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BOOK REVIEWS

Biblical Theology: A Canonical, Thematic, and Ethical Approach. By Andreas J. Köstenberger and Gregory Goswell. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2023, 981 pp., $64.99.

Andreas J. Köstenberger served as research professor of New Testament at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary after serving faithfully for many years at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. He is co-founder of Biblical Foundations and theologian-in-residence at Fellowship Raleigh. Gregory Goswell is academic dean and lecturer in Old Testament at Christ College in Sydney, Australia.

Biblical Theology: A Canonical, Thematic, and Ethical Approach begins in chapter 1 by covering the nature and practice of biblical theology, the significance of the canonical forms of Scripture for biblical theology, biblical theology and ethics, and biblical theology as a moderated family conversation. A standout feature of this chapter lies in its distinctive integration of ethics within the realm of biblical theology. This chapter uniquely intertwines ethics with biblical theology, highlighting the NT's resolute affirmation of the Ten Commandments, excluding the Sabbath (p. 59). It emphasizes that moral direction is not confined to the Pentateuch, but extends to the Wisdom Literature and the prophetic tradition's societal consciousness (p. 59). Ethical principles permeate not only the Gospels and Letters, but also Acts, where the emphasis lies on "the ethics of witness, leadership, the mission and governing authorities, and possessions" (p. 60).

Part 1 of the book focuses on the OT. Chapter 2 deals with the OT framework and shows the differences between the Hebrew and Greek canons, concluding with alternative endings of the OT canon. Chapter 3 deals with the Law and begins the book-by-book treatment that follows a two-part structure: the themes of the book and the ethics of the book. For example, the main themes of Genesis are "land, blessing, offspring, covenant, and the universal scope of God's salvation that aims to repair the created order" (p. 108). The authors suggest that the themes of land, blessing, and offspring appear back in Genesis 1 and 2. These themes "receive their initial sounding in the primeval history (chaps. 1–11) and fuller development in the ensuing chapters, such that the promises to the patriarchs are to be read as *reaffirming* the primal divine intentions for humanity" (pp. 108–9).

When it comes to the theme of covenant, the authors say that "it is best not to envisage a 'covenant of works' in 2:16–17, for a prohibition and a threat … do not in themselves imply the presence of a covenant" (p. 110). The authors go on to argue that covenants presuppose a relationship and do not initiate them. The covenant with Abraham has both conditional and unconditional elements, but the conditional aspect is one-sided: God alone (represented by the flaming torch) passes between the divided animals (Gen. 15:17), this being an enacted self-curse by God regarding what will happen to him if he fails to do as obligated (p. 112).

The ethics section deals briefly with the days of creation that climax in the Sabbath day. Rest "is pictured in the idyllic garden of Eden (Gen. 2:4–25), where

the work assigned to humans would have been free of the stress, strain, and frustration that often spoil our enjoyment of work" (p. 113). The ethic of marriage is shown in the fact that "monogamy is God's original design" (p. 114). Indeed, polygamy produces strife.

The last part of the chapter on Genesis is titled "Genesis in the Storyline of Scripture." This section mentions a few themes that appear in Genesis that serve as a trajectory for the rest of the drama of Scripture. For example, "Genesis 1 provides the archetype of the command-fulfillment pattern, such as seen in other sanctuary-building accounts, particularly the making of the ark … and the erection of the tabernacle" (p. 115). The work/keep language in Genesis 2 appears with priestly/Levitical nuances in relation to the building of the tabernacle. The good/evil motif from Genesis 3 appears in the Solomon narrative (1 Kgs 3:9), and "the rest of the Bible is the history of how God deals with sin and enables the renewal of the creation and the return of redeemed humanity to the garden" (Rev. 21:1; 22:1–12; p. 117). Part 1 concludes chapter 4 on the Prophets and chapter 5 on the Writings.

Part 2 deals with the NT, but not before showing the relationship between the testaments. After affirming that the canonical order of the NT was likely influenced by the Greek OT, the authors turn to the NT's use of the OT and do a book-by-book study. Matthew wants to show that many OT prophecies were fulfilled in the birth, life, and death of Jesus the Messiah. In Mark, John the Baptist is the Elijah prophesied by Malachi (3:1), and Jesus is the stone the builders rejected (Ps 118:22–23). Luke was not an eyewitness to the events described in his Gospel, but he makes many allusions to the OT. For example, Mary's song (Luke 1:46–55) echoes Hannah's song (1 Sam 2:1–10), and Simeon's blessing (Luke 2:32) parallels Isaiah 49:6. One of the longest OT quotes in the NT is Luke 4:18–19, where Jesus quotes from Isaiah 61:1–2 and identifies himself with the Servant of the Lord. John quotes from all three parts of the OT and contains many allusions, with John 1:1 being the best-known use of Genesis 1:1.

I will use Romans to show how the authors use themes, ethics, and Romans in the storyline of Scripture. The major themes identified in Romans are "the gospel, the Jewish-Gentile relationship, and the Pauline mission" (p. 531). The gospel is simply and clearly defined as the good news that people are saved and forgiven because of the person and work of Jesus Christ. The good news extends to the fact that we are declared righteous before God through faith and apart from the law (1:17; 3:22–24), and it extends to all descendants of Adam (5:12–21). When it comes to the Jewish-Gentile relationship, it is clear that Christ's redeeming work has brought Jews and Gentiles together, and yet, three times in the first two chapters, Paul affirms that salvation came "to the Jew first and then also to the Greek" (1:16–17; 2:9–10). Paul elaborates on this concept when he shows that Gentiles are grafted into the olive tree (11:11–31). Paul's sense of mission is "intertwined with the Jewish-Gentile relationship" (p. 535). Indeed, Paul has fulfilled his ministry by taking the gospel from Jerusalem to Illyricum to Rome.

When discussing ethics, everything "is predicated upon the doctrine of the total depravity of humanity" (p. 536). Paul's discourse in Romans 1 underscores a divergence from God's original plan, particularly evident in sexual ethics. Highlight-

ing the contradiction with the created order and the Levitical holiness code (Lev 18:22; 20:13), same-sex relations stand in opposition to God's intended design. Paul advocates for an ethic of complete dedication (Rom 12:1), urging believers to employ their spiritual gifts through service (12:3–8) and love (12:9–18). Ultimately, "Paul articulates an ethic that is grounded in total commitment to Christ individually and a communal ethic of mutual love and service" (p. 539).

Chapter 13, titled "Conclusion," could be a stand-alone volume since it is so rich in summarizing the important themes of the Bible. OT themes such as creation, covenant, kingship, Messiah, sanctuary, God's Spirit, Israel and the nations, prophecy, the kindness of God, and the love of God interact with each other and "intertwine as the warp and woof of the fabric of the Old Testament" (p. 703). Without explanation, the section on the themes of the NT adds "and the Entire Bible" to the section title. These themes include love, Christ/Messiah, the King and his kingdom, new covenant/exodus/creation, the cross, the Spirit, the gospel, the church, remembrance, mission, and the last days. The concluding chapter ends with a subsection on biblical ethics, which the authors divide into the ethics of the OT and the ethics of the NT. Biblical ethics cover "all spheres of life and human experience, and believers have vital roles and responsibilities to fulfill before God's plan is concluded in the new creation" (p. 730).

Köstenberger and Goswell have created a much-needed masterpiece, not only because they accomplish what they set out to do by clarifying "the purpose and pattern of God's actions and words by looking at each passage of Scripture in light of the Bible as a whole so that we understand how every part of Scripture is related to Jesus," but also because they add the very important dimension of ethics. The authors have shown how orthodoxy should lead to orthopraxy, and they have given birth to a work that could serve as *the* textbook of biblical theology for generations to come.

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Being God's Image: Why Creation Still Matters. By Carmen Joy Imes. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2023, xii + 231 pp., $22.00 paper.

What does it mean to be human? How does Jesus help us understand our humanity? What is the ultimate hope of God's people? In *Being God's Image: Why Creation Still Matters,* Carmen Joy Imes, associate professor of Old Testament at Talbot School of Theology (Biola University), seeks to answer these fundamental questions. The book is designed as a companion volume to her earlier work, *Bearing God's Name: Why Sinai Still Matters* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2019), which focuses on God's redemptive design for his covenant people to mediate blessing to all nations.

Being God's Image is divided into three parts. In Part 1, Imes carefully guides the reader through Genesis 1–11. She contends that human identity as the image of God entails kingship (representational rule) as well as kinship (that we are God's

royal family). She emphasizes the necessity of selflessness and collaboration in the task of stewarding the earth's resources to promote its flourishing. Human identity as God's image is not "lost" post-Fall, and thus to this day all people, regardless of race, gender, or abilities, should be treated with great and equal dignity.

Part 2 examines OT wisdom literature. Song of Songs highlights the goodness of sexuality as a gift rather than as a right or a need. Ecclesiastes encourages us to take delight in all that we already have, while Job exhorts us to trust God even when we do not understand why we are suffering.

Part 3 turns to the NT. Imes presents Jesus as the perfect human, the supreme image who "fulfills God's intentions perfectly for the vocation entailed by this identity" (p. 110). Jesus's resurrection "validates our physical embodiment on this planet, upholding it as something destined for restoration" (p. 129). The gospel now creates a restored family characterized by embodied and dependent relationships. The ultimate hope of the Christian does not lie in leaving the earth, but in a purified and restored creation ruled by King Jesus together with his people. In view of this future, followers of Christ ought to continue to pursue the flourishing of creation.

Each of the book's ten chapters concludes with a summary of key ideas, recommendations for additional reading, and related videos from The Bible Project. The book includes 15 sidebars that range from one to three pages, and that address exegetical issues (e.g., "*In* the Image or *As* the Image?," "Is Life Really Meaningless?"), contemporary problems (e.g., "The Porn Problem," "Reckoning with Racism"), or controversial matters in American evangelicalism (e.g., "Gender and Ministry Roles," "The Christian and the Environment"). Discussion questions appear at the end of the book.

In *Being God's Image*, Imes has succeeded magnificently in her aim to make robust biblical theology accessible for all God's people. Her tone is conversational, warm, and inviting. Her writing is rooted in thoughtful exegesis of texts and a great breadth and depth of knowledge, and yet she explains complex concepts in ways that are easy to comprehend. She weaves numerous personal stories into the book that illustrate her points and their relevance admirably.

The primary emphases of the book will be well-known to those who are familiar with contemporary evangelical biblical theology, but new and eye-opening for most of her intended readers. It is commonplace to affirm that evangelical biblical theology ought to be prescriptive, and yet many such works remain almost entirely descriptive. In contrast, Imes is steadfastly focused on demonstrating the relevance of biblical theology for daily life, and thus this is biblical theology at its best, in service to the church. She includes wonderful pastoral encouragements for those who tend to be marginalized, affirming the full humanity and dignity of singles, women, the disabled, and those who have suffered abuse. She emphasizes the communal nature of being the image, including the importance of physical presence and interdependence for a healthy local church, a much-needed message for individualistic Western culture. Furthermore, her work is thoroughly and commendably Christ-centered.

Nevertheless, some aspects of the book are rather dissatisfying. She frequently delves into issues disputed among evangelicals, to the point that one wonders if an unspoken purpose of her book is to challenge popular views. Those who have settled convictions that differ from hers are likely to object that their views have been dispensed with in a somewhat cursory manner. Granted, given the nature of the book, such issues cannot be accorded extensive and exhaustive treatment, but the reader is often given the impression that the biblical basis for the rejected views is weaker than it is. As a result, those who espouse, for example, the creation of the universe in six literal days, a pretribulational rapture, or a Reformed understanding of God's sovereignty in suffering may be hesitant to recommend the book to their friends or students due to her treatment of these issues. Complementarians may be particularly disappointed that in her brief treatment of gender roles in ministry (pp. 47–49) she claims that their position depends entirely on only a few texts (which she does not cite or explain from an egalitarian perspective) and then states that they "ignore the rest of the Bible's teaching on women" (p. 48).

Naturally, some will disagree with Imes on various points of exegesis (e.g., Gen 3:16b; 11:1–9; Rom 8:28). Of particular significance is how the gospel is to be defined. She stresses that the gospel is about what we are saved *for*, fullness of embodied eternal life with Christ on a new earth. But in her effort to emphasize this, at times she downplays what the Christian is saved *from*. In her conclusion she states, "Getting saved is not about avoiding hell" (p. 185). In view of the NT emphasis on avoiding the condemnation and wrath of God through Christ (e.g., John 3:36; Rom 5:9; 8:1; Gal 3:13; Eph 2:3; 1 Thess 5:9), would it not be better to say that salvation is "*not only* about avoiding hell"? Similarly, although earlier she does state that the cross entails substitutionary atonement and yields forgiveness of sins (pp. 126–27), her final page-long summary of a "reimagined" gospel (pp. 185–86) makes no clear mention of these concepts, thus marginalizing these fundamental benefits of the cross.

These areas of concern admittedly take up little of the content of the book. Overall, *Being God's Image* is a rich feast in prescriptive biblical theology, and lay Christians stand to benefit tremendously from it.

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Genesis 1–11: Bud of Theology, Grandmother of the Sciences, Seedbed of the Holy Books. By Anwarul Azad and Ida Glaser. Windows on the Text: Bible Commentaries from Muslim Contexts. Carlisle, Cumbria, UK: Langham Global Library, 2022, xvii + 316 pp., $29.99 paper.

As the book title indicates, this work is a commentary on the text of Genesis with clear reflections on how the Koran or other Muslim writings would view the biblical story displayed in these first eleven chapters. The publisher describes the series "Windows on the Text" as "a ground-breaking Bible commentary series written by followers of Jesus in Muslim contexts. It develops biblical insight in deliber-

ate conversation with the Qur'an, the Hadith, and local Islamic cultures. Confident that the Bible in its entirety speaks directly into Muslim contexts, it opens new windows into the holy word of God to equip and empower believers to live out their faith in loving service and clear communication within their communities" (cover).

The audience of this book is Christian believers in Bangladesh or other societies where Muslim culture is the majority culture. Stories of Adam, Noah, and the flood are well-known in those societies, but stories about these persons or events in a Muslim culture are not found in the Bible. The writers also recount the ANE stories that deal with the creation or flood accounts. This commentary tries to show the differences between these stories and the Bible. The book does not shy away from difficult questions a modern reader would ask about the text. In special excursions, it deals with topics like Scripture and science, the age of the earth, what a day is in the creation story of the Bible and in Muslim contexts, Genesis and the theory of evolution, and many more topics too numerous to mention. This volume is the first of a two-volume set; the second will deal with Genesis 12–50.

The commentary follows a definite structure for each section/chapter. First, a short introduction presents an overview of the text under review. A section called "The Worlds Behind and in Front of the Text" follows the introductory paragraph. Here the authors deal with the ANE background, the NT statements about this section, and what the Qur'an says about this topic, concluding with a paragraph on how the Genesis text differs from the ANE text and the Qur'an. The third section deals with "The World of the Text," in which the authors discuss the structure and genre of the pericope in focus. The authors then comment on the biblical text. Sometimes, they quote straight from the Hebrew text and provide transliteration, but they mostly quote the text in English. The last two sections of each chapter contain a theological reflection and an application section ("What About Us?").

The strength of the book is its interaction with Muslim scriptures and culture. This approach is new territory for a Christian reader from a Western country and quite fascinating. For example, in the flood story, the Qur'an stresses that Noah is a paradigmatic prophet, the first of many to follow. The Qur'an does not place Noah in his historical context, for example, leaving the details of the ark out of the story. Also, the Qur'an focuses on the time before the flood and Noah's pietistic behavior (p. 199). Further, the Qur'an differs on who enters the ark: Noah, some of his sons, and some other believers, but at least one son and his wife refuse to enter (p. 200).

The commentary's special excursions conclude with insights from the Muslim world. In their systematic treatment of the biblical text, the authors often refer to the Hebrew text undergirding the translation and provide valuable insights based on their research. Their theological reflections and applications point unabashedly to the Messiah, and the gospel message is well-worded and presented. While they treat the more difficult sections of the text, they always apply the text to the present-day believer who lives in Bangladesh in ways that also apply to believers from other nations.

Let me mention a few drawbacks of the commentary. One of them is that though Azad and Glaser discuss specific topics, they do not take positions on more controversial topics, or they only hint as to a possible position they might take.

One example is the age of the earth. They mention those who hold to an old earth (Big Bang and Gap Creationists) and those who see a young earth (James Usher and Maimonides) but then continue with the statement: "Genesis does not tell us the specific time of creation. The beginning of creation is hidden in the abyss of eternity. Genesis is not meant to be a modern scientific textbook: the narrators were eager to inform their readers *about* the Creator of the universe, not *when* the creation came into being" (p. 51, their italics). Yet, a few pages later (pp. 63–64), they accept a particular form of theistic evolution and thus go against their statement on page 51. They do see a problem with an evolution theory that tries to replace God and with scholars who reject the idea that humankind is accountable to a greater power than themselves.

Another drawback is that in almost every pericope the authors find a chiasm. It sometimes feels forced, and the headings do not always cover all the material they should describe. This structural approach is not just a matter of aesthetics because the authors see the pivot verse as the primary teaching point of each section (e.g., pp. 92, 122, 176, 200–201). Not every scholar will agree with how they structure the various passages.

A minor blemish is that the authors often write Greek and Arabic with diacritics in the transliteration but leave out all the diacritics in Hebrew. Another flaw is that they do not list every bibliographic reference in the footnotes in the biography at the back of the book. A few editing problems and typos are also evident. Despite these imperfections, I enjoyed the commentary and look forward to the second volume.

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Numbers: A Commentary for Biblical Preaching and Teaching. By Joel Barker and Steven D. West. Kerux. Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2023, 477 pp., $37.99.

This work is part of the Kerux series of OT and NT commentaries that began publication in 2019, a dozen of which have appeared at the time of writing this review. What is unique about this series is the teaming of an exegetical scholar (in this case, Joel Barker) with an expert in homiletics (in this case, Steven West) to produce commentaries. The subtitle states the purpose of the series: "A Commentary for Biblical Preaching and Teaching." Both authors are professors at Heritage College and Seminary in Cambridge, Ontario.

The work adopts the view of many recent evangelical scholars that the author of Numbers is "primarily Moses" (p. 43), who remains the authority figure here and throughout the Pentateuch. Nonetheless, "supervised by the Holy Spirit," the Mosaic tradition was finalized subsequently by those who transmitted and preserved it. This constitutes a rejection of the JEDP Documentary Hypothesis while recognizing a role for limited editing. One such example of editing is said to be Numbers 12:3, which notes that Moses was the humblest man on earth. Rather than Moses ironically bragging about his own humility, the commentary takes this to be a

comment by a later editor about Moses, as does the NIV. The authors do not mention an innovative alternative that I personally find attractive, that Moses is called here the most "miserable" man on earth rather than most humble one (see Cleon Rogers, "Moses: Meek or Miserable?," *JETS* 29.3 [1986]: 257–63), which if true, would allow Moses to say this without self-contradiction.

A unique feature of this commentary is the "Overview of All Preaching Passages" (pp. 13–40), which in a summary way gives the exegetical idea, the theological focus, the preaching idea, and preaching pointers for each unit of the commentary. Since few preachers are likely to preach separate messages on all forty-one units of Numbers, this summary allows a preacher to scan quickly the entire commentary to choose those units for preaching that suit the preacher's purposes. On the other hand, these summaries are repeated word-for-word again before each unit. This results in twenty-eight pages of duplicate material that undoubtedly adds to the cost of the book. A helpful feature at the end of each unit is a list of discussion questions that could help small groups studying the book of Numbers.

