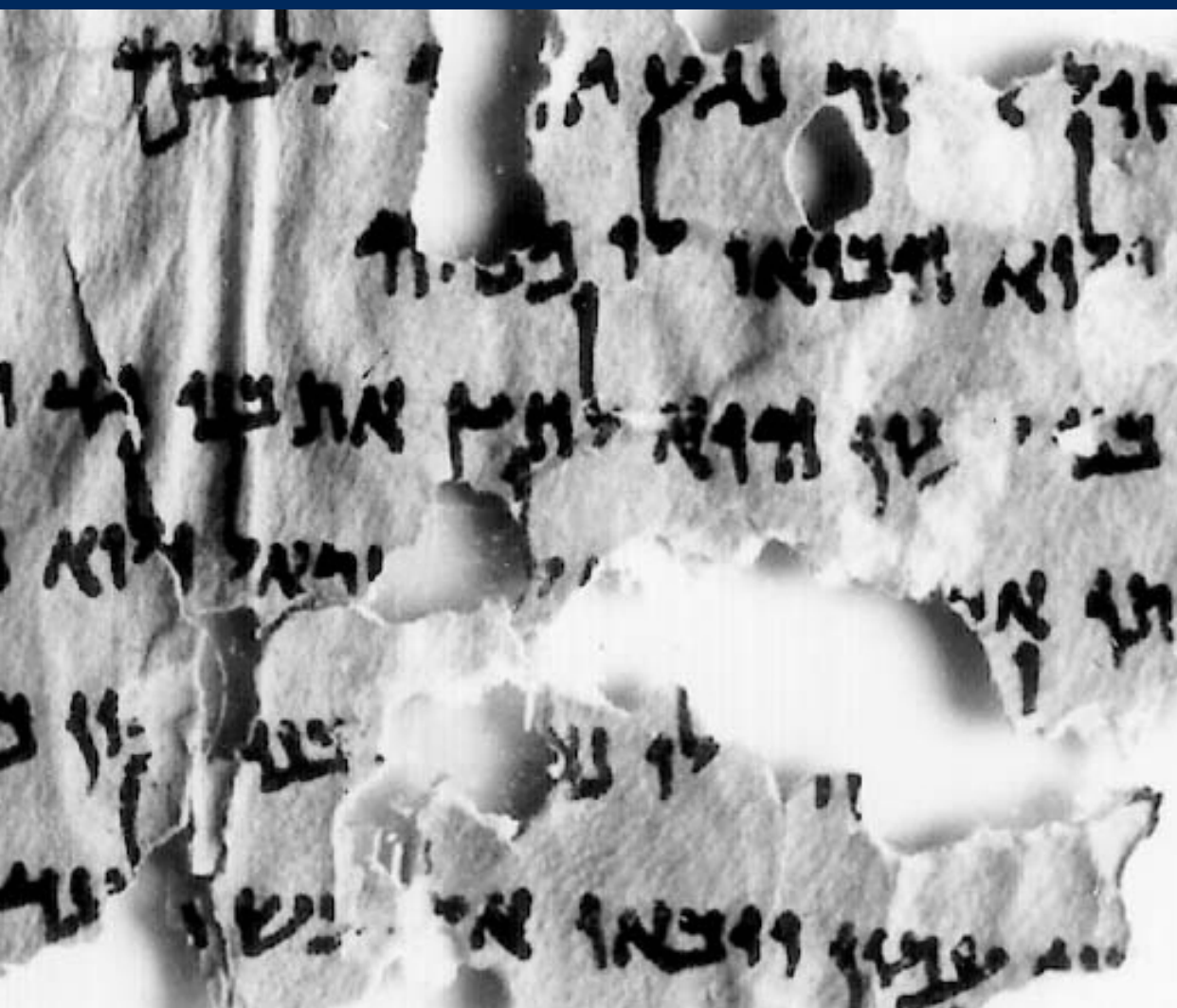


# DEAD SEA SCROLLS



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## *Book Reviews*

***Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary. Edited By John H. Walton. 5 Vols. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009. 1,924 pages. Hardcover, \$159.99.***

True to its title, this is a backgrounds commentary, compiling and explaining a vast number of ancient cultural contexts and concepts (Egypt, Mesopotamia, etc) that will inform the biblical terms/concepts found in the Old Testament and may impact the interpretation of a text. The commentary offered is not trying to come up with the best biblical interpretation using backgrounds, but offers ancient background material as possible viewpoints to what the Bible text states. This work is easy to read and follow. John Walton is ideal as the editor as reflected in his well-considered methodology offered in the preface. As Walton indicates, ancient culture and texts, when presented correctly, inform the context of Scripture and aid in interpretation. In general, this work takes a high view of Scripture, but some issues such as the interpretation of “thousand” come from a more critical viewpoint. Some background material is not doctrinally orthodox, but that is the nature of this work (i.e. to present the views, culture, and context in which the Bible events and texts took place). The pictures, illustrations, charts, and maps are superb. Some caution must be noted on the graphic erotic nature of ancient religious art that occasionally exhibits itself in the pictures presented. More significantly everything is in color and on heavy paper making these five finely-bound volumes a great value. Each book of the Old Testament is presented by scholars who can elucidate the backgrounds of the text. The picture index in the back of each volume is helpful, but one wishes that these pictures would be offered as a part of a teaching slide set to go along with these volumes. Both topical and Hebrew word indices would make this work even more useful.

While backgrounds material is very helpful and can give a Bible teacher/preacher insight, care must be taken in the use of this information because background materials can be easily misunderstood or misused. One must always check the source of the information to ensure its validity and Scripture must take preeminence in interpretation. One error that is often spread in our pulpits is the issue of the “eye of the needle.” When Jesus says in Matthew 19:24, “And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.” (NASB). It is often stated that there was a small door within the city gate and a camel could be stripped of its load and caused to pass through. However, Timothy Boyd, in an article entitled “The Needle’s Eye” (*Biblical Illustrator* 20 (1994): 37–38), showed that this interpretation came about in the fifteenth century AD. There is no strong evidence for this type of small gate early. Even if there were, to understand Jesus as equating the “eye of the needle” to this small door in a city gate would lead to one teaching that through diligence and work a rich man could get into heaven. This would be a misuse of backgrounds material since the shocked response of the disciples to Jesus’ words indicates that they understood Jesus as saying it was impossible for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God on his own.

This reference work is highly recommended. It is very easy to read with excellent content. Its doctrinal viewpoint is somewhat neutral, examining the evidence and not concerned with orthodox teaching—that is left to the teacher. This would make an excellent addition to a pastor’s or Bible student’s library.

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***Zondervan Atlas of the Bible*, rev. ed. By Carl G. Rasmussen. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010. 304 pages. Hardcover, \$39.99.**

This excellent atlas is a revision of the 1988 book with a slightly different title: *The NIV Atlas of the Bible*. The revised edition still uses the New International Version of the Bible for its Scripture text, but “NIV” is no longer in the title.

Rasmussen, who authored both the original edition and this revision, is professor emeritus of Old Testament at Bethel University in St. Paul, Minnesota. He is also adjunct professor at the Jerusalem University College in Jerusalem. Having led numerous study groups in the Holy Land, Rasmussen is well familiar with the subject matter of this atlas.

Virtually all of the maps have the same titles and subject matter as the 1988 version, but the maps in the revised edition are far superior. The topography in the new maps is much more defined, and the maps in the old edition almost look cartoonish in comparison. This does not mean that the maps in the old edition were bad—they were made by the respected Carta cartographers—but the new three-dimensional maps by International Mapping, using information from Digital Elevation Modeling, are exceptional (e.g., 36, 38, 51, 69). They have an eye-popping appeal, especially the ones that are rotated for an angular view rather than the typical view of looking directly down at the map (22, 38, 43). The map color scheme is an excellent choice for highlighting elevations and other topographical features (11).

In addition to looking better and sharper, the maps also reflect up-to-date archaeological information, which has certainly changed in the last 22 years. For instance, there is much change in the proposed ancient international, interregional, and local trade routes (32, 34). Historical dating is also occasionally revised, and Rasmussen uses the dating system from the *Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land* (13).

The excellent maps are the primary strength of this atlas, but there are other positive features as well. First, the 100+ pictures throughout the atlas are also much improved over the pictures in the first edition. They incorporate some recent important finds, such as the original Pool of Siloam (249) and Herod the Great’s tomb at the Herodium (204). Second, the glossary, indices of Scripture and persons, and the geographical dictionary and index are very helpful (265–303). Third, the foldout map of New Testament Jerusalem is a nice bonus.

Here are some ways to improve this atlas. First, provide alternative dating schemes, such as for the exodus, with evidence for each proposal. Rasmussen purposely avoids doing this, but it weakens the atlas (13). Second, add a map giving the various possibilities of the route of the exodus. Third, clearly identify the Eastern Gate on the map of New Testament Jerusalem. Fourth, update the last chapter on disciplines of historical geography, which have certainly improved in the last 22 years (254–62). Fifth, restore the six pages of endnotes from the first edition that were

inexplicably dropped in this revised edition. Many of them were content endnotes. Sixth, darken the text. The text in the first edition is much easier to read.

Despite the suggestions for improvements listed above, this atlas is excellent. Its maps and pictures are its strong suit, and they make it well worth the purchase for university and seminary students, pastors, and any serious student of the Bible. After all, fine maps and pictures are what a person mainly needs and expects in an atlas.

