JETS 63.3 (2020): 611–60

BOOK REVIEWS

Stewards of Eden: What Scripture Says About the Environment and Why it Matters. By Sandra L. Richter. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2020, 158 pp. $14.99 paper.

Sandra L. Richter currently teaches OT at Westmont College. She obtained her Ph.D. from Harvard University. A former monograph, *The Epic of Eden: A Christian Entry into the Old Testament*, stands out of an array of historical, societal, and economic articles that demonstrate her refined expertise of ancient Israel. Richter employs each chapter of *Stewards of Eden* as apologetic and polemic. She is also uniquely gifted as a storyteller. When her scholarship, storytelling, and environmental concerns are woven together, the reader holds a primer and enchiridion sure to provoke further reflection into creation care.

Richter takes up five themes as apologetic: "sustainable land use, humane treatment of livestock, care for the wild creatures, respect for the flora and fauna of our leased land, and care for the widow and orphan … reiterated from Eden to the new Jerusalem" (p. 107). These themes loosely correspond to the chapters that comprise the volume. She employs a parallel between Adam and Israel that demonstrates how both were constituted under suzerain obligations. Jehovah was "lord of the manner" and gracious land giver. Adam and Israel were only vassals on the land; as such, they were to obey the stipulations of the gracious creator/owner (pp. 9, 11, 16). Both Adam and Israel were to be faithful stewards of the land, which in turn would bring God glory.

Richter says the core message of Israel's covenant is "If you will honor me as God, your only God, I will make you mine forever" (p. 30). They were formerly a slave people, and the covenant was formally ratified by the giving of the Sabbath. The gracious suzerain gave them a day of rest, worship, and refreshment. To see how radical this idea was, one need only contrast it with the idol worship of their neighbors. The nations around them were constantly performing activities for their gods, while Israel's God was constantly caring for them.

Each chapter is laid out in Socratic fashion. First, Richter asks a question such as "What does the Bible say?" Her answers come from the suzerain's instructions. This is then contrasted with a "What will we say?" and/or contemporary case study. Here she details how present-day vassals have violated the suzerain's creation mandates. We have done this to our own detriment and to that of the planet.

Richter's thesis is striking from the first page: "The subject matter of this book is … one of the most misunderstood topics of holiness and social justice in the Christian community today, the 'Environmental Concern for the Christian'" (p. 1). She then poses the question, "Why has the church, historically the moral compass of our society, gotten so lost on this topic?" (p. 2). She offers three answers: (1) Politics: "Christians are *first* the citizens of Heaven" (p. 2) and not merely American evangelicals. (2) Social concern: "We don't *see* how unregulated use of land and water by big business decimates the lives of the marginalized" (p. 3). (3) "The theo-

logical posture taught by many in the church" (p. 3). The conversion of souls is not the main thing but "the only thing." Soul-saving should not be juxtaposed with environmental concerns: "My objective … is to demonstrate via the most authoritative voice of the church's life, that of Scripture, that the stewardship of this planet is not alien or peripheral to the message of the Gospel" (p. 3).

I offer a further recommendation regarding *Stewards of Eden*. First, Richter's polemic against the idea "saving of souls" should not be separated from creation care. The author builds a strong case throughout the volume that they are not to be parsed out but are conjoined in the gospel. Second, various audiences should consider the breadth and depth of this volume. All believers, from the academy to Christian "environmental crusaders," will benefit from Richter's insights. Hopefully, it will cause some to pause and reconsider creation care ethics and practice. It certainly did that for me.

Roger D. Duke
Baptist College of Health Sciences, Memphis, TN

A Boundless God: The Spirit according to the Old Testament. By Jack Levison. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020, xiv + 194 pp., $21.99 paper.

It is clear to anyone who reads Hebrew that *rûach* can in different contexts be translated "wind," "spirit" (or "Spirit"), or "breath." Usually translators decide which meaning of this very common term (much more common than *torah*, for instance) fits the context. Professor Jack Levison contends that separating the three meanings is problematic (and it is even more of a problem to separate "spirit" from "Spirit"), and that while there are emphases in each instance of the term's use, some degree of all aspects of the term appears in most usages. Naturally, the linguistically educated reader immediately asks, "Is this book a massive illegitimate totality transfer with respect to this term, or is it a sensitive reflection on a term in which the meanings really are not totally exclusive?" One must read the book to form an informed opinion.

Levison certainly has the academic credentials and teaching position that would make one expect a sensitive reflection. Furthermore, he has written at least three books on the Holy Spirit, so one would expect him to be at home in the field. For this examination of the *rûach* in the OT, realizing that there are 389 uses, he chooses to organize his study by the verbs used with the term. Therefore, after a 13-page introduction, he discusses successively "Spirit Blowing and Breathing" (17 pp.), "Spirit Coming Upon" (19 pp.), "Spirit Resting Upon" (19 pp.), "Spirit Passed On" (16 pp.), "Spirit Poured Out" (15 pp.), "Spirit Filling" (17 pp.), "Spirit Cleansing" (15 pp.), and "Spirit Standing and Guiding" (16 pp.), before a final 25-page conclusion. The book ends with twelve pages of indices. In other words, Levison has organized he book by the Hebrew verbs used with *rûach* rather than by the date of a particular use, collection of uses, or by genre of Hebrew literature. He clearly does this so that he does not have to cover all 389 uses individually but can select significant representatives of the occurrence of this term with certain verbs. This

means that there is only one reference to the OT apocrypha (even though some of them have Hebrew versions), three to the OT pseudepigrapha, four to the Dead Sea Scrolls, and nine to the NT. Clearly, this is not simply a work on the OT but one on the Protestant OT.

While Levison does agree that there are some contexts in which the three basic meanings of *rûach* can be distinguished, his interest is in the vast number of contexts in which no clear definition is possible. Thus, he concludes with a series of "beyond" statements—this term is "beyond definition," "beyond gender," "beyond salvation," "beyond death," "beyond wisdom," "beyond sacred walls," and "beyond spirituality." Note that in discussing the expression "beyond sacred walls," Levison breaks down contrasts between "spirit"/"Spirit" in the OT and the NT. That challenge to typical biblical pneumatology might itself be worth the cost of the book. But that is not the only distinction he challenges, for, among others, he challenges the distinction between learned or trained skill and *rûach*-filling. The long and short of it is that Levison argues that this term is as fluid as "breath" or "wind" and transcends many contemporary attempts at definition and distinction. He does this in readable language with the skill of a teacher who starts each chapter with a series of passages to be read in preparation for the reading of the chapter.

Levison's book is well worth reading. One will not agree with every statement, which is not surprising since he covers the whole OT, but one will be challenged. Perhaps this work will help readers understand the NT term *pneuma* better. It certainly is a breath of fresh wind into the use of *rûach* in the OT and therefore into an understanding of God.

Peter H. Davids
Our Lady of Guadalupe Priory, Georgetown, TX

Bloody, Brutal, and Barbaric? Wrestling with Troubling War Texts. By William J. Webb and Gordon K. Oeste. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2019, 397 pp., $45.00.

Bloody, Brutal, and Barbaric is a collaboration between William Webb and Gordon Oeste, both adjunct professors at Tyndale Seminary in Toronto. In the book, the authors address the ethical dilemmas created by the OT's war texts and establish a middle position between what they call the traditional and anti-traditional approaches. Traditional approaches argue that God's war instructions reflect his pristine ethic. Any perceived ethical problems arise out of a misunderstanding of God's justice on the part of the modern audience. The anti-traditional approaches argue that the OT's war texts are morally reprehensible and the product of corrupt human authors.

Webb and Oeste's position rests upon six theses. First, the traditional responses to the challenges created by the OT's war texts are helpful answers to questions asked by the original audiences of these texts. These questions concerned the ethics of exile and God's creation of sacred space. Although well suited for the questions posed by the original audience, the traditional responses are inadequate to address the questions posed by modern audiences. Thus, using the traditional

answers to address ethical questions posed by modern audiences is akin to using square pegs to fill round holes. Second, the "total-kill" claims in the OT are meant to be understood hyperbolically, as they are in contemporaneous ANE war texts. Recognizing the hyperbolic nature of these statements mitigates the ethical challenges they create. Third, YHWH's war instructions in the OT are an accommodation to the cultural reality in which the Israelites find themselves. These war instructions do not represent YHWH's pristine war ethic. Fourth, YHWH's war instructions contain an incremental (or redemptive-movement) ethic. Even though these war instructions do not represent YHWH's pristine war ethic, they are nonetheless a move toward YHWH's pristine ethic when compared to the war practices of the surrounding nations. Fifth, the portrait of YHWH in the OT is consistent with the portraits of Jesus in the NT—the portrait in Paul and the Gospels and the portrait in Revelation. Neither the traditional nor anti-traditional approaches can maintain the continuity between all three portraits. Sixth, God will one day bring closure to all instances of injustice in the world.

Webb and Oeste have filled *Bloody, Brutal, and Barbaric* with helpful discussions of biblical war texts and the related secondary literature. Their discussion of how God creates sacred space is helpful for showing how several seemingly unrelated OT motifs (e.g. exile and holiness codes) are actually interconnected with the OT's war texts.

Webb and Oeste confront the ethical challenges of OT war texts by claiming these texts do not reflect YHWH's ultimate ethic but contain an incremental movement toward that ultimate ethic when compared with other ANE war texts. Their proposal contains several methodological, hermeneutical, and evidentiary difficulties. This review will only be able to address a few of these difficulties. Methodologically, what are the teleological limits for their suggested incremental or redemptive movements? What exactly is God's ultimate or pristine ethic that the OT is moving toward (for war or any other issue)? How could we even begin to identify this ethic? If we cannot identify where these incremental movements are headed, then how do we know when to apply this incremental or redemptive movement method? What would prevent modern readers from identifying a portion of the OT that falls short of their ethical ideals, searching for an ANE text related to the same subject and regarding which the OT could be said to have made some marginal improvement, and then using this "incremental movement" to justify whatever final ethical conclusion they desired as God's ultimate ethic? Perhaps Webb and Oeste would argue that the NT would offer the appropriate teleological guide for their proposal. They never say this directly, but even if this is the case, what would keep modern readers from applying this same method to the NT? In this sense, Webb and Oeste's proposal seems very similar to other "trajectory" approaches to the biblical text.

Webb and Oeste's approach to these OT war texts also creates a hermeneutical difficulty. They claim the traditional answers to the ethical difficulties created by these war texts work well for the ethical questions of the original audience but not for the questions raised by modern audiences (square pegs for round holes). They go on to propose their solution regarding the OT's incremental improvement com-

pared to other ANE customs. The hermeneutical problem concerns whether the OT audiences (or authors for that matter) would have been aware of these incremental improvements. Webb and Oeste have already conceded the original audiences were concerned with their own ethical issues (related to sacred space and exile) rather than the issues these texts raise within our modern context. Would the OT audiences have known that these texts and customs represented an incremental improvement over the surrounding nations? Perhaps not if they were unconcerned with our modern ethical difficulties, but if this were the case, is it hermeneutically viable for Webb and Oeste to claim that these texts contain an incremental improvement? If, however, the original audiences were aware of these incremental improvements, then Webb and Oeste must concede that they were concerned with similar ethical questions as are modern audiences but were satisfied with an ethical standard that was far less than that of modern audiences. Since this is the case, Webb and Oeste's proposal either lacks much ability to explain the biblical text or lacks ability to address the ethical difficulties created by the text.

Beyond these and other difficulties, I remain skeptical as to whether Webb and Oeste's claims will truly satisfy the objections of those who would question the ethics of OT war texts. Even if the ethic underlying these texts is incrementally better than the surrounding nations, the ethical problem in these texts still remains. Even if God uneasily accommodates himself to Israel's war ethic, I doubt whether those who would otherwise condemn the OT's war practices will be convinced that those practices no longer pose the same moral problems. In fact, I could easily see God's accommodation and (mere) incremental movements causing all the more indignation from those who would claim that God was a moral monster for lowering his moral standards and allowing these deplorable and unethical actions to continue. Webb and Oeste's approach may be helpful for those who are less hostile to the OT but are nonetheless struggling with the ethics of OT war, but I am still hesitant to believe that their proposed solution will resolve the difficulties of these texts even for those who are charitable to the OT.

In conclusion, I am hesitant to affirm that Webb and Oeste's proposal is as much of an improvement over the traditional position as many may hope. We may have to simply accept that the Bible does not offer us the answers to the questions that we are asking. Nevertheless, this book is filled with helpful exegetical arguments and critiques of both the traditional and non-traditional views on this subject.

Casey K. Croy
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY

Judges. By David J. H. Beldman. The Two Horizons OT Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2020, 316 pp., $24.88 paper.

Tribalism, seduction, murder, sexual exploitation, warfare, authoritarianism—Judges is a "book about God's covenant people whose witness and way of being in the world had been deeply compromised by the religion and culture of the surrounding nations. A seemingly insignificant nation among the powerful empires all

around them, they could have experienced and influenced widespread and profound blessing in allegiance to Yahweh and his kingdom, but instead divided their alliance, which only brought violence, misery, and chaos" (pp. 1–2). David J. H. Beldman, author of *Judges* in the Two Horizons OT Commentary series, is associate professor of religion and theology at Redeemer University College (ON, Canada) and is well versed in Judges scholarship.

This volume is organized into three main parts: (1) "Theological Introduction"; (2) "Theological Commentary"; and (3) "Theological Reflection." The 55 pages that comprise Section 1 are in keeping with the distinctives of this particular commentary series. Beldman explicitly states, "The fundamental conviction that drives the practice of theological interpretation is that in and through Scripture God speaks. It follows, therefore, that the principal task of theological interpreters is to situate ourselves in the very best position to hear the divine address" (p. 4). In this way, rather than belabor the typical matters that traditionally occupy commentary introductions, Beldman instead focuses on "hearing" Judges in its literary and historical context and "hearing" others hearing Judges, from early Christian/Jewish and medieval interpretations of Judges through to the postmodern turn (see p. 5).

Beldman seems somewhat flippant about the date of Israel's conquest of Canaan, taking no particular stance on the subject (p. 25). One does note, however, that the author asserts that Judg 18:30 is a reference to the northern exile, and therefore, the final composition of Judges occurred sometime after 722 BC (p. 33). He also states that "the north/south dynamics in Judges are … not helpful in determining the date of the composition of Judges" (p. 34). Notably, Beldman is not convinced by the theory that Judges is pro-Israel (p. 62). Regarding Noth's work and the so-called "Deuteronomistic History," the author is unabashedly "skeptical" (p. 243).

Section 2, the commentary proper, deftly navigates the complexities of the book of Judges and avoids verbiage, something that is necessary considering this section's relatively short length (172 pages). The author's sensitivity to the literariness of the text is much appreciated and his engagement with the scholarly community at large—including fair amounts of insightful, poignant quotations from key commentators and scholars—is thorough and adept.

Beldman has an exceptional knack for keeping the concerns of the "person in the pew" at the forefront of the discussion, and his capacity to bridge effectively the divide between the pulpit and the ivory tower is highly commendable. For example, with respect to the Song of Deborah (Judges 5), Beldman states that though the role of Yahweh is, indeed, present, it is "eclipsed by the role of the human agents. … There may be enduring instruction here for contemporary people of faith about the kinds of worship songs we sing—are they theocentric songs that inspire commitment to God and a more faithful witness to him or are they anthropocentric songs that celebrate human achievement and leave us comfortable with the status quo?" (p. 100).

Lastly, it should also be noted that Beldman's insightful comments concerning *analepsis* (a kind of flashback) bring special import to the conclusion of Judges. He convincingly argues that the real-time indicators in Judg 18:30 and 20:28 (refer-

ences respectively to Jonathan, Moses's grandson, and Phinehas, Aaron's grandson) jolt the reader to consider the shocking reality that the depths of Israel's degradation did not necessarily occur at the end of a long process but that their rebellion and apostasy were systemic from the very beginning (pp. 224–25).

Readers of all levels will appreciate the inclusion of both the Hebrew text and transliteration within the commentary itself. It should be noted, however, that Beldman makes clear that there is a deliberate attempt at times to avoid as much as possible the "very technical discussions and debates," leaving these matters to other commentaries (p. 91). As such, those whose needs require in-depth discussion of philology, linguistic analysis, word studies, textual criticism, specific details about Hebrew grammar/syntax, and the like will be disappointed.

Section 3, "Theological Reflection," covers three units/topics: (1) "Judges and Biblical Theology"; (2) "Judges and Systematic Theology"; and (3) "Judges for Today."

The first unit devotes itself to attending to the narrative shape of the canon (including the relationship of the OT and the NT) and the place of Judges therein. The second focuses on Judges and sundry doctrines, such as God, the Holy Spirit, sin, providence, and political theology. The "Judges for Today" portion focuses on violence, the treatment of women in Judges, and the enduring testimony of Judges for today. These excurses are a fine inclusion to the volume and offer much valuable insight. Three examples will suffice.