Within each unit a concise exegetical analysis typically covers one to three verses at a time. Exegetical analysis discusses such things as literary structure, the meaning of Hebrew words, how translations differ, and important textual variants. Concise excurses consider the large numbers in the censuses (though without a decisive conclusion), the bitter water and ritual for infidelity in Numbers 5, the purification offering, the role of the Levites, Moses's extended family, complaining in the wilderness, Moses's Cushite wife, why only Miriam and not Aaron is punished in Numbers 12, differences in the accounts of sending spies in Numbers and Deuteronomy, the Nephilim, household punishment, tithing, the "perfect" red heifer, Balaam in archaeology, the question of God changing his mind (Num 23:19), the history of interpretation of the star and scepter (v. 17), Baal, the historicity of Numbers 31, holy war, the historicity of Israel's journey through the wilderness (Num 33), and degrees of culpability in cases of killing (Num 35). The exegesis seems judicious and competently done in conversation with both evangelical and non-evangelical modern scholars while avoiding exhaustive depth.

The book assumes that pastors will want to preach through the book of Numbers, though there are challenges to trying to do this. It is relatively easier to suggest sermons from the narrative portions of Numbers, though even here there are problems. The commentary suggests from the story of Aaron's staff blossoming (Num 17) the sermon idea that "the Great High Priest [Jesus] … bears spiritual fruit, and makes his followers fruitful in the Spirit," which seemingly reads the event in Numbers as an allegory, which is dubious. Moreover, such a sermon downplays the thrust of the passage regarding the unique role of the line of Aaron for Israel's priesthood in contrast to those in Korah's rebellion, who wanted to allow other tribes (like Reuben) to serve as priests. In Numbers 27 and 36 on the story of the daughters of Zelophehad, the commentary rightly warns against reading contemporary concerns about the equality of the genders into the text, but then it takes what seems to me the opposite extreme of unnecessarily circumventing the issue of gender roles in the suggested sermon. Even if it was not the purpose of Numbers 27 and 36 to address contemporary concerns about gender, gender plays

an important role in this story and is an important issue in the church and society today. These chapters do seem to imply more that is relevant to this modern issue than the commentary allows, and a preacher would have been better served by more guidance on bringing that out.

While preaching narratives in Numbers has challenges, it is even more challenging to find sermons from the regulations of Numbers that are time-specific to ancient Israel. Nazirite vows (Num 6) are no longer taken either by Christians or even by modern religious Jews, but the commentary helpfully suggests preaching from the Nazirite law a message on dedicating oneself to God. On Numbers 35, which makes a distinction between intentional murder and unintentional manslaughter, the commentary helpfully suggests a sermon on the sacredness of human life and standards of justice coming from God's nature.

How does one preach on the census of Numbers 1:1–54? The commentary proposes a sermon thesis something like "God knows and names his people and consecrates them for his service," giving lots of references to the NT to expand on that point. This thesis, while no doubt true, seems a bit forced since it is not clear that Numbers 1 is trying to teach any of this. Similarly, while the theological focus of the census of the Levites in Numbers 3–4 seems fair enough ("God's holiness establishes his authority over his people"), the preaching idea ("Through Christ the High Priest, there is now a holy priesthood of all believers") seems to have little connection with the text of Numbers but merely imports NT theology into a sermon supposedly on these chapters in Numbers.

I would put the problem thus: Although all Scripture is profitable for teaching (2 Tim 3:16), not every chapter of the Bible seems wholly suitable for a sermon. That thesis constitutes a challenge to the premise behind this whole commentary series and explains some cases where the suggested sermon idea falls short. But even if my thesis is true, the only way to determine whether a chapter is suitable for preaching a sermon is to try to do so. This exegetical-homiletical commentary makes that attempt and is mostly successful. It contains much good exegesis and many helpful suggestions on how to communicate and preach passages in Numbers. Preachers and Bible teachers alike will benefit from this work. For that we can congratulate the authors.

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Psalms 73–150: A Pastoral and Contextual Commentary. By Federico G. Villanueva. Asia Bible Commentary. Carlisle, Cumbria, UK: Langham Global Library, 2022, 438 pp., $37.99 paper.

Federico G. Villanueva is a Filipino OT scholar who studied for his doctorate in the West (Trinity College, University of Bristol) and currently ministers mostly in his home country (Philippines) and other parts of Asia. His pastoral heart and passion for the lament psalms is evident from his previous studies and publications.

Note especially his accessible *It's OK to Be Not OK: Preaching the Lament Psalms* (Carlisle, Cumbria, UK: Langham Partnership International, 2017).

This commentary is Villanueva's second volume on Psalms in the Asia Bible Commentary series. The series intends to help readers engage well with their communities of faith in an Asian cultural context. Authors in the series aim to holistically approach the text by combining "approved exegetical principles" and contextual application with the ultimate goal of strengthening the body of Christ in Asia. The series "incorporates and addresses Asian concerns, cultures, and practices" and hopes to meet "the need for evangelical commentaries written specifically for an Asian audience" (p. xi). More specifically, its noble mission is "to produce resources that are biblical, pastoral, contextual, missional, and prophetic for pastors, Christian leaders, cross-cultural workers, and students in Asia" (p. xi).

Villanueva succeeds in meeting most of these goals. Moreover, one can see how this commentary can be useful for all Christians, whether in Asia or elsewhere, who are committed to applying the Bible in their particular context.

The first volume, on Psalms 1–72, published in 2013, has a nine-page introduction (pp. 1–9) that discusses how the psalms were composed, the psalms as a prayer book, as the word of God, and as poetry. The last section has a brief discussion on reading the psalms in a Filipino/Asian context. This second volume, on Psalms 73–150, contains a seven-page introduction that addresses the reason behind emphasizing application, the reading of the psalms at the time of the 2020 pandemic, the "community of lament" found in the first two books of the Psalter (1–72), and the "lingering of lament" found in Books III–V (73–150). Here Villanueva makes the puzzling comment that "lament lingers till the end of the Psalter" (p. 6), but he later corrects himself, as the Psalter clearly ends in a "fireworks of praise" (p. 350).

The introduction ends with an inspiring section on the "persistence of faith," in which Villanueva makes a convincing argument that one of the reasons that the people of Israel "were able to cope with their many tragic experiences was because they knew how to lament" (p. 6).

This is "a pastoral and contextual commentary" on each of the last seventy-eight psalms (73–150) of the Psalter, and it includes insightful cultural reflections on a wide variety of relevant topics for Asian Christians (though Villanueva's overwhelming focus and expertise is clearly on Filipino Christians). The following are some of the topics on which he provides useful cultural reflections: the challenge of lament to Asian Christians (p. 18); remembrance of God's faithfulness (p. 44); the Filipino concept of *pagsusumbong* (reporting) and its relevance for imprecatory psalms (p. 198); God's deliverance as *kaginhawaan* (well-being, p. 249); the Filipino word for "mercy" in the context of Psalm 123 (p. 288); the concept of *kapwa* (fellow human beings) in the context of Psalm 133 (p. 329); and more. He also includes two brief discussions on the following highly relevant contextual topics: "How Can We Praise a God Who Gives the Lands of Others to One Nation?" (p. 338) and "God and gods in the Filipino Context" (p. 342). This list obviously highlights Villanueva's Filipino context as the background and focus of his reflections,

but it is likely they will also find resonance with many other Asian Christians and even beyond.

Villanueva wrote this commentary during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, a time of disruption when many people felt "trapped" and "out of control." According to him, and I agree, that was an "uncertain time" when the world needed the book of Psalms (p. 3). Moreover, the author interprets the psalms "from the perspective of exile," which parallels the fact that the Psalter received its final form after the experience of exile. Somewhat unsurprisingly (given his previous studies and interests), he considers that the most significant contribution of the Psalter "is its message about lament" (p. 3), and this preoccupation with lament is certainly traceable throughout this work.

One distinctive of this commentary is the intention—I say intention because it is not at all clear in practice—to place "the application at the beginning" (p. 1). Villanueva's goal is to emphasize application (as a contrast to Western biblical commentaries, which offer "little application") and to integrate it with exegesis "without separating application from meaning" (p. 1). He plans to do this in each psalm/chapter by beginning with a summary of the message of the psalm combined with discussions about canonical context and genre. I must admit that I do not understand well what he means by putting application at the beginning, and I fail to see this being applied consistently throughout the commentary.

There is no doubt that this commentary is written by a scholar who is familiar with the best recent studies on the Psalms and who has a longstanding passion for teaching and preaching them. Its usefulness is enhanced by its clarity, intertextuality, concern for practical application, and engagement with current issues in the Filipino context. I benefited and learned something from each of the expositions I read.

Readers will especially learn from Villanueva's sensitivity to related biblical texts. For example, when discussing Psalm 89, he points out useful similarities for interpretation from Lamentations 3, Psalms 9–10, 44, 74, and more (pp. 94–101).

The writer wisely provides needed introduction to the broader canonical context (pp. 4–7). Moreover, he consistently pays attention to nearby psalms in his exposition. For example, when discussing Psalm 89, note the following relevant connections to Psalm 88 (p. 101): "Like the speaker in Psalm 88, who feels that he is a man (*geber*) who has no strength (88:4b), the speaker in Psalm 89 laments, "What man [*geber*] can live and not see death?" (89:48). The words "death" and "Sheol" or "grave" in 89:48 echo the psalmist's sentiments in Psalm 88, where he says he feels like one among the dead (88:3, 5).

As expected, one of Villanueva's strengths comes from his sensitivity to lament, and he consistently points out laments or lament features throughout the Psalter (e.g., pp. 9, 99–101, 194–95, 233, 362), rightly seeing in them signs of hope. But this concern for lament also leads to one of the weaknesses of this commentary as one gets the impression that the author finds laments even where they are completely missing or at least highly debatable (e.g., Pss 73, 115, 121).

Undoubtedly, the greatest shortcomings of this commentary are its lack of concern for Christ and NT connections (see, for example, the comments on Psalms 110 and 118) and the lack of clear guidelines for preachers. To remedy this,

it is highly recommended that this book be used with the commentaries of Allen P. Ross (Kregel Academic) and James M. Hamilton (Evangelical Biblical Theology Commentary).

A few other quibbles do not take away from the fact that this is a significant scholarly achievement coming from Asia and for Asia. Any prayerful reader from Asia and beyond will benefit from the reading of this volume.

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Proverbs: Commentaries for Christian Formation. By John Goldingay. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2023, xvii + 477 pp., $39.99.

This is the third volume, and the first OT volume, in the Commentaries for Christian Formation series. The primary concern of the series is "faith formation." In meeting this end, the aim of the commentary is to combine theology and exegesis in such a way as to "underwrite preaching and teaching, which in turn forms believers in the faith" (p. xiii). The series separates itself from commentaries that focus on exegesis, preaching, or teaching in that it tries to draw together the results of those approaches in an applicatory fashion. This approach both clarifies the text for the reader and deepens the reader's understanding that the text connects with the reader in a way that deepens the reader's faith.

Given the aims of the series, author John Goldingay does not provide an extensive detailed introduction to Proverbs. Instead, his introduction highlights three aspects of Proverbs. The first aspect is to emphasize that, for all its apparent plainness, Proverbs is, at its base, a theological work. It assumes that gaining wisdom is a lifelong pursuit that focuses on faithfulness and honesty, springing from a fundamental awe for Yahweh.

The second aspect that Goldingay deals with is the composition of Proverbs. Anyone who has read through Proverbs carefully, even in English, can identify various subdivisions of the book that the final editor provides. Goldingay divides the book into three sections: Part A, 1:1–9:18; Part B, 10:1–22:16; and Part C, 22:17–31:31. Parts A and B are connected primarily with the name of Solomon, whereas Part C is connected with a collection of named and unnamed wisdom teachers. Goldingay's working hypothesis is that the sayings of the book accumulated over centuries, that much of Part B was collected during the period of the monarchy, and that Part C was probably added during the Second Temple period.

The third aspect of the book that Goldingay addresses is Proverbs as Scripture. In this, we see the general acceptance of the book by the Jewish community and later by the Christian community. Further, there is the theological application of the book to Christian discipleship among the early church fathers. This approach to the book has not ceased over the centuries.

Goldingay references a range of commentaries and other works on Proverbs from medieval rabbinic works to the present day. Roman Catholic and Protestant authors are also included in his relatively brief bibliography. One advantage of pick-

ing up a book by Goldingay is that the reader knows the author has done his homework and that there is a great deal more bibliography behind this work than the few dozen books noted at the end.

Given the purpose of the commentary, Goldingay does not provide a verse-by-verse explanation of the text of Proverbs, though he does comment directly on most verses. Instead, his approach is more section-by-section. The translation provided is his own, though it is not identical to the translation he gave the reader in *The First Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2018). I think I prefer this translation to that one. This translation's punchiness and liveliness suits Proverbs and helps challenge readers to think carefully about what they are reading.

The commentary on Part A (1:1–9:18) begins with a brief overview of the entire section. The reader is reminded that we don't know if this material reflects actual teaching that might have appeared in Israelite homes and courts, or whether this presents a kind of idealized teaching that provides a pattern for more practical use by parents and mentors. While it may have originated separately from the rest of Proverbs, it now provides readers with a framework for reading the rest of the book. Goldingay suggests that "Proverbs B and C thus give specifics to the wisdom that Proverbs A encourages" (p. 19).

The author uses several pages to define carefully the terms that appear in 1:1–7. Understanding these terms, used repeatedly throughout the book, is necessary for a proper understanding of the book. Explaining these terms is particularly helpful in separating the reader from loose or careless "definitions" that the reader may have previously entertained. For example, Goldingay defines "faithfulness" (*ṣedeq*) as follows: "The traditional translation is 'righteousness,' … but that English word suggests a virtue embodied in someone's life as an isolated individual, whereas the Hebrew and Greek words concern someone's life in relation to God and to other people" (p. 24).

In addition to this defining of terms, Goldingay strengthens the work in other ways. First, he regularly connects Proverbs with other portions of Scripture, particularly Deuteronomy and Jeremiah. Proverbs is often treated as if it were more closely connected to ANE literature than to the rest of the Bible. Though Goldingay does not neglect those connections, he makes it clear that Proverbs is a unique portion of Scripture and yet closely connected to the rest of Scripture.

Second, Goldingay knows how Proverbs has been used theologically in the church. Thus, his discussion of the personification of Wisdom in 8:22–31 is astute and theologically sensitive.

Goldingay's treatment of two notorious passages is particularly helpful. Proverbs 22:6 is often taken as divine assurance for parents troubled over wayward children. He gently directs the reader to a more subtle and more satisfying reading of the passage without directly rebuking such a reading of the verse. He also explains the seemingly contradictory advice of 26:4–5 in such a way that both verses make sense. The KJV and NKJV translate 26:10 in a way entirely different from modern English versions. Goldingay explains the verse according to both readings, which is a real help to the reader who might otherwise wonder if we have two entirely dif-

ferent texts here. I'll leave to the reader his treatment of the virtuous woman of Proverbs 31.

In his conclusion, Goldingay provides readers with a threefold summary that matches his threefold introduction. First, actions have consequences. Goldingay points out several ways in which Proverbs illustrates that truth and shows the wisdom to be gained from it. Second, Proverbs appears in the context of the Scriptures. Here, he notes the connection with Deuteronomy and the other wisdom literature, but also suggests connections with the Psalms, Song of Songs, Ruth, and ultimately Jesus himself. Third, Proverbs teaches both theological and practical virtue. As Goldingay says, "Awe for Yahweh is the beginning of wisdom. It is also the end of wisdom" (p. 429).

I have no problem recommending this commentary. The specialist will have a pleasurable interaction with another specialist. The novice will learn much from a mentor. And both will find their spiritual lives enriched by the exercise.

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Charged with the Glory of God: Yahweh, the Servant, and the Earth in Isaiah 40–55. By Caroline Batchelder. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Academic, 2023, xxi + 439 pp., $34.99 paper.

Caroline Batchelder's book, published as a result of her ThD thesis at the Australian College of Theology, provides a penetrating analysis of the Servant Song passages in the book of Isaiah. Due to her untimely passing, the book did not profit from her final editorial arrangements, and so was edited by her peers for publication. Her study seeks to view the Servant Songs within the scope of the canon but her concentration is clearly on Isaiah 40–55 and its Genesis background, especially the Abraham narratives. Occasionally NT associations arise but with little development. So, for example, her poetic concentration shelves any discussion of substitutionary atonement in relationship to the Servant (p. 325).

The book's second chapter provides an extended literature review with brief references to past critical approaches. Beginning with Bernhard Duhm, frequently referenced throughout the book, the works of recent expositors are reviewed. Especially helpful are the scholarly discussions of *mišpaṭ*, Yahweh's righteous order, a key theme of the book. Batcheler describes her methodology as "rhetorical criticism in a canonical frame" (p. 47). Isaiah is accepted as a composition over time. However, her discussion lacks a clear explanation of how such a cohesive model evolved from the multiple prophets, authors, and editors who wrote or arranged these Songs. For Batchelder, they together "raise up similar convictions in their audience" (p. 1). Her poetic analysis of the Servant shows a keen awareness of literary devices and allusions in the text. However, her rhetorical focus deemphasizes historical discussions, including much of chapters 1–39 or Davidic links. One key interpretive emphasis for the author is "conceptual blending," where, simply stated, two concepts are blended to produce a new meaning. The Servant blends with the

image of God from Genesis to move the exilic audience into new possibilities of becoming God's servants, thereby enabling them to restore Yahweh's order (*mišpaṭ*) among the nations.

A discussion of Yahweh's image in Isaiah 40 (chap. 4) presents the sovereignty of Yahweh over the earth, including his holiness and his uniqueness in contrast to an unholy nation and needy earth. Isaiah's clever use of poetry then hides the answer that will begin to open the eyes of blinded Israel. Questions raised in chapter 40 envision a new thing, anticipatory of the Servant who provides the answers. The author follows her description of Yahweh's image with a discussion about idol polemics in the next chapter. Defended as integral to the context, four idol passages (40:18–20; 41:5–7; 44:9–20; 46:5–7) illustrate Israel's embrace of the wrong image of Yahweh and expose the failure of God's people to present Yahweh's *mišpaṭ*, or true order, on the earth. Idols provide the wrong answer, but Isaiah's discussion sets the stage for the Servant's role in reversing Israel's blindness to become Yahweh's true image. Given Isaiah's focus on idolatry, a more canonical development of idolatry among the nations would help this section.

Abraham, Yahweh's servant, is the topic of chapter 6, especially his questions about *mišpaṭ* and *ṣedaqah* in Genesis 18:25. His questions, generated by the Lord's disclosure of his plan for Sodom, anticipate the role of Isaiah's Servant, who opens the way for true justice and the Lord's revelation of his way to his people. The Servant of the Songs eventually answers Abraham's questions and invites postexilic Israel to return to Yahweh as his servant after the pattern of Abraham. Further, the seed raised up by the Servant is faithful Israel, returned from exile and doing *mišpaṭ* among the nations. This answers the covenant promise to Abraham to be a "blessing to the nations" (p. 132).

