *Acts of Paul*, and other second-century writings. He concludes that the

fragmentary data provides no reliable evidence that Paul was remembered as a worker of miracles.

The final section contains chapter 10, “The Paul of History and the Apostle of Faith.” Twelftree concludes that, in view of Paul’s broad view of the miraculous, which includes prophecy, revelation, and *charismata*, “it is obvious that Paul would have said that the miraculous was central and profoundly important in his life, theology, and work” (p. 314). Against recent interpreters of Paul, the author asserts that any historical reconstruction of Paul—his life, theology, and ministry—is “not credible without giving a high priority to the miraculous” (p. 324).

This book focuses on a much-neglected topic and offers provocative and (overly-cautious) conclusions. Twelftree is not afraid to show when the data offers differing perspectives. Unlike scholars who make much out of meager material, Twelftree is generally careful in arguing for what the data does or does not support, although many points may be questioned in the analysis of the canonical “interpreters” of Paul. Nevertheless, this is a helpful, informative work that would be of interest to scholars studying Paul, as well as his relation to earliest Christianity, his religious context, and his early interpreters.

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*Judgment according to Works in Romans: The Meaning and Function of Divine Judgment in Paul’s Most Important Letter.* By Kevin W. McFadden. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013, xvi + 196 pp., \$59.00 paper.

God justifies the ungodly by faith (Rom 4:5) and will judge people by their deeds (Rom 14:12). How do these truths cohere? Especially since the Protestant Reformation, many readers have found tension here in Paul’s thought, even a conundrum. McFadden’s revised doctoral dissertation, originally supervised by Thomas R. Schreiner and accepted in 2011 by the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (Louisville, KY), centers on Paul’s epistle to the Romans, his greatest treatise on the gospel. McFadden concentrates on the motif of judgment according to works, specifically on the rhetorical function of each passage containing it. He concludes that the sole ground of justification, both now and on the last day, is God’s saving work in Christ, grasped by faith. Christian obedience follows as fruit and evidence of the believer’s union with Christ, a fact God will confirm at the last assize.

Chapters 1 and 9 (“Introduction” and “Conclusion”) define the problem and survey proposals. Was the idea of judgment by deeds a relic of Jewish nomism that Paul never purged from his system despite its clash with justification by faith? Will the future judgment of believers determine only their rewards, their salvation having been secure from the moment they were first justified? Does justification put away prebaptismal sins, leaving postconversion sins to be dealt with at the judgment? Or did the Reformers falsely oppose faith to works in justification, heedless that Paul’s polemic against “works of the law” was aimed primarily at Jewish eth-

nocentricity, not at human disobedience in general? McFadden gives sound reasons to reject all these solutions. In the first chapter he shows himself inclined to endorse the Reformed maxim that, while good works invariably manifest faith and will fittingly serve as corroborating evidence on the last day, they form no part of the ground on which people are saved (pp. 15–17). This theologoumenon returns as the grand conclusion of the study (pp. 161–63).

Chapters 2–6 provide exegetical underpinnings. Each chapter covers a Romans passage that mentions deeds as the criterion by which God will judge people: 1:18–32; 2:1–29; 3:1–8; 3:9–20; and 14:1–23. To each passage McFadden puts the same heuristic questions. Who judges (the “agent”)? Who is judged (the “object”)? What is the criterion (the “ground”)? What does judging involve (the “action”)? The answers, worked out in dialogue with secondary literature, feed into an overarching question: For what rhetorical purpose did Paul bring judgment by deeds into his argument? The first four passages belong to the opening section of Romans (1:18–3:20), where Paul sets forth God’s universal indictment of the human race without exception. In Romans 14 the coming judgment of believers backs up Paul’s exhortation to church members not to criticize one another, for all will answer directly to God. Throughout these chapters McFadden proves himself a sensitive, penetrating, and sober exegete.

Chapter 7 reviews the train of thought of the whole of Romans to determine the relationship between present justification and future judgment. The looming tribunal belongs to the worldview within which Paul’s preaching of justification is meaningful. For Paul, to pursue righteousness by works of the law and to seek it by faith are mutually exclusive alternatives. People can only be justified by faith in Christ’s cross-work (Rom 3:25–26). This holds for final as well as present justification (Rom 5:1–11, 12–21; 8:1–4, 31–39), since even where good deeds of believers are on exhibit it will ultimately be God who makes them stand (Rom 14:3–4). For Christians the cross does not replace the last judgment, but it guarantees a positive verdict. Their works will be “a necessary and significant factor” (pp. 136, 137, 138; cf. pp. 113, 152, 153, 156, 162), but not the “ground.”

One verse sticks in the craw of this thesis. Paul’s first use in the epistle of the word “justify” occurs in a description of the judgment (Rom 2:5–16) where Paul affirms, “the doers of the law will be justified” (Rom 2:13). This clause caps a crescendo of parallel phrases in the preceding context, namely, that those who are patient in doing good will receive eternal life (2:7) and that glory and honor and peace will accrue to those who do good (2:10). A natural reading sees moral good done as at least part of the basis for the happy verdict, as McFadden recognizes: “The positive recompense of the final judgment is ... God’s justifying judgment of life” (p. 47), and “The ground of the positive recompense is the doing of good works” (p. 49). So McFadden’s eighth chapter has to make sense of Romans 2.

Protestant commentators have resolved the difficulty either by understanding performance of the law as a standard that no actual person meets, making 2:13b conditional or hypothetical; or else by supposing Paul hints proleptically at the fruit of the Holy Spirit in the lives of new covenant believers, a reality he develops later in chapters 6–8, 12–15. McFadden finds both tactics inadequate. The hypothetical



approach misses the unity of the indicatives in 2:6, (7, 10), 13 and cannot account for the outcrop of new covenant terminology in 2:25–29; the view that Paul has Christians in mind fails to explain how 2:5–16 helps to consign all human beings to God’s wrath (1:18) and condemnation (3:19). So McFadden combines them. “Doers of the law” are indeed a null set, and that is Paul’s main point to which he is driving (3:20); but Paul envisages obedient Gentile Christians at this early stage of the argument (most clearly in 2:25–29) to move Jewish compatriots to jealousy and repentance.