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***Kingdom of Priests: A History of Old Testament Israel*, 2nd ed. By Eugene H. Merrill. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008. 560 pages. Paperback, \$39.99.**

Since the original edition in 1987, a myriad of books addressing the history of ancient Israel have been produced. In the 1980's, when Dr. Merrill's book was first published, most "history of Israel" textbooks were already debating the amount of historical reliability found in the Hebrew Bible. *Kingdom of Priests* was a welcome textbook that grappled with the archaeology and historical sources that were contemporary with the biblical texts. Popularly viewed as a conservative Bright (John Bright, *A History of Israel*, 3rd ed. [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1981]), *Kingdom of Priests* was an attractive textbook because Merrill provided a synthesis of current scholarship within an overall framework of Israel's history that was written well and accessible to students.

The same year *Kingdom of Priests* was published, Baruch Halpern's *The First Historians: The Hebrew Bible and History* was also published and became a catalyst for a protracted debate within the scholarly community. Up to this time, history of ancient Israel textbooks followed the same methodology of viewing the Hebrew Bible as a text that contained historical data—the debate was centered on the extent of historical data found in it. The past two decades saw a wind of revisionism sweeping through biblical studies—especially in regards to the history of ancient Israel. The issue of the historicity of the biblical narrative and the nature of Israelite historiography became central to the writing of Israelite history. Merrill has been an active participant in the field of Old Testament history and theology, various genres in the Hebrew Bible, and hermeneutics. He has brought this insight into the updated edition with a new chapter addressing the nature of Old Testament historiography and the field of historiography and biblical studies.

The text and format of the original edition has virtually remained the same. *Kingdom of Priests* introduces each phase of Israelite history (e.g. Patriarchs, sojourn, conquest, united kingdom, etc.). While critical scholars would accuse Merrill of mimicking the biblical text, a closer reading of the text will demonstrate that Merrill has provided a synthesis of the biblical narrative against the extra-biblical historical texts and archaeological data.

The strengths of *Kingdom of Priests* is that Merrill weaves together Old Testament Theology, literature, and history to provide a contextual-historical discussion of the Hebrew Bible. Merrill writes specifically for a conservative audience, avoiding bogging down the discussion with apologetic statements addressing critical scholarship. Nevertheless, students of Old Testament history will be cognizant of discussions that address critical issues. Students, pastors, and lay persons who are unfamiliar with the debates will be introduced to the wealth of insights that

previous generations have received. The weakness of the volume is that Merrill's incorporation of the over two decades of archaeological research and discoveries since the first edition is sporadic. In his defense, biblical archaeology has grown as a separate discipline with its own journals, academic meetings, and associations separate from biblical studies. The first edition incorporated the archaeological data up to the 1980's; it is unfortunate that this new edition does not.

*Kingdom of Priests* remains one of the books that will need to be read by any student of the Bible and a reference for any scholar's or pastor's library.

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***The Meaning of the Pentateuch: Revelation, Composition and Interpretation.* By John H. Sailhamer. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2009. 610 pages. Paperback, \$40.00.**

Nothing makes me more nervous than when I hear a preacher say that he has an interpretation of a biblical text that no one else holds. My heresy antennae come up quickly. Part of my fear is based on one of the fundamental values of orthodoxy. As a Christian concerned with orthodoxy, I value preservation over innovation. When I hear an interpretation that is novel, I fear the interpreter has abandoned the deposit of faith left by the prophets and apostles. Rarely can a work of interpretation both preserve what has been passed down and strike out in directions that seem provocative and innovative to the contemporary interpreter. John Sailhamer's *The Meaning of the Pentateuch* is such a work.

In the book Sailhamer takes the reader on a journey through the Pentateuch in order to understand its meaning, including its "big idea." The reader begins with the hermeneutical foundation for interpreting the Pentateuch. Sailhamer stresses revelation, that is, "the divine act of self-disclosure put into written form as Scripture by the prophets" (11). He argues that the Pentateuch is revelation rather than an artifact of ancient Israelite religion. In doing so, he also lays out his own approach to reading the Pentateuch, what he calls a "compositional approach" (48). As Sailhamer defines it, "An evangelical compositional approach to biblical authorship identifies Moses as the author of the Pentateuch and seeks to uncover his strategy in putting the book together" (48). By uncovering this strategy, Sailhamer claims that one also uncovers the "historical meaning" of the Pentateuch (100–01). He compares and contrasts this understanding of the "historical meaning" of biblical texts with critical and evangelical scholars. Finally, Sailhamer provides practical pointers for discerning the "big idea" of a work such as the Pentateuch.

In the second part of the book Sailhamer sets his attention specifically on the text of the Pentateuch. His first concern is to explain how the Pentateuch was made. By doing so, he hopes to shed light on the strategy that was used in making it. He describes the way in which many biblical books, including the Pentateuch, are made by placing together some source material along with commentary in order to construct a unified text. The sources for the Pentateuch consist primarily in "large blocks of narratives, ancient poems and the collections of laws" (279). Sailhamer locates the composition and interpretation of the Pentateuch within the process of making the entire Old Testament. Having described the way in which the Pentateuch was made, he lays out the rationale for the various parts of the Pentateuch, highlighting the structure of the Pentateuch, the placement of poetic material, and the interaction

between legal material and narrative framework. In this part of the book Sailhamer most clearly sets out his understanding of the “big idea” of the Pentateuch.

The third part of the book moves beyond the exegetical task to the theological task, specifically biblical theology. Sailhamer addresses significant issues of biblical theology to show the Pentateuch’s point of view for these issues. He begins by critiquing the notion that the scheme of promise and fulfillment serves as the appropriate link between the two testaments. Then, he justifies the search for the “Biblical Jesus” in the Pentateuch and shows the result of such a search. Next, he discusses the significance of the Mosaic Law for Christians, especially how Christians are to apply the Mosaic Law. Finally, he describes the picture of salvation offered in the Pentateuch.

Throughout the book the reader will find much that reflects both preservation and innovation from a contemporary evangelical perspective. I offer three significant examples although there are many others. First, Sailhamer affirms Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, a clear case of preservation. At the same time he brings to light that certain brief portions of the Pentateuch do not appear to come directly from Moses, notably the account of his death in Deuteronomy 34. By exploring these “additions,” Sailhamer notes that there is a consistent perspective that suggests that these additions are part of an intentional strategy to produce “an updated version of the Mosaic Pentateuch produced, perhaps, by the ‘author’ of the OT as a whole (Tanak)” (48). In other words, there was an effort on the part of the prophets who followed Moses to preserve what they had received, in part, by bringing it up-to-date with the rest of the Old Testament. Such a proposal is an innovation.

Second, in contrast to the “postmodern turn” in biblical studies, Sailhamer affirms the historical-grammatical method of interpreting texts. He preserves this method characteristic of evangelicals. At the same time, Sailhamer articulates the meaning of the historical-grammatical method that offers a critique of its contemporary usage. Here especially he looks at the understanding and role of history in the interpretation of biblical texts. His critique in large measure is that contemporary evangelicals have lost sight of the words of the Bible by focusing on the objects or events to which the words point. Sailhamer states that the aim of contemporary evangelical interpreters is “to view biblical events not merely through the eyes of biblical authors (as written accounts of those events), but also through the eyes of historians as if we were gazing upon the actual events through the words of the text” (101). Even though he preserves the historical-grammatical method, his explanation is an innovative critique of its contemporary use.

Finally, Sailhamer affirms that the Pentateuch is a Christological document, preserving a longstanding Christian understanding of the book. Yet, he articulates it in terms that are out of step with many contemporary evangelicals who are focusing on Christological readings or salvation-historical trajectories. Sailhamer argues that the intentional, historical meaning of the Pentateuch was Christological from the start.

Sailhamer’s work is a case of preservation and innovation. As a result, he provides an insider’s critique to contemporary evangelical biblical interpreters and theologians. This work provides a critique of current approaches to the biblical text, but also strikes out in new areas for future work. Sailhamer does not provide a comprehensive, detailed defense for each part of the portrait. Instead, he provides a provocative look forward.

The strength of Sailhamer’s book is that it paints a wide-ranging portrait of

the Pentateuch: its origin, history, strategy, interpretation, and its place in biblical theology. The portrait provides an impressive synthesis of many seemingly disparate pieces. This strength will likely be its weakness as well because Sailhamer devotes such time to the larger portrait that he does not spend time defending his case for every detail. Many readers may want to see further justification of specific points only to find that Sailhamer does not provide it.

*The Meaning of the Pentateuch* is the result of decades of Sailhamer's reading, teaching, and publishing on the Pentateuch. It synthesizes much of the work that he has produced over the years, especially his *Introduction to Old Testament Theology*, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, and his articles on the Pentateuch and hermeneutics. One might expect this book to be his *magnum opus*, but such a designation does not get at its heart. Its true character is found on the dedication page: "To my students." This book is not a comprehensive, detailed defense of Sailhamer's work, but a roadmap forward for evangelical biblical theology. It is less of a *magnum opus* and more of a *magna carta*.

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***An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach.* By Bruce Waltke. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007. 1040 pages. Hardcover, \$44.99.**

This book is divided into three unequal parts. The first part consists of an introduction addressing the nature, task, and method of Old Testament theology. Waltke stresses that the basis for an Old Testament theology is the Old Testament texts themselves and that these texts are the revelation of God. Since the texts are revelation, his method focuses on the literary dimensions of them. He concludes the introduction by discussing the center of the Bible which serves as a recurrent touchstone for his Old Testament theology.

The second part constitutes the bulk of the book. It is devoted to the exposition of and reflection upon the Primary History, Genesis through Kings, plus Chronicles, Esther, and Ezra-Nehemiah. As Waltke unfolds the shape and message of these books, he also leaves room for these texts to address classical and contemporary theological issues. Some of these chapters (e.g. Chapter 22 on 1 Sam) read more like a survey of a biblical book sprinkled with insightful exegetical comments. Other chapters focus upon a particular theme, providing an opportunity to approach a theological issue more systematically, using both Old and New Testaments.