The final four chapters analyze each Servant Song in sequence. In the first Song, Isaiah constructs the Servant image to remind the exilic community of their true identity through a conceptual blend of the image of God from Genesis with Israel. Since God's preexilic people failed in their task of presenting true *mišpaṭ,* they were not a blessing to the nations as promised to Abraham. The first Song then concentrates on *mišpaṭ* and what is necessary to bring *mišpaṭ* to the nations, which for the author is "the master task to be accomplished in Isaiah" (p. 166).

The second Song (chap. 8) challenges Israel to become Yahweh's Servant by providing a conceptual blend of Israel's failed history and the Servant's account of his life. Recreated as Yahweh's Servant, Israel then brings *mišpaṭ* to restore the earth and realign all with Yahweh, which is taken to be "Isaiah's foremost theme" (p. 206). Viewing the Servant as a conceptual blend removes the need for the Servant to be an individual who fulfills Israel's mission. Israel reimaged to be Yahweh's Servant explains how Israel can be presented as both Israel and not Israel.

The third Song presents the Servant's obedient life as a pattern for Israel's realignment with Yahweh to become his true Servant. The Servant, a conceptual blend between rebellious Israel and Yahweh's image, shows Israel the way back to Yahweh by providing a model of obedience. The Servant invites Israel to become Yahweh's Servant and persist obediently through suffering in order to act as a light to the nations in accord with God's promise to Abraham.

The book closes with an exposition of the fourth Song (chap. 10) followed by a brief conclusion. Drawing together the movement of the first three Songs, the fourth provides both the turning point for all the Songs and for Isaiah 40–55. By laying down his life, the Servant models an example for Israel and ultimately all humanity. According to the author, the Servant fulfills Yahweh's expectations for his people. Israel looks at the Servant and sees Yahweh while Yahweh looks at the Servant and sees the alignment of humanity with Yahweh. This is how the Servant prospers and counters the false image of Yahweh on the earth. Through obedience, the Servant offers the promise that "all who labor to become like Yahweh will also see" (p. 331). The Servant's complete obedience to Yahweh opens the blind eyes of the people and the remnant.

A major strength of the author's work is her insight into Isaiah's poetic devices and multiple allusions. Israel's restoration is understood through a rhetorical reading of the Servant. However, a rhetorical explanation of some key issues, like Yahweh sharing his glory, the restoration of Jacob/Israel to Yahweh, and the death of the Servant, seem to fall short of the fullness of the Servant envisioned by Isaiah. In my view, the elimination of the Davidic links between OT promises and NT fulfillments because of the chosen methodology and because the Songs do not mention David presents a Servant that can invite Israel to image Yahweh from a conceptual blend but one that provides no power to accomplish that goal.

All in all, however, Batchelder's book definitely yields thought-provoking insight into Isaiah's poetry of the Servant Songs in Isaiah. Her work is a helpful addition to the ongoing discussion of Yahweh's Servant in Isaiah.

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A Commentary on Jeremiah. By Michael B. Shepherd. Kregel Exegetical Library. Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2023, 928 pp., $57.99.

This commentary is an exegetical and theological study on the short version of Jeremiah known from the Septuagint (hereafter LXX) but also represented at Qumran in two fragments (4QJer$^{b, d}$). The text base for this commentary is the critical edition of Ziegler in the Göttingen Septuagint (p. 18). This has been retroverted into Hebrew, which is included as "The Hebrew Source Behind the Old Greek" (pp. 873–909). The commentary translates this text but always includes the variants of the longer version from the Masoretic text, observations from the LXX, and references to other translations such as the Vulgate, Targums, Syriac, and Martin Luther. The retroversion is referred to as the final text of Jeremiah and therefore the one that represents the words of the prophet.

The commentary does not seek to recover the life of Jeremiah or the literary prehistory of the book; rather, it seeks to provide a theology of the final version of the prophecy as derived from the LXX text. Jeremiah delivers a message of judgment and restoration (1:10). The words of the prophet are interpreted eschatologically, with the goal of reorienting the reader to perennially relevant concerns im-

bedded in the text (p. 12). The number seventy is symbolic of an indefinite period, interpreted in Daniel 9:24–27 as prefiguring an eschatological restoration (p. 17). Judgment is not just that of the historical Babylonians but represents judgment of all worldly opposition to God. The whole land coming into ruin for seventy years in servitude to the nations (Jer 25:11, LXX) makes no reference to Babylon or to the identity of the enemy from the north. Judgments against the nations follow, introduced by the heading "That which Jeremiah prophesied against the nations" (v. 14). The LXX text is not historicized with reference to Babylon; so the reference to judgment is open and inclusive of all nations, according to this version.

The words of Jeremiah are structured in terms of two books. The first is noted in 25:13, which states that all the judgments written in this book will be carried out. These are the words of Jeremiah in the first section of the book. Following events involving the prophet in the last days of Jerusalem, in the structure of the LXX, the second book is commissioned in 37:2 (MT 30:2). This second book contains words of restoration and promise of a new covenant.

The first section is titled "The 'Book' of Jeremiah" and extends from 1:1–25:13. No further outline is provided for this section. The commentary proceeds with untitled units (1:1–2:14; 2:14–27; 3:1–4:4; etc.). Textual and exegetical notes are incorporated in the translation and exposition. For example, Jeremiah 3:1 begins with לֵאמֹר הֵן יְשַׁלַּח אִישׁ in the Masoretic text, which is then represented in the translation as *[MT (>Ms) and Tg Jon. add: Saying; Vulg.: It is commonly said; Luther: And he said] If a man sends his wife away [GKC §159w]*. The Masoretic text reference indicates this word is absent in the Greek and Syriac according to the footnote in *BHS*, while *Gesenius* discusses the conditional הֵן. The significance of לֵאמֹר is taken up in the comments section and the function of הֵן in a footnote complementing a comment on quotation. The reader needs to follow *BHS* and become accustomed to this integration of explaining text critical comments. The comment goes on to provide an exegesis of Deuteronomy 24:1–4 according to several interpretations before addressing the question of God returning to the unfaithful of Judah who have fornicated with many lovers. Each unit ends with a short application section of the prophecy in its own setting and its relevance for the church. Application of Jeremiah 1:1–25:13 is provided in the conclusion (pp. 459–60). This first book is messianic "in the textual portrait of the Messiah that emerges over the course of the book's composition as a whole in conversation with other books of the biblical canon."

The second section is titled "The Nations" and follows the order of the LXX with sections for each nation that are clearly set out. This placement of the nations is "not only the ultimate judgment of the nations but also the ultimate restoration of a remnant of the Gentiles" (p. 582). This is best illustrated by John's allusion to Jeremiah 50–51 in Revelation 17–18. The LXX order of nations begins with Elam, most likely understood as the Parthian empire, followed by Egypt and Babylon (the Seleucid empire), then the territories south of the Euphrates ending with the longest section on Moab. If the territories are referenced this way it admirably suits a universal judgment, which may well be the way John read it in Revelation.

The third section is an "Interlude" in 32:1–36:32 (MT 25:15–29:32). These chapters mostly depict Jeremiah's conflict with false prophecy and serve "to remind

the readers that the word of God will be vindicated" (p. 635) and all those faithful to the word will see the light of redemption. This redemption is found in the "Book of Comfort" in 37–40 (MT 30–33). "It is about the eschatological restoration of the true people of God from Israel, Judah, and all the nations" (pp. 710–11). The prophecy concludes with the "Realization of Jeremiah's Historical Prophecy" in 41:1–51:30 (MT 34–44). These chapters develop the theme introduced in 1:10, to uproot and destroy, to build and to plant. This conclusion illustrates the need for a new covenant. The illogical defense of idolatrous practices (44:15–19) "leaves no doubt that no amount of persuasion from prophecy or experience will ever change their hearts and minds" (p. 841). The note on Baruch in 51:31–35 (MT 45) is a "scribal colophon" at the end of the book, which shows that Baruch both affirmed and preserved the words of Jeremiah. The final chapter is an "Appendix" that reports on the fall of Jerusalem, a demonstration of the truth of the prophecy fulfilled in the past, and a guarantee of its fulfillment in the future.

This commentary is significant in developing a theological viewpoint in the LXX version of Jeremiah, the text preserved in the Greek OT used and quoted by NT authors. The historicized and complemented text preserved by the Masoretes in the Jewish tradition orients the prophecy toward the events in Judah until its capture by the Babylonians and creates a different structure. The cup of God's wrath is extended against all nations in 25:14–38 as a universal announcement of the will of God. It forms an *inclusio* with 1:4–10 where Jeremiah is to proclaim the uprooting of all nations. The book concludes with detailed judgments against the nations in chapters 46–51, beginning with those proximate to Israel in Jeremiah's time (Egypt, Philistia, Moab). The theme of Judah in 1:11–19 is addressed in the poetic section ending in 25:14 and is taken up again in the narrative of chapters 26–45. This is the version that has been accepted as canonical by the Protestant church since the time of the Reformation.

Shepherd has chosen to use a critical edition of the Greek text of Jeremiah that is a representation of the Old Greek translation. Even more challenging is to know the Hebrew text used by the translator, as it is difficult to judge which Greek variants constitute the *Vorlage* of the translator. Textual choices are a representation of what may be termed the final form, but in the case of many OT compositions these choices are complicated by the presence of more than one final form. This is evident in the commentary, in that readings from the Masoretic version may often be preferable to those represented by the Greek. More problematic are instances where no chronology can be established for final forms. Joshua is an exemplary case in point. The book is preserved in three extant forms: the Greek text, the Masoretic text, and 4QJosh^{a}. All three show the work of scribes in arranging and complementing the text during the stage at which scribes were also editors and authors. The transition to a final form or a completed literary composition was preserved in three editions. These editions did not emerge from the same text base and have different transmission histories. In Jeremiah the historicizing and amplifying layers do not affect text critical questions of the Greek version (pp. 15–16), but additions are not as obviously chronological in other books. A final form is one preserved in canonical tradition, which must be considered in a doctrine of inspira-

tion. The subordination of a canonical version to an inferior status (p. 15) raises more questions for inspiration than it solves.

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The Minor Prophets: A Theological Introduction. By Craig G. Bartholomew and Heath A. Thomas. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2023, 388 pp., $45.00 paper.

Within the last decade or so there has been an emergence of new introductions to the Minor Prophets. While many of these volumes are worth mentioning, suffice it to say that each reminds us of the importance of these prophetic books and their message for today. In fact, the church needs to be regularly reintroduced to the major message of the Minor Prophets. Within this stream of reintroduction, Craig Bartholomew and Heath Thomas have provided the church and academy with a great theological introduction to these dynamic books.

Craig G. Bartholomew is the director of the Kirby Laing Centre for Public Theology in Cambridge, UK, while Heath A. Thomas, an associate fellow of the Kirby Laing Centre, serves as president and professor of Old Testament at Oklahoma Baptist University. Bartholomew and Thomas have authored or edited numerous books, including other collaborative efforts such as *A Manifesto for Theological Interpretation*. This installment covering the Minor Prophets continues the IVP Academic series and follows on the heels of Bartholmew and O'Dowd's *Old Testament Wisdom Literature: A Theological Introduction*. The method proposed in the *Manifesto* is carefully modeled for us in this theological introduction.

Bartholomew and Thomas aim to be accessible to students, laity, academics, and pastors so that the message of the Minor Prophets is heard and preached today. An introduction opens the reader to the necessity of the message that the Minor Prophets have for our world. The Minor Prophets are Christian Scripture and as such the Minor Prophets are for the church. They usher us into the presence of God and call our attention to social, political, religious, and cosmic issues of immense importance—the things of human existence—of life lived before the face of God. The authors contend that reading the Minor Prophets makes us uncomfortable, not for discomfort's sake, but to bring our lives back on track with God, to lead us to a flourishing life in God's presence.

Chapter 1, "Reading the Minor Prophets with the Church and in the Academy," begins with importance of the church as the primary context for the reception of the Bible. Bartholomew and Thomas argue, "From its inception, the church received the Old Testament as Holy Scripture. The result is that we never read the Minor Prophets *de novo* but always in the company of that one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church" (p. 7). Additionally, this chapter discusses the difference in book order of the Minor Prophets between the MT and the LXX and the major issue in contemporary studies of whether the Minor Prophets are twelve individual books or a collection (i.e., the Book of the Twelve). The chapter also contains helpful charts that display commentaries on the Minor Prophets written by the church

fathers and a summary of forms of prophetic speech. The reader might be surprised to find just how many commentaries on the Minor Prophets were written by the church fathers. Here the authors also cover issues of modern biblical interpretation, including the historical, literary, and theological turns in hermeneutics.

Chapter 2, titled "The Ancient World of Prophecy," argues for the importance of understanding the similarities and dissimilarities between Israel and the ancient world from which the nation emerged. In this chapter, the authors chart the concept of prophets/prophecy in the ANE. The chapter provides helpful charts for an at-a-glance summary of some major concepts. This is a most helpful chapter for students only just considering the concept of prophecy in the ANE and what exactly prophets did in Israel. Bartholomew and Thomas emphasize the importance of viewing the Minor Prophets as a collection of books, each "theologically meaningful on its own but theologically enriched through intertextual and thematic interchange with the rest of the books in the Twelve" (p. 39). This intertextual and thematic emphasis provides the reading strategy for the rest of the book.

Chapters 3–19 focus on the Minor Prophets book-by-book by following the order of the Masoretic text with Nahum and Zephaniah and Haggai and Malachi sharing chapters, respectively. Each chapter follows the same general outline by considering the context of the book (its primary audience and historical context), providing an outline or structure for each book, and discussion of the interpretation and theology of each book. Novices and experts alike will find value in the inclusion of recommended further reading at the conclusion of each chapter. Each prophetic book (with the exceptions of Nahum, Zephaniah, Haggai, and Malachi) has a follow-up chapter that focuses on further interpretation of either significant portions of the book with exegetical insight or major themes of the text. For example, a second chapter on the book of Hosea focuses solely on Hosea 2:16–25 [Eng 2:14–23], which concerns Yahweh's shocking promise of a radically different future from the judgment portrayed in Hosea 2:2–13. In Hosea 2:16–25 [Eng 2:14–23] Yahweh promises to "woo adulterous Israel once again, to bless her in every way, and to extend his blessing through Israel to the whole creation" (p. 57). Another chapter continues the discussion on Joel and considers the OT theme of the Day of the Lord.

The latter chapters of the book (chaps. 20–22) cover the theology of the Minor Prophets, the Minor Prophets and Jesus, and the theology of the Minor Prophets for today. Chapter 20, "The Theology of the Minor Prophets," centers discussion around Yahweh, the central character in the Minor Prophets. The authors note that as the central character, "*Everything* turns around him, and it is from him that the theology of these books flows" (p. 312). This chapter in summary form brings together everything the Minor Prophets have been saying about Yahweh.

In chapter 21, "The Minor Prophets and Jesus," Bartholomew and Thomas rightly note that all streams of the Old Testament converge in Jesus, and so the discussion cites the importance of the Minor Prophets as one of those streams. The authors present a back-and-forth method of reading the quotes, citations, and allusions to the Minor Prophets in the Gospels, then back into the broader theology of the Minor Prophets and how they are fulfilled in Jesus. It is Matthew that cites the

Minor Prophets more than any other prophet and thus the bulk of the chapter deals with Matthean citations of the Twelve.

In the final chapter, "The Theology of the Minor Prophets for Today," Bartholomew and Thomas say, "If for no other reason, we ought to retrieve and renew our reading of and listening to the Minor Prophets today because of their importance for understanding *Jesus*. They are indispensable in grasping the magnitude of the Christ event. Precisely as disciples of Jesus, we are pushed to return to the Minor Prophets and listen to all they have to say as part of Scripture for today" (p. 355). Additionally, the discussion in this chapter is filled with real life concerns about our humanity, worship, and hope.

The authors' excitement about the Minor Prophets is indeed palpable and will no doubt be infectious for those who read this book. *The Minor Prophets* is commendable to both the Church and the academy for its pastoral reflection and the skill with which the work navigates significant theological issues within the book(s) of the Twelve. The volume is well-suited for the classroom but also accessible to laity and will prove to be a helpful aid to pastors who strive to proclaim the whole counsel of God, especially the Minor Prophets in their disclosure of Christ.

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Creating the Canon: Composition, Controversy, and the Authority of the New Testament. By Benjamin P. Laird. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2023, xiv + 258 pp., $30.00 paper.

In his most recent work, *Creating the Canon*, Benjamin Laird, associate professor of biblical studies at the John W. Rawlings School of Divinity of Liberty University, brings into focus the intricacies surrounding the composition, publication, formation, and authority of the NT writings. Laird's intention is to offer readers a deeper understanding of the historical context of the NT, aiming to spark further reflection and investigation into certain subjects related to the study of canon.

The book is structured into three main sections, each addressing questions related to the production, formation, and authority of the NT canon. Laird is transparent about his aim not to provide a comprehensive introduction to the subject of canon but rather for his work to serve as a beginner's guide for those with limited prior study of NT background. This is good news for his primary audience. Few of the subjects he addresses will be familiar to even the most ardent churchgoer or lay reader (e.g., ancient literary conventions, canonical subcollections, the criterion of apostolicity). No doubt, many such readers will benefit from being introduced to these topics and discussions for the first time.

At the same time, Laird also states that he has intentions for a secondary audience—"the scholarly community" (p. 4)—to encourage further dialogue about such subjects. In light of that stated intent, the focus of this review in this academic journal will be more evaluative in nature than a simple summation of content.

Throughout the volume, Laird calls into question specific areas of study he thinks are largely "misconstrued," "unfamiliar," "overlooked," "misunderstood," "obscure," and so forth. As he does this, readers are given the impression that they are receiving the most current scholarship or the necessary nuances that the current state of investigation provides. However, that is not always the case. His analysis sometimes lacks alignment with current scholarship.

Take chapter 1 as a prime example, especially since its far-reaching conclusions set the stage for the rest of the book. Laird discusses ancient literacy without acknowledging recent publications that have reshaped our understanding of the topic. In fact, he does not mention any publication written directly on the topic in the last twenty years. Yet newer works have been written, many of which overturn or advance previous understandings of the topics he tackles (see below). And even when he does highlight a work, such as William Harris's *Ancient Literacy*, it is not the author's most recent contribution on the topic. Harris has since defended his 1989 findings in a work published in 2014. But the reader will not learn that here. The same can be said of his discussion regarding letter carriers and a few other topics throughout the book.

Speaking of letter carriers, Laird writes that ancient authors essentially had to utilize associates or personal slaves to deliver their writings. Why? He claims that the ancient world "did not have an organized postal system available to the general public" (p. 19). But that is historically inaccurate. There *was* an organized postal system available before, during, and after the first century AD. Some people even had daily news bulletins delivered straight to their homes via the government-sponsored postal service (e.g., see Brian J. Wright, "Ancient Rome's Daily News Publication with Some Likely Implications for Early Christian Studies," *TynBul* 67.1 [2016], 145–60). In fact, more recent research than Laird offers from the 1990s and early 2000s has challenged (even overturned) the older notion of how sparse the evidence is for the private use of the postal service. For instance, see Pliny the Younger (*Letters* 2.10.45; 10.120.1), Historia Augusta (*Pertinax* 1.6), and Libanius (*Oration* 1.14).