To evaluate: In spite of McFadden’s carefully nuanced handling of the Greek text in chapters 2–6 and 8, there is an unwarranted leap from the rather modest conclusions about the rhetorical functions of Paul’s language (accusatory, hortatory) to the theological result in chapters 7 and 9. True, only Christ satisfied God’s requirement of perfect righteousness (Gal 3:10; 5:3; cf. p. 52) and opened the way for the gift of the Spirit (Gal 3:13–14; Rom 5:1–5), and so Christ’s work is the indispensable basis of justification. When God first declares believers “righteous,” that predicate is founded in Christ and not in them. Yet on the last day, when they will have done actual good by the Spirit’s enablement (pp. 147–48), will the adjective still describe exclusively what God sees in Christ and not also what Christ’s Spirit has wrought in them? Is the Spirit’s fruit only “evidence” pointing to their participation in Christ’s righteousness? Are not good deeds of Christians, on McFadden’s own showing, instances of righteousness in their own right? As exegete, McFadden avers that deeds are the “ground” of “God’s justifying judgment of life” (pp. 49–53); as theologian, he denies it (pp. 134–38, 161–63).

McFadden is well aware of the distinction between humanity fallen and humanity revived in Christ, between nature and grace. Since Paul sums up Romans 1–5 using his Adam/Christ typology—in a passage that reverberates of judgment (5:12–21)—why not use this polarity to solve the dilemma in chapter 2? That doers of the law will be justified is simply true (Exod 23:7; Prov 17:15). Applied to humanity incorporate in Adam, the category “doers of what the law demands” most certainly comes up an empty set; but applied to the new humanity in Christ, it fills up with all Christ’s members. Cannot Rom 2:13 function in either sphere, whether to support 3:20 (concerning those in Adam), or to inform 2:7, 10; 14:4, 17–18 (those in Christ)? Need these implications of a single truth be incompatible (p. 145)?

Concerning Rom 2:13 McFadden himself states, “Both one’s status before God *and* one’s individual character are in view. Those who are ethically righteous ... will be declared to be righteous at the final judgment” (p. 124). Why then fudge on “according to (*kata*) works” (McFadden: “this preposition [in 2:6] leaves room for a variety of ways in which works function as the norm of the final verdict,” p. 49)—unless to assert, from theological commitments outside the study’s focus, and in the teeth of the data, that works are “necessary” but “not the ground” of a justifying judgment in 8:1–2 (p. 136) and in 14:1–23 (p. 114)? Such keen analysis of these texts bolsters a quite different construct from the one pressed.

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*Philippians*. By Lynn H. Cohick, The Story of God Bible Commentary. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013, xv + 283 pp., \$29.99.

Lynn H. Cohick has served as Professor of NT at Wheaton College since 2000. Before coming to Wheaton she taught at Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology in Nairobi, Kenya (1998–2000). She adds this commentary on Philippians to her recent work on *Ephesians* (New Covenant Commentary Series; Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2010) and on *Women in the World of the Earliest Christians* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009).

As the series title indicates, The Story of God Bible Commentary series (based on the NIV 2011) emphasizes the story of the Bible and is divided into three sections that highlight that story. First is “Listen to the Story,” which refers the reader to “a selection of important biblical and sometimes noncanonical parallels” (p. xiii). At times these parallels are quite helpful; at others one is perplexed as to why the “parallel” was selected. Certainly there is a constant challenge to be sure we have found the best OT or Gospel background to an epistle. The second section is “Explain the Story.” Here exegetical comment is made. As a commentary for laypeople and busy pastors, this section is not intended to be academic, and ostensibly “the footnotes are limited to the kinds of texts typical Bible readers and preachers readily have on hand” (p. xiii). Nevertheless, one finds Cohick referencing technical resources several times (e.g. a 1984 festschrift published by Wilfrid Laurier University Press [p. 196 n. 7]; Tertullian, *On the Prescription of Heretics* [p. 223 n. 20]). The third section is “Live the Story,” which probes “how this text might be lived out today” (p. xiv). Here we find suggestions for application and stories that illustrate points in the passage.

Regarding front and back matter, Cohick provides a 21-page introduction, including a discussion of authorship (genuine), date (AD 60–62), provenance (probably Rome), historical and cultural background (e.g. “Philippi as a Roman Colony,” “The Imperial Cult at Philippi”), unity (single letter), and themes (e.g. “in Christ,” community, joy, partnership). It would have been helpful to the reader to find an outline of the letter in this introductory section. We find 21 pages of indexes at the end, including “Scripture and Apocrypha,” “Subject,” and “Author.” Cohick divides the letter into the following pericopae: 1:1–2, 1:3–11, 1:12–18a, 1:18b–26, 1:27–30, 2:1–5, 2:6–11, 2:12–18, 2:19–30, 3:1–14, 3:15–21, 4:1–3, 4:4–9, 4:10–20, 4:21–23.

The commentary has a number of strengths. Cohick writes warmly and transparently as is particularly appropriate for a non-technical commentary. One feels that the author is becoming a friend after hearing stories of teaching at Wheaton, growing with family, and teaching in Kenya. *Philippians* helps the reader set the letter in its Greek and Roman cultural context. Cohick shows how the setting is important for understanding the Christ hymn, Paul’s call to imitate him, and Paul’s delicately handled response to the Philippians’ gift, to name a few. For those who preach regularly, the “Live the Story” section can be quite helpful for generating ideas for application and illustration. Several of these sections could be brought into the sermon directly or with slight modification.