The third part is devoted to the other writings of the Old Testament: the prophets, Psalms, Ruth, and Wisdom Literature. This third part is similar to the second in format; however, Waltke covers more introductory material and devotes less space to theological topics. Some of the introductory material covered includes the various characteristics of prophets throughout Israel's history and a description of interpretive approaches to the Psalms and the significance of their being edited into a psalter. Despite the limited space provided for theological themes, he concludes the book with a reflection on the biblical teaching about the afterlife.

The book's subtitle helps to capture the distinctive characteristics of this Old Testament theology. First, it is exegetical; that is, it is structured to follow the shape of the biblical texts and the way in which the texts develop certain themes. Waltke completes his exegetical work primarily in terms of literary analysis: poetics and

intertextuality. His exegetical work is a real strength of the book. One will quickly notice that he consistently devotes attention to the structure of passages at a macro- and micro-level as a means of identifying a passage's message as well as his insight in reading the contours of the narratives.

Second, it is canonical; that is, it focuses on the final canonical form of Old Testament books rather than attempting to reconstruct their compositional history even though he does not avoid discussions of compositional history "in those cases where there is convincing evidence and it is patently relevant to the [sic] explicating the Old Testament message" (55). On the other hand, his approach does not follow a particular shape of the Old Testament canon (i.e. tripartite Tanakh), but arranges the books into four major blocks: the Primary History, Prophetic Literature, Hymnic Literature, and Wisdom Literature. Despite this canonical emphasis, the book itself gives little attention to much of the Old Testament canon. The bulk of the book (ca. 580 pp.) is devoted to the Primary History. All of the Prophetic Literature occupies 45 pages; the Hymnic Literature, 27 pages; and Wisdom Literature, 50 pages.

Third, it is thematic; that is, it treats certain themes that arise from the text within the larger scope of the Bible. For instance, after explicating the creation narrative in one chapter, he devotes the following chapter to marriage. In the chapter, he does not limit his focus to the Genesis passage, but brings in questions raised in other biblical passages as well as contemporary discussions. However, it is also thematic by explicating the Old Testament books within the framework of a center, which Waltke describes as "the message that accommodates all [the Bible's] themes" (144). He defines this center as the following: "Israel's sublime God, whose attributes hold in tension his holiness and mercy, glorifies himself by establishing his universal rule over his volitional creatures on earth through Jesus Christ and his covenant people" (144), and uses the phrase "the irruption of God's kingdom" as a shorthand for it. At the same time, Waltke is aware of the danger that forcing disparate material to fit within this mold may warp the material itself. He states that the "proposed center accommodates the whole, but the whole is not systematically structured according to it" (144). For the most part, Waltke heeds his own advice; he allows each part of the Old Testament to speak for itself. However, the book falls prey to another danger: giving insufficient attention to other parts of the Old Testament. The majority of the book is devoted to the primary history where the irruption of God's kingdom is a prominent theme. Since Waltke devotes such little space to the other writings, he cannot show how this center naturally arises from them.

Along with the descriptors of the subtitle, there should be added another: it is confessional. Waltke approaches Old Testament theology as a spiritual exercise. It is a discipline of theology, not history or religion (39–40). As a result, throughout the book Waltke provides several devotional reflections with personal anecdotes. To illustrate, Waltke's final topic in the book is the New Testament's teaching about hell. In the last sentence of the entire book, Waltke recounts, "Spirit-filled preaching of the last passage cited [Revelation 20:10–15] convicted me to pray that God would have mercy on me a sinner" (969).

The book is of an academic style. Such is probably unavoidable given the author, subject, and aims. On occasion, the style leads to obfuscation. For example, Waltke writes, "The failure of paremiologists to grasp the significance of the restricted ability of epigrams to express the whole truth and the rectification of this problem by grouping them has bedeviled the discussion" (925). On the other hand, Waltke provides a pleasurable reading experience with colorful analogies and delightful turns



of phrase. As an example, Waltke describes the royal psalms and Israel's anticipation of the Messiah as follows: "Israel draped the magnificent royal psalms as robes on each successive king, but generation after generation the shoulders of the reigning monarch proved too narrow and the robe slipped off to be draped on his successor" (889). This type of picturesque analogy and turn of phrase is found throughout the book and provides quotable gems for any Bible teacher or preacher.

Because of Waltke's exegetical competence in dealing with Old Testament passages, his theological insight in bringing the various parts together, his firm grasp of contemporary critical and conservative scholarship, and his devotional sensitivity to the spiritual task of Old Testament theology, there is something for everyone in this volume: churchman, student, exegete, or theologian. The volume is especially helpful in providing an overview to the Bible (especially Chapter 6 on the Bible's center) and as a reference for individual Old Testament books and theological topics since it provides the necessary background discussion, exegetical interaction, and theological reflection that helps bring each book into focus within the larger biblical context. At the same time, the book proves woefully inadequate for certain Old Testament books, especially the prophets.

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***Biblical Interpretation in Early Christian Gospels: Volume 2: The Gospel of Matthew.* Edited by Thomas R. Hatina. Library of New Testament Studies. New York: T&T Clark, 2008. 256 pages. Hardcover, \$130.00.**

This collection of essays addresses Matthew's extensive use of the Old Testament and the difficulties associated with it. The twelve contributors integrate narrative, social-scientific, and historical methods in their attempt to clarify how Matthew employs Scripture texts and comprehends them in light of Jesus and non-scriptural traditions.

M. Anthony Apodaca opens with a theoretical discussion on the use of Isaiah 7:14 in Matthew. He argues that the early Christian "community" used Isaiah 7:14 as a mythmaking agent, embedding the text into a new narrative to legitimize Jesus' origin and dual identity simultaneously with their identity in him (14–15, 24).

Warren Carter examines Jesus' Old Testament citations in Matthew 22:34–40 in view of the socio-political climate of the imperial world in Jerusalem and the "metonymic intertextuality" that was present in oral cultures (30–31). Carter reasons that Jesus proclaims God's "societal vision" from Deuteronomy 5–6 and Leviticus 19, which demands adherence to aggressive neighbor-love in opposition to the practice of Jerusalem's elite (41, 43).

J.R.C. Cousland utilizes Justin Martyr's scriptural citations as effective history to clarify Matthew's aim in his fulfillment quotations (45). Cousland finds that Justin's apologetic goals lead him to interpret the Old Testament with Jesus as his starting point whereas Matthew's starting point is not Jesus, but the Old Testament (59). For Cousland, Matthew's fulfillment quotations portray an inductive presentation of Jesus (60).

Craig Evans' chapter explores the contribution Matthew's "incipit" makes in identifying the purpose of his Gospel. By following his incipit with a genealogy likened to several scriptural antecedents in Genesis, Matthew presents the story of

Jesus as a new “beginning” in God’s history of redemption (67).

Mark Goodacre responds to the guild’s negative outlook on Matthew’s reading of Mark. Goodacre classifies Matthew as a “successful reader” of Mark, who underscores the points Mark’s Gospel develops (74). This he illustrates using Matthew’s redactive clarification of Mark’s Elijah theme (77).

Clay Alan Ham examines the relationship of Matthew’s Olivet Discourse to Zechariah on two fronts. Allusion focuses on how antecedent texts relate to authorial intent (87). Intertextuality focuses on how later texts provoke the informed reader of the Old Testament regardless of authorial intent (88). For Ham, both connections enable Matthew’s readers to recognize the parallel of Jesus’ Parousia with the coming of Yahweh (97).

Hatina’s contribution echoes Apodaca’s. However, Hatina outlines the actual process of mythmaking, which involves moving from the historical event to the event’s mythologization to the historical legitimization of the myth (110–11). The embedded texts of Matthew 2 reflect this latter transition for Hatina. The Matthean community, then, applies Old Testament texts to Jesus’ infancy narrative in order to historicize a “hero myth” for their own social legitimization (112).

Michael P. Knowles demonstrates that God’s voice, though seemingly silent in Matthew’s Gospel, resounds via Scripture and the mouth of Jesus. Matthew’s character and plot development clarifies this as all competing voices—like those of angels, scribes, or Moses—pale in comparison to the “divine voice” behind Scripture (122).

John Nolland explores the role Deutero-Zechariah plays in Matthew’s development of Jesus as God’s appointed shepherd-king (133). Using thematic similarities with, textual allusions to, and direct quotations from Deutero-Zechariah, Matthew argues that Jesus fulfills the Davidic-shepherding role and plays “counterpart” to the disastrous shepherds mentioned by the Prophet (134, 138, 145).

Lidija Novakovic challenges C.H. Dodd’s thesis that the apostles remained faithful to the contexts of their Old Testament citations (147). By way of example, she argues that, unlike early Judaism, Matthew strips Isaiah 53:4 from its context of the Suffering Servant and applies it to Jesus’ healing ministry atomistically (148). Matthew only cares to use a text relevant to Jesus’ healing miracles, not his redemptive suffering (159).

Andries G. van Aarde investigates the texts that may inform Matthew’s use of  $\sigma\psi\zeta\omega$  in presenting Jesus as the Healer-Messiah (163). With Mark as his base text, Q as his intertext, and the Joshua story as his background text, Matthew’s use of  $\sigma\psi\zeta\omega$  reveals his orientation toward Jesus as the Davidic Messiah gifted with Joshua-like leadership to save Israel from their sins and establish God’s kingdom (173, 177, and 179).

Lawrence M. Wills closes with a comparative study of Matthew’s usage of religious traditions and that of *Pirkei Abot*. Wills finds that where Matthew appropriates statements of contrast from Mark and Q, he chooses also to reformulate them into a “precise antithetic parallelism” (183). Positive statements accompany negative ones repeated word for word to distinguish those included in the righteous community and those excluded (195).