When exploring topics like oral transmission, text circulation, and ancient book production, it is pertinent to consider recent scholarship alongside older works. While seminal publications from 1987, 1998, and 2000 have laid important groundwork (as Laird notes), contemporary research offers nuanced insights. For instance, Scott Charlesworth's recent publications, including "The End of Orality: Transmission of Gospel Tradition in the Second and Third Centuries," in *Between Orality and Literacy: Communication and Adaptation in Antiquity*, Orality and Literacy in the Ancient World 10 (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 331–55, and *Early Christian Gospels: Their Production and Transmission*, Papyrologica Florentina 47 (Firenze: Edizioni Gonnelli, 2016), critically assess these themes, providing readers with updated perspectives and advancements in the field.

Furthermore, Laird's reliance on dated research as mentioned above leads to compounding assumptions that may not withstand scrutiny against emerging scholarship. His assertions about the involvement of trained secretaries and trusted associates in the dissemination of NT writings are weakened by recent findings chal-

lenging such traditional views. For instance, he states that "it is unnecessary to assume that they [the NT authors] composed each of their writings on their own or without the use of a trained secretary" (p. 18). Since emerging scholarship undermines mass illiteracy and the need for trained secretaries, the opposite can now equally be stated: "It is unnecessary to assume that the NT authors did not compose each of their writings on their own or needed to use a trained secretary."

Likewise, Laird goes on to state that "we may safely assume that authors such as Paul relied primarily and possibly even exclusively on trusted colleagues and associates to deliver their writings to their intended recipients" (p. 19). But again, since more recent research over the past 10–20 years is challenging these types of assumptions regarding letter carriers and the dissemination of information (not to mention that this research disproves his view regarding postal systems), then his assumption is not as safe as he suggests.

While Laird effectively engages his primary audience by introducing them to lesser-known topics and prompting critical questions, his neglect of recent scholarship, especially as it relates to the foundational chapter of the book, diminishes the value of his work for the scholarly community.

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Union with the Resurrected Christ: Eschatological New Creation and New Testament Biblical Theology. By G. K. Beale. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2023, xviii + 558 pp., $49.99.

In his latest book, renowned biblical theologian G. K. Beale has set his sights on unpacking the nature of the believer's union with Christ. Of course, Beale is aware that this subject has been thoroughly explored in recent years. However, he believes his is a unique contribution because of its focus on union with the resurrected Christ. As he puts it, "many books and essays on union with Christ have been published recently, but most have focused on Paul and most have discussed union with Christ in general, *not focusing on the resurrected and ascended Christ"* (p. 14, my italics). Moreover, Beale contends that a work like his is needed to fill a gap in Christian scholarship regarding the theology of the resurrection (pp. 15–16).

Beale argues a two-part thesis: first, that "Christ's resurrection and ascension place him as the beginning of the eschatological fulfillment of the new-creational kingdom" (p. 1). And second, that "inaugurated eschatological realities have been attributed to believers through identification (or union) with the *resurrected* and *ascended* Christ" (p. 2). While having a central thesis, the book was designed to function more like a series of essays on various benefits received by believers through their union with Christ. And so, Beale instructs readers to treat the work "as a kind of encyclopedia of union with the resurrected Christ" (p. 17).

In chapter 1, Beale summarizes the storyline of redemptive history with an eye toward the eschatological character of Scripture's metanarrative. He begins with Adam, arguing that the first man was a priest-king who could have ushered in the eschatological age had he fulfilled his commission. However, because he failed,

"God raised up other Adam-like figures to whom his kingly and priestly commission was passed on" (p. 25). Thus, Beale argues that the Bible is eschatological from beginning to end, as God always intended for creation to be transformed into an eschatological new creation through the obedience of God's chosen king-priest. Moreover, according to Beale, this same emphasis on eschatology is found in the NT through its focus on the "latter days"—a term that refers "in various contexts to inaugurated eschatology and in other contexts to a future period that is the consummation of the latter-day period" (p. 60).

In chapter 2, Beale seeks to show that "[the] notion of resurrection throughout the NT is equivalent to eschatological new creation and kingship for Christ and all who identify with him" (p. 64). Beale begins by trying to show that Genesis 1–3 already hints at a coming resurrection from the dead. He then highlights OT passages that attest to a future resurrection prior to the clear statement in Daniel 12:1–3 (cf. Isa 25:8; 26:19; Ezek 27; Hos 13:14; Ps 49:14–15; 1 Sam 2:6; Deut 32:39). After asserting that the notion of resurrection was connected to the eschaton within Judaism, Beale turns to the NT to demonstrate that the resurrection is repeatedly linked with new creation and with kingship. And while Beale argues that the resurrection was crucial to the Gospel writers, he posits that it was particularly foundational for Paul's theology, stating that "Christ's resurrection as a new creation was the generative source from which Paul's conception of most of his major theological conceptions arose" (p. 96).

The next fifteen chapters are devoted to various "inaugurated eschatological realities" that believers experience through union with the resurrected Christ (p. 100). Many of these chapters focus on typological structures that find their climactic fulfillment in Christ and in the church insofar as it is united to Christ. Thus, Beale includes discussions on Christ as the last Adam (chap. 3), the true Israel (chaps. 3 and 5), the true temple (chap. 4), the true king-priest (chap. 7), and the true returnee from exile (chap. 8). Other chapters tackle more traditional subjects in soteriology while emphasizing that these saving benefits are experienced through union with the resurrected Christ. Beale explores topics such as justification (chaps. 6, 11, and 12), redemption (chap. 6), glorification (chaps. 13–14), regeneration (chap. 16), and sanctification (chaps. 6, 15). Finally, he includes two chapters that describe the Spirit's work in relation to the resurrected Christ (chaps. 9 and 10) and one chapter on NT texts that portray the believer's life as a possession of Christ's resurrection life (chap. 17).

On the whole, I believe *Union with the Resurrected Christ* is a remarkable achievement that expansively and thoroughly tackles the theme of union with the resurrected Christ. Beale shows that Christ's resurrection is crucial for the accomplishment of God's saving work and for everyday Christian living. Additionally, Beale provides a host of helpful discussions on various aspects of the Christians' newfound identity in Christ. Beale persuades more often than not, though he does so more through bombardment than through precision strikes. For instance, after reading the book, readers will walk away with confidence that the risen Christ fulfills several typological structures introduced in the OT and that believers assume these various aspects of the risen Christ's identity through their union with him.

They will come to this conclusion because of the avalanche of exposition and argumentation that Beale provides to defend even the most obvious typological connections. As such, readers looking for a treasure trove of information on the subjects covered will find the book an invaluable resource. Meanwhile, readers seeking more concise presentations might view some of the material as overkill.

While Beale achieves his overall aims, some of his more specific claims are not persuasive. At times, he places too much weight on allusions that may or may not be present in a text. For example, he argues that the Synoptic accounts of Jesus's baptism allude to Genesis 1 and Genesis 9 in order to present him as "the representative of the new humanity to fulfill his new creational commission given to him from God" (pp. 110–11). However, the evidence Beale puts forward for this connection is tenuous, consisting as it does of the motif of God sending his Spirit to separate the waters from the land. However, unlike Genesis 1 and 9, the baptism accounts do not mention land emerging from the waters. Moreover, some of Beale's claims seem to be rooted in a rather wooden approach to texts. For instance, while he is probably correct that 1 Corinthians 1:30 refers to imputation of Christ's righteousness through union with Christ, he needlessly concludes that Christ's wisdom and Christ's redemption must likewise be imputed to believers through union with Christ. It seems much more plausible that Paul did not intend readers to interpret the parallel so strictly, so that Christ does not have to become the believer's wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption *in exactly the same way*. Finally, elements of Beale's treatment of Genesis 1–2 will not be found compelling by all. Those who do not hold to covenant theology are unlikely to be convinced by Beale's claim that Adam could have ushered in the eschatological age through his obedience to the covenant of works. Moreover, even those who share his approach to the covenants may be skeptical of his contention that the tree of the knowledge of good and evil refers to the place where Adam was to judge the serpent.

As Beale describes it, *Union with the Resurrected Christ* is "a kind of tool to be used for better understanding the believer's union with the resurrected Christ" (p. 17). Beale is to be thanked for providing readers with a powerful tool that will build up their appreciation for the benefits that come through union with the resurrected Christ. Though some may find the tool to be hefty and a little unwieldy, those with the fortitude to employ it will be thankful they did.

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Jesus among the Gods: Early Christology in the Greco-Roman World. By Michael F. Bird. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2022, xi + 480 pp., $59.99.

Michael F. Bird is no stranger to debates about early Christology (see, e.g., *Jesus the Eternal Son: Answering Adoptionist Christology* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017]). But in this latest volume he offers what will doubtless be his definitive statement. In terms of scope—the authors/texts/time period covered and the debate partners engaged, both from previous generations of scholarship and from the present—

this is one of the most wide-ranging accounts of early Christology ever written. For instance, it covers an even wider historical period than that treated by the famous studies of Wilhelm Bousset (1913) and Larry Hurtado (2003). However, despite its encyclopedic reference to most of the relevant texts and issues of early Christology from the Second Temple Jewish period down to c. 200 CE, it lacks the historical rigor of the aforementioned accounts.

In any case, Bird states his larger aim in this way:

> I give renewed attention to divine ontology—what a god is—in relation to literary representations of Jesus. In other words, I'm asking: What is a god, what are the types of gods of antiquity, and what type of god was Jesus presented as being? This is important because most studies of early Christology focus on christological titles, divine functions, divine identity, and types of worship. The subject of "ontology" is considered something that happened in the second and third centuries as the early church engaged in a flamboyant Platonic interpretation of Jesus. My rejoinder is to say no: divine ontology was there from the beginning, and a comparison of first-century authors like Philo, Paul, and Plutarch proves it so. The upshot is that I think I can show that belief in Jesus as an absolute, eternal, true, and unbegotten deity goes back to the first century (p. ix).

In the first section ("Problematizing Jesus' Divinity," pp. 9–40), Bird canvases the wider historical context within which early Christology must have made sense: Greco-Roman mythology, philosophy, and ruler cult; and Jewish monotheism, messianism, and other sorts of intermediary speculation. Then, in the second section ("The Search for Divine Ontology," pp. 41–86), Bird convincingly shows that Greco-Romans, at the popular level but more particularly at the technical philosophical level, made a fundamental distinction between two different kinds of divinity: (1) beings that had always been deities (e.g., the Olympian gods), even though, of course, there were hierarchies of power among them (Bird refers to this order of divinity as "absolute or ontological [divinity]"); and (2) humans (or demigods such as Hercules or Achilles) that, for various reasons (e.g., political power; military exploits; benevolence), were later regarded as deified beings (Bird refers to this order of divinity as "euergetic [divinity]"). Moreover, as Bird also indicates, this distinction between two different orders of divinity was further sharpened in Middle Platonism's distinction between "being" and "becoming" and Judaism's distinction between God the creator and everything else.

In this regard, through nuanced dialogue with primary and secondary sources (pp. 87–380), Bird demonstrates that however much early Christological traditions appropriated "intermediary traditions"—Adam, royal Messiah, priestly Messiah, wisdom, Angel of the Lord, ruler cult, and other such traditions—a large range of early Christian literature—e.g., Paul's letters, John's gospel, Hebrews, 1 John, and sundry texts from the second and third centuries—ascribes to Jesus an absolute divinity that goes beyond anything we see in the intermediary traditions of Second Temple Judaism or the imperial ideology surrounding the Roman emperor:

> In the previous chapters I noted the similarities and the differences between portrayals of Jesus and various intermediary figures, such as the demiurge, Log-

> os, Wisdom, principal angels, exalted patriarchs, and deified rulers.… The similarities mean that Jesus was in many respects a Greco-Roman deity, a comparable and comprehensible divine being of antiquity.... [But] the fact that Jesus was described as an unbegotten and uncreated god is proof that Jesus was considered a divine being in the strongest Greco-Roman sense imaginable.… Jesus could be deliberately portrayed like a demiurge, Wisdom, an angel, an exalted patriarch, or a deified ruler.… [But] no single intermediary figure can be regarded as a progenitor of early Christology, just as no single intermediary figure can be considered the hermeneutic key explaining the development of early Christology (pp. 382–83).

With respect to the positive gains of the book, we should say the following. (1) Bird succeeds in demonstrating that, broadly speaking, Greco-Romans thought in terms of two kinds of divinity: the kind of being that had always been a deity and the kind of being that had been honored with deification after political ascendancy, and/or military exploits, and/or extraordinary benefactions. (2) Furthermore, Bird shows that the first order of divinity was often ascribed to Jesus in early Christian texts (e.g., Paul's letters; John's gospel; the homily to the Hebrews; and 1 John). (3) Bird's treatment is much more nuanced than most previous studies of early Christology with respect to (a) the relationship between "Judaism and Hellenism"; (b) the relative import of Jewish intermediary traditions; and (c) the relationship between first-century Christologies and the subsequent Christological traditions of the second and third centuries.

Concerning (a): for the older history-of-religions school, early divine Christology was explicable because of the contextual influence of Greco-Roman polytheism and ruler cult and/or a watered-down *spätjüdischer Monotheismus*. Thus divine Christology was explained by appeal to "Hellenism." On the other hand, Hengel, Bauckham, Hurtado and some others in the so-called "new history-of-religions School" largely explain divine Christology within the context of a supposedly siloed Jewish tradition. Bird rightly rejects this false dichotomy *but still properly insists upon the context of a distinctive, rigorous Jewish monotheism*. With respect to (b), Bird wisely navigates between the two extremes of seeing the precedents and parallels of Jewish intermediary traditions either as wholly explicative of earliest Christology (e.g., Dunn and McGrath) or else as largely irrelevant (e.g., Bauckham and Wright). And with respect to (c), Bird shows perhaps more than any previous study the continuity between earliest Christology and the Christologies of the second, third, and fourth centuries.

But we should also note the reasons for some slight ambivalence toward the book's contribution to debates about earliest Christology. Many scholars in the last hundred or so years would be happy to grant that Jesus is ascribed Bird's notion of "absolute divinity" in John's gospel, Hebrews, and some second-century traditions, though they (e.g., Dunn and even Hurtado) would insist on some elements of Christological (i.e., ontological) subordination here as well. But what many scholars have doubted is that such a Christology of "absolute divinity" goes back to Paul's letters. And though Bird rightly insists that it does, the quick, encyclopedic manner of his treatment—that is, jumping from a text in Paul to a text in John to a text in

Justin Martyr in the space of a few sentences—will be unlikely to persuade the not-already-convinced. Furthermore, some will understandably wonder why, even if Jesus is depicted as "absolutely divine," he is not still presented as ontologically inferior to God the Father. And, beyond this, one might also want to tease out the possibility that Jesus is treated in some texts (e.g., Phil 2:6–11) *both* as an absolute divinity *and* as having a humanity that is later euergetically divinized.

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Divine Shepherd Christology in the Gospel of Matthew. By Wayne Baxter. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books/Fortress Academic, 2022, viii + 204 pp., $95.00.

In *Divine Shepherd Christology in the Gospel of Matthew*, Wayne Baxter analyzes the shepherd metaphor within the Hebrew Bible, Second Temple Jewish texts, and the NT to show how Matthew's shepherd metaphor compares with these texts. Baxter concludes that although Matthew's shepherd metaphor shares similarities with them, Matthew also presents a unique portrait of Jesus as the shepherd king of Israel who embodies Yahweh, Israel's ideal shepherd.

In the introduction, Baxter argues that Matthew's shepherd Christology provides evidence for a high Christology by linking the "Son of David" and the shepherd motif. That Matthew chooses to include shepherd imagery in his Gospel shows that Matthew is intentional about depicting Jesus as Israel's shepherd. For example, he uses the shepherd-sheep metaphor in 25:31–46, a passage about the final judgment, when he could have chosen the harvest metaphor as John the Baptist did (3:12).

In chapter 1, Baxter discusses the shepherd metaphor in the OT. Earthly rulers are called shepherds, and Israel's future monarch is compared with a shepherd. "Shepherd" is also used as a title for Yahweh as he rescues, gathers, and protects his people. Another feature of the shepherd metaphor in the Hebrew Bible is the presence of Jewish-national overtones. God promises to restore his people's status as a nation in Ezekiel 34:13–14 as God himself shepherds them, gathering them from exile and establishing them in their own land. Micah 5:2–4 predicts that a future Davidic ruler will accomplish this.

In chapter 2, Baxter discusses the shepherd metaphor in Second Temple Jewish texts. Non-Christian Jews appropriate "shepherd" as a metaphor most frequently for rulers. In these texts, hopes for Jewish-national restoration are clear. Second Temple Jews portray God as a merciful or compassionate shepherd and also as a sovereign judge. A Davidic messiah who will reign as the King of Israel will live in close relationship with YHWH, establishing co-extensive judgment and co-extensive kingship.

In chapter 3, the shepherd metaphor in the NT is discussed. Mark portrays Jesus as Israel's prophesied shepherd, who was struck down to atone for the sins of his sheep. John seems to view Jesus as the fulfillment of Ezekiel's prophecy of a coming Davidic shepherd. John's appropriation of Ezekiel 34 seems to indicate

that God and the coming David are one and the same: Jesus is Ezekiel's eschatological David, who is also the God who became flesh and dwelled among his people (1:1, 14). In Revelation, through the appropriation of Psalm 2:9, Jesus's shepherding is equated with ruling over nations at the parousia.

In chapter 4, Baxter discusses the shepherd in Matthew as a sign of Yahweh's fidelity to his royal promises. Matthew 2:6 cites a conflation of Micah 5:2 and 2 Samuel 5:2b connecting Jesus's kingship with the shepherd motif. According to Matthew, Jesus represents the promised ruler who will shepherd God's people Israel. The focus of Matthew's shepherd remains squarely on the nation of Israel. Jesus's reign includes the earthly, political dimension, and he replaces Jerusalem's leaders as their shepherd.

In chapter 5, Baxter sees Matthew present Christ in chapters 8–9 as Yahweh's royal agent of mercy and compassion. When Jesus saves his people from their sins (1:21), an integral part of Israel's salvation is their deliverance from physical illnesses and satanic oppression. Jesus's mission to Israel is characterized not only by divine authority but also by compassion. Ezekiel 34 says that Yahweh as Israel's true shepherd would heal the sick, care for the marginalized, and deliver the flock from its bondage. That is what Jesus does in Matthew 8–9.

In chapter 6, Baxter discusses the shepherd in Matthew as the eschatological judge. In the final judgment pericope (Matt 25:31–46), the judge is the Son of Man, separating people as a shepherd separates sheep from goats (vv. 32–33), which alludes to Ezekiel 34:17. The criterion for judgment is deeds of mercy or lack thereof (vv. 35–36) done for followers of Christ, since they represent Christ. He will return as the king of the world who will judge the world, fulfilling God's promise to David. The combination of Jesus's use of the Son of Man title (25:31) and his allusions to Daniel 7:13 (v. 31) and Ezekiel 34:17 (v. 32) reveals Jesus's deity.

In chapter 7, Matthew's shepherd is the atoning sacrifice and resurrected gatherer. In 26:31–32, the more central dimension of his shepherding appears, namely, his sacrificial, atoning death on the cross and his resurrection from the dead for their final salvation from their sins. Jesus is the prophesied shepherd in Zechariah who will be struck down by his crucifixion to atone for the sins of his people, but who will gather them together in Galilee after his resurrection. Nowhere else is the shepherd metaphor connected with resurrection. As the fulcrum of salvation history, Jesus becomes God's rejected shepherd. Zechariah's prophecy of the rejection of Yahweh by the leaders finds its fullest theological significance in the Jerusalem leaders' rejection of Jesus.