To begin with, Beldman asserts that the book of Judges is "Israel's struggle to manifest the earthly reality of Yahweh's kingdom and the Sinai covenant as the structuring principle for that reality" (p. 242). In this way, "the problem that dogs the people of God in Judges is not merely moral or spiritual. Israel's rejection of Yahweh as king and their alliance to the Canaanite gods set the trajectory for a full orbed social (dis)order that is thoroughly Canaanite and counter to the principles and practices of the kingdom of Yahweh (p. 242). With respect to the "hall of faith" chapter of Hebrews 11 and the book of Judges, Beldman opines, "This is not a fanciful reinterpretation of Gideon, Barak, Samson, and Jephthah, but rather a deliberate highlighting of their more positive aspects" (p. 251). At the same time, however, Beldman also astutely notes that though there is "no contradiction between Judges and Hebrews 11 … we should avoid the temptation to use Hebrews 11 to short-circuit a careful reading of Judges" (p. 252). Lastly, concerning political theology," Beldman believes that "a political state, limited or otherwise, is not at the core of the Bible's political teaching. Rather, a community undividedly loyal to God and his kingdom must necessarily involve political engagement in whatever context God's people find themselves" (p. 277). This brief essay was perhaps the most stimulating.

The book is complete with an eight-page bibliography and two indices (author and Scripture). While thorough, one should mention the conspicuous absence of the semi-technical commentary by Mark J. Boda on Judges (revised *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Zondervan, 2012), whose value for serious students of Judges cannot be overstated. By way of critique, not all readers will be persuaded by Beldman's assertion that since the author of Judges provides "no explanation or defini-

tion of the Spirit of Yahweh," this suggests that the "audience would have understood the concept" (p. 261). One may also wish for more details concerning Beldman's claim that references to the (*mal'āk*) "angel/messenger" of the LORD as being a preincarnate representation of Jesus are "difficult to substantiate" (p. 65). That said, it is hard to fault this volume. Bible college, seminary, and Christian university students, alongside pastors and the invested layperson, will all be well served here. Highly recommended!

Dustin G. Burlet
McMaster Divinity College, Hamilton, ON

The Road to Kingship: 1–2 Samuel. By Johanna W. H. van Wijk-Bos. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2020, xiv + 368 pp., $29.00 paper.

The Road to Kingship is the second volume by Johanna Wijk-Bos of A People and a Land, a series of commentaries on the Former Prophets of the Hebrew Bible. The first volume was *The End of the Beginning: Joshua–Judges* (2019). The third volume will cover 1–2 Kings. Her work is the fruit of many years of teaching this material at Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary.

In the brief but self-revealing preface and introduction, Wijk-Bos refreshingly discloses her background, starting points, and goals. She approaches the text with "deep commitments to feminism and issues of gender and to analysis of patriarchal structures and ideologies" (p. x). She views the composition as a Deuteronomistic work from the post-exilic period (p. 2). She reads the Hebrew text seriously without seeking to affirm "the historical truth of any of the characters" (p. 7).

The commentary moves through the text of 1–2 Samuel in biblical order, with the exception of 2 Samuel 21–24. The concluding four chapters she identifies as an A–B–C–C´–B´–A´ parallelism, and she comments on the parallels together. She does not offer a word-by-word commentary on every verse but an analysis of the structure of the narrative of the text. She divides 1–2 Samuel into five cycles: "The Last Judge (1 Sam 1–12)," "A King on His Throne (1 Sam 13–31)," "Ascent to Kingship (2 Sam 1–8)," "A King and His People (2 Sam 9–20)," and "Hazards, Heroes, and Poetry (2 Sam 21–24)." Within each cycle Wijk-Bos arranges the text into acts and scenes, as in a play. She then works through the text spending time on key ideas and words and tying into other passages from Scripture. Each cycle and act begins with an overview of the narrative structure of the unit.

Each section of the commentary consists of a title, with act and scene numbers. Beneath is a relevant quotation or two from secondary resources. All Hebrew words are transliterated in a simplified style without diacritical marks, except for non-initial *aleph* and *ayin*, with a pronunciation guide on p. 369. On almost every page appear valuable and concise footnotes that do not overwhelm the commentary. Scattered throughout are ten excurses, the last serving as a conclusion to the commentary and anticipatory of the next volume in the series. Following the commentary is an appendix of Hebrew expressions (pp. 369–73) providing a brief definition with page references where discussions are found. Following each translit-

erated entry in parentheses is a pronunciation guide that divides the words into syllables and underlines the accented syllable and an abbreviation of the part of speech. The book concludes with a bibliography followed by indices of authors, subjects, and Scriptures.

Wijk-Bos provides original translations of passages of special significance. Rather than simple paragraph form, she employs the useful feature of extending each line only as far as the Hebrew clauses, even though prose may thus appear to be poetry. Her translation seeks to reveal the "alien voice" of the Hebrew text, rather than to acclimate the text to modern culture (p. xii). An example of this is reproducing Hebrew cognate accusatives into English (e.g. "kinged you a king," 1 Sam 12:1, p. 91).

Wijk-Bos takes a naturalistic view of the composition of 1–2 Samuel. For example, in her excursus "The Question of Saul and David" (pp. 175–76), she asks if instead of Saul, David in fact might have been the perpetrator of the murder of the priests at Nob, based on David's claim of responsibility (1 Sam 22:22) and the pro-Davidic bias of the author. In "David and the Death of Saul" (pp. 212–13), the author says the story of Achish's sending David away from the direct conflict against Saul and associated events (1 Sam 29–30) may have some kernel of truth or may have been a complete fabrication to make David out to be innocent of Saul's death, as other scholars have argued.

The special focus of Wijk-Bos on women is helpful. Her way of reading texts gives good insights into Hannah (pp. 20–21, 33–34). Wijk-Bos questions the reality of Elkanah's love for Hannah in spite of 1 Sam 1:5, but she raises legitimate questions about the effectiveness of Elkanah's actions, or inactions, as it may be. Furthermore, Wijk-Bos is sensitive to Hannah's pain of sending the young Samuel to the temple (p. 30). She gives attention to "Queen Michal" (pp. 249–53), pointing out that she is the only woman portrayed as loving David. Wijk-Bos explains how Michal may have viewed David's exposing himself as inappropriate, and Michal's rebuke of David demonstrates her initiative and independence. In the "David and Bathsheba" excursus (pp. 281–84), she gives good insights into that relationship, most notably the prior interconnectedness of David, Uriah, and Bathsheba, and raises the issues of rape. For Wijk-Bos, the power differential between David and Bathsheba and no mention of Bathsheba's consent to sex exonerate Bathsheba and indict David as guilty of rape. Further, Wijk-Bos says that Uriah understood what is taking place on the surface, and his refusal to cover for her affair actually places Bathsheba's life at risk. In the brief story of 2 Sam 21:10–14, Rizpah's power and faith brought about the restoration of the land when David's inaction failed to do so. She argues that Rizpah's act of hope for the future was included to inspire a similar hope in the future for the post-exilic community (pp. 349–53). Overall, Wijk-Bos views the text as failing to show the importance of women in David's rise to kingship (p. 216).

The work of Wijk-Bos is readable for undergraduates and useful to scholars. Those holding to the divine origin and infallibility of Scripture will take issue at several points. It would have been interesting to read her interaction with evangelical scholars (e.g. Tsumura is in the bibliography, but not in the author index).

However, she concisely offers innumerable keen insights on the text and on how to read it.

Lee M. Fields
Mid Atlantic Christian University, Elizabeth City, NC

The Second Book of Samuel. By David Toshio Tsumura. The New International Commentary on the OT. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2019, 374 pp., $48.00.

Robert Alter famously stated that the Book of Samuel is "one of the most astounding pieces of narrative that has come down to us from the ancient world. The story of David is probably the greatest single narrative representation in Antiquity of a human life" (*The David Story*, p. ix). The book continues to fascinate and draw scholars to its rich characterization and subtle narrative. *The Second Book of Samuel* represents the completion of David Toshio Tsumura's commentary on the text of Samuel begun in his 2007 publication in the same series. Tsumura is professor of OT at Japan Bible Seminary and chairman of the translation committee for the New Japanese Bible, *Shinkaiyaku*.

The introduction to this commentary is sparse, relying on the more extensive introduction in the 1 Samuel volume. As with his previous commentary, Tsumura prioritizes the MT of Samuel against readings in the LXX and DSS. Throughout his commentary he provides detailed analysis of the MT and strives to make sense of what many consider textually corrupt passages. In the course of this study, he often provides novel solutions to old textual difficulties. Building on his previous research, he argues that many of the MT readings considered corrupt are actually phonetic spellings (pp. 4–5). He also continues his suspicion of both literary readings and diachronic investigation. Regarding date and authorship, Tsumura suggests that the book was virtually complete no later than the tenth century with the "possibility that the books were slightly modernized in the following generation … during the ninth century" (p. 10).

According to Tsumura, the purpose of 2 Samuel is not only "to explain the meaning of the Israelite monarchy as a political institution but also to show how God led King David's life specifically despite his grave sins against God in order to keep his promise to provide heirs, finally the heir, to establish his eternal dynasty" (pg. 19). His approach can be described as a combination of discourse analysis along with a detailed examination of grammar, philology, and historical-cultural background.

Tsumura's commentary is marked throughout by meticulous and careful research. This is evidenced in his extensive scholarly publications, which are frequently cited to support positions taken in in the commentary. The commentary itself is especially strong in its grammatical and textual analyses, which are supplied in his original translation. These notes are buttressed by several excurses intended to clarify difficult grammatical or lexical issues. He also provides helpful discussions on geography and cultural background. For example, in commenting on 2 Samuel 7, Tsumura compares David's promise of an eternal kingship to passages from the

Code of Hammurabi, the Baal Cycle, and other Ugaritic texts (pp. 124–25). While he does interact with other scholarship on Samuel, this aspect is not quite as robust as other commentaries. His most frequent conversation partners are A. A. Anderson, S. R. Driver, E. D. Herbert, C. H. Gordon, and K. McCarter. Given his focus on the historicity and cultural background of the book, it is striking that he does not interact more with more recent work in this area (e.g. B. Halpern). However, his generous interaction with Ugaritic, Phoenician, and other ANE texts provide many avenues of further research to students interested in this area.

As with his commentary on 1 Samuel, Tsumura applies R. Longacre's method of discourse analysis to the entire text of Samuel. Occasionally, his discourse analysis is drawn upon to solve difficult interpretive issues. For example, in 1 Sam 7:9b–11a, the shift to the *weqaṭal* conjugation is understood as a shift in discourse type to procedural discourse followed by a result clause (pp. 134–36). This analysis is one way to resolve a perceived tension between 2 Sam 7:1 and 7:11. However, for most of the commentary, the discourse analysis is not fully integrated into the body of his commentary.

Despite Tsumura's suspicion of most literary readings of Samuel, he interacts with scholarship in this area at key points, and the commentary is better for it. In his analysis of the David and Bathsheba narrative, he discusses the pacing of the narrative and the high proportion of direct speech (p. 173). He also provides some correctives to literary readings. For example, many commentators find irony in 11:1, "In the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle" (ESV). However, Tsumura reads this verse in line with the MT: "At the time when messengers go out" (p. 174). The manuscript support to emend the MT is strong, and in my view, likely correct. However, Tsumura argues that the term "messenger" is also a *Leitwort* in this narrative and thus likely the original reading (p. 175). At the least, he has made an argument that the MT reading deserves careful consideration. Tsumura admits that even if one accepts the reading "kings" in this verse, it may be overreading it to understand the narrator as criticizing David for staying in Jerusalem. There are many parallels in the ancient world of kings attending to issues in their capital during battles (p. 175). As this narrative continues, Tsumura follows many literary and intertextual readings of this passage, which connect the language of "saw … good … take" to Gen 3:6. His commentary on the rest of the David and Bathsheba episode contain many helpful insights of this kind. It would strengthen the commentary if this careful literary attention was more consistently practiced throughout.

Tsumura views 2 Samuel 7 as a key turning point, not only in the narrative of Samuel, but "in the history of salvation" (v. 12). His commentary on this section is especially strong. He provides excurses on its literary composition, ANE context, discourse grammar, "speaker-oriented *'al-kên*," and the meaning of ransoming and redeeming. While he does not provide a full intertextual and canonical reflection on the Davidic covenant, he provides a robust reading of it in its ANE context. For example, he reflects on the Lord's response to David's desire to build a temple in this way: "One can well contrast here the Lord, who is content with a tent even when offered a house of cedars, with the god Baal in the Ugaritic mythological text

KTU 1.3, who covets a house, and one bigger and better than those of the other gods" (p. 130).

In order to get full value from this commentary, one would need to also have Tsumura's volume on 1 Samuel at hand. In hundreds of places, the author refers the reader back to his 1 Samuel volume for his explanation of a grammatical, syntactical, cultural, theological, or geographical issue. For example, in his discussion of 2 Sam 6:1–5, he directs the reader back to his first commentary six times for key discussions on things like the purpose and function of the ark of the covenant, or the meaning of *'elep* (pp. 111–12). This is not a major critique since most often these commentaries will be purchased together.

This commentary is a welcome contribution to the continued study of 2 Samuel. Tsumura's respect for the historicity of the narrative is especially valuable. His defense of the MT provides a helpful contribution to scholarship that is often quick to emend the text. It will undoubtedly be a standard reference for years to come.

Ryan J. Cook
Moody Theological Seminary, Chicago, IL

1 Samuel–2 Chronicles. Volume 3 of *ESV Expository Commentary*. Edited by Iain M. Duguid, James M. Hamilton Jr., and Jay Sklar. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019, 1343 pp., $60.00.

The *ESV Expository Commentary* series seeks to provide commentaries to the church that are exegetically sound, robustly biblical-theological, globally aware, broadly reformed, doctrinally conversant, pastorally useful, and application-minded. The OT series is edited by the respected evangelical scholars Iain Duguid, James Hamilton, and Jay Sklar, who have each authored commentaries on biblical books as well as numerous other works. It is clear from the focus and format that the series is aimed at pastors and teachers of Scripture. Five volumes have been published in this series and two further volumes are currently listed as forthcoming in this twelve-volume series.

Volume 3 covers the books of 1–2 Samuel, 1–2 Kings, and 1–2 Chronicles. Each of these sets of books is written by a different OT scholar and follows a similar format of (1) a brief introduction (approximately 20 pages); (2) a very short overview of a larger section of text (usually comprising several chapters, e.g. 1 Sam 1:1–7:17; 1 Kgs 1:1–11:43; 1 Chron 1:1–9:34); and (3) a translation, overview, outline, commentary, and application/response section over a smaller unit/section of text. The translation, overview, outline, commentary, and response section typically covers about one or two chapters of the biblical text. There are some minor deviations between the commentaries in this volume. First, the commentary on 1–2 Kings does not contain a bibliography, but the other two do. Second, the 1–2 Kings volume contains two sections at the end of the commentary titled "The Message of 1–2 Kings" and "Final Reflections." Neither of these sections is found in the commentaries on 1–2 Samuel or 1–2 Chronicles. Third, the larger overview

sections in the 1–2 Samuel commentary are given titles (e.g. "Samuel: The Last of the Judges"), but these are not found in the commentaries on 1–2 Kings and 1–2 Chronicles. These minor differences do not impact or detract from the quality of the work but are worth noting for the sake of consistency.

From a preaching/homiletical perspective, the headings are helpful in the Samuel commentary. One of the strengths of this commentary is that it focuses on the main content and material from each section and each verse. It does not get weighed down by minutiae. This will help the expositor of the text focus on the main information, while other commentaries which are more technical in nature can be consulted for more detail.

The commentary on 1–2 Samuel was written by John L. Mackay. Mackay was principal emeritus and professor of OT studies at Edinburgh Theological Seminary. He has authored numerous commentaries, including commentaries on Exodus, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, and several of the Minor Prophets. Some helpful content in his commentary includes a chart that places some of David's psalms within the context of 1–2 Samuel, his discussion of the interpretive challenges in these books, and a basic chronology of the events of the books of 1–2 Samuel (tables 1.2 and 1.3, pp. 32–33). While helpful, the discussion of the interpretive challenges, particularly regarding the text, could have been longer. This is especially true since Mackay's introduction was slightly shorter than the other two. Nevertheless, his discussion of the challenges did helpfully introduce some key issues of which preachers and teachers should be aware.

Mackay's commentary on the text will be helpful to any expositor. He focuses on the main ideas of the text and reads the books of Samuel as a whole throughout his commentary. The application/response section is a little heavy on interpretation and could have a little more focus on application, but a skillful expositor will be able to link the biblical-theological themes that he brings out within these sections. Another helpful feature of Mackay's commentary is that he does not ignore the difficulties of the actions of the characters. Examples of this can be seen in the application/response sections on 2 Samuel 11 and 24 (pp. 368–369; 488–489).