Two of this volume’s contributions also become reasons for concern. First, several essays stress the hermeneutical significance of viewing the Gospel as a complete narrative. With a whole-narrative approach, seeming contradictions or redundancies become intentional devices the author uses to communicate his

purpose, not warrant to divide his text according to reconstructed *Sitzen im Leben*. Nolland's essay exemplifies this well by tracing Matthew's narrative development of Jesus as the shepherd-king that so-called Deutero-Zechariah foresees.

However, some of the contributors' narrative emphases minimize the historicity of the Gospel's message and the controlling influences of its broader canonical context. Apodaca's notion, that the meaning of Jesus' virgin birth replaces concern for its historicity, ignores the historical question and is unfaithful to the nature of the object of his study (24). Matthew expects his readers to trust he is referring to real events, the real God-man, and the effects of his real work. Furthermore, both Apodaca and Novakovic argue that the meaning of Matthew's embedded texts depends solely on their place in the new narrative context (24, 158). If meaning lies solely in the new context without regard for the old, new and even contradictory meanings could evolve and eventually question the coherence of the canon's testimony. Novakovic approaches this claim by arguing Matthew separates the Suffering Servant's healing ministry from his redemptive suffering, when this is not the case at all (e.g., Matt 20:28 [Isa 53:10–12]; 26:28 [Isa 53:12]; 27:12 [Isa 53:7]).

Second, there is constant awareness among the contributors that the New Testament writers shared a common knowledge of particular texts with their readers. Furthermore, they recognize the need to refine how to speak rightly of the author, his readers, and their respective texts and pre-texts. They find these intertextual relationships also serve to emphasize the noticeable continuity between the Testaments. Carter's essay exemplifies these qualities, though on social-scientific grounds.

Nevertheless, aspects of Van Aarde's and Ham's intertextuality should raise concern for Christian interpretation at three levels. Ham's intertextuality minimizes authorial intent and allows for possible abandonment of determinate meaning. Van Aarde includes the author in his approach, but reconstructs the author's intent by distinguishing it from the "voices" of other text sources he used (167). The reconstruction closely resembles those of source criticism. For van Aarde, intertextuality is open-ended since every text is an inter-text (181). Identification of textual interdependence, then, is unlimited and does not truly consider the author's intent.

Other places worthy of more brief criticism could be mentioned, such as Apodaca's claim that any interpretation with distinctly Christian presuppositions restrains current New Testament scholarship from soaring to new heights of theoretical dialogue (16). He is correct in that Christian interpretation functions within its orthodox framework. He is wrong, however, in that belief in the exclusivity of Christ hinders understanding the Old Testament in the New Testament. The New Testament itself says just the opposite (e.g., John 5:39; 2 Cor 3:14–16).

Despite these shortcomings, this volume will still prove useful to scholars, teachers, and post-graduate students as they contemplate Matthew's use and understanding of the Old Testament. Its diverse scope will grant them a measure of exposure to an array of literary, historical, and sociological implications involved when Scripture interprets Scripture. Its openness to methodological integration will surely stimulate further reflection on the role of hermeneutics, linguistics, and theology in New Testament studies; however, let us hope it does not lead to any further fragmentation.

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*The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Captivity Epistles.* By Ben Witherington III. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007. 382 pages. Paperback, \$38.00.

It is typical for a scholar to write a commentary on his or her life's study of a biblical book, such as James R. Edwards's commentary on Mark for the Pillar series. This person is an expert on that book, and the commentary reflects many insights from possibly decades of study and reflection. Some scholars effectively accomplish the herculean task of writing excellent commentaries on several books, such as F.F. Bruce, Gordon Fee, and others. Yet, how helpful can the writings be of a scholar who writes a commentary on almost every book of the New Testament? If the name is Ben Witherington III, who has written seven socio-rhetorical commentaries on the New Testament in the Eerdmans series, the answer is: quite valuable. In addition to this volume, this prolific scholar has authored commentaries in this series on Mark, Acts, Romans, 1–2 Corinthians, Galatians, and 1–2 Thessalonians. He wrote a socio-rhetorical commentary on Titus, 1–2 Timothy, and 1–3 John for IVP, and he has written commentaries on every New Testament book except for Luke.

Professor of New Testament at Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, Kentucky, Witherington has a penchant for pushing the scholarly discussion forward in a beneficial manner, especially in regard to ancient rhetoric. His research is judicial, fair, thorough, and thought provoking, and he gives a clear and balanced presentation. (Notice his kind handling of opposing views: e.g., 247, 274, 288, 298, 316–17, although this reviewer would like to have seen Witherington address more opposing views and contrast them with his than he did in this volume).

The vast majority of readers will be unfamiliar with the many Latin terms of Asiatic rhetoric, which Witherington argues Paul used in this trio of Captivity Epistles with an Asian destination (to churches in Asia Minor, called Turkey today; Philippians, the fourth Captivity Epistle, was written to Macedonia, called Greece today). Witherington usually gives a helpful description of each rhetorical term as well as an ancient example when he points out an example in one of these Pauline epistles (e.g., 137–38, 220, 229, 250). However, a short introductory chapter on Asiatic rhetoric would greatly benefit the reader. An appendix of key terms and definitions would also help. Since these helps are absent, consider reading Witherington's 2009 *New Testament Rhetoric*.

Witherington's strength in this commentary is his deft analysis of Asiatic rhetoric that gives a strong underpinning to the argument for Pauline authorship of all three epistles (2–3, 11–19, 25, 30, 239, 252, 355), each one an example of a different level of moral discourse (11, 282). Time after time he decimates the claims that pseudepigraphers wrote these New Testament books, showing they indeed fit Paul's theology and style as well as the Asiatic style of rhetoric with which these Christian recipients were likely well familiar (223–24). Another asset, the annotated bibliography (37–51), is very helpful, including French and German works as well as pertinent articles.

True gems are abundant in the "Bridging the Horizons" application chapters that follow the exegetical commentary on each book. For instance, here is his answer to a complaining student who questioned the need to do sermon preparation instead of just letting the Holy Spirit use him: "Yes, you can do that, but it is a shame that you are not giving the Spirit more to work with" (210). He replied thus to a person wanting to attend a church who desired to continue living in sin: "[E]veryone is

welcome to come as they are into the church, that is meant to be a hospital for sick sinners not a museum for saints. But equally no one is welcome to stay as they are" (211). One wishes these application chapters were longer—Witherington has much wisdom to share from his years in the pastorate.

Deficiencies in this commentary are few. Adding verse divisions in Witherington's personal translations of the biblical text would make it easier for the reader to find a specific verse, especially in the long sections (152–53, 251–52, 315). Although the indices for authors, Scripture, and other ancient writings are beneficial (366–82), an index of terms is lacking. Of course, this reviewer has disagreements with some interpretations, such as falling from grace (274, 300–02, 308, 360, 364), but he greatly appreciates his emphasis on free will involved in salvation (234). This is an excellent volume that offers much to Bible students, teachers, pastors, and scholars.

James R. Wicker

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***Jude & 2 Peter.* By Gene L. Green. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008. 448 pages. Hardcover. \$39.99.**

The Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (BECNT) is shaping up to be an excellent commentary series, and the *Jude and 2 Peter* volume continues in the tradition of the volumes already in print. Both *Jude* and *2 Peter* are among the most neglected books of the New Testament both in preaching and teaching, and they were among the group of last books to be canonized. However, starting with Richard Bauckham's commentary on these books in the *Word* commentary, there has rightfully been a renewed interest in these books, especially of late with Peter David's volume in the *Pillar* commentary.

One expects a thoughtful traditional approach to authorship and related elements of these two New Testament books, and Green does not disappoint. He gives good reasons for accepting *Jude*, the half brother of Jesus, as the author of *Jude* (1–9) and the apostle Peter as the author of *2 Peter* (139–50). He also effectively deals with the dilemma of how to understand *Jude* and Peter's use of 1 Enoch and the Assumption of Moses. One can (1) discount their canonicity because of their use of non-canonical literature, (2) extend canonicity to the writings from which they quoted, (3) realize *Jude* and Peter cited them only because their opponents considered them authoritative, or (4) consider the parts they quoted true, but not extend that authority to the rest of the noncanonical works (26–33). This reviewer agrees with Green that the latter option is the only viable one.

As in all of the volumes in the BECNT series, this volume gives Hebrew or Greek references in the original language followed by a transliteration and translation. This helpful feature allows the reader who does not know Greek or Hebrew to follow the discussion, thus helping to reach their goal of a wide audience, from lay person to scholar (ix). However, the other convention from the series of marking questionable words in the translation using the right-angled siglum from the Nestle-Aland text ought to have some explanation for the novice to textual criticism (e.g., 43, 63, 101, 119, 171, 249).

Taking the most likely view that Peter used *Jude* as a source when writing

2 Peter (159–62), rather than Jude using 2 Peter, Green gives solid exegesis. He provides many relevant extrabiblical examples for both style as well as word meanings, from Josephus and Philo to pseudepigraphal writings to the Apocrypha (e.g., 227–28, 240, 243–45), all of which appear in a very helpful “Index of Scripture and Other Ancient Writings” (389–420).

Green offers valuable insights, such as the tendency to get caught up in trying to figure out what the “first letter” is that is mentioned in 2 Peter 3:1 that interpreters often miss the importance of that statement. The mentioning of a second letter or second statement not only affirms the importance of the first one, but it also draws attention to the importance and authority of the second, present teaching (310). He stresses the importance of Peter broadening the concept of Scripture to include Paul’s writings in 3:16 (147, 340). Rather than causing doubt about Petrine authorship of 2 Peter (which, unfortunately, is the way most scholars react), this statement sheds light on the process of the canonization of the New Testament. Green wisely cautions that 2 Peter 3:8 is not an interpretive key for one to look for certain “days” in the Scriptures that are actually thousands of years. Rather, God looks at time differently from humans (325–26).