In chapter 8, Matthew is compared with other writings to show Matthew's high shepherd Christology. Matthew's shepherd motif bears strong overtones of Jewish-national restoration similar to the Hebrew Bible by focusing on Israel. A unique relationship exists between Yahweh and the Davidic shepherd in that they both shepherd Israel (Ezek 34:15, 23). Matthew's presentation of Jesus as a healer and exorcist who prioritized Israel in his mission and replaced Israel's failed leaders does not find a parallel in other Christian writings. Matthew deploys the shepherd metaphor only for Jesus and never for assembly leaders. Matthew's high shepherd Christology prohibits him from using "shepherd" for anyone other than Jesus.

In chapter 9, Baxter tries to demonstrate that Matthew's shepherd Christology provides evidence for his high Christology. Baxter argues that the reason some scholars reject the deity of Jesus is the history of idealized human figures predating Jesus. Baxter points out that the previous idealizations of biblical figures are never the thrust of the document as the Gospels' thrust is. There is no evidence in monotheism that a human being was exalted to be a divine being. That Jesus alone remains the final standard for universal judgment speaks to his deity. The reason the Shepherd can atone fully for the sins of his people is that he is none other than Yahweh.

In his book, Baxter defends Israel as the people of God for whom Christ came as their shepherd. The book insightfully makes connections between Jesus's role as the king, final judge, and shepherd first of Israel and also of the world. The book uses endnotes that require readers to flip the pages back and forth to see the notes. Those who do not want to bother with that will miss some good information, so footnotes might have served readers better. As for the content, Baxter has produced a very well-argued book shedding light on the important but overlooked shepherd Christology in Matthew. Baxter successfully defends his thesis that the shepherd Christology in Matthew provides strong support for high Christology—Jesus is the Yahweh of the Hebrew Scriptures. In 2007, Terry Hedrick wrote a PhD thesis titled "Jesus as Shepherd in the Gospel of Matthew" (Durham University) in which he examines the shepherd metaphor in the Gospel of Matthew and concludes that Jesus is the Son of God, Shepherd-Messiah, and the Son of David who fulfills the promises of the Hebrew Scriptures. But he falls short of affirming the deity of Jesus. Baxter's high Shepherd Christology is thus an important contribution to the defense of the historic Christian belief in the deity of Jesus who is functionally subordinate but ontologically equal to the Father.

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Shaping the Past to Define the Present. By Gregory E. Sterling. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2023, xix + 281 pp., $44.00.

The name of Gregory Sterling is well-known to students of Luke-Acts. His *Historiography and Self-Definition* (1992) was a landmark work in the field, making a key contribution to then-prominent discussions concerning the genre of Luke-Acts and Luke's use and imitation of the OT. The passage of time has brought neither great consensus on, nor waning interest in, either question. In *Shaping the Past to Define the Present*, Sterling updates and extends his arguments in a tour de force that will provide fresh food for thought for anyone interested in the content, form, and purpose of Luke's double work.

As a refresher, *Historiography and Self-Definition* argued that Luke-Acts is written in the tradition of a preexistent genre Sterling calls apologetic historiography, a form that presents the history of a people in terms intelligible to the wider Greco-Roman world. It was *historiography* because it told the story of a people, but it was

apologetic because it did so in ways designed to speak to a wider audience (not least by being written in Greek). Josephus's *Antiquities* is the best example, although several others exist, at least in fragmentary form. In the present work, which Sterling calls a "sequel," he doubles down on his basic thesis, while updating and extending the argument. Most of the book reflects material that has been published or presented elsewhere in article or essay form; however, everything has been revised, even if lightly. The book contains three sections with three chapters each: first, the tradition of apologetic historiography as a whole; second, the ways in which Luke-Acts reflects Israel's tradition (the "historiography" part); and third, features of Luke-Acts that reflect a concern to present Christianity favorably to outsiders ("apologetic"). Most chapters contain appendices with detailed analysis of whatever Greek text(s) Sterling's argument is based on—an immensely helpful feature.

The brief introduction previews the upcoming chapters and mentions a few updates to the argument, including a new understanding of genre based on prototype genre theory; I would have liked to have seen more interaction with this throughout the book. Chapters 1–3 examine the features and limits of apologetic historiography. In chapter 1, Sterling considers Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History* as a test case of apologetic historiography, a question he was unable to address in his earlier work. He argues that the historian's portrayal of Christians as a distinct "nation" (ἔθνος), his efforts to establish Christianity's antiquity, and his care to distinguish it from Judaism all peg the work as belonging to the genre.

Chapter 2 considers whether "apologetic historiography" is an *emic* or *etic* genre. That is, is it a tradition the ancients themselves would have recognized, or purely the construct of modern scholars? Sterling sifts the evidence of some non-Greek historians (Egyptians, Phoenicians, Babylonians) to answer affirmatively that these "Eastern" peoples were conscious of being part of a tradition that differed from Greek historiography. That there were numerous historical works by these peoples sharing certain features in common is not in doubt; the evidence for a recognized "tradition" appears to be less certain.

Chapter 3 considers a question that has been of interest to many scholars: Can we discern evidence in the Gospel of Luke that he planned a second volume from the outset? Marshaling Synoptic source-criticism, Sterling answers in the affirmative. Luke's putative alteration of Mark's citation of Isaiah 40, the apparent delay (compared with Mark) of Gentile mission until Acts, and downplaying of the charge that Jesus spoke against the temple all indicate that Luke was saving major elements of the story until his second volume. Sterling is at his best here, and this fresh evidence should help provide a definitive answer to this important question.

Chapters 4–6 explore the "historiography" side of apologetic historiography: how Luke and others looked back to earlier traditions. In chapter 4 Sterling considers the ancient practice of *mimesis*, arguing that Josephus's *Antiquities* is an example of an author attempting to *improve* upon a predecessor (the LXX), while Luke for his part *continues* where that same predecessor left off. While I demur with some of Sterling's claims where Josephus is concerned (did he really see his work as a *replacement* for the LXX?), Sterling is surely correct for Luke-Acts, notwithstanding that the LXX is better described as *awaiting fulfillment* in Luke's eyes, rather than

"unfinished." Chapter 5, a study of potential models for Stephen's speech in Acts 7, is invaluable for its in-depth review of earlier Jewish historians, while chapter 6 helpfully situates the synagogue speech in Acts 13 within a larger tradition of retelling Israel's story.

Chapters 7–9 tackle the "apologetic" angle. Chapter 7 lays out evidence that Luke intentionally downplays elements of Jesus's passion while echoing the "noble death" tradition of Socrates and others in order to make Jesus more palatable to Hellenistic audiences. Here is a great example of where Sterling's careful analysis of the Greek (presented in the appendix) helps make a strong case, perhaps enough to convince those (like myself) not initially inclined to accept the thesis.

Chapter 8 looks at the summaries in Acts, arguing that these literary creations of Luke are patterned on a preexisting tradition of descriptions of religious or philosophical groups by Greco-Roman and other authors. While the comparative analysis of these various groups is impressive for its detail, the argument for Luke-Acts struck this reviewer as *just-so*, and left me wondering if there simply are only so many ways to describe ancient religious groups, who no doubt shared many features in common.

Rounding out the book, chapter 9 tackles the ever-vexing question of the overall purpose of Luke-Acts, arguing for *social apology* as a major motivator, based on Luke's apparent awareness of three common criticisms later authors made about Christianity. The brief conclusion summarizes the findings and points to some areas for additional research.

Shaping the Past to Define the Present stands out not only as an up-to-date précis of Sterling's earlier work, but as a great introduction to many issues germane to the study of Luke-Acts. The result is an invaluable contribution to the field of Luke-Acts studies. Besides the content and argument of the book itself, students and scholars alike will find much to emulate in terms of detail, depth of research, and clarity of writing.

I alluded above to some minor points of disagreement; I mention here one additional issue. A great deal of the book is devoted to *comparing* Luke-Acts (or Eusebius or whoever) to other writings. But while comparison is of course part of the stock-in-trade of scholars, not to mention a fundamental component of human reasoning, so is contrast. At times I wanted the differences, as well as the similarities, between Luke-Acts and a given exemplar to be more thoroughly considered.

Despite this, *Shaping the Past to Define the Present* is a stand-out and should be considered required reading for students and scholars of Luke-Acts. Even if one does not follow Sterling in all of his conclusions, the work will serve as an outstanding introduction to many of the key issues, and the meticulous care with which the arguments are constructed will provide a model for others to imitate and continue—and even perhaps to improve upon, although that will be harder to accomplish.

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Dictionary of Paul and His Letters: A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship. Edited by Scot McKnight, Lynn H. Cohick, and Nijay K. Gupta. 2nd ed. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2023, xxx + 1223 pp., $70.00.

The first edition of *Paul and His Letters* (*DPL*) was published in 1993. Thirty years later, the second edition (*DPL2*), which is the subject of this review, has now been published. My copy of *DPL* is well-worn from use. Given that I have just read very closely about 70% of the articles and skimmed the remaining 30%, I know that my *DPL2* will also be well-worn in the future as I anticipate that I will return to it often. These "well-worn" comments for both *DPL* and *DPL2* are made despite my theological and exegetical disagreements with many of the articles in *DPL*, and even more so in *DPL2*.

As to the format of *DPL2*, it parallels *DPL*. Each article includes appropriate cross-references and an up-to-date bibliography. A significant subject index combined with a Scripture index spans 63 pages. *DPL2* has 219 articles by 141 authors, with only 15 of them being of them being reused or revised from *DPL*. Almost all the authors in *DPL2* teach NT at the undergraduate or the graduate level and have published a monograph and/or significant articles related to their assigned topic. In fact, often the author of an article is very well-known in that topic area (e.g., Barclay for "Grace," Capes for "Lord," deSilva for "Honor/Shame," Evans for "Qumran and Paul," Hill for "God," Sprinkle for "Homosexuality"). Clearly, *DPL2* is a massive undertaking. The three editors, McKnight as the general editor and Cohick and Gupta as associates, along with the IVP publications staff are to be commended.

There is obviously a wide continuum of views and issues concerning Paul in today's scholarly world. The preface of *DPL2* notes that *DPL* was focused on the New Perspective on Paul (NPP) and its relationship to the "old perspective." The preface then contrasts this emphasis with current ways to summarize the continuum of scholarly views. It comments that a recent book distinguished between "Reformation, New Perspective, Apocalyptic, Participationist"; another distinguished between "Roman Catholic, Traditional Protestant, New Perspective, Paul Within Judaism, and Gift" (p. ix). *DPL2* includes articles related to all these and many more.

But what is the general perspective from which *DPL2*'s authors are writing? Or maybe a better question, what is the theological center of gravity for this collection of authors? First, my take on *DPL*. To use my own terminology, I often categorized *DPL* as including a reasonable mix of "right-leaning" evangelicals, "left-leaning" evangelicals, and "right-leaning" critical scholars. Generally, the "right-leaning" evangelicals were clearly anti-NPP, and many in all three groups were very and/or broadly Reformed. Articles directly related to NPP were assigned to both pro- and anti-NPP (e.g., Dunn for "Romans" and Schreiner for "Works of the Law"). Concerning articles related to NPP, I might say that *DPL* leaned toward anti-NPP overall, but also had a significant pro-NPP flavor.

Now to *DPL2*. Again, the same mix exists with "right-leaning" evangelicals, "left-leaning" evangelicals, and "right-leaning" critical scholars. However, there is a

significant "center of gravity" of "left-leaning" evangelicals. This center of gravity is definitely pro-NPP or some softer variant of it (e.g., "Justification" by Gombis, "Romans" by McKnight, "Atonement" by Colijn, "In Christ" by Gorman, "Righteousness" by Bird, "Works of the Law" by Thomas). Also, this center of gravity is often coming from those in the broadly Wesleyan/Arminian tradition. Or to say it another way, the center of gravity reasonably corresponds to the three editors, McKnight, Cohick, and Gupta—as one would expect and is their prerogative.

What about Pauline authorship of the letters and the historicity of Acts? A Pauline dictionary whose authors were left-leaning to middle-of-the-road critical scholars would assume Pauline authorship for only the seven "undisputed" letters and be circumspect or simply ignore the other six "deutero-Pauline" letters. They would also have a low view of the historicity of Acts. *DPL2*, however, does have many authors who explicitly affirm Pauline authorship of all thirteen letters, and some who do not affirm all thirteen. For example, Kidson in "Pastoral Epistles" does not affirm Pauline authorship. But for the vast majority of articles, no matter the author's stand on the thirteen, pertinent information from the deutero-Pauline letters is included. As to the historicity of Acts, it is a similar story with the three groups. One of the longer articles in *DPL2* is "Paul in Acts" by Walton. He argues strongly and in detail against the thesis that the portraits of the Paul of Acts and the Paul of the epistles are incompatible.

DPL2 has many articles on contemporary (some might say "trendy") Pauline issues. This well matches the subtitle, *A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship*. For example, there are articles titled "Disability," "Ecological Paul," "Mission," "Interpretation: Postcolonial," "Performance [Criticism]," "Narrative," "Empire," "Paul and Judaism," and "Social-Scientific Approach." Portions of the contemporary scholarly world are overrun with ideological criticism. There is, however, only a modicum of this in *DPL2*, and most of it is in the articles explicitly dedicated to it (e.g., "Interpretation: Reading Paul *Latinamente*," "Interpretation: African American").

As expected, many articles include potentially pertinent OT, Greco-Roman, and/or Second Temple Judaism backgrounds as part of the explanation of a Pauline issue (e.g., "Friendship" by Briones, "Temple" by Perrin). In addition, there are several up-to-date articles on various aspects of Greco-Roman and Second Temple Judaism backgrounds per se, but especially Greco-Roman (e.g., "Legal System, Roman" by Rapske, "Religions, Greco-Roman" by Hubbard).

Within the evangelical scholarly community, there is strong debate as to whether Paul was a complementarian or an egalitarian. *DPL2* is decidedly against complementarianism. In "Head," Westfall argues that *kephalē* does not mean "authority." In the long article "Women," Peppiatt argues strongly for the egalitarian position, although she prefers the terms "hierarchicalist" (complementarian) and "mutualist" (egalitarian). In "Man and Women," Lee-Barnewall strives to split the middle by taking into account both the creation narratives of Adam and Eve and the new creation in union with Christ.

In conclusion, as intimated above by my "well-worn" comment, I am highly recommending *DPL2*—even to my "right-leaning" evangelical colleagues. Especial-

ly considering that I am a "right-leaning" evangelical, confessionally Reformed, very anti-NPP, complementarian, skeptical of many of the newer Pauline trends, and strongly affirming of both Pauline authorship of all thirteen epistles and the historicity of Acts, why this strong recommendation? (1) *DPL2* has first-class articles that contain useful bibliographies by scholars who are well-informed concerning their topic and who seriously engage with Pauline texts. (2) This dictionary is a one-stop, very valuable aid to keep abreast of Pauline studies.

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Doing "the Good" in Paul's Ethical Vision. By T. Luke Post. Lanham, MD: Lexington/Fortress Academic, 2023, viii + 303 pp., $120.00.

In his published 2019 dissertation from Asbury Theological Seminary, T. Luke Post proposes through a monosemic approach that Paul's usage of ἀγαθός and καλός was informed by the stable meanings of these adjectives that his readers would have recognized. While questions concerning the role of faith and works since Augustine and Pelagius have sometimes hindered readers from seeing the "good" in Paul's ethic, *Doing "the Good" in Paul's Ethical Vision* serves as a helpful corrective. The book features eight chapters in which Post seeks to define doing "good" in light of social-scientific backgrounds as applied to passages that give ethical instruction in Paul's seven "undisputed" letters (plus 2 Thessalonians).

In his introduction Post notes that "the good" is a "central ethical category" for Paul (pp. 3, 8). Post's thesis is that "doing good" in Paul should not be "equated with generic obedience," but rather "point[s] beyond the fulfillment of basic covenantal/ethical obligations to actions that serve to sustain and increase the well-being of others in light of new social realities that Christ has brought into existence" (pp. 8–9). After introducing the meaning of the two key Greek adjectives, the thesis is applied to Galatians (chap. 3), 1–2 Thessalonians (chap. 4), 1–2 Corinthians (chap. 5), Romans (chap. 6), and Philippians and Philemon (chap. 7). In each chapter, Post introduces the context of the letter and provides an analysis of the selected passages. The author delimits the study to texts that "carry clear ethical significance" (p. 9).

In chapter 2 the author suggests that ἀγαθός and καλός carried a "stable meaning" that was exemplified in the LXX, where both expressions were built on the "goodness" of God. He claims that ἀγαθός referred to the use of one's blessings to benefit others, while καλός was connected to the "beautiful, noble" reflection of that same goodness (pp. 26–27, 40). Post then shows similar usage of the Greek words in Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and others to produce a framework for better understanding this emphasis in Paul's ethic (pp. 40–41).

Building on these monosemic meanings of ἀγαθός and καλός in chapter 4, Post's thesis is applied to Galatians 4:12–20; 5:22; and 6:6–10. He claims that the pressure for the Galatian Christians to be circumcised was in part about their striving for honor; however, this was a trap that would put them back into a slavery

comparable to what paganism had held them in before knowing Christ (p. 54). By denying themselves, they would do "good." This "good" that the Galatian Christians could do for one another could demonstrate what giving "good" (ἀγαθός in Gal 6:6, 10) might look like.

In chapter 4, Post applies the meanings of ἀγαθός and καλός to 1 Thessalonians 5:15, 21; 2 Thessalonians 1:11; 2:16–17; and 3:13. The author suggests that the command in 1 Thessalonians 5:15 to "pursue the good (ἀγαθός)" offers "the early Christian alternative to the OT's *lex talionis*" (p. 92). Similarly, the command to "cling to the good" (καλός) in 1 Thessalonians 5:21–22 would benefit the whole church, while also applying to every Christian. Holding fast to healthy teaching would help the struggling Christians to show "good" (ἀγαθός) in their words and work (2 Thess 1:11; 2:16–17).

In chapter 5 on 1–2 Corinthians, the usage of ἀγαθός and καλός is applied to 1 Corinthians 5:6, 10; 2 Corinthians 8:21; 9:8; and 13:7. In the Corinthians' context of boasting, factionalism, and immorality, Paul urged Christians to pursue the "good" (καλός) that only God could bestow. This "good" would demonstrate the connection between "eschatology and ethic" (pp. 138, 143). The generosity that the Corinthian Christians could show towards the poor would embody the righteousness and grace that Paul alludes to throughout 2 Corinthians 8–9.

In chapter 6 on Romans, Post shows that the theme of "doing the good" is especially highlighted in Paul's "lengthiest and most reflective epistle" (p. 187), as seen in Romans 2:6–11; 7:7–25; 12:2, 9, 12:17–21; 13:3–4; and 16:19. Post correctly notes that the "good" (ἀγαθός) that the Roman Christians were to do was to benefit others (Rom 2:7, 10). In Romans 7:12–21 "good" is referred to eight times as a means of showing how God's law was "good" (7:12) and how those who trust in the flesh (7:18) cannot live the "good life" in an honorable manner (ἀγαθός in 7:12–13, 18–19; καλός in 7:16, 18, 21). Even in Romans 12:2, "one of the richest expressions of God's ethic," love could be seen in this kind of "doing good."