It may be helpful to point out how Cohick deals with some of the important issues of interpretation in Paul's letter to the Philippians. First, with P. T. O'Brien and Ben Witherington and against G. D. Fee and most translations (e.g. ESV, KJV, NASB, NIV, and NLT), Cohick asserts that at 1:3 "Paul thanks them for the fact that *they remember him*" (p. 34; italics hers). As I have said before, this "rendering is preferable and it is time that translations start offering readers at least a marginal note to that effect" (review of Ben Witherington's *Philippians* in *JETS* 55 [2012] 627–29).

Second, the participle in 2:6 (*being* in very nature God [NIV]) "probably carries a causal sense" not a concessive one (p. 111). In other words, Jesus does not humble himself *despite the fact that* he is God (see NASB, NET); he humbles himself *because* he is God. It appears that this position is gaining ground.

Third, placing herself on the subjective side of the *pistis Christou* debate, Cohick asserts that the two uses of faith in 3:9 (through faith in Christ; the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith [NIV]) refer first to "Christ's faithfulness and then the believer's response of faith" (p. 172). Cohick leaves open the possibility, however, that "Paul may be deliberately ambiguous" (p. 172).

Fourth, Cohick's discussion of Philippians 3 is largely dependent on the New Perspective on Paul, which she references by name. Following Dunn, for instance, Paul's works of the law (a phrase not found in Philippians) is a reference to "particular laws that distinguished between groups" (p. 182); that is, between Jews and Gentiles. The laws, especially Sabbath, circumcision, and food laws, mark the Jews as insiders and show that Gentiles are outsiders.

Fifth, for Cohick, Euodia and Syntyche should be considered overseers (ἐπίσκοποι). She states that "several pieces of evidence" demonstrate this (p. 211). In fact, two are given: "First, given that patronage was so important and early churches met in homes, it seems likely that these women functioned in some leadership capacity. Second, Paul's designation of the women as coworkers is used to identify itinerant missionaries as well as resident leaders (1 Cor 3:9; Phil 2:25; Phlm 1; 3 John 8)" (p. 211).

Let me mention a few areas of concern. First, surprisingly, at times Cohick's commentary is emotionally weak. By this I mean that it sets emotion in a narrow context, sets up false emotional disjunctions, and puts the whole discussion in a rather two-dimensional format. Here are three examples. First, for Cohick, "Paul sees love not as an emotion but as a state of being" (p. 37). Besides the difficulty of understanding what "love is a state of being" means, one wonders why love—even ἀγάπη—cannot have an emotional element. Second, understandably, Cohick comments at length on Paul's joy in Philippians. Unfortunately, we sometimes find the old view that joy is disjunctive from happiness (pp. 147, 164, and 185) and has nothing to do with circumstances (p. 185). Against this, certainly the joy of 4:10 has a circumstantial element. Other examples could be supplied (e.g. Luke 1:58; Acts 15:31; 2 Cor 7:7–13). Third, whereas joy is always commented on (sometimes extensively), Epaphroditus's distress (2:26), Paul's reference to "sorrow upon sorrow" (NIV; ἵνα μὴ λύπην ἐπὶ λύπην σχῶ, 2:27), and his stated desire to "have less anxiety" (NIV; ἵνα ... καὶ ἄλποτερος ὦ, 2:28) are ignored. Further, Paul's tears over the

enemies of the gospel (3:18) receives only one paragraph (p. 198). This reflects a common problem: we like talking about so-called “positive” emotions but not so-called “negative” ones. Second, there is a tendency to mention what some or most churches or Christians get wrong (pp. 65, 75, 89, 148, 195). Certainly the thinking of every one of us goes wrong more often than we realize. At the risk of falling into the same pattern, I would say that at times the commentary strikes me as being unduly negative. Third, in the discussion of the verb *δικαίωω* Cohick seems to blur the distinction between infused righteousness, imputed righteousness, and sanctification (p. 181). Fourth, subheadings sometimes make the commentary difficult to follow. For example, if one is looking for comment on Phil 1:20–26, one finds the following subheadings (in this order):

- Courage Sufficient to the Task (1:20)
- Martyrdom (1:20–21)
- Paul’s Fruitful Ministry (1:21–26)
- To Live Is Christ (1:21)
- To Depart and Be with Christ (1:23–24)
- Paul’s Continuing Ministry (1:24–26)
- Progress and Joy in the Faith (1:25)
- Boasting in Jesus (1:26)

Fifth, regarding Phil 4:10–20 and the gift the church sent Paul, Cohick asks two questions: (1) Why does Paul delay his thanks to the end of the letter? (2) Why are his thanks so weak? One understands why the questions are asked, but in the final analysis they are not helpful since they lead the reader to think in twenty-first century Western ways about thanks. Although Cohick tries to rescue Paul from the charges that are inherent in the questions, the rescue largely fails, despite extensive reference to ancient sources.

Nevertheless, in spite of these areas of concern, “The Story of the Bible Commentary” on *Philippians* can be quite helpful for the preacher when read in conjunction with a more technical commentary such as the one by Peter O’Brien (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991) or Walter Hansen (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009).

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*Reading the Epistles of James, Peter, John, and Jude as Scripture: The Shaping and Shape of a Canonical Collection.* By David R. Nienhuis and Robert W. Wall. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013, xvii + 314 pp., \$30.00 paper.