The commentary on 1–2 Kings was written by J. Gary Millar, who is principal at Queensland Theological College in Australia. He is the author of several works, including two volumes in the New Studies in Biblical Theology series. Some of the more helpful content in the introduction includes his discussion of chronology (found in an excursus, with easy-to-read tables); a discussion of speeches, oracles, and prayers; the theology sections; and his discussion/advice to the expositor about avoiding endless repetition. Of these, the "Theology of 1–2 Kings" section will prove particularly helpful for the expositor. Millar's content on "The Theology of the Word" (pp. 501–2) in Kings could easily be missed. When preaching or teaching any biblical book it is difficult not to be repetitive. Millar, however, notes that repetition can be important and help hearers "get to the stage where they can recognize the importance of the repetition and begin to feel the challenge or rebuke of the fact that generation after generation repeats the same mistakes" (p. 510). He notes that there "is a fine line to walk" (p. 510), but that it is important for people to understand the weight of the focus of the text. As someone who spent about a

year in the books of Chronicles in a Sunday School class, I can attest to the importance of this, and the saints respond.

In the commentary section, Millar is particularly helpful in his content on response/application. In particular, his comments on the differences in covenantal context between the original audience and today provide the expositor with a framework that some may not have considered. An example of this contrast can be seen when he writes, "We today are part of the *new covenant relationship* made possible by Jesus' death and resurrection—but we still are related to God through a covenant. … And in that we stand shoulder to shoulder with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and Moses and David and Solomon himself" (pp. 582–83, emphasis original).

John W. Olley is the author of the commentary on 1–2 Chronicles. Olley is research fellow and former principal of Vose Seminary in Perth, Australia. Olley has authored a commentary on 1–2 Kings and a commentary on the LXX of Ezekiel, as well as other works. The introduction contains very helpful content for the preacher. Olley's section on "Looking Forward" will help the expositor think through connection and differences between the people of Israel and the temple in the OT and the church in the NT. He is thoroughly Christological in this section and throughout the commentary proper. He also draws the reader to understand the context of the book as a postexilic work and brings to light the literary features many expositors often overlook.

Olley is also particularly strong in the response/application of the text. This shines through in the genealogies in 1 Chronicles 1–9, which are texts that are particularly difficult to apply to the modern audience (e.g. his connection of the genealogy in 1 Chronicles 1 with being in Christ, p. 930). Olley is also helpful in giving comparisons to the content in 1–2 Samuel and 1–2 Kings, while at the same time focusing on the presentation of the material in Chronicles.

Hopefully this commentary will encourage more pastors and teachers in evangelical churches not only to preach one or two sermons on characters in these important biblical books, but to spend considerable time preaching through the entirety of the books of 1–2 Samuel, 1–2 Kings, and 1–2 Chronicles. The focus in each of these commentaries on literary features and biblical-theological themes show the importance of these books for the life of God's people today. These biblical books display God's history with his people and show the pattern of their sin and unfaithfulness to their covenant relationship (particularly by rejecting his word through idolatry). Their unfaithfulness is starkly contrasted with God's faithfulness and the hope of God's kingdom through a Davidic messiah. The message of these books needs to be studied, preached, and heard by the church today. Mackay, Millar, and Olley have provided expositors a faithful commentary that should be consulted when preaching through these books.

Daniel S. Diffey
Grand Canyon University, Phoenix, AZ

Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs. By George Athas. The Story of God Bible Commentary. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020, 400 pp., $39.99.

This commentary is the sixth OT commentary published in the series, which aims to explain "each passage of Scripture in light of the Bible's grand story" (back cover). George Athas is the Director of Research and Senior Lecturer in Hebrew and OT at Moore Theological College in Sydney, Australia. He serves also as an associate editor for the commentary series on the OT. The format of the series has each chapter examining a biblical passage in three parts: (1) "Listen to the Story" sets the passage in the context of the larger canonical and extrabiblical intertextual connections; (2) "Explain the Story" expounds the passage in its canonical and historical settings; and (3) "Live the Story" applies the passage to a contemporary audience with present-day illustrations and implications.

With respect to Ecclesiastes, Athas concludes that Qohelet was a Davidic descendant living in Ptolemaic Jerusalem and writing at the end of the reign of Ptolemy III Eurgetes sometime between 225 and 222 BC (pp. 20–28). The Epilogist, who agrees substantially with Qohelet's worldview, disseminates the final version of the book by 217 BC. Athas takes a negative or pessimistic view of the book, preferring to follow the NIV in rendering the keyword *hebel* as "meaningless" and seeing Qohelet's discourse as a "hopeless message" constituting "profound pessimism" (p. 36). Qohelet is "a skeptic jaded by the universality of human fate" and desires death as preferable to life (pp. 60, 62). Indeed, as Athas explains, Qohelet believes death is the end of human existence, that the best humanity can do is to salvage some enjoyment before life comes to a wretched end, and that God is a terrifying power because he acts in an absolute and unpredictable way (pp. 36–38). Athas discerns the structure of the book in a thematic fashion, dividing the book into six topical sections outside the opening and concluding frame (p. 42).

With respect to Song of Songs, Athas concludes the book was composed during the Antiochene persecution and Maccabean revolt in 166 BC, that the song is a unity rather than anthology, that the meaning is literal not metaphorical or allegorical, and that the song features a love triangle among Solomon, the young woman, and her shepherd lover (pp. 252–58). The plot climaxes in the young woman's impassioned decision "to take the drastic action of sleeping with her beloved shepherd as a means of dealing with the supreme injustice of being forced into Solomon's bed" (p. 258). Thus the book functions not to underscore the sanctity of marriage but as a means of protesting the injustice of compulsory marriage by commending a sexual liaison out of wedlock. Athas divides the book into four plot movements that comprise a single song (p. 264).

The strengths of the commentary include Athas's clear writing style, the reader-friendly structure and format of the commentary, and the frequent contextualizing of the biblical books into the contemporary world to aid interpreters. Several weaknesses of the commentary merit mention. First, Athas's approach to the historical context of Ecclesiastes is highly suspect if not implausible. The historical backdrop of the Ptolemaic period becomes a decoder ring to unlock every detail of Qohelet's discourse. Thus, for example, the frequent phrase "under the sun" is a

subtle critique of the Ptolemies' rule (p. 57). The circuits of the wind in 1:6 are a reference to the dispute between the Seleucids of the north and the Ptolemies of the south (p. 58). The time poem (3:1–8) is a distillation of the history of Israel down to the Ptolemaic period, with its heavy imposition of taxes (pp. 89–91). The foolish sacrifices of 5:1 are the offerings of the Ptolemaic high priest Onias II (p. 124). The woman who is a snare in 7:26 is Laodice, the estranged wife of Seleucid king Antiochus II, who poisoned him (p. 159). The shouts of a ruler of fools in 9:17 are the loud protests of Onias, who refuses to pay Ptolemy twenty talents for his position (p. 187). The problem with this approach is that contemporary knowledge of the Hellenistic and Persian periods remains too incomplete to press the details of the book this far. As James Crenshaw has asked elsewhere of such treatments, how many eras of the past are so distinctive as to be this recognizable millennia later?

Second, the proposed dating of the books is too late to be persuasive. Athas places the books essentially within the context of apocryphal books, such as Tobit (225–175 BC), Ben Sira (*c.* 200–175 BC; Athas claims Qohelet is a contemporary of the sage), 1 Esdras (third century BC), and 1 Maccabees (*c.* 130 BC). In addition, two manuscripts of Ecclesiastes appear among the Qumran texts, the earlier of which (4QQoh^{a}) dates to 175–150 BC. More recently, Lange has proposed that the Qumran text 1Q/4QMysteries, which dates to around 200 BC, alludes to Ecclesiastes. Athas's proposed date would also place the book within the broad timeframe of the Septuagint (*c.* 280–100 BC). Such a move compromises the canonicity of the texts. It contravenes Josephus's affirmation of a settled canon and his claim that from the reign of Artaxerxes other Jewish writings existed but were not afforded the same honor as the earlier Scripture (*Ag. Ap.* 1.8). Such a late date brings into question Athas's understanding of the formation of the OT canon.

Third, Athas's approach to the message of Song of Songs undermines the position of Jewish and Christian tradition for centuries that the book affirms the divinely ordained sanctity of marriage. To claim, as Athas does, that the book instead affirms the need for attraction and consent in marriage, that sex is beautiful in the context of love, and that arranged marriages are a travesty appears to be a rereading of the book in the context of what modern Western interpreters might wish the book to say. Such a reading is too novel and runs contrary to the grain of Scripture.

Fourth, I found the biblical theology and intertextuality discussions, highlighted as a strength of the commentary series, to be a shortcoming here. Many of the intertextual connections Athas draws, including to Gilgamesh, the Harpers' Songs, and the Gezer Calendar, originate from literature composed centuries, if not millennia, prior to the proposed date for the composition of Ecclesiastes. Moreover, insufficient connection is drawn to earlier parts of the canon, particularly books such as Genesis and Deuteronomy. Athas's biblical theology is almost entirely one of contrast with the NT and specifically with Jesus, rather than of noting continuities between Ecclesiastes and other biblical books. A close study of the Gospel of John, for example, suggests several literary echoes in a more positive vein (e.g. John 3:8 with Eccl 11:5). Athas seems to wish he could evangelize Qohelet by introducing him to Jesus (p. 62), a stance that runs contrary to the view of the NT that the

OT constitutes "sacred writings" (2 Tim 3:15) penned by "holy men of God" (2 Pet 1:21). It appears inconsistent with the book's own presentation of its wisdom as "delightful words" and "truthful sayings" given by one Shepherd (Eccl 12:10–11).

Kyle C. Dunham
Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary, Allen Park, MI

Papyri and the Social World of the New Testament. By Sabine R. Huebner. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019, xv + 192 pp., $24.99 paper.

Ever since the first discoveries in the late nineteenth century of vast papyrus hoards in the trash heaps of Egyptian Oxyrhynchus, scholars have been given a rare glimpse into the everyday life of an important Roman province. Though these finds occurred over one hundred years ago, with important finds still happening today, scholars are continuing to process the information that these ancient documents bring to bear on our knowledge of the ancient world. Huebner takes on this task in *Papyri and the Social World of the New Testament* by "focusing on the protagonists and key episodes of the New Testament literature" and illuminating "the everyday lives and daily concerns and difficulties of members of the lower and middle classes" (p. 136).

Chapter 1 sets out the goals of the book, which include a desire "to focus on the lower classes of Roman provincial society" (p. 2). According to Huebner, "86–93 percent of the entire free population" of Egypt was composed of the "lower social strata" (p. 2). A broad picture of the Christianization of Egypt is painted, highlighting that Demetrius of Alexandria was the first reported bishop of that city (189 CE) and that Christianity was broadly limited to Alexandria ca. 200 CE (pp. 11–13).

Chapter 2 focuses in on one of the features found in the earliest Christian manuscripts, that is, the *nomina sacra* (pp. 21–23). Knowledge of Christian family dynamics in the Egyptian hinterland is teased out from the earliest known Christian letter, P. Bas. 2.43 (*c.* 230s CE; pp. 19–20). Huebner articulates the argument that the social elite traveling from the countryside to Alexandria were responsible for the Christianization of rural Egypt in the early third century (p. 24).

Chapter 3 examines the subject of the imperial census referenced in Luke 2:1–3. Huebner articulates an answer to the well-known chronological difficulty of the Lukan census (pp. 46–47). This is done by examining the papyrus remains (pp. 37, 39, 42), primary sources (pp. 33, 44, 46), and inscriptional data (p. 46). Huebner's solution is that the Lukan census was not an imperial census that occurred every fourteen years, one that Josephus mentioned taking place in 6 CE under the Syrian Provincial Governor Quirinius (*Ant.* 18.1–8; p. 49). Rather, Quirinius was acting the role of a procurator who carried out the dirty work of a census, in this instance, in the kingdom of Herod the Great when Saturninus was Governor of Syria (p. 49).

Chapter 4 unpacks the role of women along with their social status in the Greco-Roman world of the NT. The apocryphal "Gospel of Mary" is examined, along with its earliest copies in P.Oxy 50.3525 and P.Ryl. 3.463 (pp. 51–55), which paints a different picture of women, one with a more "leading role in the religious community" (p. 57). Despite this alternate Christian source, Huebner notes that there is no evidence of women holding any ecclesiastical offices in Egypt (pp. 59–63).

Chapter 5 studies the lives of the "working classes," which, according to Huebner, likely represent "around 95 percent of all premodern society" (p. 65). The trade of a carpenter is the focus of this chapter with information gleaned from funerary stele (p. 67), a fresco painting (p. 68), an ivory carving (p. 69), and documentary papyri (pp. 71, 84). This illuminates Jesus's family dynamics in striking detail, since, as Huebner observes, Jesus's lifestyle and willingness to die "strongly neglect the traditional role of a widowed mother's son" (p. 85).

Chapter 6 surveys the evidence of mobility by the lower classes by examining epigraphic, literary, and papyrological sources (pp. 87–113). Questions concerning travel, such as transport costs, women travelers, travel routes, and Christian travel, among others, are explored. Huebner concludes that travel was not limited to the social elite; rather, those on the lower social strata and women were often highly mobile (pp. 113, 114).

Chapter 7 explores the marginalized of Roman Egypt in the life of shepherds. During the era of Jewish patriarchs, shepherds often signified the qualities of an ideal king (p. 133). By the time of Jesus, shepherds were on the margins of society and represented the lowest social strata (p. 133). Huebner notes that "it was not the emperor, his governor, King Herod, or the scribes who were the first to hear the news [of Christ's birth], but simple folk at the margins of society" (p. 134).

There are a few areas in *Papyri and the Social World of the New Testament* that warrant criticism. Nestled within a footnote, Huebner states that "*Nomina sacra* for *Iesous*, *pater*, and *huios* were added to the canon only later" (p. 142 n. 14). Yet, this contradicts the evidence for the first *nomen sacrum* mentioned in a Christian source, which is the abbreviation for the name of Jesus found in the *Epistle of Barnabas* (*Barn.* 9:7–8; ca. 70–135 CE), likely predating the earliest copies of Christian manuscripts by decades. This led Larry Hurtado to posit that the *nomen sacrum* for Jesus was actually the *first* of its kind and was the originator of this unique Christian practice ("The Origin of the *Nomina Sacra*: A Proposal," *JBL* 117 [1998]: 655–73). Huebner also implies that only those who could read would have been familiar with *nomina sacra* (p. 22). Yet, Hurtado has also noted that *nomina sacra* may have been shown to those who were listening to the Scriptures being read during worship gatherings, so that not just the literate but also those with limited or no literacy may have had a "visual encounter" with the *nomen sacrum* of the names of God or Jesus (*Earliest Christian Artifacts: Manuscripts and Christian Origins* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006], 133).

Another criticism is that Huebner accepts the view that Christianity was absent from rural Egypt prior to the appointment of Demetrius as Bishop of Alexandria in 189 CE (p. 24). Though a full criticism is beyond the scope of this review,

this view does not follow the spread of Christianity known from elsewhere in the Roman Empire. If one takes Palestine as an example, the Jewish movement that later developed into Christianity began in the rural regions of Galilee (Jesus and his disciples) and the Judean wilderness (with John the Baptist) before it moved into the larger metropolis of Jerusalem and northward into Antioch. The same is true of Egypt's closest neighbor, the region of North Africa. The first evidence of Christianity in North Africa is found in the *Acts of the Scillitan Martyrs*. In this extant court record a group of Christians are brought from the rural village of Scillium to the city of Carthage and then martyred for their faith in 180 CE. This account, in which rural Christians take center stage, predates by many years the conversion of higher profile Christians such as Tertullian in the 190s CE and precedes the ministry of the Bishop Cyprian of Carthage by decades.

If North Africa and Palestine can be used as examples, Christianity was likely already well on its way in the Egyptian rural landscape long before Demetrius was appointed Bishop of Alexandria. This is evident in some early Christian writings that likely date to the second century such as the *Epistle of Barnabas*, possibly the *Didache,* and the *Gospel of Thomas*. Also, Christianity was strong enough in Egypt before Demetrius to warrant a catechetical school in Alexandria headed by Pantaenus (ca. 180 CE) who later taught Clement (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.10), and Irenaeus mentioned in passing that there were established Egyptian churches in his day (ca. 180 CE; *Haer.* 1.10.2).

Despite these criticisms, Huebner's work is to be commended. The chapter on the Roman census alone is worth the price of the book as it provides a creative, original, and highly plausible solution to the well-known problem of the Lukan census, which is based on a thorough knowledge of the primary sources. Hopefully, Huebner's thesis will gain traction in the scholarly community. The overviews of Roman travel and tradecraft (such as shepherding and carpentry) are also highly informative and can potentially illuminate other aspects of early Christianity, such as the copying and distribution of Christian literature and the early and rapid spread of Christianity throughout the empire. This work has the potential to inform not only scholars and students but also pastors and teachers at the local-church level, as many of the topics directly relate to common preaching themes such as the birth and life of Jesus and the ministry of the apostles.