Post engages Philippians and Philemon in chapter 7, evaluating Philippians 1:6 and Philemon 6 and 14. These references to "good" (ἀγαθός) are unique in highlighting the financial aspect of *koinonia*. In the context of Philemon much of this emphasis builds on Paul's being a benefactor or partner to Philemon and in turn asking in the context of generosity that Onesimus be received well or even released (pp. 244–46).

In his concluding chapter Post lists ten findings about "the good" in Paul summarized in this sentence: The ethical, missional emphasis of "the good" in Paul was rooted in love for the betterment of one's inner person, while serving to aid other people by the use of wealth in God's strength for the purpose of advancing one's honor in God's sight, despite weaknesses in the flesh, to be rewarded at judgment (pp. 259–62).

The author is to be commended for the well-researched study that contains a total of 1,423 endnotes in the book and a thorough, up-to-date bibliography. Each page is filled with exegetical gems that reaffirm Post's thesis. Exegetes will enjoy the author's frequent interaction with Greek grammar and syntax. The author is to be commended for not throwing out the "good" just because some have failed to

emphasize Paul's ethical theme of "good works." While the focus on eight of Paul's letters was well-explained by the author, it is unfortunate that the Pastoral Epistles were excluded, given their use of καλός twenty-one times, which is far more than the books included in this study. One wonders how the inclusion of the other five letters traditionally attributed to Paul, letters that, ironically, are included in some parenthetical references to Scriptures through the study, could have impacted the application of the thesis.

Furthermore, while the writer does a good job defending the monosemic "stable" meaning of ἀγαθός and καλός, one wonders how the occasional nature of Paul's letters and the varied perspectives of his audiences might have impacted how these words would have been understood. To borrow language from Beker's *Paul the Apostle*, how could these words have been understood not only in the *coherent* center of Paul's theological emphasis, but also in the *contingent* circumstances he addressed? Even with these challenging questions in mind, Post's study offers a refreshing challenge to those who might underestimate Paul's frequent theme of "doing good" as a means of blessing others (ἀγαθός) in a manner that is honorable (καλός) in God's sight. One would "do good" to apply this study as a corrective to works on Paul's ethic that fail to explore a central ethical theme of Paul's thinking.

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The Spirit, Ethics, and Eternal Life: Paul's Vision for the Christian Life in Galatians. By Jarvis J. Williams. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2023, 240 pp., $32.00, paper.

In this book, Jarvis J. Williams continues to expand his work on Pauline theology and deepen his engagement with Galatians. Williams has also published a commentary on Galatians in the New Covenant Commentary series (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2020) as well as an academic monograph titled *Christ Redeemed "Us" from the Curse of the Law: A Jewish Martyrological Reading of Galatians 3:13*, LNTS 524 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2019). This book sets out to develop a single theme within Galatians, speaking more to the academy than to the church.

The main thrust of the book is to show that "God's salvation in Christ includes ethical transformation by faith and by the power of the Spirit" (p. 10). There are likely very few readers of IVP Academic books who need to be convinced of that statement, but there is a more particular contribution. The first part of Williams's thesis might best be described as a demarcation of the directional scope of God's saving action in Christ, which he understands to encompass horizontal, vertical, and cosmic tangents (p. 4). The need for his work arises because scholars have often "not allowed for nuance and complexity in understanding Galatians and the soteriology therein" (p. 148), but Williams is also aware that contemporary treatments of Paul "run the risk of being more sophisticated, creative, clever, and nuanced than Paul himself ever intended to be" (p. 196, speaking specifically here about ethical discourse in Galatians). As far as I can tell, Williams's reading of Paul's soteriology sets it up to be multifaceted rather than monolithic. For example,

while he is convinced that Paul's soteriology is apocalyptic, he argues that "it is *not only* apocalyptic" (p. 110). Williams argues that justification is specifically vertical and that "neither deliverance from the present evil age nor cosmic liberation is called justification in Galatians" (p. 112). The result is a less tidy Paul, whose soteriology holds several distinct, though not disparate, elements together. Williams sees Paul's soteriology as complex, without being confused.

The second element of his thesis concerns how God's saving action in Christ relates to ethics and eternal life. Williams sets himself against the idea that the ethical life of Christians is either the *ground* or the *result* of their inheritance of the kingdom of God and eternal life (p. 176). Rather, that inheritance, which itself stems from God's saving action in Christ, is "*the* reason Paul commands the Galatians to walk in the Spirit, the reason they *can* walk in the Spirit, the reason they have life in the Spirit, and the reason they *must* walk in the Spirit" (p. 4). Williams argues that God's saving action enables "personal agency and ethical transformation in Christ" (p. 179) so that the obedient walk is necessary proof, both of participation in eternal life now, and necessary proof for the future day of judgment (p. 176).

The introductory chapter is followed by a "Selected History of Interpretation of the Spirit and Ethics in Galatians," which, at sixty-six pages, is the longest chapter of the book. Chapters 3 and 4 offer exegetical and theological readings of Galatians (alongside the broader Pauline corpus and context) that develop Williams's twofold thesis. Chapter 5 shows that the reception of the Spirit and of eternal life are irrevocably bound together, and in chapter 6, Williams connects his theological and exegetical work to ethical questions, especially with an eye to contemporary issues of race and ethnicity.

Williams's book raises a series of vital issues that challenge us to define our soteriology more carefully and that offer significant resources for the life of the church. His avoidance of the pinball exegesis that plagues academic works on Paul, where an argument bounces its way to an allowable conclusion by ricocheting through the alleyways of Pauline scholarship, is laudable. We can also appreciate that Williams does not give yet another reading where one thing attempts to offer an encompassing explanation for all things in Paul. I think more could have been said about how the vertical, horizontal, and cosmic aspects of Pauline soteriology relate to one another, but his determination not to over-refine Paul's complexity is refreshing. It is good to be reminded that Paul need not be tidy to be orthodox.

Williams has unquestionably given a great deal of time to attentive reading of the primary texts (as, for example, his insight about the clustering of time language in Galatians 3:23–4:7 shows, p. 149). I suspect that preachers could find parts of this book especially fruitful as they seek to proclaim Paul's gospel (for example, his language that the justified "*can*, *will*, and *must* walk in step with the Spirit to inherit the kingdom of God and eternal life," p. 151).

At the same time, the realization of Williams's commendable aims here is limited by a lack of synthesis and clarity. For example, the long chapter on the history of scholarship makes no real attempt to consolidate the various viewpoints. Very few of the works that Williams covers directly address his research question and this of course makes it difficult, but without synthesizing comments to place these

scholars in conversation with one another, this survey has far less value. Further, the writing and structure of the book are not tight enough to sustain the rather finely tuned nuancing that Williams sets out to do. Illustrative of this fact is that although he sets out "six arguments" on which his thesis builds in the introduction (pp. 4–9), these are not used explicitly as touchpoints throughout, and they seem to have become "five primary points" (pp. 83 and 194) as the book progresses. A collection of apparent errors in the book also makes it more difficult to engage with. The usual minor things that slip through the cracks (such as omitting "Genesis" in the reference "LXX 12:3," p. 157) can be overlooked, but the issues here amount to something more (consider the lack of parallelism in the italics from the quote on p. 4, cited in the 3rd paragraph of this review, or that it is not clear that the "Second…" on p. 141 has a "First…"). Many sentences are long and difficult to parse, but others simply go astray, such as: "Gunkel says Paul recalls to the Galatians' memory God provided conclusive evidence of validity and origins of his gospel by reminding them that he worked miracles in their midst by the Spirit" (p. 19).

There are also elements that sit somewhat awkwardly in the book. Personal agency is crucial, both to Williams's reading of Paul's soteriology (pp. 164–65) and his discussion of contemporary ethics (p. 202), but the idea is not developed enough to be well integrated into the argument. His comments about racial issues are vital, but they feel as though they fit better with his broader project (*Redemptive Kingdom Diversity* [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2021]) than that they arise organically from this material.

These issues make it difficult to recommend the book for students, although those with interest in the topics Williams addresses will need likely to engage the work, and pastors are probably better off buying his commentary to benefit from his devoted attention to Galatians. Williams is undoubtedly a valuable voice in both biblical studies and Christian ethics, but this book is not as strong as his other work.

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Purifying the Consciousness in Hebrews: Cult, Defilement, and the Perpetual Heavenly Blood of Jesus. By Joshua D. A. Bloor. Library of New Testament Studies 675. London: T&T Clark, 2023, xvii + 216 pp., $115.00.

In *Purifying the Consciousness in Hebrews*, Joshua D. A. Bloor pays attention to "the role of the recipients within [the] sacrificial ritual" (p. 1) and investigates the relationships between the recipients' consciousness and its ritual purification. He argues that Jesus's heavenly blood offering, not his death, provides purification of the participants' consciousness of sin. Although a full sustained study of the purification of the recipients' consciousness is lacking, Bloor notes that Barnabas Lindars has recognized the importance of consciousness in Hebrews, despite some weaknesses in his discussion of the motif. Bloor provides a brief overview of the interpretative history of συνείδησις. The term was widely employed in the NT and in several writings of church fathers such as Clement of Rome, Clement of Alexandria,

Ignatius, and Polycarp. Yet Jerome's rendering of the lexeme as *conscientia*, Bloor argues, was "the first major development of the term" (p. 7). The term was understood since then as *conscientia Dei*, *vox Dei*, "an innate capacity [that helps] to distinguish between good and evil" (p. 7).

However, Franz Delitzsch rejected the notion that συνείδησις means God's voice. Recent studies of the term have focused on Paul's use of συνείδησις. C. A. Pierce defines the term as "an individual's past behaviour, causing that individual discomfort or pain" (p. 8). Others—like Johannes Stelzenberger and Robert Jewett—could not provide a definition for the term in Paul's writings. For Bloor, a landmark study on σύνοιδα in Philo and Paul was done by Philip Bosman, who finds the term has the notion of "divine aspect" in Philo, whereas in Paul it has an anthropological connotation. Bloor points out that συνείδησις is rare in ancient Greek literature and has no equivalent in the Hebrew Bible—the closest term is לֵב. Philo uses the term to denote the notion of sin or misdeeds. He uniquely uses τό συνειδός to mean "an inner law court," a "witness," against the soul who has committed sin or wrong (p. 11). Similarly, Josephus understands τό συνειδός as a witness or judge against the one with past misdeeds. In Hebrews, συνείδησις appears in 9:9, 14; 10:2, 22; and 13:8. In these passages, Bloor contends, συνείδησις should be referred to as "consciousness," more specifically "consciousness of sin."

In chapter 2, Bloor examines the motif of defilement and its connection to the tabernacle, its place in the argument of Hebrews, and its effects. The earthly cult is unable to perfect the conscience of the worshiper. As such, sin and defilement contaminate the tabernacle, and "defilement" becomes "a hindrance to cultic participation" (p. 34). Hence, it is necessary to purify the tabernacle, which in turn purifies the worshiper. After discussing the various definitions of purity and impurity offered by scholars, Bloor stresses that defilement (impurity) is a metaphorical expression of sin, yet it is real. For Bloor, the act of purgation happens in the heavenly Holy of Holies, because sin has impacted the heavenly tabernacle. The portrayal of sin in Hebrews is vivid, but the effect of sin, that is, defilement, is paramount in the epistle. He contends that the recipients are aware of their defilement and impurity, which the "earthly cult is unable to deal with" (p. 49). In Hebrews, συνείδησις denotes "consciousness of sin," "the memory of sin," and "sins" in general (p. 50). The phrase "dead works" (νεκρῶν ἔργων) in Hebrews 6:1 and 9:14 also conveys the idea of the defilement of the recipients' consciousness. Hebrews underscores that communal defilement also extends to cosmic (heavenly tabernacle) defilement, needing purgation with the blood of Christ. The consequence or effect of the defilement of the consciousness is that it inhibits the worshiper from accessing God, marks the worshiper with a stain that leads to dread, timidity, and ultimately apostasy.

In chapter 3, Bloor explores Hebrews' sacrificial argumentation in dealing with a defiled consciousness. He situates this chapter in the most vexed current scholarly discussion of Jesus's death and offering in Hebrews. However, the discussion heavily revolves around David Moffitt, who has vehemently argued that the death of Jesus does not atone; rather, Jesus's heavenly offering of his resurrected body does. Bloor contends that though Yom Kippur is vital in the argument of

Hebrews, "an exact Yom Kippur hermeneutical narrative is not evident" (p. 67). Citing Kathryn McClymond and Christian Eberhart, Bloor states that the manipulation of blood is vital during Yom Kippur, not the slaughter of the victim. He acknowledges that the motive of Yom Kippur appears in the cultic discourse of Hebrews; nonetheless, he questions the assertion of some scholars—Moffitt, for example—that it is the governing hermeneutic of the epistle, because the author of Hebrews does not include "key elements" of the Yom Kippur ritual.

Bloor finds the expression "atonement" problematic because Hebrews scholars have used the term both for ransom and purgation. In his estimation, in Hebrews, the location of redemption and purification vary; whereas the former occurred on earth, the latter happened in heaven. For Bloor, the author of Hebrews utilizes the Paschal narrative (esp. Exodus 12) in his discussion of Jesus's redemptive task through his death. As a Paschal lamb, Jesus disabled the Destroyer and removed the fear of death from God's people. In his discussion of Jesus's offering, Bloor argues that Jesus offers his blood in heaven once for all to purgate sin (9:24–28; 10:14). Jesus also offered his body on earth not only through his death but also through his perfect life of obedience to the will of his Father (Heb 5:1–10; 7:26–28; 10:5–10). Bloor insists that Jesus's "earthly offering lacks the purgative power of his heavenly blood offering" (p. 91).

In chapter 4, Bloor further explores the connection between blood and purification. The defilement of people and the heavenly tabernacle necessitates purgation by means of blood. This purgation happened when Jesus offered his own blood in the heavenly tabernacle. Bloor utilizes Yom Kippur typology to contend that the heavenly sanctuary can be defiled by sin and purged by the offering of blood. Only Jesus's blood offering can purify the heavenly tabernacle, and this purifying leads to the purifying of the consciousness of the people, giving assurance to the worshipers. Bloor rejects the notion that σάρξ indicates an external purification, while συνείδησις denotes internal purification. Instead, he proposes that σάρξ and συνείδησις "represent an earthly-heavenly contrast" (p. 98). For Bloor, the term σάρξ represents "the earthly realm" (p. 99). The term is used three times to refer to Jesus's earthly life, incarnation, and death (2:14; 5:7; 12:9). He contends that the Levitical sacrifice is not merely concerned with external purgation. It has "powerful psychological benefits for those involved" (p. 104). Thus, the OT sacrificial ritual is concerned with the consciousness of the worshiper. He provides אָשַׁם as evidence for such a theological conclusion. In agreement with some OT scholars, he renders the term אָשַׁם as "to feel guilty" rather than "to be guilty." The Levitical sacrificial system temporally deals with the sinful consciousness. Nonetheless, "Jesus' heavenly blood offering provides a 'qualitative purgation'" (p. 109).

In chapter 5, Bloor discusses the nature of Jesus's heavenly priesthood, his blood offering, and its relation to the purgation of Jesus's followers. He argues that the enthronement of Jesus the Son signifies the pinnacle of his obedient life on earth. The author of Hebrews utilizes Psalm 8 to underline that Jesus is the Son of Man to whom everything is subjected under his feet, signaling that he is an enthroned Son. For Bloor, Jesus's high priesthood began to function in heaven. He contends that Jesus's high priestly task in heaven is offering "divine help" to God's

people who are expected to suffer, resist, and struggle against sin. Jesus himself faced temptation and received divine help when he asked his Father for help. As such, he sympathizes with the audience. For Bloor, the heavenly, ongoing, divine help is expressed in the phrase ἱλάσκεσθαι τὰς ἁμαρτίας τοῦ λαοῦ (Heb 2:17). Divine help is dispensed so long as the recipients approach God and ask for help. This help is given in providing assurance to the worshipers by both Jesus and his blood. This assurance is explicitly mentioned by attaching two descriptors to Jesus's heavenly ministry: guarantor and mediator. Speaking of Jesus's blood, Bloor argues that it is "an independent agent" that provides "perpetual assurance for the recipients" through "ongoing purgation" (p. 144). For Bloor, both the "once-for-all" and "perpetual offering" are present in the epistle. Jesus's blood purges and speaks to provide access to the recipients.

Finally, in chapter 6, Bloor concludes his study by restating the notion that the consciousness of sin is a present problem for the recipients to access and approach God, but Jesus's heavenly blood offering is able to purge it and enable the worshipers to access God's presence.

Bloor's monograph should be commended for several reasons. First, he helpfully highlights that blood is very significant in the argumentation of Hebrews. Second, he correctly critiques those scholars who seek exact correspondence between Hebrews and the Levitical sacrificial system, particularly those who argue that Yom Kippur dictates everything in the epistle. However, there are some minor issues that I have found unconvincing. First, he considers "dead works" (νεκρῶν ἔργων) in 6:1 and 9:14 as if they are two separate things. The two uses of this expression in those passages should be taken as parallel, conveying similar meaning. A second unhelpful bifurcation that is problematic is Bloor's argument that Jesus's death on earth provides objective redemption but does not purify. Instead, his heavenly blood offering provides subjective purgation. Contrary to Bloor's assertion, both redemption and purification occurred on the altar of the cross where Jesus was offered and has offered himself once for all. As such, the idea that Jesus brought his own blood into heaven to offer is foreign to Hebrews. Finally, Bloor's contention that Hebrews lacks "substitution and vicarious suffering" is not correct, especially in light of Hebrews 2:9 where it states χάριτι θεοῦ ὑπὲρ παντὸς γεύσηται θανάτου.

Despite these issues, Bloor's monograph will be valuable to those interested in the current discussion of Jesus's earthly and heavenly tasks, blood, sin, and sacrificial offering in Hebrews.

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Petrine Theology. By Douglas W. Kennard. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2022, 352 pp., $32.00, paper; and *Petrine Studies: Support and Ethical Expressions of Petrine Theology.* By Douglas W. Kennard. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2022, 209 pp., $32.00, paper.

In *Petrine Theology* (*PT*) and *Petrine Studies* (*PS*), Douglas Kennard attempts to provide a truly integrated Petrine theology by drawing on the sources traditionally associated with Peter, including the Gospel of Mark, Peter's speeches in Acts, and both 1–2 Peter. On initial viewing the reader notices that both books share identical introductions. I contacted the publisher about this unusual feature and learned that the two books were originally slated to be a single volume, but the publisher determined that 550 pages might be too long, and Kennard chose to use the introductory material in both books. (Thanks to Matt Wimer at Wipf & Stock for responding to my query.) In any case, *Petrine Theology* does the bulk of the heavy lifting while *Petrine Studies* "[provides] important support material to complete a Petrine theology project" (*PT,* pp. 9–10). The review that follows focuses chiefly on material in *Petrine Theology*, followed by a brief overview of *Petrine Studies.*

Kennard's project is a biblical theological one (*PT,* p. 9), tackling major themes as they appear across the aforementioned sources (he defends the selection of these sources in *PS,* chap. 2). Chapter 1 provides a brief history of Petrine theology; chapters 2–5 might be described as articulating a Petrine doctrine of God and its various subgenres ("God," "Christology," "Missional Trinity," and the "Holy Spirit"); and chapters 6–15 offer an eclectic mix of topics ranging from "God's Word" to "Exodus Following Jesus to Kingdom Virtues" and "Standing against Satan and Exorcising Demons," among others.