David R. Nienhuis and Robert W. Wall are no strangers to canonical interpretation, as a perusal of their past publications proves. This work is a significant contribution to that field. Part 1 (“Introduction to a Canonical Collection”; 69 pp.) is an introduction to the idea of canonical interpretation, part 2 (“Introduction to the Catholic Epistles”; 75 pp.) is a brief commentary on each of the seven Catholic Epistles from this perspective, and part 3 (“Conclusion”; 31 pp.) is a brief theology

of the Catholic Epistles collection and epilogue. (There are also 38 pp. of bibliography and indexes.) That is a lot of territory to cover in a modest-sized book, but they deliver what they promise. They describe an approach and then show how it is done using a collection that they argue is a deliberately created collection shaped by the theological interests of the time of its creation (i.e. the third century).

Nienhuis and Wall do not reject traditional historical-critical readings of canonical literature, but they note that readings that seek the message intended for the implied readers (i.e. authorial intention) depend upon reconstructing the author's mind and life-setting, which has not resulted in a consensus. The way forward, they argue, is to look (also) at how the texts were read as they were collected and canonized, which is a particular way of putting them together in a different theological and ecclesiastical context, one that we know more about and one that has shaped how the texts have been read until modern historical-critical studies atomized the collections into individual books. In other words, we must not blur *Historie* ("canonization from below" in their words) and *Geschichte* ("canonization from above"), as both conservative and liberal scholars (with different emphases) have traditionally done, resulting in two different sets of distortion. Furthermore, they feel that the usual way of treating the NT in both literature and courses distorts the intentional canonical reading strategy: the Synoptic Gospels separated from John, ignoring the four-Gospel canon; Luke combined with Acts, ignoring Acts' canonical setting as a bridge to Paul; the Johannine letters separated from the rest of the Catholic Epistles and read with John rather than the Catholic Epistles; and even Jude read with 2 Peter rather than as the caboose at the end of the seven-letter Catholic Epistle collection.

In many places they do a good job of laying out their data, especially when they describe canon history ("The Shaping of a Canonical Collection," pp. 17–39). However, questions remain. The fact that James is not *explicitly* cited before Origen is, of course, an argument from silence. That does not mean that some churches in the eastern end of the Roman Empire were not reading it (i.e. it was canonical for them), especially given the disturbances in this area that limit our evidence. Of course, Nienhuis has argued in *Not By Paul Alone* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2007) that James was written around 180 as a deliberately created introduction to the Catholic Epistles, a datum that is repeatedly mentioned in footnotes or asides in this present book. One wonders whether this and other hypotheses late-dating various letters do not influence the views expressed in this book more than the authors admit. Also, both the canon lists and the earliest manuscript evidence are fragmentary. A papyrus with part of 1 Peter, for instance, could be a section of a whole Catholic Epistles collection, which would throw off Nienhuis and Wall's dating.

When it comes to "The Shape of a Canonical Collection" (pp. 40–70), more questions arise. First, this chapter is very difficult to read, filled with technical jargon, and often opaque. Second, while the chapter does demonstrate that various Church fathers *used* the Catholic Epistles in general and James in particular to preclude a "Lutheran" reading of Paul, what it does not demonstrate is that this is the reason for the *creation* of such a collection. After all, the same Fathers used the Sep-

tuagint for their purposes, but in theory had no influence on the creation or selection of the various collections of books. Furthermore, other uses are also made of this literature (e.g. James) in the third and fourth centuries, demonstrating that it was useful for more than modifying Paul. Third, Hebrews is not included in the Pauline collection. Instead, it is viewed as something of a transition to the Catholic Epistles, even though in fact the Fathers are explicit that Hebrews was in their eyes Pauline. Thus the Pauline collection was bookended with the large Romans on one end and the large Hebrews on the other. The approach to Hebrews in this chapter seems to be a violation of the principle of letting the creators of the canonical collections be the interpreters. Finally, Acts is viewed as the bridge, the mediator between the Pauline collection and the Catholic Epistles, but that is only true for some orders of NT books and not for others, certainly not for the eventually accepted order. While the chapter explicitly denies the early Catholicism hypothesis for Acts, one wonders if it does not simmer under the surface given the dating of Acts to the “end of the first century,” “a generation later than Paul,” and the assumption that Acts has a contrasting agenda to Romans.

Turning to the commentaries, one notes that they are brief and normally treat whole sections of a work rather than following the author’s train of thought. At the end of each book there is a theological summary. Certainly there are many significant insights here, but again there are questions. One does not see quotations from the Fathers supporting any of the interpretations; so there is little evidence that this is how the works were read “at the point of canonization” (whenever that was—the phrase itself may be an anachronism). One does see historical-critical insights on background that one suspects that the Fathers would not have known and contemporary theological observations that one is sure were unknown in the third and fourth centuries. Then in James, for example, the various occurrences of *logos* are viewed as referring to Jesus, not, for example, the good news; wisdom is also viewed as Jesus’ title. Yet while the early Fathers did use *logos* Christology, there is no evidence that they read *logos* in James that way. Have Nienhuis and Wall created a Christology for James (of a wisdom teacher who is exalted for having obeyed the royal law) that fulfills a purely modern agenda? Furthermore, the Johannine letters do not have the same *logos* Christology, and James does have an exalted Lord/coming Judge Christology that is not of significant interest to these authors. There are also numerous places where widely separated verses are brought together in the exegesis to the exclusion of what lies in between. Finally, again in James, 2:14–26 is chosen as the core message of the letter. While important for Nienhuis and Wall’s message that James is a deliberate correction to certain readings of Paul, the making of that passage focal in a reading of James (versus picking out verses from it for use in expositing Romans, as Nienhuis and Wall demonstrate that some Fathers do) is a creation of modern critical scholarship and is rhetorically questionable. It also ignores the other uses of James made by patristic writers. Similar criticisms could be made of the other commentaries in this work.

Nienhuis and Wall’s conclusion does show intriguing links between letters and among all the letters, but it is the similarities that are stressed rather than reading these similarities in the context of the differences. Is this enough of a bridge to

support the freight train Nienhuis and Wall want to run over it? If one re-ordered the books could one find other links that would make the new order just as logical? To what degree are the links the product of the modern reader and to what degree do they reveal the theology of the ancient canonical creators (certainly plural, since it was a group process)?