What is the genre of Jude and 2 Peter? There is a tendency today to examine the New Testament through the lens of ancient rhetoric. However, Green gives a good balance between appreciating the rhetorical elements in both epistles while understanding the basic structures of a Greco-Roman letter (33–42, 162–70).

Green gives conscientious conservative interpretation, careful attention to details, extensive extra-biblical examples, and thoughtful interaction with the interpretations of other scholars. Unfortunately, as with other volumes in this series, the “Additional Notes” sections are skimpy or nonexistent (e.g., 50, 111, 177, 268), and this reviewer would like to see them expanded. Nevertheless, this is an excellent volume for the BECNT series.

James R. Wicker  
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***Jesus and the God of Israel: God Crucified and Other Studies on the New Testament’s Christology of Divine Identity.* By Richard Bauckham. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008. 285 pages. Paperback, \$34.00.**

This volume consists of eight essays exploring monotheism in Second Temple Judaism and early Christianity. The first essay, “God Crucified,” was published ten years before this volume as a single work that explores the precedence of Jewish monotheism in connection with the Christology of the early church. Here, *God Crucified* further serves as the crucial thesis upon which the other seven essays coalesce.

Bauckham lays out two main approaches to understanding Jewish monotheism. One angle of approach posits that “Second Temple Judaism was characterized by a ‘strict’ monotheism that made it impossible to attribute real divinity to any figure other than the one God” (2). The strictness of monotheism inevitably leads to the unlikelihood of a Christ-figure having any divinity, hence dismissing the possibility of the New Testament texts speaking of Christ’s divinity. The second angle of approach is contingent on revisionist interpretations of the Second Temple period, which, as Bauckham sees it, “in one way or another deny its strictly monotheistic character” (2). This second view looks for a precedent of early Christian Christology

in the intermediary figures, which are not completely divine, but have certain characteristics (e.g. angels, special humans, etc.).

Bauckham's thesis is that a "high Christology was possible within a Jewish monotheistic context, not by applying to Jesus a Jewish category of semi-divine intermediary status, but by identifying Jesus directly with the one God of Israel, including Jesus in the unique identity of this one God" (3). Bauckham proceeds with this thesis by establishing Jewish monotheism in God's unique identity, which shapes the life of the Jews in their adherence to his law and the worship of him that ensues. Bauckham provides evidence to show that the period of Second Temple Judaism is "self-consciously monotheistic" (5). In the discussion of intermediary figures like Michael the Archangel, which fall into two categories—angelic figures and exalted patriarchs, Bauckham observes that they are still subordinate to God and do not participate in his rule, despite their significant positions (15).

In the subsequent section, Bauckham posits that New Testament Christology is the highest possible Christology, as opposed to developmental gradations of Christology from low to high: "the inclusion of Jesus in the unique divine identity was central to the faith of the early church even before any of the New Testament writings were written" (19). The worship and exaltation of Christ place him over all things, an expression common in the rhetoric of Jewish monotheism (23). Jesus is the crucified God, in whom his identity is revealed. The Christian readings of Isaiah 40–55 and Psalm 110:1 reflect his nature: "Here God is seen to be God in his radical self-giving, descending to the most abject human condition and, in that human obedience, humiliation, suffering and death, being no less truly God that he is in his cosmic rule and glory on the heavenly throne" (50). The early church has carried on this tradition in its worship of Christ.

Bauckham's other essays are further explorations of the discussions that have arisen from *God Crucified*. "Biblical Theology and the Problems of Monotheism" fields the challenges of a monotheistic view in biblical studies, and arrives at monotheism being "a claim about the God who defines himself by his covenant with Israel and the particular name YHWH that cannot be abstracted from his particular identity in his history with Israel" (81). "The 'Most High' God and the Nature of Early Jewish Monotheism" seeks to trace the usage of the designation "Most High" in Deuteronomy 32:8–9 as well as other early Jewish literature, along with temple cult practices. In "The Worship of Jesus in Early Christianity," Bauckham sees how the act of Christian worship is a continuation of Jewish monotheistic faith, not a break from it. "The Throne of God and the Worship of Jesus" finds the centrality of Scripture in the late Second Temple period to provide a connection to the uniqueness of the God of Israel and the exclusive worship rendered unto him. The imagery of the throne of God continues on to Jesus, who is worshiped and included as the one God of Israel.

"Paul's Christology in Divine Reality" looks at the ways in which Paul uses specific YHWH passages in connection to Christ. *Kurios*, commonly known to be a reverential title for Christ, is also the Greek divine name found in the Septuagint for the Tetragrammaton. Another article, "The Divinity of Jesus in the Letter to the Hebrews," also examines Christology in the attribution of Melchizedek the high priest to Christ.

The last essay, "God's Self-Identification with the Godforsaken: Exegesis and Theology," is an exegesis of Jesus' cry from the cross in their proper Gospel contexts (Mark 15:39, Matt 27:46). The words, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken

me?” underscore the “godforsakenness” of Jesus. Mark brings it to a dramatic climax that conveys the abandonment and suffering, which Jesus efficaciously experienced for all of humanity.

The series of essays presented here in this volume enters into various discussions on the topic of high Christology, from the precedence of Jewish monotheism to the divine language attributed to Christ by Paul and the Gospel writers. Bauckham takes the position that early Christology is high Christology, and offers a variety of perspectives that develop into a larger theological framework. Many of these papers have been published elsewhere either in full form or at least in some parts. They are what he calls “working papers” to a volume, which he had promised earlier in the first publication of *God Crucified* (xi). What can be appreciated in these papers is his earnest effort to weave together and synthesize the ongoing scholarly discussions concerning early Christology.

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***Basics of Biblical Greek: Grammar*, 3rd ed. By William D. Mounce. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009. 419 pages. Hardcover, \$49.99.**

***Basics of Biblical Greek: Workbook*, 3rd ed. By William D. Mounce. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009. 223 pages. Softcover, \$22.99.**

This volume represents the third edition of *Basics of Biblical Greek* by Bill Mounce. With a number of stylistic and aesthetic revisions, Mounce aims to make his grammar more accessible to students. The size of the book is much bigger than previous editions, with wider margins for note taking. The new layout is also designed to distinguish the various elements of each chapter with differing shades of blue. These features improve the readability of the material and make the grammar feel more like a traditional textbook. In an attempt to ratchet up the “fun factor,” Mounce introduces a cartoon professor who shows up throughout the grammar. The professor gives the readers “helpful tidbits” and other things that are “fun to learn,” such as phrases to say in conversational Greek (xiii). These stylistic revisions are surely intended to make the text more palatable to undergraduate students and other self-learners (e.g., high school and homeschool students). Some graduate level professors, though, might not be as enthusiastic about the intentionally casual tone of these changes. The price increase is also an unfortunate aspect of the new edition.

In order to make the material more manageable in this edition, Mounce has added “halftime reviews” to the middle of many of the chapters that highlight the subjects just covered. There are also now section overviews that summarize what will be presented in subsequent chapters. Additionally, chapter thirty-five has been split into two chapters with extended material on the definite article. Though small, these changes will surely help students maintain their bearings as they work through each new chapter. Mounce has also added an “exegesis” section at the end of some chapters that introduces syntactical concepts from second year Greek. These optional parts will likely encourage the disciplined student, but most beginners will be simply overwhelmed by this advanced material especially in the early chapters.

Regarding content, the strengths that made this grammar a widely used textbook remain in the new edition. Mounce’s approach attempts to blend deductive



and inductive ways of learning the language. He tries to include only what is essential in order to lessen the mental burden on new students. He also helpfully focuses on the recognition of forms rather than the rote memorization of paradigms. Accordingly, he synthesizes the important morphological data into a few composite paradigms and then focuses on seeing the patterns that are present in the Greek of the New Testament. He is also keen on students understanding English grammar prior to analyzing grammatical concepts in Greek, a sometimes overlooked feature of learning the language. His overarching goal is to teach students Greek “not as an intellectual exercise but as a tool for ministry” (xiv–xv). To this end, Mounce includes “exegetical insights” at the beginning of most chapters. These features continue to make this grammar an attractive option for introductory Greek courses.

One element that was unfortunately not revised involves Mounce’s presentation of Greek verbal aspect. Mounce describes aspect in a way that differs from most scholarly discussion on the topic. For example, he gives the two main aspects as “continuous” and “undefined” rather than “imperfective” and “perfective” (124–26). Further, he says that he will discuss a “third aspect” in relation to the perfect tense form, but his discussion there does not mention aspect and simply describes an “action that was brought to completion and whose effects are felt in the present” (223). Although his descriptions have some explanatory power, they might only add confusion for a student who pursues interaction with other works on the subject. He also does not associate individual aspects directly with certain tense forms, which is a departure from the scholarly consensus. Consequently, instructors wishing to integrate verbal aspect into their introductory Greek courses will need to supplement Mounce’s grammar on this subject with a sampling of the standard works in the field (e.g., Campbell, Fanning, and Porter).

The workbook received only minor additions and a slight reordering of some of the example texts. Instructors who have used the workbook previously will want to consult Mounce’s detailed list of specific changes to the exercises in the preface. One helpful addition is the text of 2 John at the end of the workbook. This option of translating an entire biblical book would be a fitting and encouraging capstone for a student who has completed the course. Along these lines, students will also appreciate that Mounce has integrated as much of the biblical text into the exercises as possible.

For the third edition, Mounce has replaced the CD-ROM that came with the second edition with significant improvements to the website that accompanies the grammar (<http://teknia.com>). The website features troves of helpful and easily accessed content. For every chapter, there are multiple online resources including video, audio, vocabulary helps, and quizzes. The grammar itself frequently references the website, which Mounce plans to continue updating regularly. Self-learners will probably benefit the most from the website, though it serves as an excellent complement to classroom instruction. As a beginning student of the language, I used Mounce’s materials to learn elementary Greek independently before coming to seminary. The marked improvements to the website will only enhance the experience of someone using this grammar and workbook to pursue a similar task.