An extended glance at the details in the contents page of *PT* also reveals a surprise. It turns out that not all chapters are created equal in *PT*. Two topics receive, to my mind, extremely short shrift in comparison with the rest of the book. Chapter 5, "The Holy Spirit," receives a mere two pages (pp. 58–60), while chapter 12, "Suffering," receives just ten pages (pp. 215–24). Meanwhile three other chapters (e.g., chap. 10, "Exodus Following Jesus…" pp. 137–75) receive treatments nearing forty pages. Given the significance of the topics and the overall project at hand, one might expect a more balanced approach.

In chapter 2, Kennard proceeds through Petrine material and describes how God is presented there. "God is the creator of everything through his word" (p. 11); God is sovereign in action (p. 12); "The sovereign Lord or God and Father is the one to whom Peter primarily prays" (p. 13); God is called the "Shepherd and Guardian," the "Majestic Glory," and "holy" (p. 14), and so the chapter continues. As far as is possible, Kennard is refreshingly concerned to let the text speak for itself. A feature of this chapter that becomes a pattern for the rest of the book, however, is that the chapter has no genuine introduction or conclusion. Kennard launches into his topic giving the reader little, if any, guidance about what is to come, and there is no synthesis of material to wrap up the chapter. The result is that each chapter begins and ends abruptly, creating a somewhat jarring experience for the reader.

Chapter 3 sees Kennard cover the topic of Christology. Here Kennard provides a helpful, albeit brief, overview of the scholarly discussion in recent history (pp. 24–25); discusses Jewish messianism with regards to the Davidic covenant (pp. 25–32); summarizes the Markan presentation of Jesus (pp. 32–41); considers Peter's sermons presented by Luke in Acts (pp. 41–44); before concluding with consideration of the Petrine epistles (pp. 44–50). Chapter 4 covers Peter's letter form and argues that Peter presents an "intentional missional trinity," wherein the Godhead is presented as functioning together to ensure a believer's eschatological salvation (p. 57). Curiously, it is this chapter that presents Kennard's view (following Elliott, *Home for the Homeless* [Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1990]) that the recipients of the Petrine epistles are literal resident aliens (p. 55).

Chapters 5–6 cover concisely the topics of the Holy Spirit and God's Word, respectively. Here, Kennard presents clearly as one on the more conservative end of the theological spectrum. He very briefly distills the work of the Spirit with regard to the believer's life, concluding that "the Holy Spirit empowers and obligates the believer to obey God as a witness to Christ's resurrection and authority" (p. 60). Kennard's work on God's Word presumes a conservative hermeneutic that, although I am sympathetic to it, needs a more robust development and defense than is provided here. For example, Kennard asserts that "Peter *consciously* writes Scripture containing part of the prophetic word" (p. 65, my emphasis); however, this is a claim that needs greater substantiation than is provided.

Chapter 7 on humanity covers concepts of "soul," "spirit," "body," "heart," "mind," "will," "conscience," and humanity's relationship with one another. In Kennard's view, the "soul" is what connects humanity with the rest of creation and "signifies a complete living being" (p. 67), while the "spirit" is seen as a facet of one's being and the place from which a person's actions flow (p. 69). Kennard sees Peter's household code as being in relative alignment with the Greco-Roman world (p. 81). Chapter 7 also reveals several oddities including an editorial oversight in which material from pp. 68–69 finds itself repeated nearly verbatim on p. 70; an unnecessary swipe at the antivax movement (p. 83); and the misattribution of "polite resistance" to John Elliott rather than to David Horrell (p. 83).

In chapter 8, Kennard tackles atonement, sanctification, purification, and redemption. He sees the sacrificial context of the Exodus narrative playing a significant role in Petrine theology. Of note is that while Kennard sees the idea of *substitution* present, he pushes against the idea of a *penal* understanding of atonement (pp. 89–91). Initially, he acknowledges that Christ's death is "penal in that he dies under the legal judgment of death sentence from … Pilate" (pp. 90–91), but he does not see it functioning in what he terms the "traditional theological sense" (p. 91).

In chapter 9, Kennard articulates Peter's gospel (via the Gospel of Mark) as "the message that focused on Jesus is Lord and everyone needs to align with him" (p. 123). Moreover, he sees Mark's use of εὐαγγελίου as indicating the work to be one of biography (p. 123). Kennard discerns from Peter's speeches in Acts that the gospel focuses on the message that Jesus is king and offers numerous outworkings of that message (p. 126), though curiously he does not view "the efficaciousness of the death of Jesus" as essential to the proclamation, arguing that Peter and Luke do

not mention it (p. 131). This seems an unusual claim, given that redemption in 1 Peter is bought through the blood of Christ (1:18–19) and that Luke ties Jesus's suffering and death to the forgiveness of sins (e.g., Luke 24:46–47).

Chapter 10 is titled "Exodus Following Jesus into Kingdom Virtues." Here we find Kennard viewing the ministry of Jesus as an Exoduslike calling. To follow Jesus is to follow him in an Exoduslike pilgrimage that creates a new family (p. 139). Kennard elaborates on the way the Gospels present discipleship along this Exodus way (following Jesus unto death [p. 155]; alertness and praying; relationship and service [p. 156]). Kennard also outlines new Exodus motifs in Hebrews and 1 Peter, observing seventeen points of connection (pp. 164–65).

The household of God is the subject of chapter 11. Here Kennard argues that the purpose of God's household is tied to their identity as priesthood and declaring the excellencies of God, which he sees as being applied especially in personal life (p. 176). Furthermore, because Kennard affirms a literal reading of "resident aliens" in 1 Peter, the language of "God's household" and its praxis provides the believers with "communal meaning and belonging" (p. 185). Finally, like Elliott, Kennard appears to reject the idea that any of the household language in 1 Peter might be understood as temple imagery (p. 189).

Chapter 12 looks at the topic of suffering in 1 Peter (why Mark is ignored remains unknown). Kennard follows the basic contours of the Petrine text, noting that Christians should not be surprised by suffering (p. 220); that they should not suffer as evildoers (p. 221); and that Christians should suffer with joy (p. 222) and ask God for protection in the midst of their suffering (p. 224). The following chapter (13) takes on the topic of Satan and demons. Kennard promotes a Christus Victor approach "that facilitates a new exodus for humanity from bondage under: Satan, idolatry, impurity, and lawlessness" (p. 225). Satan is summarily defined according to his actions as presented in Scripture (p. 227), and the role of demons in Mark's Gospel is examined (pp. 228ff), as is Jesus's descent into hell (pp. 235–39). Kennard briefly discusses possible interpretations here but argues, based on the Greek grammar, that Jesus proclaims to the imprisoned spirits in his resurrected state as opposed to the lull between his death and resurrection (p. 237).

Chapter 14 gives an overview of false teaching and is largely dependent upon 2 Peter. Such teaching is characterized by despising authority, sensuality, greed, and their ultimate judgment. *Petrine Theology* concludes with a chapter on the second coming of Jesus that argues for a somewhat eclectic view containing elements of premillennialism, amillennialism, and postmillennialism (p. 281).

Briefly, the companion volume *Petrine Studies* offers ten short chapters on topics that one would find in the introduction to most commentaries. Chapters 2–6 offer a helpful review of Kennard's source selections for a Petrine theology (pp. 11–35); an analysis of the recipients of the Petrine epistles (pp. 36–46); the form of the epistles (pp. 47–56); and Peter, the man (pp. 57–85). Chapters 7–10 pick up a range of topics including Jewish traditions and Gentile conversion (pp. 107–15); marriage (pp. 116–23); the poor (pp. 124–33); and the historicity of Jesus's death and resurrection (pp. 134–50).

What then to make of Kennard's work? First, the volumes appear to be pitched toward academics and students at a master's level and above, as evidenced by Kennard's command of primary sources that are replete within the book and for which he should be commended. However, some important secondary sources were surprisingly overlooked. To give one example, his chapter on suffering does not draw on the work of Travis Williams's *Persecution in 1 Peter* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), which has set the standard for discussion in the last decade.

Moreover, the work contains several weaknesses that detract from Kennard's abundant knowledge. As stated earlier the project lacks a balanced approach (two pages on the Holy Spirit!), and most chapters lack true introductions and conclusions to help guide the reader. Longer chapters would have also benefited from subheadings to allow the reader to track better with Kennard's train of thought, which is sometimes difficult to follow. Additionally, chapters 12 and 14 appear as methodological departures from the rest of the book by relying too heavily on various dictionaries (*TDNT,* etc.) A reader is left with the impression that while the final product reflects years of learning and lecturing, due time was not given to properly review the material and mold it into something more coherent (perhaps best exemplified by the editorial errors mentioned regarding chapter 7 above).

The volumes are also riddled with grammatical and spelling mistakes from the very first chapter including the names of authors (e.g., the title of chapter 1 is missing a question mark [p. 1]; D. S. Russel[l] [p. 16]; Jack Kingsbur~~r~~y [p. 25]). Toward the end of *PT,* Kelly Liebengood is misidentified as a woman (p. 256). Among numerous authors misspelled in the indices are R[e]inhard Feldmeier (p. 295), Bo[n]nie Howe (p.300), Jeremias [Joachim] Jeremias (p. 301), and Bruce Molina [Malina] (p. 308), to name a few. All this leads to a frustrating reading experience. Kennard is undoubtedly learned and respected by his peers, but this volume is palpably underdone and would have benefited enormously from more rigorous editorial oversight. For all Kennard's erudition, those interested in Petrine studies would be better served looking toward Markus Bockmuehl's *Simon Peter in Scripture and Memory* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012)*,* Gene Green's *Vox Petri* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2020)*,* and Larry Helyer's *Life and Witness of Peter* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012).

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Royal Ideologies in the Book of Revelation. By Justin P. Jeffcoat Schedtler. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023, viii + 226 pp., $110.00.

Justin Jeffcoat Schedtler, assistant professor of religion at Wartburg College, has offered a superb new contribution to Revelation studies. In *Royal Ideologies*, he convincingly argues that royal and messianic themes are foundational to Revelation's Christology. Through extensive research into Jewish and Greco-Roman primary sources, Schedtler illuminates the ideological and literary world that created the backdrop for the subversive rhetoric of Revelation. More specifically, he pro-

poses that "Revelation appropriates various conventions of Jewish messianic discourse and non-Jewish kingship discourse in order to present Jesus as the ideal king" (p. 5).

In a clear and insightful introduction, Schedtler lays out his methodology as well as relevant interpretive backgrounds. He notes that his examination takes place in the "socio-cultural-political-economic" realities from which Revelation arose (p. 7). He does not purport to offer a detailed portrayal of the historical institutions of kingship, but rather the manner in which royal ideologies inform the Christology of Revelation. He also points out that such ideologies have largely been ignored in studies of the Apocalypse due to the book's overt anti-imperial claims. Messianic discourse in the Apocalypse has, likewise, been muted as many early interpreters sought to distance Revelation from its Jewish foundations. More recent scholarship, however, has recognized the thoroughly royal and messianic aspects of Revelation, and Schedtler intends to carry this trajectory forward.

The author builds his thesis across the course of five chapters, all of which are structured similarly. For each, a specific aspect of ancient kingship is examined through the lens of Greek, Roman, Jewish, and Christian sources. Such sources include biblical and nonbiblical texts as well as epigraphic and numismatic evidence. From these primary sources, Schedtler then creates a framework from which to examine the specific theme in Revelation.

In chapter 1, Schedtler examines the ideology that kings were chosen by the gods to rule as viceregents on their behalf. He explains that this notion of divine election was virtually ubiquitous in the ancient world, and that "early Christian appropriation of these mechanisms to signal the divine election of Jesus may have functioned as counter-Imperial narratives in an ideological world in which the Roman emperor was thought to be the rightful king chosen by the gods" (pp. 39–40). Schedtler thus concludes that the author of Revelation inverts the Roman imperial ideology of divine election to portray the Roman emperor and the entire imperial system as an illegitimate, unholy antithesis to the rightful possessor of divine authority, Jesus Christ.

In the second chapter, Schedtler explores the notion that military victory served as proof of divine election. He argues that this theology of victory is a critical aspect of the Lamb's status as viceregent in Revelation. Once again the author of Revelation subverts and inverts the prevailing ideology to portray victory not in terms of military success but by means of Jesus's bloody and shameful death.

In chapter 3, Schedtler investigates the notion of divine throne sharing. Ancient Mediterranean kings were customarily understood to share the throne of a deity, and their enthroned position served to confirm their status as divinely appointed. Not surprisingly, such thought is scarce in pre-Christian Jewish sources, as viewing any entity other than God upon the heavenly throne would have been problematic. Nonetheless, Second Temple Jewish literature "provided early Christians with a rich conceptual reservoir from which to draw images of a heavenly Messiah seated upon God's heavenly throne" (p. 96). Therefore, Schedtler concludes, Revelation's depiction of the Lamb upon the heavenly throne not only legitimizes his reign but also again undermines Roman imperial claims to power.

As a minor note of criticism in an otherwise exceptional monograph, Schedtler's survey of throne sharing in early Judaism would benefit from a more pointed discussion. The scholar is unclear whether ancient Jewish sources anticipated a messiah who was human or divine. Schedtler seems to imply that conceptions of a divine messiah developed and grew over time, but he never makes the point overtly.

In the fourth chapter, Schedtler examines royal ideologies through the lens of patronage and benefaction. He explains that one of the primary functions of an ancient Mediterranean king was his role as benefactor for his kingdom. The throne was the locus of status and power and also the locale from which the king disbursed benefits to his subjects.

While all types of benefactors expected and received honors in return for their benefaction, gods and kings received the most elaborate. Temples, sacrifices, and hymns were common means of returning praise. Such honors were not simply a matter of gratitude but of sacred obligation. Thus, Schedtler argues that the socio-cultural-economic realities of imperial patronage and benefaction "constitute the primary means of depicting the relationship between God, the Lamb, and the followers thereof" (p. 107). Jesus serves as benefactor by sacrificing himself in order to purchase freedom and offer status improvement for his subjects. In return, his followers offer crowns and hymns, which "provide the clearest clue that God and Jesus are imagined to be benefactors" (p. 134).

In chapter 5, Schedtler focuses more closely on the nature and role of hymnic praise. Although honors for benefaction were no problem for ancient Jewish people, anti-iconism prohibited certain types of honors. Along such lines, many Jews and early Christians were reluctant to offer divine hymnic praise to mortals, as "hymnic praise by its very definition suggests the divine status of the object of praise" (p. 164). By extension, the presence of multiple hymns to the Lamb in Revelation underscores his divinity. That the Lamb is hymned in exactly the same manner as God in Revelation 4 confirms his status. Furthermore, the Lamb is identified as God's *only* worthy viceregent, yet another example of Revelation's subversive ideology. Schedtler points out that "the only songs that are rightfully sung of the empire are the funeral dirges in the aftermath of its destruction in the eschatological age" (p. 183).

The monograph concludes with a brief summary in which Schedtler suggests opportunities for further study. He invites fellow scholars to continue examining the relationships between messianism and apocalypticism, especially in the Pauline corpus and Synoptic Gospels. He asserts, "Increased attention to both the messianic and apocalyptic dimensions of early Jewish and Christian texts can only lead to more dynamic understanding of the relationship(s) between them" (p. 186). Indeed, Schedtler's suggestion is well-articulated, as his research bears implications for the entire NT.

In fact, the entire monograph is well-articulated. Schedtler's writing is clear and his organization is impeccable. Despite navigating and synthesizing a plethora of primary sources, his argument is easy to follow. Although surveys of ancient literature and material culture can at times become dry and tedious, *Royal Ideologies* is engaging from start to finish. Schedtler situates the most interpretively neglected

and abused book of Scripture in its proper first-century Greco-Roman context. By illuminating the socio-cultural-political-economic realities from which Revelation arose, Schedtler offers a corrective to the eisegesis that often takes place in studies of the Apocalypse.

While scholars of Revelation have long recognized the subversive, anti-imperial nature of the book, Schedtler contributes greater substance, clarity, and depth to the discussion. Every scholar of Revelation will certainly appreciate Schedtler's contribution to the field. Moreover, because Schedtler's research doesn't simply reflect the culture behind Revelation, but the entire NT, all NT scholars and seminary students should consider the relevance of Schedtler's detailed work in their own interpretation and exegesis.

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You're Only Human: How Your Limits Reflect God's Design and Why That's Good News. By Kelly M. Kapic. Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2022, iii + 261 pp., $24.99.

Kelly Kapic's latest work, *You're Only Human*, considers the inherent goodness of God's creation of humans as limited and finite beings, despite mankind's propensity to see these same limitations as inherently sinful. Kapic draws from the full range of voices from the Christian tradition to offer a portrait of human personhood in the particularity of God's created intent, love towards them, and acts to save them. In doing so, Kapic is able to redirect the reader to faithful dependence on God as we live, work, and worship in the face of creatureliness.

The book is divided into two sections. The first section articulates a theological anthropology centered on the goodness of God's creation of humans as finite and his particular love towards individuals. The beginning two chapters serve as the theological foundation for the rest of the book. Kapic begins the first chapter by situating mankind in its proper relationship to God: Creator to creature, infinite to finite, independent to dependent. Sin's corruption impells mankind to rage against the "good" of creaturely finitude, to their own destruction and despair. With the sensitivity and tone of a sermon rather than a theological presentation, Kapic helps the reader see the implications are massive: "Denying our finitude … distorts our view of God and what Christian spirituality should look like" (p. 6). Yet the propensity to seek to exceed creaturely finitude is woven into the very fabric of society. Kapic himself admits that he was surprised to find himself drawn in his research to the American educational system and the ways in which the expectations presented by its pedagogy foster unhealthy expectations of what one might hope to achieve in a day. His analysis prompts the reader, especially those in education and other positions working with young people, to consider the ways they might be unconsciously promoting a lifestyle that rages against finitude. Even so, the answer is not practical but pastoral and theological. Kapic concludes this introductory chapter by situating the chapters that will follow, pointing the reader to the infinite Creator as the true place of blessing, love, meaning, and freedom in human life.

The second chapter takes up Kapic's second major emphasis: creaturely finitude calls for a particularity that is grounded in nature and redeemed by Christ. The salvation offered in Christ affirms a particular love for individuals in the presence of God. Kapic helpfully confronts the primary evangelical anthropological emphasis on humans as sinners. Grounding his focus instead on humans as the objects of God's perfect love, Kapic's hamartiology falls in a secondary position to his creation theology in a way that clarifies his soteriology. This full systematic refection then serves to offer a searching application to the heart: "To disconnect redemption from creation encourages a form of self-loathing and shame among God's people" (p. 26). Kapic counters this with a sort of Christian individualism that does not relativize the need for community, as he will exhibit in the following chapters. Instead, while Christians frequently bemoan the excesses of individualism, particularity situates the individual properly within the personal and communal love of Christ for his church, as portrayed in the rites of baptism and the Lord's Supper. This second major emphasis on particularity is not offered to drive back to his overarching point on the goodness of creaturely limits. Understanding human value and dignity as inherent and redeemed, Christians can encounter their limitations with confidence and without fear.