Nienhuis and Wall have written a challenging book, whether or not one agrees with particular conclusions. It points to the importance of the canonical process. It argues that this was a theological process and gave new meaning to texts that are now read together. This is an important contribution. However, does this book really reveal the minds of the canonizers or, as has been said of some historical-critical exegesis, does it more reveal the minds of two modern readers?

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*Persecution in 1 Peter: Differentiating and Contextualizing Early Christian Suffering.* By Travis B. Williams. Novum Testamentum Supplements 145. Leiden: Brill, 2012, xxvii + 483 pp., \$245.00.

Travis Williams is Assistant Professor of Religion at Tusculum College (Greeneville, TN). The monograph is a slight revision of his thesis completed at the University of Exeter under the supervision of David Horrell. That Horrell served as supervisor is significant, since he himself has written extensively on 1 Peter over the last fifteen years. Horrell and Williams are under contract to co-produce a commentary on the letter for the International Critical Commentary series.

The goal of the study is “to determine the nature of suffering in 1 Peter by situating the letter against the backdrop of conflict management in first-century CE [Asia Minor]” (p. 16). The author argues that the current consensus concerning the nature of the hostility presupposed by 1 Peter is inadequate. The consensus holds that the nature of the hostility was “unofficial.” In other words, the hostility essentially consisted of verbal harassment and social ostracism at the local level and erupted only sporadically. Although despised, Christianity remained legal, and governing authorities remained above the conflicts. This “unofficial” position is to be contrasted with the “official” view. The “official” interpretation argues that 1 Peter reflects a state-sponsored and systematic persecution, decreed by imperial edict, which actively hunted Christians down to eliminate the faith. In response to both the “official” and “unofficial” views, Williams offers a third way to understand the hostility, a sort of *via media*. The author argues for the thesis that Christianity was “effectively illegal.” He means by this that “all Christians shared the same perilous legal status following the Neronian persecution [of 64 CE]: the profession of Christianity came to be seen as effectively illegal in that it was treated as a punishable offense if one was so charged before the governor’s tribunal” (p. 235).

To achieve his aim, the author develops his argument in an introduction and three sections of two chapters each. The introduction raises the issue of the nature of the conflict in 1 Peter by surveying the history of research on the subject (chap.

1), before turning to provide a summary of modern conflict theory and how its insights might aid in the interpretation of the hostility reflected in the letter (chap. 2).

Section 1 then investigates the original audience. Williams argues that the audience is primarily urban and that they have been heavily shaped by Roman imperial rule and culture (chap. 3). Ethnically, the audience is primarily Gentile; socio-economically, they are mixed. Nevertheless, most would have lived at the lowest levels of the economic scale and thus would have been vulnerable to financial crisis brought about by hostility (chap. 4).

Section 2 then turns to examine conflict management in first-century CE Asia Minor. In chapter 5, the author surveys “various conflict strategies afforded to an aggrieved party in Roman Asia Minor,” both informal and legal (p. 129). In chapter 6, the author contends that “the detrimental downturn in the legal status of Christians took place during the time of Nero rather than during the second or third centuries CE” (p. 235).

In the final section, the author brings his findings from the previous chapters directly to bear upon 1 Peter. In chapter 7, he discusses the probable causes for the conflict reflected in 1 Peter. He reasons that Christians would have often withdrawn from Roman social institutions because of the pagan nature or vices associated with them (such as voluntary associations, the imperial cult, and worship of the traditional gods). He further maintains that, in light of the findings of chapter 6, 1 Peter probably does in fact presuppose a legal scenario at 4:15–16, in which a believer has been accused for profession as a Christian. He asserts that “official accusations could be brought by the local populace with the result that sanctioned punishments would be meted out by Roman authorities merely on the basis of a person’s confessed Christian identity. . . . According to 1 Pet 4.16, the faith has been (effectively) criminalized” (p. 296).

In chapter 8, Williams completes his argument by examining the possible various *forms* of persecution, both informal and legal. Informal persecution included verbal harassment, and probably also at times physical abuse, spousal tensions, economic oppression, and social ostracism. Legal persecution, when tensions escalated to that level, could result in the death penalty due to the precedent set by Nero in 64 CE. The study is rounded out by a conclusion and four appendices.

Williams acknowledges that his thesis is not new. Earlier scholars, such as Masterman, Moffatt, and Knopf, have espoused a similar interpretation. More recently, Feldmeier and Horrell have argued in this direction. Indeed, Williams’s phrase, “effectively illegal” is borrowed from Horrell’s work (*1 Peter* [NTG; London: T&T Clark, 2008] 57; cf. Feldmeier, *The First Letter of Peter: A Commentary on the Greek Text* [Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2008] 2–13). However, Williams states that this nuanced perspective, or *via media*, had been overlooked in the past because it had been clumped together uncritically with the “official” view. With his substantial monograph, Williams puts this “third way” down so firmly and fully upon the table that the place settings are disheveled. The thesis can no longer be overlooked.



The result, in my judgment, is largely convincing. The proposed *via media* is a more nuanced view than either the “official” or “unofficial” interpretations because it accounts for the available historical data better than they do. The (albeit, modest) payoff is a truly informed “legal” reading of 1 Pet 4:15–16 (as well as possible exegetical payoff in 2:11–17 and 3:14b–16; see pp. 303–16).

The first innovation is the author’s investigation of first-century CE conflict management in Asia Minor, and placing 1 Peter against this backdrop. Conflict does not always escalate, but at times it does. When it did, one option available to take against Christians was to submit a legal accusation before a civic magistrate or provincial governor. While the emperor apparently never issued a formal edict against the faith, Nero’s pogrom in 64 CE had set a *precedent* (the key word). Consequently, the Christian faith was no longer legally safe as a mutation within (legally tolerated) Judaism. Christianity became “effectively illegal” and its status before the tribunal perilous.