Timothy N. Mitchell
University of Birmingham, UK

Christobiography: Memory, History, and the Reliability of the Gospels. By Craig S. Keener. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2019, xxix + 713 pp., $54.99.

Christobiography is another welcome resource for those who argue that the Gospels are ancient biographies, which scholars typically associate with the *bios* ("Life") of the early Roman empire. While the *bios* is a familiar literary type that scholars identify with the genre of the Gospels, Craig Keener, F. M. and Ada Thompson Professor of the NT at Asbury Theological Seminary, claims that few

of these scholars have actually "*examined*" (p. 1, emphasis original) ancient biographies. Such shortcomings, Keener further claims, result in scholars broadly defining the Gospels as ancient biography but offering little further insight into how that genre categorization helps in understanding the Gospels. Thus, in this book, Keener attempts to show that ancient audiences would have expected ancient biographies, like those of the Gospels, to have relied upon and adapted early materials and sources within the living memory of their biographers. He utilizes modern-day memory studies and compares Greek and Jewish biographies in the early empire to show that "Christobiography" would have been a recognizable subclass of the larger ancient biography genre.

Prefaced by an introductory chapter, the book is divided into five main parts, each of which is composed of several chapters that support the author's thesis. The book concludes with a bibliography of secondary sources cited and indexes of authors, subjects, Scripture references, and ancient sources. In the introductory chapter, Keener presents some of the agreements and disagreements in the scholarly discussion about who Jesus is and underscores the reliability of the Gospels as the best sources for examining the historical Jesus. Noting some scholarly opinions on the genre of the Gospels, Keener argues that we actually know much more than we think we do about the gist of the episodes of Jesus's ministry via both individual and collective memories about him, even though history can only be remembered and written selectively.

Part 1 deals with biographies about Jesus. This section highlights the consensus in Gospel scholarship on reading the Gospels as ancient biographies. However, according to the author, this genre identification means little when we do not grasp its implications for treating the Gospels as historical sources when studying Jesus. Thus, the remainder of this section discusses the development of ancient biographies, answering the following questions: "What sort of biographies are the Gospels?" and "What did first-century audiences expect of biographies?" Because the genre of *bios* evolved from a historiographical to a hagiographical literary form between the early empire and late antiquity periods, the Gospels, according to Keener, would fall somewhere in the period when biographers were more interested in providing historical information than creating literary inventions.

Part 2 explores the relationship between biography and history. The chapters in this section discuss topics such as biography as a form of historical writing, the Gospels as a form of both biography and history, and how ancient writers handled historical information. Keener shows that ancient audiences would have the default expectation of understanding ancient biographies as sources of historical information rather than as collections of historical inventions, even though biographers would have had the freedom and flexibility to adapt their source information for their own use and purpose. He says that such would have been the case when Matthew and Luke used Mark as a biographical/historical source but then rearranged Mark's material for their own purposes. Keener also says that, because biographers and historians in the early empire were restricted by and confined to their sources, they would have rewritten the remembered past with rhetorical and not literary

creativity (i.e. literary fiction). Luke-Acts, the author notes, is one such example: "Luke tells an old story in a fresh way" (p. 239).

Part 3 provides case studies that test the range of deviations of recent (i.e. contemporary) ancient biographies from their used sources and surveys some ancient literary styles that were evident in the works of ancient biographers (e.g. Plutarch). Keener says that biographers displayed different levels of flexibility in appropriating their sources as shown in these case studies. Nevertheless, such levels of deviations were common textual phenomena in ancient biographies. The "parallels and variations" that we find in the Synoptic Gospels, for instance, would have been analogous to other similar literary works of that time. Keener asserts, just like Tacitus and Suetonius who would not have invented their reported "rumors" about Caligula, Nero, and Domitian, the Gospel writers also would not have invented new stories (i.e. events not in their sources) about Jesus. Therefore, such differences as chronological displacement, conflation of material, and simplifying of narratives in the Gospel accounts would have been typical of the biographical genre and expected by ancient audiences.

Part 4 answers two objections critics raise for treating the Gospels as historical biographies. The first concerns the Gospels' miracle stories, which raises the question of whether they reflect genuine eyewitness testimonies or whether they are merely legendary accretions along with the writer's creative inventions. Keener briefly explains that the overwhelming contemporary evidence of healing and exorcism reports from eyewitnesses should confirm the veracity of the Gospels' miracle stories. The second objection concerns John's divergence from the Synoptics, which often leads to the notion that the fourth Gospel is less historical and that its author would have exercised greater flexibility in appropriating the available sources than the other three Gospels would have done. Keener agrees that John would be the Gospel that would fall outside the contours of ancient biography but would still remain closer to a biography rather than a novel. The author refers readers to his two-volume book *Miracles* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011) and to his 1,600-page commentary on John's Gospel (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003) for further details on these two topics.

Part 5 demonstrates that memory studies corroborate the theory that the Gospels are ancient biographies. The argument is that "memories come before memoirs," because memoir writers must first have memories about the events that they tell their audience. Keener notes that the evangelists had access to reliable information for the stories they narrate, even when they wrote decades after the events, since studies on oral tradition and history suggest that collective memories over the course of generations still preserve the core or gist of the stories and messages of the source. He also notes that memories that have lasted for five years will continue to persist for decades. This is clearly seen in the reality that the disciples of Jesus preserved the words of their teacher by telling and retelling them, eventually leading to the production of literary patterns for recitation, storytelling, and basic and advanced education.

This book provides a good comprehensive overview for reading the Gospels as ancient biographies and for exploring how this genre classification relates to the

historical reliability of the Gospels. Nevertheless, a few points in the book call for some clarification. First, it is not clear, at least in my mind, that the author is justified in claiming that few scholars have actually "examined" ancient biographies. The numerous sources the author cites in the book seem to show that many (not few) have studied ancient biographies, even when their conclusions do not necessarily correspond with the author's.

Second, the author's comparative methodology is perhaps inadequate to demonstrate that the Gospels were actually ancient biographies. The methodology can highlight the similarities (and differences) between ancient biographies and the Gospels, but it definitely cannot show, and thus be used, to claim that they *are* ancient biographies. The Fourth Gospel is a clear case in point; one does not need to compare it with ancient biographies to claim that it more closely resembles a biography than a novel. By simply comparing it with the Synoptic Gospels, one can immediately tell that the parallel historical information in the Fourth Gospel would make it more like a biography about Jesus. Moreover, do we really need to go to great lengths to engage in these kinds of literary comparisons in order to demonstrate that the Gospels are true biographies? It seems clear, at least to me, that the content of the Gospels already show that they are indeed, in some sense, biographies about Jesus. Nevertheless, *Christobiography* can be a useful resource for scholars and students who are interested in studying further the biographical purpose and composition of the Gospels.

Hughson T. Ong
Emmanuel Bible College, Kitchener, ON, Canada

Interpreting the Gospels and Acts: An Exegetical Handbook. By David L. Turner. Handbooks for NT Exegesis. Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2019, 358 pp., $36.99 paper.

David L. Turner is Professor Emeritus of NT at Grand Rapids Theological Seminary. He is the author of several other helpful books including *Matthew* in the Baker Exegetical Commentary on the NT series, *Matthew* in the Cornerstone Biblical Commentary series, and the monograph *Israel's Last Prophet: Jesus and the Jewish Leaders in Matthew 23* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015).

This volume belongs to the four-volume series Handbooks for NT Exegesis edited by John Harvey. The four volumes cover the Gospels and Acts, the Letters of Paul, the General Letters, and Revelation respectively. The series is intended to provide textbooks for seminary students who have completed a minimum of one year of introductory Greek study. The individual volumes include summaries of the major themes in the assigned NT books, discussions of pertinent methods of interpretation, strategies for preaching or teaching texts from each type of literature, and sample sermons that apply the methods and strategies.

Chapter 1 examines the genre and structure of the Gospels and Acts. Turner explains the meaning of literary genre, explores various views of Gospel genre (*sui generis*, loose collections of oral traditions, aretalogy, midrash, quasi-OT narratives,

apostolic recollections, and Greco-Roman biographies). He concludes that, although the OT narratives influenced the way that the evangelists wrote their Gospels, they should be recognized as βίοι Ἰησοῦ (biographies of Jesus) and that, as the second volume of the Luke-Acts collection, Acts should be viewed as a "quasi-biography of the church." He briefly discusses the subgenres of the corpus (poetry, parable, etc.) and OT citations and allusions. He treats the structure of the books and discusses their distinctive features.

Chapter 2 focuses on the historical setting of the books. Turner discusses the most important sources for reconstructing this history, key historical references within the books, the major institutions, sects, and feasts of Judaism in this period, and offers a brief treatment of the distinct historical setting of each individual book.

Chapter 3 introduces the theology of the Gospels and Acts. Turner explains the nature and approaches of biblical theology and examines the relationship of biblical theology to systematic theology and the theological interpretation of the Bible. Turner objects to the bifurcation of the primary emphases of these books into Christology, pneumatology, and ecclesiology and argues that this approach separates what the books themselves thoroughly integrate. He summarizes the central theme thus: "The Gospels and Acts depict the work of God progressively and incrementally through the Spirit's ministry to John the Baptist, to Jesus, and to the followers of Jesus, the church." The chapter concludes with a treatment of the distinctive theological emphases of the individual books.

Chapter 4 provides prolegomena to the interpretation of the Gospels and Acts. Turner explains the important major theories and methods and offers examples of the practice of textual criticism. He introduces the two major theories of Bible translation and gives examples. He overviews the history and application of important methods used in Gospel study, including source criticism, form criticism, redaction criticism, and narrative criticism. He points out that the genre of these books requires approaches that are different from epistolary material in the NT.

Chapter 5 focuses on the linguistic aspects of exegesis. Turner introduces methods of diagramming the structure of the text, syntactical analysis, and the proper approach to word study. He correctly points out that some of the methods that are very helpful in the study of epistolary texts need to be adapted slightly when applied to narrative texts. He also examines how biblical theology is a preliminary step to systematic theology and practical theology.

Chapter 6 guides readers in communicating passages in the Gospels and Acts. Turner encourages students to adopt the goals in communication promoted by Cicero and Augustine: teaching, delighting, and moving. After coming to a historically accurate understanding of the passage and identifying the original point or points, communicators must seek to address the needs of their current audience. Turner challenges the cliché that a text has only one meaning but many applications, because some applications are valid but others are not. He suggests that an understanding of speech act theory and the distinction between meaning and significance assist in determining the current point of a passage. He discusses various ways in which the current point of the passage may be expressed. Finally, he uses Acts

2:37–47 as a case study that illustrates several different approaches to "homiletical packaging."

Chapter 7 offers two detailed examples of how Christian communicators should exegete and expound a text in the Gospels and Acts. This chapter is the capstone of the book since it walks readers through the entire process described in the separate preceding chapters. Turner carefully selects his two texts for their pedagogical impact. His study of Mark 4:1–20 is designed to demonstrate how to work with a text in the Synoptic triple tradition that includes an embedded genre in the narrative, requires intertextual analysis, and is challenging theologically and pastorally. His study of John 1:1–18 provides a case study in interpreting and preaching passages from the Fourth Gospel.

Chapter 8 consists of a carefully organized introduction to important resources that will be useful to readers as they seek to exegete and expound texts in the Gospels and Acts using the recommended procedure. Turner recommends bibliographies and electronic resources, as well as tools for establishing the Greek text, analyzing the Greek text, and understanding the historical setting of the passage. The chapter identifies important encyclopedias, commentaries, aids in constructing a biblical and systematic theology, and resources that will help students communicate the significance of a text more effectively to particular audiences.

The genius of the book is its integrative approach. Too often theological education is highly fragmented. Students study Greek, hermeneutics, exegesis, homiletics, and theology in separate courses sometimes taught by instructors who do not know the other fields well. Most seminary curricula allot so little time to these elements of classical theological education that professors can hardly give more than a superficial survey of the specific topic of the course, much less find time to illustrate how all of these related studies come together to help students formulate a biblical theology or prepare an expositional sermon. Furthermore, courses may not be properly ordered to help students best understand the various steps in the task of sermon preparation and how each step leads to the other. This book (and series) is a much-needed corrective to that fragmented approach. These books will not replace introductions and surveys of the NT. However, they will serve as helpful supplements to these primary texts. Professors who must teach NT introduction in two semesters (or sadly, even one!) may struggle to find ways to utilize these books as required texts. If the first semester focuses on the Gospels and Acts, Turner's volume will helpfully supplement the assigned introduction. However, many will hesitate to assign the three remaining volumes in the series along with the primary text in the second semester. Professors who have four or more semesters for NT introduction (it has been thirty years since I had this privilege) will be well served by utilizing the entire series as supplementary texts. Perhaps these books will best serve as supplementary texts in Greek exegetical intensive courses devoted to the study of a single NT book belonging to one of these various sections of the NT.

Turner's contribution to the series is an impressive achievement. In this volume he displays the same uncanny ability to summarize immense amounts of information in a clear and interesting manner that he exhibited in his outstanding commentary on Matthew in the BECNT series. His treatment of the process of

exegesis and exposition is obviously that of a practitioner and not merely a theoretician. Those of us who serve in the evangelical academy can forget all too quickly that our primary calling is service to the church and preparation of a new generation of ministers who will correctly handle the word of truth. Turner's volume encourages theological educators to fulfill that calling with new vigor and will help them employ a more effective strategy.

Charles L. Quarles
Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, NC

Jesus Christ as the Son of David in the Gospel of Mark. By Max Botner. Society for NT Studies Monograph Series 174. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019, xvi + 239 pp., $99.99.

In studies on the Second Gospel, there is scholarly dispute over whether the writer affirms or rejects the importance of the Davidic tradition. Max Botner contends that the *Davidssohnfrage* has often been approached through a reductionist lens that limits the study to texts where David's name appears and where the *crux interpretum* is Mark 10:46–47 (cf. Wrede). This, he convincingly argues, is methodologically flawed. Botner instead considers the framing of texts (cf. Bal, Eco) and the writer's "encyclopaedia" or toolbox of Davidic stories as he exegetes the wider Gospel narrative. In Botner's words, his book aims to "reshuffle the [Markan] deck … so that we might start the game afresh" (p. 39).

This book is a carefully written and exegetically thorough consideration of the Son of David motif and the Markan Christ. In chapter 1, he outlines the interpretive impasse between the work and legacy of Wrede who claimed that Davidic descent cannot be traced back to Jesus as it was rejected by some early Christians especially in the *Epistle of Barnabas* (*Barn.* 12:10–11). He took the plain meaning of the *Davidssohnfrage* passage in Mark's Gospel (12:35–37) to be one of rejection, not acceptance of the Davidic sonship of Jesus. Botner also notes the influence of Reimarus's view that, if the historical Jesus was truly the Son of God, he would have sought to bring about an earthly political kingdom, since for Reimarus "Son of God" was equivalent to "son of David" and "messiah." Botner goes on to show how the theological sidelining of interest in Davidic Christology corresponded with a preference for discussion of the importance of the Son of Man title. In addition, Botner outlines and critiques the recent narrative approaches to this topic of M. Eugene Boring (narrative Christology), Elizabeth Struthers Malbon (Christology as characterization), and Richard Horsley (reader/audience-oriented narrative criticism). He concludes that such studies present a methodological problem due to their lack of attention to scriptural intertexts and "the grammar of messianism" (cf. Novenson), which are not limited to places where the name David is mentioned directly (p. 26). He then turns to his own approach, which (1) searches for words and phrases that evoke a *frame* or cultural script that is latent beneath (Eco's model); (2) considers the complexity of messianic language; (3) uses Hays's model for de-

termining echoes and Mark's implicit use of Scripture; and (4) follows Powell's and Bal's attention to reading a linear text where anticipation and adaption occurs.

In chapter 2, Botner addresses *how* ancient writers communicated a "Davidic" messiah. He first uncovers the ancient writings (excepting the Synoptic Gospels) that linked their messiahs to Davidic descent (fewer than we sometimes imagine) and refutes Christoph Burger's claim concerning "die spärliche Überlieferung zum Davidssohn" in Mark's Gospel (*Jesus als Davidssohn: Eine traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970], 59). It is only when compared with the other Synoptic evangelists that this claim may be made concerning Mark, and Botner argues that Matthew and Luke seem inspired by Mark's Son of David. He goes on to show the range of language used in ancestral claims (branch, son, root) and the false assumption that an interest in Davidic roots requires a move away from the significance of Son of Man texts; Mark need not be anti-David if he alludes to Dan 7:13–14. Botner uses the undisputed allusion to Psalm 2 in the Markan baptism story as a "test case" to show how ancient writers selected elements of this psalm as they constructed their messiahs and thus their literary and ideological aims. He concludes that "virtually every messiah text containing a citation of Psalm 2 actualizes the son-of-David frame" (p. 59), showing a strong expectation that the anointed son of God would be the son of David. A significant addition to Botner's work is his attention to the use of royal psalms at pivotal junctures (baptism, first passion prediction, transfiguration, triumphal entry, opening and closing of the temple controversary cycle, and before the Sanhedrin). He finally considers the various titles used for Jesus in the Gospel.