The remainder of the book's chapters, in many ways, serve as applications of these two points. In chapters 3, 4, and 5, Kapic turns to the goodness of the body and its limitations and the givenness of human identity. Its finite nature and particularity are not scorned by God; rather "the incarnation … includes the teaching that God puts a high value on the particular humanity and finitude of each of us" (p. 39). Humanity's embodiment opens it to both divine and human communion. Kapic concludes, "Human flourishing comes not in the absence of our creaturely limits but in the healthy wholeness of them" (p. 48). He again concludes with reflection on the life of Jesus Christ, whose ministry was holistic, addressing the body as well as the heart and mind. In concluding the first section, the givenness of identity brings the section back to its beginning. The elusive game of seeking ourselves is only answered when the self is not sought but found in relation to God as creator and provider. The call to which Kapic will devote the second half of the book is a view of Christian life that is thoroughly dependent on God and others.

The second section sees the theology of the first section open to joyful living in light of particularity and finitude. Chapter 6 reframes humility as a journey in rediscovery of ourselves in right estimation before God, others, and creation. This is the context to recognize and celebrate human giftedness, to use it for its God-given purpose, and to help and affirm others in realizing who God has made them to be. Chapter 7 considers challenges that the modern age presents to the concepts of finitude. Technology's reconception of time drives a view of productivity and efficiency that presses humans beyond their creaturely goodness and into stress and anxiety. Kapic's answer is presence—in the moment and before God—as exemplified in Christ. The final three chapters consider Christian living more specifically: sanctification and growth, the community of believers, and daily rhythms. In each, Kapic effectively demonstrates the ways that humans rage against their limits by expecting of themselves too much, too quickly. Instead, he points to a fuller Chris-

tian portrait of a flourishing humanity through communion with God in communal and individual life. Indeed, readers will not escape this theological anthropology without also feeling that they were similarly offered a profound theology of the Christian life and ecclesiology, the latter an emphasis often forgotten in volumes on theological anthropology.

Kapic exhibits a deftness to offer searching application amid, at times, dense theological material. In each chapter, Kapic weaves in compelling illustrations from secular sciences, journalism, and personal experience. Though not written specifically to this audience, he brings the conversations into application for teens and college students in a way that comforts and that confronts the idols of the age. This book could easily serve as a guide for parents pondering how to raise their children in the modern world, a college student nearing burnout and grasping for answers, or pastors seeking to shepherd their flock better.

Moreover, Kapic guides the reader carefully without ever becoming overly critical or idealistic. For instance, just as he commends the human need for appropriate physical touch, he also warns of sin's pervasive abuses in this area. His project recovers lost theological reflection from the Christian tradition while also accounting for sin's obscuring and corrupting influence in these same areas. This creates an overall balanced account.

Kapic's contribution in this volume stands with other recent publications working constructively in the space of theological anthropology and appealing to ministry practitioners while remaining conversant academically. Alongside Alan Noble's *You Are Not Your Own*, Kapic grounds his work in the created goodness of mankind as a gift from God that renders human life owed to God. Kapic's work serves as broader application of James K. A. Smith's work in *You Are What You Love* by locating the affective power within humans that drives worship, thought, and actions within a more robust theology of the body. With Carl Trueman's *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*, Kapic warns of the excesses of the modern understanding of the self. With LaPine's *Logic of the Body,* Kleinig's *Wonderfully Made*, Pearcey's *Love Thy Body*, Tennent's *For the Body*, and Allison's *Embodied*, Kapic is particularly concerned to integrate a holistic anthropology, relating a robust articulation of the body to how one comes to think and believe. This recent impulse of many authors from across the Christian tradition to return to the study of humanity is a welcome rebuttal to the anthropological narratives that drive much of modern culture. The volumes mentioned here are but a small sampling of a growing field that promises much more engagement in the coming years. Kapic's work stands out even among these in its unique combination of nuance, depth, readability, practicality, and thoroughness.

Kapic's ability in uniting these strengths is demonstrated by the wide spectrum of audience that might benefit from this volume. The applications he employs from diverse sources would suggest a popular audience informing young Christians, parents raising children, or pastors teaching congregations in the modern world. However, Kapic's academic prowess builds his arguments from theological sources as wide ranging as Augustine, Lombard, Calvin, Owen, and Bonhoeffer, while also giving voice to the contributions of recent biblical studies, such as those by Susan

Eastman and Grant Macaskill. Kapic's volume succeeds in being accessible without being shallow, well-sourced without being esoteric. This quality, perhaps, stands out as the work's greatest strength.

Kapic's work deserves more commendation on many fronts. Here I will offer two more. First, Kapic builds his theological anthropology from a foundation of full systematic theological reflection, touching theology proper, Christology, soteriology, and eschatology throughout the book. Notably, he returns frequently to the incarnation of the Son of God to help distinguish between that which is inherently good in our creatureliness, and thus perfectly seen in the life of Jesus Christ, and that which is a result of our fallenness, and thus redeemed by the ministry of Jesus Christ. The skill of the volume is deftly demonstrated in what might be considered a Protestant Mariology in the third chapter. While many Protestants remain wary of engaging in theological discourse on Mary, the mother of Jesus, due to the excesses of Catholic theology, Kapic does not shy away but rather situates Mary's faithful acceptance as a model for Christian obedience, a paragon for bodily goodness, at a crucial moment for rightly understanding Christ's full humanity. In this way, Kapic is able to demonstrate the testimony to the work of God provided by the body's inherent goodness, finitude, and limitation, and the incarnation's endorsement of humanity. This example is minor, employed as a biblical example of his larger points, but the theological dexterity to address a complex topic and locate it in his broader theology is paradigmatic for the whole work's profundity. Kapic's ability to bring various theological loci into constructive conversation with one another lets this volume, written to a broad audience, speak with a subtle and profound depth.

Second, Kapic considers a range of application to the modern person in astute observation, cultural exegesis, and deep empathy. Drawing on a wide array of modern media, Kapic brings concise critique to the guiding principles of the world today in many areas. One common area he returns to in multiple chapters is the way media and technology push humans to rebel against their finitude, forget their particularity, and lose their dependence on the community around them. The book's very premise seems to be seeking to answer culture's mandate that people be everything, everywhere, all the time, and true to themselves above all else. Examples are rife throughout the book. In the second chapter, Kapic cites comparison anxiety onset by early and excessive social media use that exerts pressure especially on young women. Later in the book, in a section that stands out as particularly fascinating, Kapic points to the advent of clocks and other technology that measures and even conquers time by expanding the hours one might work. This technological change reframed expectations of time, embodied inhabitation of time for families and communities, and as a result has led to the increase of anxiety, sleep deprivation, and overworking. Kapic sums it up well: "We have often tried to make machines that are like humans, but now we often expect humans to be like machines" (p. 126). In each of these cases, Kapic seems to anticipate Jonathan Haidt's recent book *The Anxious Generation*. Haidt, a non-Christian, considers the same problems as Kapic—plunging mental health and surging rates of depression and anxiety among teens, especially young girls—and searches deeply into their causes. Haidt's research certainly offers many revelations, but it is remarkable how

many of his observations are anticipated and answered by Kapic. From perfectionism to sleep deprivation, Kapic's offering in *You're Only Human* stands as a ready and waiting response to Haidt's call to action with the full resources of the word of God and the people of God.

Whether it be conversations about mental health, eating disorders, connection on college campuses, selfhood, time, ministry fatigue, and more, Kapic frequently offers the reader day-to-day experiences and expectations to which his theological anthropology offers a hopeful response. Further, he does not leave his critique laying a heavy hand on the world exclusively, but he is also keen to show how the same root beliefs influence the church's life and practice. What's more, perhaps his greatest strength is to marry his critiques to commendations of the more compelling story Christianity tells of who and what we are as humans.

Only in one area did it feel as if Kapic failed to address a significant conversation related to the theology he sets forth: human sexuality. The oversight in this area is perplexing, especially considering the above commendation of his engagement with modern culture and the direct applicability of his subjects to this topic. In chapter 4, where he considers embodiment and physicality, he rightly critiques perverse sexualizing of our bodies, but he stops just short of in-depth application and consideration of the culture of casual sex, pornography, and the like that dominates much of our culture and lives. It is not as if following this line of thought would have diverted Kapic's discussion; rather, it could have served his point admirably. The freedom of the human body must be in accord with its inherent limitations for humans to pursue flourishing. This articulation allows one to offer a compelling case of a Christian vision of sexuality grounded in creation and redeemed by Christ, just as Kapic does in other areas.

In chapter 5, a chapter on identity and the problems with self-definition, again it feels as if he sidesteps a direct confrontation with LGBTQIA+ ideologies. One thinks of the account offered by Trueman as a conceptual companion to Kapic's work. However, while Kapic traces the same concepts concerning the identity, he stops short of identifying the modern sexual ethic as the result while Trueman goes on to see it as the primary application of the intellectual history that he traces. The oversight in this area may be due simply to natural limitations in any book—not every book can address every topic—but considering the many topics Kapic found space to discuss, the omission of this one stands as most curious. Even still, Kapic's thorough critique of the broad ideologies, cultural and personal, that underpin much of the way human sexuality is discussed today proves helpful for guiding readers to think through these issues.

Overall, this book is a must-read for pastors, theologians, counselors, and lay people. Many moments from *You're Only Human* have rung in my ears over the last couple of years, inspiring a more focused and dependent ministry and life. I commend the book to others both for its personal power and academic contribution. Kapic has written a book that should be widely read and allowed to influence deeper theological and personal reflection for years to come.

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Kingdom Come: An Eschatological Third Article Ecclesiology. By Gregory J. Liston. London: T&T Clark, 2022, xi + 205 pp., $39.95 paper.

Greg Liston has produced a rich, winsome, at times infuriating, and quite promising ecclesiology. His focused thesis is simple: "The church … is the proleptic anticipation of the coming kingdom. Through enabling Christ's kingly presence, the Spirit draws back to the present church characteristics of the coming kingdom. This enriches, influences, and transforms the present church towards its intended *telos*" (p. 23). He presents his project as an explicit contribution to Third Article Theology (TAT) (see Liston, *The Anointed Church: Toward a Third Article Theology*, 2015; Habets, *Third Article Theology: A Pneumatological Dogmatics*, 2016). This refers to the third article of the Apostles' Creed, a theology done from the primary perspective of the Holy Spirit. Liston's methodologically self-conscious writing is one of the chief strengths of the book. Though not everyone will adopt the more programmatic dimensions of his proposals, his application of Wolterstorff (1976) to dogmatic reflection and the interrelation of theological loci certainly warrants wide consideration. I will state at the outset that I emphatically endorse Liston's central ecclesiological thesis while underlining that he hands us much with which to argue on the journey to his conclusions. As such, I will introduce each chapter by turn, introduce two major axes of criticism, and outline Liston's central contributions.

Chapter 1 serves as an introduction to TAT and as a general introduction to the book. In truth, Liston fields his own methodological proposals as contributions to TAT, which he proceeds to vigorously execute throughout his argumentation. As a proposal for *dogmatics* specifically, biblical theologians and nonsystematicians may have trouble following every turn in his approach. As with any new proposal, patience in these programmatic sections will be rewarded with both creative and critical insight. Presenting and demonstrating the fruitfulness of his method and the promise of TAT's research program is a major aim of the entire book. One's assessment of this dimension, of course, hangs on one's assessment of TAT more generally as a historically developing research paradigm. However one in the end assesses this paradigm, Liston's central ecclesiological thesis can be independently appreciated and assessed. Chapter 1 argues that a specifically "Third Article Ecclesiology," or pneumatologically grounded ecclesiology, offers a perspective by which to grasp more fully the significance of eschatology for ecclesiology.

In chapter 2, Liston employs Barth and Hütter as critical foils. He cogently argues for a *via media* for understanding the relation between church and kingdom. Barth, Liston argues, poses a too-radical "discontinuity" between church and kingdom that "leans toward a static understanding" (pp. 20–21). Hütter, by contrast, presents an overly continuous understanding of church and kingdom that remains "too optimistic, tying the Spirit's work and church practices together too closely" (pp. 20–21). Chapter 3 puts Liston's methodology to work by sketching a theological "understanding of the church's transformational journey through time" (p. 21). By contrast to Barth and Hütter, Liston "paint[s] a picture of the Spirit working through but not being beholden to the church, leading us in cruciform lives that echo Christ's overarching metanarrative" (p. 21). Chapter 4 deepens this account through treating the eschatological dimensions of the *munus triplex* (i.e., Christ's threefold office as Prophet, Priest, and King). Given Liston's broad aim and the content of Scripture (e.g., Ephesians 4), his turn to the *munus triplex* is apt. Liston argues that "the church's present existence can be best understood through its participation in Christ's ongoing eschatological offices" (p. 21). Whereas classical Reformed tradition tended to focus almost exclusively on Christ's earthly session, and more contemporary work has adequately plumbed understandings of Christ's prophetic and priestly offices, Liston argues that Christ's kingly office "offers the most insight into the question of the church's transformation through time. By the Spirit, the kingdom realities that define our future *are drawn back to become (in part) characteristics of our present ecclesial existence*" (p. 21, my emphasis). This is what both Wayne Grudem and J. Rodman Williams call a "*foretaste of the age to come*" (Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 1258; Williams, *Renewal Theology*, III.9). Chapter 5 develops this further in an analysis of the Lord's Supper, rightly arguing that "the church is also the community in which through the Spirit Christ's coming kingdom presently exists in and impacts the world" (p. 21). Chapter 6 concretizes these claims in treatments of prayer, praise, and gospel proclamation, and chapter 7 tests and authenticates the larger argument through a reading of 1 Corinthians. Finally, chapter 8 extends these ecclesiological insights to a treatment of missiology.

Liston's two main aims in the text can be distinguished and independently assessed, so I will discuss them successively. First, Liston's theological case for an eschatologically structured ecclesiology is cogently argued, largely correct, and richly illustrated. I think his case could have been enriched and nuanced by a more sustained engagement with Scripture on the theme of the kingdom. Indeed, Liston's reliance on Torrance's so-called "Chalcedonian analogy" is probably too load-bearing in the analysis, which suggests that a number of occluded exegetical insights do unacknowledged work in his account. Insofar as a core dimension of Liston's argument involves the theology of time, I would have liked to have seen him interact with redemptive-historical theological approaches on the relationship of church and kingdom. Unfortunately, Liston seems to chide those approaches: "The familiar 'now but not yet' terminology that is so often used is not only incorrect but also not complete" (p. 17). Liston misses a chance to bring kingdom theology into conversation with Torrance's vocabulary on these questions. If there is a veritable

overlap of ages this side of Jesus's return, then Torrance's "new" and "old" time are not merely parallel but are also and in some sense conflictually interactive.

As many know, TAT and its most well-known and extensive outputs in Spirit Christology have become controversial. For example, Claunch underlines that revisionary forms are basically non-Trinitarian, and even among Trinitarian variants differences emerge between primarily "biblical-exegetical" and primarily "historical-systematic" approaches ("The Son and the Spirit: The Promise and Peril of Spirit Christology," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 19.1 (2015): 91–92). Allison and Köstenberger (*The Holy Spirit* [2020], 362–66) note ongoing controversies even among exegetically oriented variants. Liston clearly tends toward the "historical-systematic" end of the TAT spectrum, a spectrum that implicates historically stylistic differences between North American and European theological cultures. For this reason, we ought to read Liston charitably even while posing criticism. For example, in light of John Frame's "triperspectivalism" (*Theology in Three Dimensions,* 2017), if we step back from various extent TAT proposals, it must be admitted that something like a TAT is at the very least *formally possible*. Though Frame's thesis is a broad one for theological epistemology, it nevertheless suggests that it is perfectly valid to develop a perspective on other theological loci from the standpoint of (in this case) pneumatology. For this reason, Liston's methodological suggestions deserve a wider hearing. In this light, the controversies surrounding TAT may have less to do with how we organize dogmatic inquiry and hinge more on the substantive content of proposed Spirit Christologies themselves.

Liston is sometimes a bit uncareful in making and arguing for various claims. For example, he once refers to the "church's divinity" (p. 9) and repeatedly asserts that the church is a "sequel" (pp. 10, 51, 167) to the incarnation. If by "sequel" he means "next in redemptive-historical sequence," the term is fine. But Liston seems to imply something more in his use of "sequel," perhaps a bit too informed by Torrance's "Chalcedonian analogy." To his credit, Liston does clarify: "In comparing the Trinity and the church, however, this similarity no longer holds. One entity is entirely divine, while the other is partially (and perhaps predominantly) human" (p. 12). The church is a *creature* of the Word and Spirit, and so Liston's qualification is of course correct. But then why suggest the former to begin with, or at all?

Liston's chapter on the eschatological dimensions of the *munus triplex* is his chief contribution to the scholarship. He properly appreciates the central import of the church's participation in Christ and his offices. This import is not merely a matter of a relatively overlooked theological arcanum, but rather bears on the structural unity of Christ's reign *as* Christ's reign and the church's biblically articulated role in the economy of the kingdom of God. Liston rightly notes that the Reformed confessions focus near exclusively on a "timebound" understanding of Christ's earthly session. He adds:

> In addition to these timebound understandings, which are based on a then-to-now logic, there is a complementary way of viewing Christ's threefold office, through an eschatological lens and not merely a soteriological one. Focusing on Christ's heavenly session—and how through the anointing of the Spirit Christ

> continues to be prophet, priest and king for us in new, redeemed time—enables an expanded, complementary view of the *munus triplex* to be examined.… This eschatological interaction was categorized into three aspects, corresponding to Christ's three offices in the *munus triplex*. The Spirit takes Christ's past (a prophetic revelation of our salvation through his suffering and exaltation), Christ's present (a priestly enabling of a filial relationship) and Christ's future (a kingly manifestation of our future glory) and brings them all to bear on the church's present reality. And because of these pneumatological connections, the church itself participates in Christ's eschatological offices. (pp. 62, 75–76).

Biblically, redemptive-historically, and systematically considered, Liston is spot-on and in a way that invites further inquiry. His reliance on Torrance's theology of time, analogies, and specific vocabulary raises many interesting questions, and presents an ideal area of dialogue for extant kingdom theologies. From the perspective of an ontology of church, Liston structurally validates his basic claim: the church indeed is "not just … the community of people historically constituted by the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ, and not just … a community presently united to Christ by the Spirit, but also and equally a communal and proleptic anticipation of Christ's coming kingdom" (p. 77). Liston goes on to richly evidence this claim in analyses of the Lord's Supper, prayer, praise, gospel proclamation, and missiology. Though in his reading of 1 Corinthians Liston mentions the gifts of the Spirit, he could well have devoted an independent section to them. His analysis suggests that coterminous with the fruits, the gifts—all the gifts—are a biblically designated and structurally stable way in which the Holy Spirit *events* God's kingdom in the present through the church, until that final day.

In conclusion, no reviewer's gloss can do full justice to Liston's ambitious, thought-provoking, and at times problematic book. Though his text clearly evinces some of the problems that have accrued to ongoing work in TAT, his ecclesiological arguments are sufficiently distinct so as to invite independent assessment. From the standpoint of redemptive-historical theology, he rightly identifies the Christological crux that any adequate ecclesiology must treat in order to count as a fully biblical ecclesiology. For this, we are in his debt.

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INDEX OF BOOK REVIEWS

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