The second innovation builds upon the first, and involves the author’s tracing of legal action chronologically backward from Polycarp († ca. 155 CE; *Mart. Pol.* 10.1) to Pliny (111–12 CE; *Ep.* 10.96.2–3) to 1 Pet 4:15–16. What becomes apparent is a historical line of connection from Polycarp to 1 Peter, in that profession of the name “Christian” was sufficient to incur legal condemnation in Asia Minor after Nero’s action against Christians.

Despite the strength of this *via media* interpretation, it must be conceded that the “unofficial” interpretation still accounts for much of the conflict reflected in the letter. There is a reason why something of a consensus has emerged. Elliott and others are right to stress that the “unofficial” scenario is more plausible than the “official” interpretation. The median view being proposed here is a needful nuancing of the former rather than the latter. Most of the persecution reflected in 1 Peter is readily accounted for by appeal to sporadic local hostility, rather than to formal legal action.

Minor flaws in the monograph include the author’s overstatement of the originality of the investigation in chapter 4, which is better understood as a summary of previous social-economic study rather than an original contribution. An entire monograph would have to be devoted to such a massive topic to serve as such. In addition, the study is an arduous trek of 483 pages; the argument could have been made in 350. In summary, the work is a competent, well-researched, and genuine contribution to the study of 1 Peter and the perceived hostilities that elicited the letter. Williams is to be commended for advancing the conversation.

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*Shepherds of the Empire: Germany's Conservative Protestant Leadership 1888-1919.* By Mark R. Correll. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014, ix + 283 pp., \$49.00 paper.

This book constitutes an indictment of four men: Adolf Stoecker (1835-1909), Martin Kähler (1835-1912), Adolf Schlatter (1852-1938), and Christoph Blumhardt (1842-1919). The author, a department chair and history professor at Spring Arbor University in Michigan, presents these four as a united coalition. They affirmed, Correll argues, a “modern, believing theology” whose “failure” lay in “its limited effect on the students and pastors of Germany” (p. 266). “The damning cause of their limited influence came from their separation of theology from faith” (p. 267). Correll explains, with reference to Kähler and Schlatter, “Their theology was modern, but their faith was pietistic. They never demanded their students accept their new theology; they simply offered it. For this reason, their students could reject the theology while still expressing considerable sympathy with them as spiritual mentors” (p. 267).

That is the argument at the end of the book. At the beginning, the charges are somewhat different. “Their failing was that they were unable to muster the following necessary to provide the later generations with Christian thinkers to help them weather the brutalities of the twentieth century” (p. 10). Or again: “The fault of the Christian leadership before the war” as epitomized in the four men above “was its incapability to rally around a single theological understanding of the modern world” (p. 10).

This review will summarize each of the book’s eight chapters, offering evaluative comments along the way.

Chapter 1 sets the stage. Correll observes that “historians, by omitting conservative theological voices from the broader discussions of the era, fail to gain a whole picture of the major issues that defined the church in the period” (p. 12). More broadly, “theology’s role in the shaping of Germany’s religious experience has been largely neglected” (p. 13). This book attempts to redress prevalent historiographical imbalance by telling the story of this era taking cognizance of neglected “conservative” voices. This is a move to be welcomed.

Chapter 2 takes up Adolf Stoecker. He is presented as the fountainhead of the fourfold coalition (along with Kähler, Schlatter, and Blumhardt) who were “shepherds of the empire.” Stoecker was “the architect of the believing community” over which he and the other three allegedly presided as leaders (p. 42). This is an odd claim, for elsewhere Correll admits that Kähler, Schlatter, and Blumhardt all reject “Stoecker’s nationalistic model of Christianity” (p. 15; cf. p. 31 for Schlatter’s distaste for “Stoecker’s ultranationalist German political ideology”). None of these three, in Correll’s treatment, is materially dependent on Stoecker, who founded an avowedly Christian political party, resorted to populist demagoguery, and expressed anti-Semitic views. He did all this based on his reading of the Bible (pp. 40-42). Correll claims he “created a group of conservative theologians” that included Schlatter, Kähler, and Hermann Cremer. I find the idea that these three men, in their upbringing and training and academic output, in any substantial way took cues

from Adolf Stoecker to be unsubstantiated in Correll's book. Stoecker certainly did not "create" this group.

Chapter 3 treats Kähler under the title "How to Honor the Bible." In the opening section comes the condescending observation, "For an orthodox scholar, he displayed a surprising flexibility to contextualize his beliefs in a rapidly changing intellectual climate" (p. 47). Given the rapid changes in nineteenth-century German biblical and theological scholarship, most university scholars who remained faithful to historic Christian conviction managed to contextualize their beliefs; this went with the turf of lecturing and publishing in that context while remaining a confessing Christian. The point of the chapter is to show how Kähler sought to read the Bible neither as the historical critics did nor as the reactionary Lutheran confessionalists and Pietists, whose respective hermeneutics were ahistorical, overly subjective, or both. Correll rightly corrects the misconception that Kähler is a forerunner of Bultmann; it is rather the case that Bultmann (and Tillich) hijacked his memory and distorted it (pp. 78-80).

Kähler is said to have "paved the way for a more thorough expression of believing theology by his junior colleague Adolf Schlatter" (p. 81; cf. p. 131: "his junior colleague"). This is misleading on a couple of counts. First, Schlatter's "expression of believing theology" (meaning, presumably, explication of Christian doctrine and experience) is no more "thorough" than Kähler's. Both men produced comprehensive though contrasting accounts of aspects of the Christian faith over their long and productive careers. Second, Schlatter was never a "colleague" of Kähler in the sense of serving on the same faculty. Nor can it be shown that Schlatter was in any way dependent on Kähler theologically or hermeneutically. Elsewhere Correll recognizes that Schlatter's ties with Kähler (and Blumhardt) were limited; the three "were well acquainted with each other's work but ... they were not intimately attached" (p. 135). This confirms how unworkable the notion is that under Stoecker's leadership they formed a conscious coalition.