Botner's work in the Gospel of Mark is sharp and clear and forms the bedrock of his argument. In chapter 3, he looks at Jesus's beginnings at his baptism where Psalm 2 and Isaiah 42 are "foundational brushstrokes … across his canvas" (p. 96). Similarly, he shows how Psalm 91 (90 LXX) and David's wider story (1 Samuel 16–17) cohere with David's own anointing, confrontation with the enemy, and "exorcistic therapy" (p. 104) in a way that is similar to other ancient texts. He concludes that Mark introduces Jesus, much like the Deuteronomistic historian did David, as a Spirit-anointed messiah who has come to do battle with the devil who holds Israel in bondage. He is one *like* David even if he has not yet established him as his descendent.

Botner also looks to the Galilean section, which is often ignored by scholars in their examination of Davidic typology as the name "David" is used infrequently in that section. He begins with Jesus's first act, an encounter with an unclean spirit who names Jesus as the "Holy One of God" (Mark 1:24). This pericope is often given little attention in commentaries, while its placement suggests that it deserves otherwise. In exploring the title, Botner considers where the expression comes from and what it refers to, examining Psalm 89 (88 LXX) which links YHWH's anointing of David with holy oil. In this he addresses how the title in Mark 1:24 may point to a Davidic provenance; certainly, it links Jesus with David's ability to cast out the evil spirits in Saul (1 Sam 16:14–23). I find Botner's arguments compelling as he looks to the wider level of the story where texts have a cumulative and cohesive nature. This creates an exegesis that comes alive with new possibilities. It

certainly helps break an impasse on the question of David in this Gospel. We are now working with wider data and able to ask a range of questions in new ways. I am particularly struck with his argument regarding the pericope where Jesus's disciples pluck grain on the Sabbath (2:23–28). This Markan story is fraught with problems as the intertext (1 Samuel 21) names a different high priest (MT: Ahimalech, LXX: Abimalech) and presents David as on his own, while Mark names Abiathar as the high priest and portrays David as not alone. By looking to the wider story in 1 Samuel, Botner links Jesus's ministry with David's in a highly successful and unforced manner and proposes a viable answer to this conundrum. I will not describe his answer, for I encourage readers of this review to read the book. I will, however, say that the suggestion that Ps 68:9 LXX is behind Jesus's light rejection of his family (where his mother and brothers are there) has satisfied my question of why his sisters may be invisible at this time. While this was previously suggested by Yarbro Collins, he adds further traditions from Pseudo-Philo, which again point to a Davidic context.

The following chapters are equally exegetically rigorous and engaging, covering how the Galilean prophet becomes a messiah like David, how the Jerusalem section reflects back to the "grammar of messianism" and forward to expectation, and finally how the crucifixion fits within a Markan frame. The success of the book is the method that looks beyond a linear and singular linguistic lens to a broader and sound consideration of how nuanced subtleties reveal meaning. Botner's writing is elegant, and this book will form an important conversation partner for studies on Mark and the David motif.

Sarah Harris
Carey Baptist College, Auckland, New Zealand

Romans. By Frank Thielman. Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the NT. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018, 812 pp., $59.99.

This work on Paul's epistle to the Romans deserves to take its place among the top five English commentaries on the book. Frank Thielman is the Presbyterian Chair of Divinity at Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham, Alabama, where he teaches NT and Greek. Each section of the book includes a look at the following: literary context, main idea, a translation and graphical layout of the text, structure, detailed exegetical outline, explanation of the Greek text (exegesis), and finally a delightful reflection on the theological contribution of the passage to the church today. Designed for readers who know biblical Greek well enough to read Greek words and understand references to Greek grammar and syntax, it is primarily for pastors, teachers, and perhaps seminary students, not for scholars.

Scattered throughout the book are fifteen "In-Depth" sections analyzing significant exegetical and background issues within Romans: (1) how long was Romans originally—14 or 16 chapters? (pp. 39–42); (2) righteousness language in Romans (pp. 84–92); (3) conscience (p. 139); (4) works of the Law (pp. 190–95); (5) Jesus as the biblical mercy seat (pp. 209–11); (6) "Let us have peace" in 5:1 (pp.

264–65); (7) Adam's sin in early Christian thought (pp. 284–85); (8) the "I" in Rom 7:7–25 (pp. 365–70); (9) height and depth in 8:39 (pp. 428–31); (10) Israel's stumbling (pp. 482–86); (11) Deut 30:12–14 in Rom 10:6–8 (pp. 493–96); (12) Are "be conformed" and "be transformed" in 12:2 synonymous? (pp. 569–72); (13) the "Strong" and the "Weak" in Romans 14–15 (pp. 627–30); (14) Paul's ministry to the poor among the saints in Jerusalem (pp. 691–94); and (15) Prisca, Aquila, and the church in their Roman house (pp. 713–16).

In the introduction, Thielman describes life in Rome in the mid-first century and the motivations that drove Rome to attempt to conquer the world and bring home thousands of slaves. He also details the growth of Christianity in Rome, originating among Jews in the first century (p. 28). One of the worthy elements of Thielman's approach is to support everything with citations from first-century textual sources. For example, he notes that most Christians in Rome, rather than trying to meet in individual homes, met together in large shops either run by Christians or in which Christians worked.

Regarding Rom 1:1, Thielman says that Paul's task as the apostle to the Gentiles included overseeing widespread groups of Gentile believers through his letters. It was this element of his calling that moved him to write Romans (p. 59). In agreement with most scholars, Thielman takes 1:16–17 as the first and major summary of Paul's thesis in the epistle. He defines "salvation" as the "rescue" of God's people from his present and coming wrath and from the decay brought into the world by sin (p. 81). From there he launches into an extensive analysis of "righteousness language" in the NT and the LXX and other Greek writings (pp. 82–92). He concludes that God's "righteousness" refers primarily to his impartiality and fairness (pp. 88–89), and that "justification" means a release from punishment rather than imputed righteousness.

In 1:18 God is shown to be "equitable and fair" by the fact that he now reveals his wrath against all peoples through the preaching of the gospel (p. 103). In 2:1, Paul begins to address a fictional Jew who has the Mosaic Law and expects God to condemn unrighteous Gentiles but not himself (p. 125). However, Paul answers that God judges everyone impartially (2:11) based on "whether they obey what they know about his requirements" (p. 130).

Rom 3:21 is based on 1:16–17 and is a turning point in Paul's argument. The believer receives God's righteousness "through God's justifying action" (p. 203). In discussing 3:25–31, Thielman displays his ability to analyze, discuss, and resolve the most detailed linguistic, exegetical, and theological problems in biblical texts. Two problems arise: Thielman does not give Romans 4 sufficient weight in shaping a Pauline view of justification by faith, and there is a greater need to tie the background and meaning of Gen 15:6 into Paul's purposes and theology in Romans.

In 5:1, Paul summarizes the argument of 3:21–4:25 with the phrase, "having been justified by faith." The result of this act is reconciliation with God and salvation from God's wrath (p. 263). Concerning 5:9 and 5:10, where Paul uses his "how much more" argument, Thielman shows from Aristotle's *Rhetoric* how the argument works (pp. 271–73), with an extensive look at the words underlying "reconciliation" (pp. 272–73). According to 5:12–21, Adam introduced sin and death into the world

and caused all to sin. The main outcome of the Adam-Christ "type" is that those who have received righteousness through Christ will also reign in life through Christ (5:17; pp. 287–90).

In Romans 6, believers have "died with respect to sin" and thus are "no longer living in the sphere of sin" or in its power (p. 303). The "body of sin" (v. 6) is "the body in its susceptibility to sin," which is now powerless in the life of believers (p. 307). In Romans 7, clearly believers are no longer under the power of the Mosaic law (p. 334). Sin is able to use the law to increase transgression, but believers are not under that power either (p. 336). Concerning the identity of the "I" in 7:7–25, the author analyzes three major views—Paul, Adam, and Israel—and concludes the following: (1) the Pauline understanding of "I" requires too much speculation to be the sole idea; (2) the Adam view is too problematic and unexpected to be adequate; and (3) the Israel view is too weak by itself without including Paul himself as a representative of Israel (pp. 352–69).

Romans 8 explains how God's Spirit frees believers from the law controlled by sin and death (pp. 378–79). Being "led by the Spirit" (8:14) means that the Spirit helps believers "make decisions about their behavior that please God" (p. 389). For all of God's people, everything is working together for good, that is, for their resurrection and glorification (pp. 409–10).

In chapter 9, Paul noted that he was deeply concerned about Israel's rejection of God through their rejection of the gospel (9:1–3). In 9:6–29 the major question is whether God has failed to keep his word to Israel. Paul looks carefully at what God actually promised and shows that God has not turned back from any of it (pp. 449–56). In Rom 9:30–10:21 Paul gives an ironic picture of a group (Gentiles) who reached a goal (God's righteousness) that "they were not even trying to attain." Gentile believers obtained a right standing with God "out of the blue," says Thielman, without any exertion on their part (p. 478). The rest of Romans 10 focuses on Christ as the freely received and universal Savior from sin, available equally to Gentiles and Jews by faith.

Romans 11 makes clear that God did not reject his chosen people Israel, nor did he cast them out of his eternal plan (v. 1). Paul makes doubly clear in 11:6 that if God chose his people by grace, then "nothing [they] did prompted God to choose them" (p. 517). Yet those who are not part of the remnant have been "hardened" because of their rebellion (p. 518). Someday, however, God will reconnect Israel to their Abrahamic promises.

Contrary to most modern versions, Thielman translates the last words of 12:1 as "reasonable worship," not "spiritual worship" (p. 568). In verse 2, he considers whether "be conformed" and "be transformed" are synonymous, and concludes that they are not (p. 572). The rest of chapter 12 focuses on building community in the church through love (p. 594). Romans 13 is instructive concerning the probable situation of the churches in Rome (p. 610). Non-citizens in Rome were forced to pay taxes of various kinds, and Paul hoped to keep the government from thinking of them as rebellious people (p. 611). In Romans 14, Thielman devotes a lengthy "in-depth" section to identifying the weak and strong. He concludes that the weak

"probably" were a mixed group of Jews and others who followed Jewish customs and laws (pp. 627–30).

Romans 15:14–33 discusses the purpose of Paul's letter within his apostolic work. He normally planted churches in new areas, rather than preaching in places where churches were already present (p. 685). The hindrances that had kept Paul from Rome were now gone, and he was planning to see Rome on his way to Spain (pp. 686–88). In Romans 16, Paul ends the epistle with a commendation and a series of greetings. Thielman then does an "in-depth" analysis of Prisca, Aquila, and churches that met in houses (pp. 713–17). The book ends with a "Theology of Romans" summary that centers on God's righteousness and grace and on humanity's rebellion and subsequent rescue. There is also a good Scripture index, an index of ancient literature, and a totally inadequate subject index.

This volume is a magnificent achievement and an excellent addition to the Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the NT series. It is a rare balance of exegesis and application, theology and historical speculation, a balance that one hopes for in a high-level exposition. Good Bible students will be able to understand the issues and arguments, and non-specialists who have studied some Greek will still find most of it helpful. It does not attempt to critique every possible interpretation in every passage, but looks at various sides of significant debates and shows grammatically, contextually, logically, theologically, and historically why the author concludes as he does. Some shortcomings have been pointed out, but it stands alongside Cranfield, Longenecker, Moo, and Schreiner as the best on Romans. It will influence teachers and preachers of Romans for many generations to come.

Wayne A. Brindle
Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA

Three Views on Israel and the Church: Perspectives on Romans 9–11. Edited by Jared Compton and Andrew David Naselli. Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2018, 266 pp., $21.99 paper.

Seeing Christ or the church as the typological fulfillment of God's promises to Israel in the OT seems to be gaining in popularity in evangelical biblical studies, and yet, Romans 9–11 is a foundational text for non-supersessionist and post-supersessionist theologies. If the apostle Paul in this foremost NT epistle affirms the theological significance of ethnic Israel, this must have bearing on how a canonical biblical theology construes the narrative, theological relationship of Israel and the church. To debate this issue, Kregel Academic has brought forward their second entry into the popular multiple-views genre of publications.

The positions taken in this interesting and helpful volume turned out differently from what the editors anticipated. Jared Compton tells us in the very helpful "Conclusion" that he and co-editor Andrew Naselli expected a debate on the meaning of "Israel" in Romans 9–11 with views ranging from a traditional dispensational definition of Israel as a nation to a traditional covenantal interpretation of

Israel as the church, with a mediating view that sees Israel generally as a type of the church but defines it in Romans 9–11 as ethnic Israelites.

Contrary to expectation, all three contributors agreed that the term "Israel" in Romans 9–11 consistently refers to the ethnic people. It does not refer to the church of Jews and Gentiles. Consequently, the debate among the contributors is not about the meaning of the term "Israel" in Romans 9–11 but about the nature and extent of ethnic Israel's salvation in that text. Differences on this topic are then brought into conversation with a redemptive-historical, biblical-theological concern for relating Israel and the church in the grand narrative of Scripture.

The resulting positions are somewhat cumbersomely labeled as follows: (1) a Non-Typological Future-Mass-Conversion View, presented by Michael Vlach of Master's Seminary, (2) a Typological Future-Mass-Conversion View, presented by Fred Zaspel and James Hamilton of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, and (3) a Typological Non-Future-Mass-Conversion View, argued by Benjamin Merkle of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary.

As can be seen from the titles, Vlach, Zaspel and Hamilton agree that Romans 9–11 predicts a future mass-conversion of ethnic Israel. They also read Paul as linking this mass-conversion to the future coming of Christ. In Merkle's view, however, Paul is arguing that only a remnant of ethnic Israel will ever be saved, and Romans 11 looks backward in time to the first coming of Christ, not forward to his return. Whereas Vlach, Zaspel, and Hamilton see the unconverted mass of Israel as a real problem for Paul for which he predicts a future salvation, Merkle reads Paul as dismissing the mere perception of a problem. Since no real problem exists, in Merkle's view, no future solution is needed or given in this text.

The contributors focus their attention, for the most part, on the exegesis and exposition of the text of Romans 9–11. (Vlach is the only one who attempts to follow closely the structure proposed by Naselli in the introduction.) It is clear from the presentations that Paul's view of Israel cannot be decided merely by examining his use of the OT or his illustrations (such as the olive tree) apart from the syntactical, grammatical argument in which such usage and illustration is found.

The contributors note the importance of Rom 9:6–8 for the definition of "Israel" and how Paul's double use of the term in that text drives his argument overall. However, readers will want to pay close attention to how each author sees the progression of Paul's argument in Romans 11, noting especially the interpretation of Rom 11:1–2, 11–12, 15–16, and 25–27. Here is where the weakness of Merkle's argument is most evident. Merkle claims that the OT lacks any concept of the salvation of Israel as a whole, and so it is not likely that Paul would argue for such. The other contributors, however, easily refute this (e.g. Jer 31:33–34). Merkle's attempt to neutralize Paul's reversal language in 11:11–33 fails exegetically. Zaspel and Hamilton in their response essay and Compton in the conclusion note Merkle's implausible assignment of differing antecedents to pronouns in 11:12 (as well as in 11:15). He also alleges different meanings to the two uses of "Israel" in 11:25–26 on the basis of Paul's distinction in 9:6 despite the difference in context and the resultant oddity that the expression "all Israel" ends up meaning "part of Israel." Vlach notes how the language of reversal in the olive tree illustration, "God has the

power to graft them in *again*" (11:23) fits with the thrust of Paul's argument throughout this section. It is difficult to see how Merkle can escape the criticism of "too much special pleading" (p. 230).

The presentations by Vlach and by Zaspel and Hamilton are stronger exegetically and address the text more comprehensively. Their expositions of Paul's argument for a future mass-conversion of Israel may be seen as complimentary, although it would have been helpful for comparison purposes if their chapters had been organized similarly.

Paul's illustration of the olive tree in 11:17–24 is discussed by each of the presenters, although not with the same thoroughness. It was interesting that none of the presenters dealt with the difference between placement in the tree, staying in the tree, and being re-grafted. Paul conditions the latter two explicitly on faith. The former, however, appears to be a sovereign act of God that demands rather than assumes faith. Consequently, it would seem to be a mistake to read it as simply illustrating the union of Jewish and Gentile believers. What God is doing with peoples in history is a challenge to Gentiles as well as to Jews.