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***Dispensationalism: Essential Beliefs and Common Myths.* By Michael J. Vlach. Los Angeles: Theological Studies Press, 2008. 73 pages. Paperback, \$8.45.**

***The Church as a Replacement of Israel: An Analysis of Supersessionism.* By Michael J. Vlach. New York: Peter Lang, 2009. 221 pages. Hardcover, \$43.95.**

Two recent publications by Michael Vlach, Assistant Professor of Theology at The Master's Seminary in Sun Valley, California, are worthy of special note. *Dispensationalism: Essential Beliefs and Common Myths* is a succinct, seventy-three page monograph, which poignantly illustrates the truth that it is not necessary to write 500 pages in order to fulfill a significant need. Dispensationalism has often been misrepresented by its opponents and in this slender volume Vlach sets the record straight. Having explained the nature of the problem in the introduction, the author provides a brief yet reasonably comprehensive history of dispensationalism followed by a chapter focusing on the essential content of dispensational thinking. Chapter three addresses myths about dispensationalism, while chapter four is devoted to questions often asked of dispensationalism. Finally, there is a conclusion as well as endnotes for the chapters.

There are three significant values of this book. First, contemporary dispensationalists—whether belonging to the classical, the revised, or the progressive schools—will all find themselves affirming what Vlach has said. In fact, Vlach succeeds in providing for dispensationalists themselves an understanding that they have much in common and little about which they should be seriously divided.

The second value of this volume lies in the cogent presentation of the most significant features of dispensationalism. Even if one does not agree with Vlach's six points comprising the essence of dispensational thought, he will nevertheless appreciate the thoroughness with which Vlach has treated the subject in so few pages.

Third, and perhaps most important of all, Vlach's handling of the calumnies often visited upon dispensationalism, such as that there is more than one plan of salvation in the Bible, are quickly shown to be misrepresentations of dispensational thinking. Dispensationalism is demonstrated to be thoroughly and completely orthodox in its theological foundation and superstructure.

The second volume, *The Church as a Replacement of Israel: An Analysis of Supersessionism*, is a much needed scholarly volume on the issue that most clearly sets apart dispensationalists from many other orthodox Christians relating to the interpretation of the New Testament documents. For many covenant theologians, as well as those who would simply prefer to allegorize New Testament and even Old Testament prophecies, making Israel and the church virtually synonymous, Vlach demonstrates in this volume that God's plan and purpose for ethnic Israel is not abrogated by His plan for the church. After providing an introduction to the problem, Vlach discusses supersessionism in church history and then makes a very fair presentation of the case of replacing Israel with the church. In chapter four, however, he presents the evidence for maintaining a future for ethnic Israel. The final chapter is an evaluation and critique of supersessionism and a final statement in favor of recognizing the significance of Israel as a part of God's future plan.

Citing Craig Blaising, Vlach notes optimistically that evidence of the history of supersessionism is sparse, and he acknowledges Blaising's hopefulness that it is virtually on its way out. Vlach seems less hopeful, and this reviewer would question the conclusion of both. In fact, this is exactly why this volume is critically important.

Theological schools have long needed a volume that discusses this issue in a scholarly but trenchant way. Vlach has produced that volume. These books together constitute a significant addition to contemporary eschatological discussion and should not be missed by anyone interested in biblical prophecy.

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***The Elder: Today's Ministry Rooted in All of Scripture.* By Cornelis Van Dam. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2009. 283 pages. Softcover, \$17.99.**

*The Elder* is one volume in P&R's new *Explorations in Biblical Theology* series that tries to find the middle ground between academic and semi-popular books. This "solidly reformed" series' target audience ranges from the seminarian to the "thoughtful lay reader." Van Dam does a good job at connecting with his target audience by writing a book that is easily read, full of Scripture references, and seasoned with a few footnotes and two bibliographies.

Van Dam's chief goal is to "enhance a biblical understanding and functioning of the office of elder" (xii). His central presupposition is that there is continuity between Old Testament elders and New Testament elders. This continuity "need not be doubted"; yet, his justification is not convincing. Add to this the presence of some contradictions and the blurring of some biblical categories, and one gets the feeling that Van Dam's system, rather than the text of Scripture, is driving his theology. To use N.T. Wright's analogy, it would seem that the roaring lion of Scripture is here often turned into a tame pet made to stand on its hind legs and dance a jig.

A prime example is the discussion about the typically reformed division between ruling and teaching elders. Van Dam uses his presupposition of continuity with the Old Testament to justify this division. While he claims that New Testament (ruling) elders are truly parallel with Old Testament elders, Van Dam claims a different parallel for the "minister of the Gospel," who is analogous to the Levitical office of the priest as an administrator of the Word and official spokesmen for God. Yet, according to Van Dam, he is "in essence a specialized elder" (117). So, besides the obvious question of what Van Dam does with the concepts of the priesthood of all believers and Christ being our only mediator with God, one wonders: if the "minister of the Gospel" is indeed a specialized elder, why is he paralleled to the Old Testament priests and not to the Old Testament elders? It seems that his theological system forces this two-step. A similar suspicion arises when ruling and teaching are presented as separate gifts to justify separate offices. Yet, only ten pages later, the pastor is declared to need multiple gifts. So, since a pastor should have multiple gifts, why does the differentiation of gifting force two separate offices?

The discussion on church discipline, while initially encouraging, is similarly affected by his system and also harmed by inconsistencies. While the initial phases of church discipline are enacted by the congregation, in Van Dam's view, the elders are the only ones who can move forward with the final step of church discipline and with re-admittance to the body due to true repentance. They are the gatekeepers who can shut the doors of the kingdom and separate the excommunicated one from "blessings such as forgiveness of sins" (174). In light of these strong statements, one is confused to learn that the elders cannot condemn the excommunicated one to hell. What then does it mean to exclude one from "blessings such as forgiveness of sins,"

and to shut the doors of the kingdom? The need for church discipline is also unclear: at times, the focus, driven by the Old Testament parallel, is on the purity of the body, and at times, the focus is on the repentance of the sinner.

In addition to major jigs, there are also several other smaller reels that continue to weaken this volume. Van Dam is not consistent with his understanding of the interrelation between office and authority. At times, Van Dam associates the authority of the elder with God or with the Word, but not with the office as such. At other times, he associates authority with the office itself. The distinction between spiritual gifts and church offices seems to be acknowledged when useful, but ignored when not. Passages teaching about apostles are applied to elders without justification, just to mention one example.

On a positive note, Van Dam reveals his pastor's heart when he exhorts elders to know the Bible and to know their flock. For him, the role of an elder "is not about getting something," but about giving (201). These biblical exhortations are much appreciated in an age of pastor-as-CEO. Also much appreciated is his stance that women should participate in the church, but that they do not need to be an elder in order to use their gifts in the body.

While this volume had a few good points, it was overall very disappointing. I would still strongly recommend it to all who wish to understand Presbyterian and Reformed theology with respect to the office of the elder. In a time when many Baptists are often more enamored with following systems of theology than the Bible itself, I hope that an attentive reading of this volume will douse their torrid love affair for manmade systems and bring them back to the careful study of the lion of Scripture.

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***Great Is the Lord: Theology for the Praise of God.* By Ron Highfield. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008. 467 pages. Paperback, \$30.00.**

How would a Stone-Campbellite with neo-orthodox leanings who teaches at Pepperdine construct a theology of God within the parameters of his tradition? The answer is the valuable doxological theology, *Great Is the Lord*. Do not be fooled by the book's subtitle; this is not a theology of the praise of God. Rather, Highfield bases his work on the refreshing rule, "Good theology makes you want to praise God, and bad theology makes you want to jump off a bridge" (58). In *Great Is the Lord*, he summarizes the biblical and historically orthodox teachings about God for the purpose of inspiring worship. Campbellite biblicism may be expected, but Highfield's aligning of himself with the historic church (vis-à-vis the contemporary academy) may not be.

Highfield offers two primary parts with a minor third on ethics. The first is about knowing God, including the sources of knowledge of God, the philosophical importance of God's existence, and the fundamental importance of God as Trinity. The second is about the attributes of God, including love, righteousness, grace, freedom, eternity, and so on. Importantly, Highfield does not separate God from his attributes: God is not "just." God is "justice." Each individual section includes an overview of the biblical teachings on the subject and then fuses them into a short theology of the subject that leans heavily on the teachings of the historic church. He

tries to use language that a more casual reader would understand and also to be succinct enough not to lose those readers. These are valuable techniques that occasionally prevent him from being as clear as needed.

The book is marked by three primary characteristics. First, Highfield constantly turns his insights to praise of God and he genuinely desires that his readers do the same. For example, he writes, “His knowledge is an aspect of his power, and his power is an aspect of his love. And his love is most worthy of praise” (313). Second, Highfield roots everything he says in the doctrine of the Trinity. For example, love is the “free, total, and unconditional self-giving, -receiving, and -returning that constitute the eternal life of the Trinity” (167). Third, Highfield does not prioritize God’s attributes. God’s glory is not a super-attribute; God does not love because it brings Him glory, God’s mercy does not interfere with His righteousness or holiness, God’s patience does not limit His freedom in any way (and neither does human freedom), and so on.

Highfield’s perspective may create concerns for some readers in a few places, but hopefully that will not detract from their opinion of the book. First, he bases his entire theology on the doctrine of divine simplicity, defending himself very well. Second, he works backwards from contemporary English to biblical theology. In other words, he defines terms such as immutability and knowledge in modern language, then fits the biblical data into those definitions. Third, he considers sin to be ignorance rather than rebellion, a rather soft definition by many standards. Finally, he leans very heavily on Barth, but this does not seem to extend to his doctrine of revelation. These are real concerns, but the book can be appreciated even through them.