Chapter 4 is the longest in the book and takes up Schlatter under the heading "Receiving the Ancient Beliefs in the Modern Day." The point seems to be that Schlatter forwarded the agenda begun by Kähler in formulating "a modern believing theology" (p. 139) using "his ability to process and synthesize conservative doctrines in a modern idiom" (p. 105). He also had social prestige by virtue of holding a university chair, highly respected in Germany at that time. In Correll's telling of the story, Schlatter was therefore positioned to reinvigorate the faith of the German nation at the onset of World War I, the assertion with which the chapter ends (p. 139). In this grandiose aim (which as far as I know Schlatter never imagined for himself), Schlatter failed. This is not surprising, since as Correll notes elsewhere, by 1914 apart from conservative enclaves at Erlangen and Greifswald, "theological liberalism reigned supreme" in Germany's theology faculties where ministers were trained (p. 183).

Schlatter studies have undergone something of a renaissance in Germany, Britain, and North America in recent decades, with numerous doctoral dissertations appearing along with solid essays and discussion elsewhere in both German and English. None of this buzz is reflected in the chapter or indeed in the entire book. I

found the Schlatter presented here (apart from biographical details) almost unrecognizable in comparison with the figure discussed in studies of his hermeneutics, exegesis, philosophy, New Testament theology, dodgy stance regarding the Jewish question in the 1930s, and place in the history of biblical studies.

For example, Correll calls Schlatter's studies on Palestinian geography (*Zur Topographie und Geschichte Palästinas*, 1893) and Josephus (*Kleinere Schriften zu Flavius Josephus*, 1910) "Schlatter's primary historical theologies" (p. 105), a designation which utterly baffles. On the same page Schlatter's two-volume New Testament theology is given the wrong title, his popular-level exposition of the New Testament is misspelled, and the claim is made that Schlatter "was a canonizer, not a theoretician." To the contrary, Schlatter wrote a metaphysic in the years covered by Correll's book, composed an essay widely regarded as one of the most insightful ever to appear on methodology in New Testament theology, and published a history of philosophy since Descartes. He even composed a succinct statement on the importance of method (= theory) for biblical and theological study ("Die Bedeutung der Methode für die theologische Arbeit," *Theologischer Literaturbericht* 31 [1908]: 5-8; this is translated with commentary as "Adolf Schlatter's 'The Significance of Method for Theological Work': Translation and Commentary," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 1/2 [Summer 1997] 64-76). To term Schlatter "not a theoretician" misses one of the strengths for which he is most recognized in the scholarly literature.

Chapter 5 takes up the life and preaching of Christoph Blumhardt. This Württemberg pastor was defrocked when he got elected to the state legislature after joining "the aggressively secular German Social Democratic Party" (p. 142). A well-known but controversial figure (like his father a faith healer earlier in his pastoral career), he wrote no books; he did not publish any sermons (p. 142). He was so intellectually inept that when he ran for political office, he did not even understand "socialism" as his party viewed it: he thought the Social Democratic Party was "a utopian party working for a millennial future, when most Marxists (including Marx himself) had earlier abandoned this vision for scientific materialism" (p. 173, n. 80). He indulged in maverick biblical interpretation (p. 148). He had "a hodgepodge theology" and argued that "God was still dynamically revealing God's self to modern-day apostles and prophets" (p. 180). Yet Correll claims that "Blumhardt's understanding of the Scriptures picked up where Schlatter and Kähler left off" (p. 149). What possible point of contact could there have been?

Correll's answer is that Blumhardt "never challenged the fundamental foundation of the Scriptures for all Christian belief" (p. 149). Because that assertion, depending on how the words are defined, could be affirmed, for example, by Mormons or Jehovah's Witnesses or an Adolf von Harnack, it seems a slender basis for linking Blumhardt with Schlatter and Kähler. Correll shows no actual connections between the three apart from generalizations like the one just cited, or others such as: "Like Kähler and Schlatter, Blumhardt believed that ethics was the best response to the relationship and salvation offered by God" (p. 169). The effect of this chapter is to implicate Schlatter and Kähler somehow in Blumhardt's memorable but eccentric activities. They were all "shepherds of the empire," even

though “Blumhardt had little noticeable effect on the widely held theological beliefs of his day” (p. 180). It would surely have come as a surprise to the average German in the 1888-1919 timeframe that Blumhardt was one of the “shepherds” of their *Reich*.

Chapter 6 is “The Friends of Job” and examines sermons from the 1888-1914 period. The chapter title seems to derive from the character of many sermons of this era, when it was popular to preach that blessing follows obedience to God, while calamity is the result of sin (cf. p. 186; for another explanation see p. 263). This and the following chapter “look at the relative failure of believing theology [i.e., the theologies of Kähler, Schlatter, and Blumhardt] to incorporate itself into the culture of churches in Germany” (p. 184). This “church culture failed to adopt the positive changes that the theology” of these three figures “offered to adapt to modernity” (p. 184). Given the disparate nature of their views and their utter lack of means or authority to enforce their thought in the vast “church culture” of that era, their “relative failure” is not only understandable but inevitable.

In addition, as Correll points out regarding Schlatter, he “made no effort to teach his students homiletics” (p. 138). This was not the province of German biblical or theological professors like Schlatter and Kähler. So it is mystifying why it should be thought “failure” that “their direct influence can be seen in only a minute portion of the students who studied under them” (p. 186), all the more in view of “the confusing cacophony of voices at the universities” and other factors that “removed all but the last vestiges of theological guidance and accountability for new pastoral candidates” (p. 187).