The difference between Vlach's interpretation and the others is better evaluated with respect to the question of how Paul's view of Israel in this passage relates to biblical theology and the interpretation of the grand narrative of Scripture. Is Israel's role in the storyline of Scripture best described as *typological* as commonly done in evangelical biblical theology today?

The use of "Typological" and "Non-Typological" in the labels of the contributors' views was supposed to signal opposite answers to this question. However, the editors do not clearly define typology (a brief definition appears in a footnote in the introduction but with no extended discussion), leaving the contributors to offer their own definitions. Not all of them do so, however. Zaspel and Hamilton speak extensively about typology without ever defining it. Vlach, who actually affirms typology in Scripture, even between Israel and the church, calls his view "Non-Typological" in contrast to a typology that reads Israel as a type "transcended," "fulfilled," or "superseded" by Jesus or the church in the NT, such that "Israel does not have future significance as a nation" (p. 22).

Merkle disclaims replacement theology, although he sees Jesus as the fulfillment of Israel. He believes that there is an "intensification" or "escalation" in the narrative movement from type to antitype and that "when the antitype arrives, the divine purpose of the type is completed" (p. 164). He recognizes that his view of Romans 9–11, which sees divine promises fulfilled to ethnic Israel, may seem inconsistent with this general typological view. Yet he rejects what he calls "a binary choice" (p. 207). He affirms "Israel's distinctive place in redemptive history" and even states that "Israel's distinctive status as a nation is not dissolved because the Messiah has come" (p. 207). However, Merkle claims that the only distinctive place and status promised to Israel is that a remnant of them will be saved.

Zaspel and Hamilton argue for a robust typological structure to biblical theology in which Israel as a type is fulfilled by Christ and the church (they reject the claim that Christ fulfills all types). However, they also expect the fulfillment of divine promises and type patterns to Israel. Consequently, they reject replacement

theology: "however much the church may realize blessings promised to Israel, for Paul the *OT* expectation for Israel continues" (p. 135; emphasis original). Nevertheless, they hesitate to affirm all that "restoration" (the end of the type pattern) entails for Israel. Although they explicitly raise the question, they are silent on the fulfillment of the land promise to Israel (contra Compton who alleges that they reject it) because, they say, Paul is silent on it. They speak only of typological fulfillment in the church. However, the canonical Paul cites God's gift of the land to Israel as an inheritance (Acts 13:19), and Paul in Romans declares the gifts of God irrevocable (Rom 11:29).

Vlach may see the national hope of Israel too readily in some parts of Paul's argument, but he is right to note the bearing of the apostle's references to Israel's covenants, promises, gifts, and calling in the so-called "bookends" (Soulen's term) of Rom 9:1–5 and 11:28–33. Israel's salvation fits naturally within a holistic restoration that is the declared topic of divine promise and prophecy. However, prophecy also speaks directly of Gentile salvation, as Zaspel and Hamilton interestingly admit. And if this is so, then perhaps typology, appreciated for its revelation of the rich intertextual structure of biblical theology, should not be seen as the primary driver of the biblical storyline. That is to be found in the declarative word of both promise and plan and also methods and means. Is this not what one finds in a passage such as Romans 9–11?

A final observation concerns the conceptualization of redeemed humanity, which, along with the faithfulness of God, is a key takeaway from this study. Zaspel and Hamilton rightly complain about language in Vlach that sounds like a traditional dispensational two-peoples view. Compton also notes this in the conclusion but goes too far in accusing Vlach of seeing Israel in the consummation "*alongside* not *within* the church" (p. 248). Vlach is a progressive dispensationalist, who in other writings distinguishes Israel and the church not as referring to different people groups (only Israel and Gentiles are *people groups* who could conceptually be *alongside* each other) but as referring to different dimensions of redeemed humanity. The church, in this view, refers to the whole of redeemed humanity in its personal interconnectedness to Christ and to one another. That dimension of redemption has its own trajectory in the progress of revelation. Jew and Gentile, Israel and Gentile nations, refer to the personal, ethnic, and national realities of this same humanity that is redeemed. As component parts they themselves are subjects of revealed plans and promises of God. Both dimensions come together in a unified consummation vision. That, it seems, is what Vlach has in mind. It would also seem to be where Zaspel and Hamilton arrive at the end of their essay. Compton appears to be recommending something like this in the conclusion. Perhaps future discussions can pick up on that point.

Craig Blaising
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, TX

Quoting Corinthians: Identifying Slogans and Quotations in 1 Corinthians. By Edward W. Watson and Martin M. Culy. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2018, xi + 150 pp., $21.00 paper.

A responsible reading of Scripture—that is the ultimate goal for Watson and Culy. In an important article on "Slogans in 1 Corinthians" (*BSac* 167 [2010]: 68–88), Jay Smith argued that it is necessary to determine where Paul is quoting the Corinthians and where he is reacting to such statements. *Quoting Corinthians* is the first book-length study to take up Smith's challenge to ferret out slogans in 1 Corinthians. Watson and Culy intend to identify these slogans embedded in 1 Corinthians by detecting *where* Paul uses them and then provide criteria to show *how* it is possible to separate "what Paul is saying from what the Corinthians have said" (p. 3).

The poignant question in chapter 1 "Why should we study the places in 1 Corinthians where Paul might be quoting Corinthians?" (p. 1) provides the starting point. As the authors rightly contend, identifying when Paul is quoting the Corinthian position may significantly affect one's reading of 1 Corinthians and practically may shape one's way of life as a Christ-follower. Watson and Culy point us to the problem: scholars have stressed that this letter of Paul to the church at Corinth contains a number of references to Corinthian positions that are expressed in slogans but they have failed to provide any clear criteria for identifying such quotations. However, important scholarly work has been done. Hence, in their attempt to develop objective guidelines for determining Paul's quotations, the authors sail through the rough waters with the help of some notable and influential studies. Three important "lifelines" in their journey are worth noting: major monographs that touch on quotations in 1 Corinthians, leading articles on slogans in 1 Corinthians, and a list of modern commentators who serve as dialogue partners (pp. 5–10).

Chapter 2 explores Paul's "dynamic relationship" with the church in Corinth (pp. 11–20). The significant length of time that Paul ministered in Corinth is important background information discussed by the authors. First Corinthians is not a letter to strangers. It is a letter to people whom Paul knows and loves and whose situation is very familiar to him. However, after Paul left Corinth (Acts 18:18), the Christ-assembly became a community that grew open to a wide range of ideas. As a result of such openness, the Christ-assembly developed various divisions that were expressed in leadership factions, class structure issues, and conflicting worship styles. The rest of this chapter helps readers navigate this relationship between Paul and the Christ-assembly in Corinth. The section on the rhetoric of relationship is informative: prior oral and written correspondence served as the main impetus for Paul's letter (p. 17).

In chapter 3, Watson and Culy survey the ancient rhetoric of "refutation" and "diatribe" (pp. 21–31) in order to show how Paul throughout 1 Corinthians quoted claims made by his opponents and then countered them with his own perspective. Their study shows that the rhetorical strategy of citing slogans in order to refute them is consistent with common practices of ancient Hellenistic rhetoricians and was particularly common in diatribe. Building on Smith's work ("Slogans in 1 Co-

rinthians"), Watson and Culy point out that Paul's employment of this method serves to characterize the Corinthians' thinking as flawed. In chapter 4, Watson and Culy ask, "How do we determine when an author is quoting another source in ancient Greek literature?" (p. 32). Clues from Greek grammar are offered as a response and illustrated through 1 Cor 14:21, followed by a ten-point summary to prepare for the setting forth of criteria for evaluating potential slogans (pp. 36–37).

Chapter 5 attempts to provide a good starting point for reconstructing Corinthian slogans or quotations (pp. 38–46). Watson and Culy evaluate and appreciate the proposals of their dialogue partners (statements introduced in an unusual manner, statements that are repeated in the letter, abnormal Pauline vocabulary, and superficial contradictions between statements within a single letter; p. 39). The difficulty of utilizing these proposals led Watson and Culy to flesh out Smith's criteria (characteristics of the slogans, syntactic irregularities, Greco-Roman literature, contextual reading, wider interpretative community), and they propose a way forward by providing a useful set of criteria: context, quotative frame, shift in person, proverbial statements, rhetorical features, repetition, diatribe, contradictions, contrast, common issues. The key text for testing the applicability of these criteria is 1 Cor 1:11–12.

Chapters 6 to 10 apply the criteria and identify the potential slogans within Paul's letter, organizing the discussion around three major themes: sexuality (chaps. 6–7), community (chap. 8), and order (chaps. 9–10). One significant contribution by Watson and Culy is that they conclude these remaining chapters of the book with the "theological implications" after recognizing Paul's interaction with the Corinthian slogans. Just like there is theological value in identifying scriptural quotations in 1 Corinthians, there is also theological value in acknowledging the presence and function of Corinthian slogans or quotations in the same letter. It adds value to our understanding of Paul's theological and practical intent: his appeal to the Corinthians to take their focus off themselves and onto the glory of God and the edification of the church, of which they are all a part. Specifically, chapter 6 in the book focuses on slogans (in 1 Cor 6:13–14, 18) that reveal a libertine attitude toward sexuality (pp. 47–69). Focusing on 1 Cor 7:1–6, chapter 7 in the book deals with the superficially opposite view, namely, asceticism (pp. 70–83).

The discussion in chapter 8 (pp. 84–109) of the book engages the whole context of 1 Corinthians 8–10 or maybe up to 1 Corinthians 12, but the application of the criteria is limited to chapters 8 (vv. 1–13) and 10 (v. 23). For Watson and Culy, it is very likely that quotation is found in 1 Cor 8:1 and 8:4 and unlikely but possible in 8:8. Following at least fifteen scholars, the authors agree that 1 Cor 10:23 contains a specific Corinthian slogan that Paul is quoting. The chapter concludes with the theological import of such slogans in Paul's rebuttal to the Christ-assembly. The authors' discussion in chapter 9 on 1 Cor 14:20–25 opens up a centuries-long debate on the apparent contradiction between verse 22 and verses 23–25, involving the apparent quote from Isa 28:11–12. Here is their position: "Paul is citing an extended quotation from the Corinthians, which includes both their paraphrase of an Old Testament passage and the conclusion they have reached from the paraphrase (14:21–22)" (p. 119). The application of the criteria not only assists their exegesis

but actually provides a brief but excellent and illuminating discussion on the "gift of tongues" (see pp. 122–23).

Chapter 10 is a bold attempt at solving the problem of women speaking in church (pp. 124–37). Is it possible that some of the confusion surrounding 1 Cor 14:34–35 can be cleared up by recognizing that Paul is once again quoting the Corinthians? (p. 124). Maintaining the integrity of the text, Watson and Culy engage with their dialogue partners and concede that their criteria have led them to concur with Hays's assessment: "there is no indication in the text that Paul is quoting anything (unlike 7:1)" (p. 135). At the beginning of the chapter, the authors' rhetoric seems to suggest that perhaps a Corinthian quotation can be ascertained in this difficult passage, but in the end they admit, "the case against a quotation here is compelling" (p. 135).

Overall, *Quoting Corinthians* is a hermeneutical gem. The authors hope, and rightly so, that the merits of their study will contribute to the remaining interpretative challenges facing scholars on relevant passages, especially in 1 Corinthians 8 and 14 and perhaps in other Pauline letters. Again, the book's primary strength lies in Watson and Culy's commitment to a responsible reading of Scripture. Its uniqueness lies in its focus on the Corinthian quotations rather than scriptural quotations. In this way, it is a helpful addition to stand alongside works such as Richard Hays's *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989) and G. K. Beale's *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), at least for any study of Paul's letters but especially of 1 Corinthians. By way of summary, the book provides help to students and scholars alike on the subject of quotations in 1 Corinthians, but also more generally on biblical interpretation, translation practice and theory, historical-critical analysis, ancient rhetoric, and theology. Hence, the authors should be applauded for offering such an enriching contribution.

Rolex M. Cailing
Asia Graduate School of Theology, Manila, Philippines

Ephesians: An Introduction and Commentary. By Darrell L. Bock. Tyndale NT Commentary. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2019, xix + 213 pp., $21.00 paper.

The Tyndale NT Commentary series has a long history (the first volume was published in 1956), one of providing reliable guides for understanding Holy Writ to evangelical Christians. Darrell Bock's volume on Paul's letter to the believers in Ephesus is part of the third cycle of commentaries within the Tyndale Commentaries series and replaces the original volume by F. Foulkes that was first published in 1963. The aim of the Tyndale NT Commentary series is to provide evangelical Christians untrained in the biblical languages and Jewish/Greco-Roman history with a straightforward reference tool that is more in-depth than a one-volume commentary on the entire Bible, yet also not as technical as an intermediate-level commentary (e.g. the Pillar NT Commentary series).

Bock's commentary begins with a brief bibliography that lists major commentaries on Ephesians, as well as significant monographs and scholarly articles that address critical issues on the letter. Interestingly, Bock includes a number of resources published in German. The bibliography is then followed by a relatively detailed introduction that addresses all the major "behind the text" critical issues. Next, Bock provides a concise outline of the letter's major textual units (pp. 25–26). The commentary then moves from a big-picture examination of relevant historical and literary considerations to a verse-by-verse analysis of the text of Ephesians. Bock's discussion of each textual unit proceeds in a three-part fashion that opens with a brief discussion of the unit's context, follows with an exegetical analysis of the unit, and concludes with a concise treatment of the unit's theological implications.

Bock's exegetical treatment of Ephesians in this commentary is marked by five tendencies that would make it particularly helpful for its intended broad audience. His ability to reach a broad audience should not be surprising given that he is the Executive Director of Cultural Engagement at the Hendricks Center and his scholarly interests include the relationship between culture and Christianity. First, and perhaps most importantly, Bock's treatment of Ephesians provides the reader with a clear picture of how Paul's programmatic statements in Eph 1:10 and 1:23 are developed throughout the letter (e.g., pp. 125, 163). In doing so, Bock helps non-specialists grasp the central importance of cosmic unity and the church within the theological vision of this letter. Second, given the excessive individualism within American evangelical Christianity, Bock's proclivity to emphasize the communal nature and significance of Paul's statements in this letter (even within "the armor of God" passage in Eph 6:10–20; p. 197) is also noteworthy. While his comments in this regard are often brief, they are especially appropriate in a commentary on this particular letter and are a necessary response to various trends within American evangelicalism. Third, Bock displays a critical appreciation for the relevance of pagan magical practices for understanding the text of Ephesians. Some scholarly treatments of this letter are marked by an excessive preoccupation with this cultural feature of first-century Ephesus. Bock, however, manages to recognize the relevance of this backdrop, while also not seeing it in the text where it likely is not present. Fourth, and somewhat related to my third point, Bock also points the reader to textual features within the letter that likely press against the imperial ideology of Paul's cultural milieu. For example, Bock argues the depiction of Jesus Christ as savior in Eph 2:8 "stands in contrast to the culture, given that figures like Julius Caesar and Augustus were both declared to be saviour of the world in inscriptions like one found in Ephesus" (p. 68). Importantly, Bock does not overstate the value of this feature of Paul's social environment and is therefore perhaps aware of C. Heilig's criticism of "political" readings of Paul's letter (*Hidden Criticism? The Methodology and Plausibility of the Search for a Counter-Imperial Subtext in Paul* [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015]). Non-specialist readers of this commentary would greatly benefit (especially given contemporary political challenges) from seeing the presence of counter-cultural statements within the text of this letter.

Given the sensitive nature of Paul's statements in the "household code" (Eph 5:22–6:9) of this letter, the author's treatment of this passage warrants closer examination. In general, Bock's treatment of this controversial text is balanced and handles difficult exegetical issues well and in a way that is faithful to Paul's intent. Bock's treatment of Paul's instructions to wives, husbands, and slaves are especially worthy of careful comment.

Three significant interpretive decisions seem to guide Bock's exposition of Paul's directives to wives and husbands (Eph 5:22–33). First, Bock rightly notes (following B. Merkle) that Eph 5:21 is best understood as a "hinge verse" that functions as a conclusion to "the exhortation about being filled with the Spirit" (Eph 5:18) *and* introduces "the exhortation to wives to submit" to their husbands in Eph 5:22–24 (p. 167). Second, Bock also appropriately argues the Greek noun κεφαλή in Eph 5:23 means "head" and not "source" (pp. 174–75). Third, Bock appreciates the counter-cultural nature of Paul's instructions in this passage (pp. 172–73, 175). These three factors then lead Bock to recognize (rightly) that Paul's vision of the marriage relationship in Eph 5:22–33 involves "mutual submission" *and* the presence of distinct roles within the marriage relationship. Bock thus helpfully guides the non-specialist reader towards appreciating the reality that Paul's picture of the marriage relationship involves a husband toiling as "a giver and server, looking out for her [his wife] growth and best interests" (p. 177) and a wife being "called to respond to the lead of her husband" (p. 173). Bock's treatment of this passage not only navigates difficult exegetical issues well, but also provides some extremely timely practical guidance for Christian couples. For example, regarding the phrase ἐν παντί in Eph 5:24, Bock appropriately states "the remark is to a degree rhetorical as the call would not be for a wife to submit to a husband who asks something of her that violates the command of God. Acts of sin, being subject to abuse or subjecting the wife, a child or other to immoral or dangerous circumstances are not at all in view here" (p. 176). Again, given the intended audience of this commentary, such comments are incredibly timely and sometimes unfortunately necessary.