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***God in Dispute: “Conversations” among Great Christian Thinkers.* By Roger E. Olson. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009. 302 pages. Softcover, \$24.99.**

What might Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Clement have said to one another if they had met in a bathhouse in Rome? Or if Locke, Kant, and Hegel had met in purgatory? As a tool to help his students understand the primary beliefs of important figures in church history (especially their differences), Roger Olson has imagined these conversations and then recorded them in *God in Dispute*. On a number of levels, Olson succeeds in bringing these figures to life, so to speak, for a wide range of readers not limited to students of theology. Though interesting and entertaining, his approach also creates a number of difficulties.

It is a strange title. Very rarely is God Himself disputed, and not all of the thinkers are Christian. Beyond that, though, the structure of the book is quite refreshing. Olson chooses forty different thinkers, groups them (roughly) by period and issue, putting their beliefs in dialogue. For example, Anselm and Abelard converse about the atonement, Wesley and Edwards about salvation, and Barth and Brunner about natural theology. Because Olson only covers the most basic beliefs of these thinkers—those most documented—there are not too many concerns with the basic content presented. It is an enjoyable way to be introduced to these concepts, and there are no questions as to what Olson wants his readers to know about the thinkers as they repeat their basic beliefs almost robotically throughout the dialogues.

That leads to the primary concern with this book as a teaching tool. In his classes, Olson has the luxury of explaining his interpretations in detail and answering questions. Not so in this book, though he tries to anticipate as many questions as possible in his chapter introductions and analysis.

Olson says he has left subtle clues as to which position he takes personally (some more subtle than others). For example, Tertullian “learns” Irenaeus’ recapitulation theory, the Cappadocians discuss gender relations, Thomas Aquinas talks to the ghost of Francis of Assisi, Calvin and Arminius engage Servetus in heaven, Edwards admits some truth to purgatory, John Toland is sent on an errand from hell, and Kant, Hegel, and Locke make it to purgatory.

All in all, *God in Dispute* is an enjoyable book that covers a lot of material. Olson casts as wide a net as is reasonable not only on the issues themselves, which extend as far as evangelical theology, liberation theology, and postmodern theology, but also the conversation participants. (Baptists will appreciate Grebel, Hubmaier, and Henry appearing in various chapters). Olson’s humor will keep even the most cynical student engaged. But readers and teachers who might consider using this book as a teaching tool need to be aware that Olson’s personal beliefs come into play throughout.

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***What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815–1848.* By Daniel Walker Howe. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007. 904 pages. Hardcover, \$35.00.**

“Like the people of 1848, we look with both awe and uncertainty at what God hath wrought in the United States of America” (855). So distinguished political and religious historian Daniel Walker Howe concludes his Pulitzer Prize-winning work, *What Hath God Wrought*. Howe takes his title from the first message sent over Morse’s telegraph. Based on Numbers 23:23, he quite purposefully follows Morse’s (accidental?) omission of the closing punctuation. Howe recognizes the phenomenal—even providential—multifaceted development and growth of America in the early decades of the 1800s, yet he does not hide the dark side of this era that leads to the lowest point in our country’s history.

Wonderfully readable and accessible to a wide audience, Howe offers a true general history, covering political, economic, military, social, and religious themes. He tries to avoid a strong thesis as might be found in a history such as *America’s God*, and for the most part succeeds. However, underlying this book is a very clear opinion: most of the government’s actions—federal and state—in this period, as well as many by famous entrepreneurs, were driven by a desire to maintain white male superiority. While this approach may seem to downplay the heroic actions of antislavery Americans, the opposite is true. Racism so pervaded the American consciousness (against Africans, Hispanics, Native Americans, and many immigrants) that it took monumental events and monumental Americans to bring the incongruity between racism and the American dream, not to mention American Protestantism, to light and resolution.

Howe writes about much more than racial issues—importantly, he concludes his history of the era by describing the events that would eventually lead to women’s

suffrage—but that tension helps drive his narrative through many historical themes. He uses it to help identify scoundrels (fans of Andrew Jackson and James Polk beware) and exemplars (Winfield Scott and a young Abraham Lincoln come to mind). But readers will appreciate his overall impartial treatment of social, religious, and philosophical developments.

Indeed, Howe's ability to weave complex yet divergent narratives together at both national and personal levels is a highpoint of the book. For students, however, the most valuable contribution is Howe's bibliographic essay in which he summarizes his opinion of the best secondary literature available on each of the subjects covered in the book. Of course, no one can completely master the primary and secondary literature of an era. For example, Howe's description of Alexander Campbell as "tolerant" indicates that he is not completely familiar with that polemicist's works, and his failure to connect the dots between Phoebe Palmer, the Five Points Mission, Charles Finney, and Oberlin College are seeds of a wider harvest he may have missed. Most disappointing is his failure to engage the theses of Tim Smith's *Revivalism and Social Reform* and Mark Noll's *The Civil War as a Theological Crisis*.

*What Hath God Wrought* is a necessary read for students of American history, religious or otherwise, offering a valuable perspective to augment those of eminent religious historians such as Nathan Hatch, Brooks Holifield, and Mark Noll.

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***Turning Points in Baptist History: A Festschrift in Honor of Harry Leon McBeth.* Edited by Michael E. Williams Sr. and Walter B. Shurden. Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2008. 332 pages. Hardcover, \$45.00.**

It has become exceedingly discouraging to open a volume on Baptist history only to discover that a number of its contributors have decided to use the occasion to air their grievances against the conservative resurgence in the Southern Baptist Convention. Unfortunately, that is precisely what has happened in the Mercer publication, *Turning Points in Baptist History*. Using charged words such as "capitulated," "regressive," "fundamentalists," and "devolution" with respect to the SBC, some contributors have blurred historiography with sermonizing. The fact that the editors promise an even-handed approach makes the final product that much more disconcerting. In this context, their decision not to include any chapters by current SBC seminary professors should not be surprising.

Billed as a *festschrift* to longtime Southwestern history professor Leon McBeth, *Turning Points* is designed to be an introduction to key moments in Western Baptist history, light on footnotes and technical jargon while heavy on historical accuracy—an unbiased presentation of the data that laypeople and students can use to draw their own conclusions. (Some of the articles seem to have missed the guidelines on footnotes and jargon.)

There are a few useful and well-written articles, most of them covering the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (including helpful overviews of the believers' church, free conscience, and believers' baptism). Other valuable chapters include those on early Baptist missions and Baptist racial tensions. More agenda-driven chapters include those on women in ministry, the Baptist World Alliance, and creedalism.

The chapter devoted to racial inclusion illustrates both the positives and negatives of the volume as a whole. It contains a meaningful survey of the Civil Rights movement—short, to the point, and very readable. Then it moralizes on certain Baptist responses to it: positively on the American Baptist Churches, the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, and the Baptist General Convention of Texas; negatively on the Southern Baptist Convention. It suppresses the view that Americans around the country share the blame for the travesty of racism, and the data that is presented is stretched to exaggerate both the positive and negative conclusions drawn.

Ultimately, the volume suffers from a primary confusion. The word “Baptist” gets thrown around much like the word “evangelical” in other contexts. There is a very important difference between characteristics that distinguish “Baptists” from other Christian traditions, characteristics that distinguish specific Baptist subgroups, and characteristics that individuals who refer to themselves as “Baptist” would like to see apply to all Baptists. For example, believers’ baptism belongs in the first category, views on a specific theological system such as Calvinism in the second, and views on the ordination of women in the third. Unfortunately, the volume does not clarify those distinctions, significantly limiting its effectiveness. It presents itself as an enlightened Baptist ideal, something all Baptists should embrace. Many Baptists will disagree.

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***The Lost History of Christianity: The Thousand-Year Golden Age of the Church in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia—and How It Died.* By Philip Jenkins. New York: HarperOne, 2008. 315 + ix pages. Hardcover, \$26.95.**

In the modern era, it is common to think of Christianity as based in the West, namely, Europe and North America. Philip Jenkins, in his fascinating work *The Lost History of Christianity*, provides a detailed and thorough study of the first millennium of the church rooted in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia. Jenkins’ work, while displaying high academic quality, is still suitable for the lay person. Jenkins not only reveals Christianity’s lost history in the East, but also points out that the center of Christianity has not always been the West, correcting some standard interpretations, claiming that “anyone who knows the Christian story only as it developed in Europe has little inkling of the acute impoverishment the religion suffered when it lost these thriving, long-established communities” (47). Christians have not only lived outside Europe, but survived—even after the advent of Islam—and developed “their own distinct literature, art, liturgy, devotion, and philosophy” (71).

Jenkins introduces the Churches of the East, identifying and exploring significant groups such as the Copts, Surianis, Nestorians, and Jacobites. Failing to pay due attention to such different Christian groups by focusing only on the mainstream Catholics and Orthodox of the West provides a distorted picture of Christian history that misses significant and essential parts of the story. For example, in explaining the conflict with Islam, while many tend to think that the expansion of Islam came mainly through the sword and outright persecution that destroyed the Church of the East, Jenkins points out several other reasons for the spread of that religion during the few centuries after Muhammad’s death. He also explains how the expansion of Islam affected Christianity, as well as how some Christian groups dealt with



it. In addition, the book describes how Christianity had a significant impact on Islam. Without a doubt, Islam retained many things from Christianity, not only in customs and some beliefs, but also in some Koranic stories and traditions, such as the month of Ramadan.