It is chiefly the sermons of these “new pastoral candidates” that Correll uses to establish what a sermon of this era in Germany looked like (pp. 186-88). He suggests that these test sermons “more likely give a more representative picture of German sermons from the era than published collections do” (p. 187). No evidence is given for this assertion. I would have thought that published sermons by established pastors would be more indicative of good preaching from the era than sermons submitted for licensure exams by relatively inexperienced pastoral candidates. By focusing on the immature homiletical productions of men recently schooled in universities largely hostile to historic Christian doctrines, Correll would appear to be ensuring a dismal portrait. Moreover, he overlooks that it was the brief of preachers to explain the Scriptures, or thoughts derived from them, not to parrot the views of their university professors. It would be striking if one *could* document consistent influence of any particular German theologian in licensure sermons of that (or any) period.

Chapter 7 is “Confident in Jesus’ Victory: Germany’s Protestant Clergy’s Spiritual Guidance during the First World War.” The story here is that when the war broke out, sermons in Germany tended to be nationalistic and supportive of country and Kaiser. Because the previous chapter argued that in the years leading up to the war, Schlatter-Kähler-Blumhardt “were still only making the smallest dent in the sermon-making culture of Germany” (p. 195), it is not clear why they should bear much responsibility for war-time preaching. This preaching first claimed that a German victory would follow from German spiritual zeal and valor; good would

accrue to both country and religion (p. 233). By 1916-1918 losses mounted and the tenor of sermons switched to consolation and perseverance. By the end of the war sermons focused more on personal peace and trust in God (p. 236). Sweeping kingdom visions of a few years earlier shrank dramatically.

Much of the chapter is devoted to Schlatter and the war (pp. 239-53). He lost his older son to a battle wound in the war's opening months (pp. 246-48), so those years were dark for him. Yet the statement that "Schlatter never regained the prolific academic writing output he had produced before the war" needs correcting: based on a page count of his significant (90 pages or longer) publications, he produced 5,180 pages through 1917 and 5,630 from 1926 till his death in 1938. At the war's outbreak, Schlatter was supportive of the government (p. 239) but preached that the outcome would be in God's hands, not Germany's or any other nation's (p. 240). "Unlike most other theologians in Germany, he did not cast blame on other nations" (p. 245). After the war he expressed regret and repentance for his personal implication in misplaced wartime fervor (p. 250). He also revised his book on ethics in light of wartime lessons (pp. 251-53). Blumhardt, too, expressed remorse. Both men's penitent and critical assessment "differed vastly from that of the majority of German clergy" (p. 258). Correll concludes, "If more Protestants had acted on the thought of Blumhardt and Schlatter, then perhaps a greater challenge to Nazi ascendancy would have arisen along with Hitler" (p. 258; cf. p. 261).

The chapter concludes with a short section on the war's effect on Karl Barth (born 1886, not 1868; see p. 259). Correll notes Barth's disenchantment with "the meaningless sermons and practical Christianity that sprang from conservative and liberal clergy alike" in the years before and during the war. He suggests that Barth's radical break with his forebears might have been unnecessary had "the German pastors who were ... of a conservative conviction adopted Kähler's, Schlatter's, and Blumhardt's modern piety" (p. 261). I do not think either "modern piety" or "modern believing theology," both key terms in the book, is ever defined.

Chapter 8 is a brief (four and one-half pages) concluding note called "The Relics of the First Modern Believing Theology." Here Correll appears to conceive of the theology of the four shepherds as singular and uniform, even though he earlier criticized them for failing "to rally around a single theological understanding of the modern world" (p. 10). The familiar story is told of how World War I shattered belief in the church and God. The outlook of the "shepherds of the empire" was abandoned. There is no doubt truth in this, granting some measure of coherence between their respective views and a sizable presence of "believing" conviction in German society. But well before the war, in Berlin, barely a quarter of Protestants were marrying in the church and only about half of Protestant children were baptized (Werner Neuer, *Adolf Schlatter* [Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1996] 311). Liberal unbelief and conservative moralism had been working mischief for generations, as they always have in the modern West.

In my view the indictment presented by this book (see opening paragraph of this review) has merit because it is always the case that even the best of pastors and theologians fall short of their good intentions. Correll's particular case that a Bible-based outlook like that of Kähler or Schlatter was a failure because most people did

not accept it is not compelling for three reasons. First, there are flaws in presentation of these men's views, Schlatter's in particular, as noted above. Second, popular acceptance is no reliable measure of theological integrity—ask Jesus. Third, the core of Kähler's and Schlatter's theology—which affirmed Christ's redemptive ministry as described in the Bible and explicated by the church's historic creeds—is still quite alive in today's world. In fact, an articulation of the gospel message like that affirmed by Kähler and Schlatter has brought hundreds of millions of souls into communion with God through faith in Christ around the globe since World War I and particularly since ca. 1960 (see Patrick Johnstone, *The Future of the Global Church* [Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2011] 124). Germany no doubt failed the Christian message in 1888-1919—what Western nation did not?—but that does not mean the Christian message is a failure, or that Christian faith can only survive if it transcends “conservative” faith in the Bible, one of the seeming insinuations of this book.

A final reason for questioning this book's argument lies in its strategy—anointing four disparate figures (two of them dubious) as “shepherds of the empire” and then associating the whole of conservative German Protestantism in that era with them. There would remain room for a book that searches out key and exemplary leaders who were actually and primarily pastors and who excelled in the deceptively difficult calling of holding fast the word of life in perilous times with biblical fidelity, love for their people and the lost, and pastoral skill—that is to say, good shepherds, and not merely clergy of notoriety in a collapsing social order who can be used to reinforce stereotypes of “conservative.”

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