The discussion of Paul's instructions to slaves (Eph 6:5–8) in this commentary is also particularly helpful. Not only does Bock's treatment of this text exhibit careful exegesis, he also provides the non-specialist with information necessary for wrestling with a culturally sensitive subject. In particular, Bock begins his treatment of Eph 6:5–8 by providing the reader with pertinent information that is necessary for understanding the nature of slavery within the Greco-Roman period (pp. 191–92). The astute reader of Bock's description of slavery within that time period should readily come away with an appreciation for the differences between slavery during that time period and slavery within the modern era. Bock also appropriately counters the uncritical link between the slave-master relationship and the employee-employer relationship that is often made at a popular level by suggesting this "analogy is an incomplete one," since "the employee chooses by contract to give his or her labour and has options to continue that service or not under that contract" (p. 192). Somewhat similarly, Bock aptly translates the Greek noun δοῦλος in this text with the English equivalent "slave," though he unfortunately does not

address the popular notion that the household codes in the NT are referring to indentured servants.

In conclusion, Bock's generally excellent exegesis in this commentary makes it a splendid option for non-specialist readers. This commentary would serve as a superb guide for adult Bible class teachers and laypeople interested in gaining a better understanding of Paul's letter to the Ephesians. Most pastors would also probably benefit from using this commentary for sermon preparation but would also need to consult more technical commentaries. Generally speaking, the gravest problem with this commentary is not with what *is* stated in the commentary, but with what *is not* stated in the commentary. No commentator is immune to poor exegetical decisions, and Bock does make some questionable decisions. For example, he argues the participle πληρουμένου in Eph 1:23 is passive and depicts Christ as "the one filled by God and who in turn fills the church" (p. 59). Non-specialists should (and hopefully do) expect these sorts of problems to be occasionally present in any commentary. That said, they should also expect (and would greatly benefit from) features like excursuses on significant textual issues. Bock, for example, provides little guidance in understanding how Paul's digression in Eph 3:2–13 fits within the letter. Given the nature of Paul's instructions to slaves and our own experience with slavery in the modern era, an excursus that addressed such topics as the translation of the noun δοῦλος and the Bible's rather neutral stance towards slavery would also have been invaluable to most non-specialist readers. At only two hundred and thirteen pages, the brevity of this commentary for such a complex letter is certainly a weakness. This minor shortcoming, however, does not detract from the overall value of this commentary.

Mark Owens
Cedarville University, Cedarville, OH

The Ethics of the Enactment and Reception of Cruciform Love: A Comparative Lexical, Conceptual, Exegetical, and Theological Study of Colossians 3:1–17. By John Frederick. Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2/487. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019, xv + 266 pp., €79.00 paper.

This volume is the published version of Frederick's 2014 doctoral dissertation at the University of St. Andrews, Scotland, under the supervision of Grant Macaskill. The book is divided into two major parts, preceded by an introductory chapter that reviews the literature on the topic and lays out the methodology Frederick wishes to employ. The introductory chapter begins with a clear statement of the author's thesis: Contrary to recent trends in Colossians research, the author of Colossians does not draw on Greek philosophical categories—especially Aristotelian, Stoic, or Cynic—in the construction of his ethics. Rather, he is working within a framework provided by the traditional "Jewish Two Way ethic which views ethical realities in terms of binary opposites" (p. 1). Frederick summarizes two bodies of research in his review of the literature: (1) studies dealing with ethical catalogues and comparative lexical studies; and (2) studies assessing the influence of Hellenis-

tic philosophy on the ethics of Colossians and Paul. This is followed by a brief review of literature on the topos of "the two ways" in early Judaism. In the section on methodology, Frederick explains that he will offer both a comparative lexical study of the terms in the virtue and vice lists in Colossians 3 as well as an exegetical study of those lists. This is to be followed by an attempt to locate the ethics of Colossians 3 within the framework of Michael Gorman's concept of cruciformity as a category for conceptualizing Christian ethics.

Part 1 concerns itself with "Comparative Lexical and Conceptual Studies." Chapters 2–4 have the same structure, comparing terms and concepts in Aristotle, the Cynics, and the Stoics, respectively, with those in Colossians. The chapter on Aristotle notes in passing that N. T. Wright has recently proposed that Paul's ethics are a "transformed Aristotelian virtue ethic." Frederick's comparative analysis, however, leads him to the conclusion that there are unresolvable tensions between Aristotle and Colossians. There is some terminological overlap in the vice lists, but the author of Colossians views them as real vices, whereas Aristotle sees them as mere passions whose moral value is determined with reference to his doctrine of the mean. There is hardly any overlap with reference to the virtues. Turning to the Cynics, Frederick concludes that "there are virtually no connections between the ethical virtue terms of the Epistle to the Colossians and the various Cynic sources" (p. 80). Two Colossian vices, πάθος and αἰσχρός, do occur in Cynic literature, but they seem to belong to general Hellenistic ethical vocabulary rather than being distinctly Cynic. On a conceptional level, there are clear conceptual differences between the Cynics and Colossians, especially regarding the communal ethic of the latter, which the former would certainly be inclined to deconstruct. For Frederick, the closest parallels are to be found between the Stoics and the virtues and vices in Colossians. This has engendered much scholarship that posits conceptual links between the Stoics and Paul as well as the theory that the latter's ethics, though hardly his metaphysics and cosmology, are essentially Stoic. Frederick questions whether "a Pauline detachment of Stoic eudemonistic *ethics* from the other integral elements of Stoic thought and worldview is even possible" (p. 94; emphasis original). Frederick attempts to establish this by reviewing the works of various Stoic authors, especially Epictetus and Dio Chrysostom, and by showing that the fundamentally Stoic concept of living life in accord with nature is incompatible with Paul. While Paul would have encountered street-level Stoic moralism and may have borrowed its vocabulary at times, he was not operating within a Stoic moral framework.

Chapter 5 summarizes Frederick's analysis in the preceding chapters. He notes that there is a general lack of terminological correspondence between the Colossian virtues and Hellenistic philosophical sources. There is more overlap with regard to the vices, which have a broadly Hellenistic provenance. All of them, with the exception of πάθος, are, however, equally well attested in the Septuagint. These factors preclude crediting any one philosophical school with a formative role in the virtue ethics of Colossians. In chapter 6, Frederick turns his attention to the Septuagint and argues that "the *patterns of conspicuous lexical absence* of Colossian ethical terms in the Hellenistic sources, can be explained by their *patterns of lexical presence* in the LXX texts" (p. 137; italics his). Frederick concludes that the Colossian virtues

correspond to OT terms that describe righteous people and God. In chapter 7, Frederick compares these results with Philo, who despite his affinity for Greek philosophy makes ample use of virtue and vice terms found in Colossians and the OT. The same can be shown to hold true for Ben Sira. Both draw from the Jewish tradition of the righteous man in their ethical formulations.

In part 2 of his book, Frederick discusses the "Governing Ethical Pattern of Thought Colossians." This, for him, "is rooted in the idea of the ultimate perfection of believers which is a result of their communal access to the wisdom and will of God through their participation in the community of the people of God in Christ" (p. 188). Frederick seeks to demonstrate this with reference to Col 1:9–10, 28; 2:1–2, 18–19; and especially 3:1–17. He notes that the critique of the Colossian heresy, which emphasizes mystical experience and worship of angels, is based squarely on the fact that it is "an individualistic and contra-communal philosophy that removes one from the necessarily corporate experience of cruciform participation in love which occurs in Christ" (p. 199). Chapter 9 summarizes the results of Frederick's study. A bibliography and extensive indexes round out the volume.

Frederick's study is an impressive comparative analysis of the ethical terminology in Colossians, especially the vice and virtue lists, with ancient philosophical virtue traditions. He reminds readers that the search for connections between Colossians and the various philosophical schools must involve more than simply tallying up common terms (though even on that level there is room for skepticism). By comparing vocabulary within the respective contexts of Colossians and ancient philosophical texts, on the one hand, and Hellenistic Jewish works, on the other, Frederick is able to present a strong case that Colossians is only superficially influenced by the former and heavily indebted to the latter. Frederick also does a good job of pointing out the incompatibility of particularly Stoic individual conceptions of virtue and—quite masterfully—of the Colossian heresy with the communal ethic of Colossians.

In spite of its fundamental strength, the work has some weaknesses. First, I question Frederick's decision to refer to the "author of Colossians" as such out of deference to the guild, even though he thinks Paul is the author, since the guild is moving back toward Pauline authorship and only demands transparency here. This strategy sometimes engendered confusion because it was, in fact, not always sufficiently clear whom Frederick meant when he referred to "Paul." Second, though I am generally in favor of shorter dissertations, Frederick could have interacted more directly with the relevant philosophical texts in the volume, rather than summarizing their contents. Readers face the choice of tracking down the primary sources or taking Frederick's word that he portrays them correctly. Third, though Frederick was, to my mind, successful in establishing a link between the vice/virtue ethic of Colossians and OT and early Jewish conceptions generally, he was less so when it came to demonstrating a link to the two-ways tradition. Fourth, Frederick's attempt to integrate the ethics of Colossians into the "cruciform" narrative of Gorman is too superficial to add much of value. A more thoroughgoing interaction with Gorman and others who share his perspective would have been necessary to establish that this is an important aspect for assessing the ethics of Colossians. I think it

probably is, but Frederick needs to offer more proof. Fifth, after quite convincingly demonstrating that the ethics of Colossians are not linked in any substantive way to Aristotle, the Cynics, and the Stoics, he tentatively posits a link to the Epicureans on the second to last page. This is an odd way to end the work. Frederick would have been better served by either subjecting the Epicurean sources to the same analysis he performs on the other schools or dispensing with such a conjecture altogether.

Despite these weaknesses, Frederick's book makes a valuable contribution to Pauline ethics and should give pause to scholars who all too quickly identify Greek philosophical traditions as formative influences on the apostle. He establishes, once again, that the first mines to quarry in that regard remain the OT and Paul's Jewish heritage.

Joel R. White
Freie Theologische Hochschule, Giessen, Germany

The Law's Universal Condemning and Enslaving Power: Reading Paul, the Old Testament, and Second Temple Jewish Literature. By Bryan Blazosky. Bulletin for Biblical Research Supplement 24. University Park, PA: Eisenbrauns, 2019, xiv + 193 pp., $74.95.

Blazosky seeks to contribute to an understanding of Paul's theology of the law by asking if unbelieving Gentiles are condemned by the law (p. 2). Blazosky demonstrates that scholarship is divided on this issue, proving his point through an overview on the identity of those under the curse of the law in Gal 3:13 and through an explanation for the reason why Paul understands them to be under that curse (pp. 5–18). To answer his research question, Blazosky reads a wide range of texts starting with the Hebrew Bible (chaps. 1–2) and then proceeds on to Second Temple Judaism (chap. 3) before considering Galatians, Romans, and then the rest of Paul's corpus (chaps. 4–6). Blazosky's aim is to contribute to Pauline scholarship by supplying a cohesive position from Paul on unbelieving Gentiles under the law, by establishing that position exegetically in Paul's letters, and by demonstrating how the Hebrew Bible and Second Temple Literature might have shaped Paul's thought (p. 24).

In chapter 1, "The Torah," Blazosky situates his study in the canonical shape of the Hebrew Bible (Torah, Prophets, and Writings) and defines the use of Torah and law in the study (pp. 25–26). It is not made entirely clear why the canonical shape of the OT is necessary to understand how Paul might have been shaped by the OT (p. 25). Blazosky observes that the pre-law narrative of Genesis includes divine commands, consequences for sin and the curse, and an extension of blessing and curses beyond Abraham and Noah's immediate families (p. 30). Blazosky does not explore the sin of the Amorites (Gen 15:16; cf. Amos 2:9) in his analysis. Blazosky focuses on two sections of the Mosaic Torah that address outsiders, Leviticus 18–20 and Deuteronomy 27–30. In Leviticus 18–20, the inhabitants of the land are described as unclean, and God detests them for their sexual immorality and idolatry (p. 41). The same judgment upon covenant outsiders and those who

break the covenant demonstrates that the plights for each are "merged" (p. 41). Like Leviticus, Deuteronomy identifies idolatry as the sin of the nations for which they will be judged, but such judgement is not tied specifically to the stipulations of the Deuteronomic blessings and curses (pp. 46–47). These two texts equate covenant disobedience with the judgment of the nations, and so conceptually it is possible to connect Gentiles with covenant disobedience (p. 47).

In chapter 2, "The Prophets and the Writings," Blazosky devotes most of his attention to the latter prophets (pp. 54–71). In 2 Kgs 17:7–41, Israel is judged for committing acts like the nations, and the nations who resettle are judged for not following the Mosaic law. This shows "the intricate connection between the land, the Mosaic law, and divine judgment" (p. 53). In the latter prophets, the nations are judged along with Israel and Judah specifically for greed, idolatry, mistreatment of Israel, pride, and violence (p. 55). Blazosky highlights Zech 5:1–4 and Isa 24:5–6 as possible evidence but concludes that neither conclusively states that Gentiles are judged under Torah (pp. 70–71). The writings, according to Blazosky, do not advance the discussion beyond what is already found in the law and prophets. This is an interesting conclusion, especially since Paul often cites or alludes to the Psalms to underscore the universality of human plight (e.g. Gal 2:16; Rom 3:9–20). Blazosky notes that the Psalms themselves do not appeal to the law to support this judgment, yet it seems that Paul understands the Psalms as indicting all under νόμος (p. 74).

Blazosky investigates several themes in Second Temple Jewish literature (pp, 82–90) in chapter 3. Blazosky argues that the law's eternal nature, association with natural law, and status as a light to Gentiles are meant to portray the law as attractive and that such characteristics present a positive outlook for Gentiles and the law (e.g. Philo, *Opif.* 3; *Let. Aris.* 15–16; Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2.281–84). Turning to the condemnation of Gentiles, Blazosky provides eight texts indicating Gentiles were under the curse of the Mosaic law: Isa 24:5–6 LXX; *1 Enoch* 1–5, the third *Sibylline Oracle*, *L.A.B.* 11:1–5, *4 Ezra* 7 and *2 Baruch* (considered together), and finally the *Mekilta* and *Sifre* on Deuteronomy (pp. 90–112). Through his analysis of these texts several conclusions are offered (p. 114). First, like the OT, Second Temple texts assume Gentile culpability without providing a warrant for why Gentiles are culpable (cf. Rom 2:12–16). Second, the Noahic covenant does not appear to serve as the basis for why Gentiles are condemned before 100 CE. Natural law does not serve as an alternative basis for Gentile condemnation. Natural order and the Mosaic law are closely linked in some authors (e.g. Philo). There is a clear affirmation of Gentiles being condemned by the Mosaic Law in the *Sibylline Oracles*, *L.A.B.*, *4 Ezra*, and *2 Baruch*. These texts make explicit the interpretive possibilities implicit in the OT.

In chapter 4, Blazosky argues that in Galatians Paul portrays the law as condemning both Jew and Gentile through an analysis of Paul's use of first-person plural pronouns (pp. 115–25) and the law's association with ἁμαρτία. σάρξ, στοιχεῖα, and κόσμος in the letter (pp. 125–33). Blazosky observes the phenomenon of Paul switching between second-person and first-person pronouns in Gal 1:6–9; 3:21–25; 4:1–7; 4:21–5:6, which demonstrates that Paul does not differentiate be-

tween the plight of Jews and Gentiles, and he applies this analysis to Gal 3:10–14 (pp. 120–24). Blazosky then examines how the law is one of the several enslaving powers constitutive of the στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου in part because of the parallelism of statements with the ὑπό + the accusative (Gal 3:22, 23; 4:3, 21). Finally, the *inclusio* of 1:4 and 6:15 demonstrates νόμος and κόσμος are a part of the present evil age (pp. 132–33). Paul's presentation in Galatians resonates with the universal accountability to the law and the singular nature of humanity's plight in the previous chapters. Paul's presentation of the law is drastically different, however, in its exacerbation of the human plight and its close connection with sin and the flesh in Galatians (p. 134).