The book clarifies the powerful influence of the spiritual and cultural centers of Eastern Christianity: the monastic Coptic system in Egypt, the Syriac-speaking stronghold in Mesopotamia, and the Nestorian monks in China and India. Jenkins introduces great eastern figures, unique Coptic and Syriac literatures and manuscripts, and Christian customs that have been preserved since the first Christian-Jewish community arose during the early centuries of Christianity. Eastern churches taught some daring ideas about understanding and approaching God and Christians in the East experienced both an age of miracles, which elevated them above the rationalism of Islam, and a passionate commitment to learning, academics, and scholarship. There was still a considerable pressure applied by Islam and the Arabic language upon the Churches of the East during the Middle Ages, although some “Syriac Christian scholars continued to use thoroughly Semitic literary style and approaches to scripture” (87).

Jenkins analyzes, in a very balanced way, the persecution and violence of Muslim governments against Egypt’s Christians, especially during the Mamluks’ rule, pointing out that “the story of religious change [from Christianity to Islam] involves far more active persecution and massacre at the hands of Muslim authorities than would be suggested by modern believers in Islamic tolerance” (99). However, he still affirms that, in the early years of Islam’s expansion, Muslim rulers did not encourage forcing Christians to convert, but, by the thirteenth century, after the Mamluk-Mongol wars, the situation “deteriorated sharply” (125). The book explains the effect of the spread of Islam on some regions in Africa, Armenia, and even China, in addition to how the scene in the Middle East changed dramatically upon the capture of Constantinople by Ottoman Turks in 1453. Many Christian communities barely survived in the following years, and “the largest single factor for Christian decline was organized violence, whether in the form of massacre, expulsion, or forced migration” (141). However, Jenkins believes that faiths are dynamic, and, if they weaken over time, they do not die because of violence, persecution, or some external pressure. Even if they disappear from some regions—no religion vanishes without leaving traces.

Concerning the role the state plays in the elimination of some communities, the book explains how, in some cases, Christians lived as second-class citizens under aggressive Islamic regimes where they were forced to abandon their icons and rituals. Jenkins analyzes what made the Muslim message stronger and more attractive, in addition to the real reasons behind the power of Islam. The book provides some reasons for the survival of the Egyptian Copts, comparing the fate of Christianity in Egypt and in the entire region of North Africa, emphasizing the importance of several factors such as the language of the ordinary people, the established church network, and the geography of the land. Jenkins concludes his masterpiece by reflecting on some lessons that today’s church and community can learn from this history. He affirms that no one can just assume that, “the rise or fall of Christian communities is solely a matter of political and social circumstances. . . . [It is] God who intervenes in history, through many and diverse ways” (257).

*The Lost History of Christianity* is a well-written and well-researched book; it is interesting and readable. Some of Jenkins’ claims need more careful analysis such

as his claim that, “[n]othing in Muslim scriptures makes the faith of Islam any more or less likely to engage in persecution or forcible conversion than any other world religion” (31). Nevertheless, he later claims that “as time went by, religious hostility became acute, so that Muslims increasingly targeted Christian sites and populations as a matter of systematic policy: persecution and massacre became an issue of faith” (119). Knowing that he speaks of history, not theology or Islamic doctrines, Jenkins should not make such a claim without further analysis of some Islamic verses such as Sura 9:29, 8:60, 4:91, and 5:33, 51. However, Jenkins’ study is thought-provoking and eye-opening. He interacts with numerous valuable academic resources, mostly recent ones. He is careful when addressing Islamic violence and tolerance—he defends and critiques in a balanced way. This book is unique in telling the forgotten story of the Churches of the East. Not only would Christians find Jenkins’ study interesting, but also Muslims, especially those from the Middle East and North Africa. This is a fascinating study; it is another masterpiece that Jenkins adds to his work on the history of Christianity.

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***The Dumbest Generation: How the Digital Age Stupefies Young Americans and Jeopardizes Our Future [Or, Don't Trust Anyone Under 30].* By Mark Bauerlein. New York: Penguin, 2008, 264 pages. Softcover \$24.95.**

John R. W. Stott underlines the role of Christian preachers and ministers as bridge-builders. In his interview, “Creating the Bridge” (1998), he states: “Any bridge, if it is to be effective, must be firmly grounded on both sides of the canyon. To build a bridge between the modern world and the biblical world, we must first be careful students of both. We must be engaged in careful biblical exegesis, conscientiously and continually, and yet also involved in careful study of the contemporary context. Only this will allow us to relate one to the other (27).” Christian ministers should be assiduous students of both ancient Scripture and present-day contexts in order to create a solid bridge between two worlds. For effective preaching and Christian education, Christian leaders who are faithful to the Scripture need to study their people, particularly each generation.

How can Christian ministers appreciate the current generation? Mark Bauerlein, a professor of English at Emory University who previously was a director of analytical study at the National Endowment for the Arts, critically surveyed the current, young American generation, specifically Generation Y (designated as Millennial, Generation DotNet, or Generation M). Admittedly, his book on the study, *The Dumbest Generation*, is not primarily written for Christian education; however, it provides an insight to grasp the particular features of this young generation. This work focuses only on intellectual components, not on “behaviors and values” among young Americans that are saturated in the digital age (7). He cites the declining intellectual ability of this current generation as evaluated by their knowledge of “history or civics, economics or science, literature or current events” (9). In this appraisal, Bauerlein employs divergent social scientific statistics such as NAEP, NSSE, Kaiser Family Foundation Program for the Study of Entertainment Media and Health, ATUS, and SPPA (14–15). Furthermore, he argues that this generation has a responsibility to preserve America’s heritage in order to transmit

it to the next generation. Overall, Bauerlein is successful in the completion of his goal.

Bauerlein evaluates the intellectual life of Generation Y in his six units from a pessimistic perspective. In chapter one, "Knowledge Deficits," he surveys this generation's intellectual state. The people of this generation spend more time in education facilities and have better intellectual environments such as public libraries, bookstores, and galleries than previous generations had available. However, their knowledge of history, civics, and science is not sufficient. Bauerlein delineates this ironical situation as "material possessions vs. intellectual possessions, adolescent skills vs. adult skills" (35).

In chapter two, "The New Bibliophobes," Bauerlein argues that Generation Y has a tendency to "a-literacy (knowing how to read, but choosing not to)" (40). This anti-intellectual attitude stems from the peer group pressure that they should cling to social activities. This generation is afraid of separation from its friends, which results from a concentration on studying; therefore, these people may not invest much time in the "leisure reading" that is a considerable ingredient in academic advancement (51). In chapter three, "Screen Time," Bauerlein contrasts the average time Generation Y spends on screen media (58 minutes) with reading (39 minutes) in a day (75). Generation Y is exposed to television, VCR/DVD player, computer, video games, MySpace, YouTube, teen blogs, and Xbox. They are "technophiles" who are comfortable with learning through multimedia (94).

In chapter four, "Online Learning and Non-Learning," Bauerlein argues that Generation Y's academic capabilities are not high enough in their reading and math test results because of their computer online learning (123). Their hasty reading habit is a "F-Shaped Pattern for Reading Web content" (144). In chapter five, "The Betrayal of the Mentors," Bauerlein addresses the important role of mentors for this younger generation. This generation clings to a horizontal relationship with its peers rather than a vertical relationship with "teachers, employers, ministers, aunts, and uncles, and older siblings, along with parents" (136). Bauerlein argues that their mentors should censure them in this wrong direction and allow them to recognize another dimension of social life, such as family and teachers. In chapter six, "No More Culture Warrior," Bauerlein points out the intellectual privilege and responsibility of this young generation for the future of America. However, Bauerlein warns that the future of civic and liberal education is not optimistic in light of the careless academic attitudes of this young generation. This generation has an obligation to preserve the spirit of heritage and tradition in America in order to pass it to the next.

*The Dumbest Generation* is the result of a critical evaluation of Generation Y. Bauerlein elucidates successfully the deficiency of the intellectual capability of this digital Y generation. Particularly, this book has two strengths. First, Bauerlein emphasizes the importance of the intellectual life of the young generation. This young generation will nurture this country's spirit in its adulthood; therefore, it should comprehend and preserve the tradition of society. With the bold assurance of a prophet, Bauerlein attempts to awaken intellectual faithfulness among young generations. Second, this author convinces his readers by employing scientific statistics methods such as NAEP, NSSE, ATUS, and SPPA (14–15). These public data help readers grasp insufficient education channels, such as television, VCR/DVD players, and computers.

Even with these profitable achievements, this book has two improbable areas. First, Bauerlein's judgment has a tendency to lose balance. For example, with a strong

cynical connotation, he labels this young generation “The Dumbest Generation.” Through the criteria of “history or civics, economics or science, literature or current events” (9), the intellectual competence of this young generation may not be high-quality; however, the knowledge of the internet and multimedia and the spirit of creativity are worthwhile for future society. Bauerlein overlooks these areas of strength in the young generation. Second, Bauerlein’s concept of the role of mentors may not be suitable for younger generations. His negative assumption of the young generation leads mentors to correct and rebuke their wrong actions in a forceful manner. To be sure, former generations should address clearly the incorrect behaviors of the young; however, the young generation’s desire is to possess genuine relationships with former generations. In authentic relationships of this kind, the younger generation will listen to the advice of members of former generations with open hearts. Even with these aforementioned weaknesses, this book is still a worthwhile read that will capture this young generation’s mind.

How can lessons from this book apply to Christian ministry for the young generation? From a spiritual perspective, this young generation needs to make more spiritual effort intellectually. They tend to become not illiterate, but “a-literate” about the Scripture (deciding not to read the Bible). However, they search for authentic mentors as their life journey guides. Christian preachers and teachers should constantly study this younger generation and make efforts to connect with them through godly lives based on Scripture. As a result, this young generation will apprehend Scripture as the authentic spiritual resource; let them connect with the Word of God through their lives. It may have a spiritual impact on their families, churches, and societies. If this comes true, their spiritual future will shine.

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