In chapter 5, Blazosky focuses on Romans 1–8 and asks two questions of the text: "How does νόμος relate to the condemnation of Gentiles in Romans 1–3?" and "What role does νόμος play in the former enslavement of believers in Romans 5–8?" The first section focuses heavily on Rom 2:12–16 (pp. 138–52). Here Blazosky argues, "Paul's point is that Gentile sinners *occasionally* do things required by νόμος, and this obedience demonstrates that they be have been impacted internally by νόμος" (p. 146). The rest of the chapter focuses on the law's relationship to the enslaving powers in Romans 5–8. Romans 6:14–15 demonstrates that there is a close association between sin and the law in this section of Romans. Furthermore, Paul argues it is necessary to die to the law in Rom 7:1–6. Blazosky argues that Paul's use of pronouns indicates both Jews and Gentiles are in view here (p. 158). The law has been "hijacked" by sin (7:7–12), which shows its inability to deliver humanity from the plight of sin, flesh, and death (p. 161). Paul presents Jesus and the Spirit as the solution to this plight in Romans 8 (p. 162). Blazosky concludes the chapter with how Romans complements and contributes clarifications to Paul's letter to the Galatians.

Blazosky's final chapter considers evidence for the law's universal condemning power in 1 Corinthians, Ephesians, Colossians, and 1 Timothy (pp. 165–86). Blazosky states these additional passages do not alter or contribute to his overall thesis, but importantly show that there is a unity in the Pauline corpus on the extent of the law's condemning power (pp. 165, 186). In the conclusion, a summary of Paul's presentation of the Gentiles and the law and its relationship with Second Temple Judaism is presented (pp. 187–90). Finally, Blazosky offers a summary of his proposal and areas for further research (pp. 190–92).

Blazosky demonstrates that he is a careful exegete and does not go beyond the evidence in the text. This is especially evident in chapters 1 and 2. The way Blazosky has formulated his research question means OT and Second Temple texts do not need to say exactly what Paul said to be viewed as a valuable source for consideration when examining Paul's theology and exegesis. Blazosky hints that apocalyptic aspects of Paul's theology might provide a further explanation for Paul's exegetical and theological conclusions, but he opts out of pursuing this suggestion since the OT establishes a framework for Gentile condemnation (p. 191). This is an interesting observation by the author because "apocalyptic" and apocalyptic interpreters of Paul do not figure strongly in the project at all. Further, "apocalyptic" is not defined in the work as a whole. Blazosky's project is descriptive and answers a

question in Pauline scholarship through an analysis of a wide range of texts. Because of Blazosky's method, the reader is left wondering why certain authors made the claims that they did and what theological and exegetical decisions might be behind these claims. A difference between description and explanation can also be observed in Blazosky's exegesis of Galatians and the law's association with the present evil age (p. 192). Why is the law associated with sin and the flesh in the letter? These caveats aside, Blazosky's work does identify and answer an area of contemporary Pauline scholarship where further clarity has been needed.

Trey Moss
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY

Clash of Visions: Populism and Elitism in New Testament Theology. By Robert W. Yarbrough. Reformed Exegetical and Doctrinal Studies. Fearn, Ross-shire, UK: Mentor, 2019, 128 pp., $16.99 paper.

Concerned about the impact of Greek philosophy on theology, Tertullian famously quipped: "What does Athens have to do with Jerusalem?" In this printed version of the Gheens Lectures delivered at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Robert Yarbrough registers his concern about the ongoing, even resurging, impact of the German Enlightenment on NT biblical studies through the heirs of that movement. To be more specific, he explores what sort of rapprochement there should or can be between the approach to Scripture inherited from the German Enlightenment, what he terms the "elitist" approach, and the approach that marks historic Christianity, what he terms the "populist" approach. As Yarbrough states:

> It is an analysis … of hermeneutical outlooks affecting how the New Testament is read and synthesized in two contrasting domains, conceptually and geographically: one in which the church tends to be stagnant or receding, the other in which the largest numeric increase of professing Christians in world history is underway for several generations and is projected to continue. (p. 7)

Why should the reader care about the interrelationship between elitist and populist approaches to Scripture? First, the elitist approach assumes and asserts its right to be the sole arbiter of the meaning of the Bible. Second, elitists promulgate a skeptical view of the Bible's history and message. Third, elitist scholarship exerts a powerful influence on pastoral training and the cultural perception of the truthfulness of the Bible's message in the West and around the world. In academic terms, you could say that he is asking: What does SBL have to do with ETS? In geographic terms, he is asking: What does the theological outlook of the non-confessing, declining mainline church of the West have to do with the theological outlook of the confessing, exploding global church?

Robert Yarbrough is uniquely poised to explore this tension as this study stands atop thirty years of teaching and writing on the NT and related fields, with a special interest in the study of the NT in Germany. In addition, along the way he

has had a sustained interest in theological education globally, especially in Eastern Europe and Africa. Yet more importantly, as a person and a scholar, Yarbrough is a model of the best of the populism that he commends.

Yarbrough's exploration proceeds in three steps. First, he attempts to define the hermeneutical camps at issue. He does this both by carefully delineating what he means by "elitist" vis-á-vis "populist" approaches, conceptually and geographically. What Yarbrough refers to as "elitist" is the relatively small coterie of highly-trained scholars who approach the NT with a historical-critical methodology founded on positivist assumptions. This "elitist" viewpoint "bloomed in the German Enlightenment" centrally through the influence of Lessing, Kant, Walter Bauer, the Tübingen school, the history-of-religion school, and the grand synthesis of NT theology presented by Rudolf Bultmann (p. 18). It lives on in the Western academy, in the presentation of the Scriptures by the cultural elites in the West, and in the declining mainline churches. The elitists do not regard Scripture as divinely given and question what have been traditionally considered its central claims, for example, the bodily resurrection of Christ and the saving efficacy of his death and resurrection for all who believe. For the elitists, the Bible is a random collection of disparate texts no more revelatory of God than any other text associated with any other religion. And, since its claims cannot be taken at face value, the reader must probe behind the texts to find out why these authors wrote so extensively and intensively about events and convictions that the elite scholarly guild knows cannot have happened and cannot be true. Moreover, the elitists disparage, even ridicule, any readings that do not comport with the "critical consensus" they represent.

On the other side stands the "populist" approach. Populists reject the necessity of the critical guild as the authorities who determine what can or cannot be said about what the NT teaches. They do not feel the need to be constrained completely by the critical consensus in terms of methods or results (though they do not reject every aspect of critical methodology or its results). They tend to approach the Scriptures in a much less regimented way. They are open to viewing the Scriptures "in the light of the dogmatic truths ecclesial readers have tended to find there through the centuries" (p. 9). They believe that its teaching can be systematized and that the church has represented that synthesis in its confessions and creeds. This approach also represents the majority, a growing one at that, of contemporary world Christianity. In terms of NT theology, it is represented by evangelical scholars like Donald Guthrie, George E. Ladd, I. Howard Marshall, Thomas Schreiner, and others in their vein. Yet, it also affirms that it is not sufficient to produce works on the NT simply for academic consumption: "It would see the necessity of personal response to the Bible's saving message and the prioritizing of living out that message and carrying it to those who as yet have resisted it or perhaps have yet to hear" (p. 25). This approach affirms that the Bible is true when it speaks of matters like a transcendent creator, the Trinity, human and cosmic fallenness, the incarnation, the divinity of Christ, Christ's virgin birth and atoning death, miracles, the new birth through renewal by the Holy Spirit as the gospel is preached and received, the glorious and visible bodily return of Jesus Christ, eternal life and eternal punishment, and an inspired authoritative Scripture that affirms all these things

and much more. Populist, then, is a "descriptive term denoting an outlook common to masses of individuals regardless of their level of learning, geographic location, or economic status" (p. 25).

Chapter 2 gives relevance to the concern at the heart of this study as it explores how contemporary scholarship is revisiting and resuscitating elitist approaches to Scripture that many thought had deservedly been put to rest in generations past. The scholarly revivifications of the theology and approaches of F. C. Baur (1792–1860) and Rudolf Bultmann (1884–1976) are the cases in point.

Chapter 3 concludes his study by offering some guidance for how populists should interact with elitist approaches. As mentioned earlier, Yarbrough does not attempt to reject the elitist approach to Scripture and its results in their entirety (even though elitists generally reject populist readings out of hand). He argues that populists should draw on the best critical scholarship has to offer without accepting its "covert ground rules" that demand an uninspired text and delegitimize, along with other crucial beliefs, faith in Christ, the crucified-yet-risen Savior. In addition, he offers reasons for confidence in the staying power, further refinement, and fruitfulness of the populist approach in the confessing global church. He is even cautiously hopeful that the growth and witness of the global church will infuse new life into elements of the evangelical West that are wandering away from the historic consensus of the church with regard to the nature, message, and authority of Scripture. The book concludes with two appendices. These are testimonies by two scholars to the life-changing power of the Scriptures read from a populist viewpoint, that is, in a way consistent with historic Christianity. In particular, they bear witness to the power of the Scriptures when taken at face value to spur social consciousness, a willingness to embrace the "other," and a life of love toward God and neighbor.

There are many reasons to recommend this little volume. For those interested in NT interpretation, it is a primer on the crucial role that the German Enlightenment and its heirs continue to play in shaping how the NT has come to be understood and treated in the West. For NT scholars or aspiring ones, this study is an encouragement to avoid bowing the knee to the critical consensus and is an initial guide for why and how to refrain from doing so. For those losing confidence in the unique character and authority of the Bible, Yarbrough's attention to the growth of the global church in conjunction with a populist reading of the Scriptures has the potential to reinvigorate the reader's confidence in the Scriptures. Finally, for institutions involved in training church leaders and academics, it would be a good discussion starter as they consider the scope and sequence of their curriculum. The tension at the center of Yarbrough's study revolves around what sort of relationship should or can there be between the elitist and populist approaches. Granting that there is an undeniable benefit to a discerning engagement with elitist scholarship and that a thorough awareness of it is essential for effective ministry in certain contexts, he is not arguing that populists should simply disengage from elitist scholarship altogether. At the same time, he is concerned that present approaches to the study of the NT in populist circles may need to be revamped. Particularly, he worries that populist circles often leave students with the impression that the criti-

cal consensus is "where the truth lies" (p. 18), which can happen when populists insist that no serious study of a given issue or text in Scripture is responsible without consulting it. Not only that, but populists are often guilty of robbing both Peter and Paul to pay Bultmann and his modern heirs. In Yarbrough's words,

> The more energy we devote to internalizing and then correcting mistaken claims about the Bible that abound in (especially) Western settings (though they are encountered worldwide), the more many of our students are confirmed in the biblical illiteracy that our society and even our churches seem to foster nowadays, because there is less time left in the curriculum for teaching and learning the Scriptures themselves rather than so-called critical theories about the Scriptures. (p. 18)

Gregory Couser
Cedarville University, Cedarville, OH

Quest for the Historical Apostles: Tracing Their Lives and Legacies. By W. Brian Shelton. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018, xiii + 314 pp., $32.00 paper.

Seeking to trace the life, ministry, and impact of the apostles beyond the biblical witness is not a task for the fainthearted. It is especially daunting for an evangelical scholar who must avoid the Scylla of uncritical thinking that exalts the stories of early post-biblical Christian writers to near inspired status and the Charybdis of skepticism that creates a whirlpool from which nothing positive is left. Patristic scholar W. Brian Shelton has survived the journey, or "quest," as he prefers to call it, and we are the richer for it. The frequent reprinting of William McBirnie's *The Search for the Twelve Apostles* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 1973) is a testament to a widespread interest in the subject, but that work completely lacked the critical powers and even-handed approach to the evidence that Shelton has mustered. As a result, McBirnie left his readers with a thoroughly misleading picture. While Shelton may in places leave his readers less satisfied, and even unsure what the author's own views are, he will certainly leave them better informed.

After explaining the parameters of his quest in an introductory chapter, the author begins with an overview of the first-century concept of the term "apostle" and what that title denoted or implied—a commonality of appointment, experience, purpose, authority, and teaching. He also reviews the religious tensions of the period and the sources of our information on it, thus setting the stage for the following thirteen chapters which deal with "the Twelve." Judas is obviously omitted, but his replacement, Matthias, and Paul are included. He also includes in the title of each chapter a physical symbol that has come to be an iconic identifier for that apostle (e.g. the rooster for Peter, the knife for Bartholomew, the sword for Paul). The uneven length of the chapters is a reflection both on the impact of each apostle and on the amount of information preserved in the early centuries—a full thirty-three pages for Simon Peter and a mere eight for Simon the Zealot. In general, Shelton has mined the sources for each chapter thoroughly, and thus the treasure that he

presents in some chapters, and the mere nuggets in others, is always a reflection of the relative abundance of the data.

The chapter on Peter will illustrate both the strengths and weaknesses of Shelton's approach. He begins, as in the other chapters with a thorough and balanced account of what the NT tells us of the apostle—his calling, discipleship events, and his post-Pentecost ministry as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. He then surveys the early testimony to see what can be gleaned about his connection to John Mark and the Gospel of Mark as well as the two canonical letters of Peter. Next comes a concise overview of the pseudepigraphical works attributed to Peter and other apocryphal works that feature him. Then follows a thorough discussion of the evidence for Peter's further ministry (not mentioned specifically in the canonical texts) in Antioch, Anatolia, Corinth, Britain, Gaul, and Rome. Finally, he discusses Peter's image in the early church and sites still associated with his life, death, and burial.

The first third of the chapter is a concise summary of the biblical witness, and if there is little new here, there is also little to quibble about. For his intended evangelical readers, however, it may have been useful to explain his acquiescence to the interpretation of πέτρα in Matt 16:18 as speaking of Peter and not his confession, the traditional Protestant interpretation (p. 65). He also mistakenly asserts that 60% of Acts focuses on Peter, a statistic that would much better fit Paul (p. 67). The early patristic claims of Peter's ministry in Antioch is especially intriguing, and the discussion could have benefited from a fuller discussion of the chronological implications of such a ministry. His possible ministry to the provinces or regions (not "cities"; p. 77) of Anatolia is properly noted. Less likely is a Petrine ministry at Corinth which is also held out as a possibility (pp. 78–79), mostly on the basis of Paul's reference to a Cephas faction in 1 Corinthians and a second-century reference by Dionysius of Corinth. The latter citation, however, is ambiguous, and whereas Paul mentions Apollos seven times in connection with the Corinthian church, stating clearly that Apollos watered what Paul had sown (3:6), Cephas is mentioned but twice and never in a context of personal ministry in Corinth. George Jowett's novelistic work positing a Gallic and British ministry could have been summarily dismissed in a footnote rather than acknowledging it with a paragraph (p. 79). When discussing the Roman ministry, Shelton gives too much space to the legend of Simon Magus, who is transposed to Rome (together with Peter's family!) to duel his apostolic namesake. That, like the *Quo Vadis* legend, was too good a story not to be oft repeated over time, but neither has substantial early support or the ring of truth. Instead, much more could have been gleaned from the solid study of early Christian Rome by Peter Lampe (not Richard Lampe, p. 90), a work only referred to twice, and then peripherally. Shelton's prose also sometimes obscures his ideas and conclusions. Eusebius may have been uncertain about the status of the Acts of Peter but saying that he held the work to be "doubtfully authentic" (p. 80) is not of much help. The reader may come away from this section wondering what Shelton's own conclusion is about the historical reality of these stories. Finally, in the section on visual symbols related to Peter, some reference should have been made to the specifically Roman image known as the *traditio legis* (Peter receiving from Christ the

new covenant in the form of a scroll while Paul watches) which appears in fourth-century apse mosaics and sarcophagi in Rome and becomes one of the dominant images of Peter. The discussion of Peter's final resting place might also have benefited from at least a mention of the competing theory of Peter and Paul's tomb being located *ad catacombas* on the Via Appia (on the basis of the *Calendar of 354*).

The shorter chapters on the other apostles that follow cover the subjects and the source materials just as thoroughly. The reader will become acquainted with all the strands of evidence for John's last years in Ephesus and for Thomas's purported trip to India. Even more useful is Shelton's gathering of lesser known stories, such as the Syriac, Ethiopic, and Latin accounts of the ministry and martyrdom of Matthias. The list of the primary resources at the beginning of the bibliography can serve as a quick reference for people wishing to consult these hard-to-find primary sources whose compositions span a millennium as well as the entire Greco-Roman world. Even church historians will find new tidbits scattered throughout these accounts.

Returning to our opening classical allusion, I personally would steer further from Scylla than Shelton does. For example, the great number of far-flung geographical locations given to Bartholomew—Anatolia, Greece, Parthia, Egypt, and India—would lead most to the conclusion that early Christians were unsure of his post-biblical ministry locations. However, after comparing modern attempts to amalgamate the various stories, Shelton concludes that Criswell's hypothesis of a ministry by Bartholomew in India before he dies in Armenia is "the best path to adopt" (p. 169). Still, I thoroughly recommend that readers accompany Shelton on the journey. The excursion will enlighten the reader about the multitude of unreliable and possibly reliable source materials that we possess for the earliest centuries of the church, an area where many, evangelicals included, are still in need of as much historical GPS guidance as possible.

Glen L. Thompson
Asia Lutheran Seminary, Hong Kong