

# SOUTHERN BAPTIST THEOLOGY IN THE LATE TWENTIETH CENTURY



SOUTHWESTERN  
JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY

## *Book Reviews*

### **Biblical Studies**

***Interpreting the Psalms for Teaching and Preaching.* Edited by Herbert W. Bateman IV and D. Brent Sandy. St. Louis: Chalice, 2010. 292 pages. Paperback, \$34.99.**

This work includes contributions from twenty scholars. Among these are Robert B. Chisholm Jr., David Dockery, Walter Kaiser Jr. and Eugene Merrill. Citing the need for the Christian community to correctly interpret, apply, and heed God's Word in order to grow spiritually as it should, the editors have designed this book to promote the informed teaching and preaching of the Psalms.

The book consists of three major parts. Part one introduces the Psalms and offers a foundation for their interpretation and proclamation. Calling them the "greatest book of poetry and prayers ever assembled," contributors D. Brent Sandy and Tiberius Rata describe the *modus operandi* of the Psalms as a reaching inward and then heavenward. Their human authors represent a wide range of life experiences and their audiences are equally diverse in their orientation. The reader will want to give careful attention to the emphasis of the aforementioned contributors concerning the recognition of a three-phased trajectory of meaning for the correct interpretation of the Psalms. This trajectory includes the contextual, canonical and typological elements. Robert Chisholm continues the introductory section by pointing to the Psalms as a "fertile seed-bed" for the preacher. His outlines of Psalms 30 and 12 offer excellent examples of a healthy interpretive process. Timothy J. Ralston completes part one by providing helpful and practical insights/tools with which to tackle the holy task of text-driven exposition of the Psalms.

Part two is the longest section of the book and focuses on the interpretation of selected Psalms within each of the five "books" of the Psalter. Readers will find J. Glen Taylor's treatment of the introductory role of Psalms 1–2 both intriguing and insightful. Taylor suggests (48) that the reference to "law" in Psalm 1 could refer to the five-book structure of the Psalms as a whole if "one considers this structure an echoing of the five-book Torah." Taylor's guidance regarding how one may read the Psalter messianically is both balanced and helpful.

In this part the reader will discover a treasure of expository insights that are rooted in the native soil of the biblical text. David C. Deuel's treatment of Psalm 19 takes the reader from "heaven's transcendence" to "covenant immanence." Herbert Bateman offers further fuel for the homeletical fire as he unpacks key aspects of authorial intent and poetic imagery in Psalm 46. Similar solid and meaty treatments of key Psalms from each "book" (Psalms 63, 73, 89, 110, 130) follow. Among these, this reviewer found especially challenging and edifying the chapters on Psalms 73 and 110.

Walter Kaiser deals with the conundrum of the prosperity of the wicked and the perspective of the believer. Emphasizing the twin themes of "restoring" and "restraining" grace in the Psalm, he offers a text-based outline which reflects the six strophes and rhetorical devices employed in Psalm 73.

In his survey of Psalm 110, Herbert Bateman views this royal Psalm as a source of assurance and confidence in the midst of life's changes. Noting that our vision of this Psalm may be so blurred by the New Testament's application to the ultimate fulfillment in Jesus that we fail to appreciate the psalmist's original social and historical context, he stresses the validity of viewing it as a psalm of assurance since it was written for a person about to transition from a Davidic heir to a Davidic king.

Part three of this book gives specific attention to the application of the Psalms. Julius Sing reflects on the variety of ways in which the Psalms are approached today for application. Using the imagery of a choir, he assumes that the Psalms are best heard "together as a choir." He sees them mostly for "performing" as chorales and rightly asserts that they celebrate dialogue with Yahweh and not merely monologue or self-talk.

An interesting inclusion to this application section is Marion Ann Taylor's focus on application of the Psalms by women of the nineteenth century. Acknowledging that men are the authors of most of the published works on Psalms, she magnifies the role of women as mothers, teachers, and leaders in proclaiming their timeless truths.

David Dockery's chapter on the Psalms and their influence on Christian worship is cogent and practical, offering five key characteristics of the worship portrayed in them (234). A final chapter addresses the Psalms in the hands of preachers and teachers. Authors Brent Sandy and Kenneth Bickel acknowledge the challenge of preaching/teaching the Psalms and admirably assert the necessity of the text dictating the form or shape of the sermon. With illuminating insights from homileticians Jeffery Arthurs and Haddon Robinson, the authors offer concrete steps for gaining the correct understanding of a Psalm (216). This reviewer found particularly scintillating the word-picture associated with an MRI and its connection to Psalm 139.

The book includes a helpful classification of Psalms by categories and titles as well as extensive notes and a bibliography. These alone make the book a welcome addition to the pastor's library.

In an atmosphere such as our present denominational climate (SBC) that, as it should, trumpets the authority and inerrancy of Scripture while at the same time often being deficient in delivering the "whole counsel of God," this book is a needed and welcomed elixir for encouraging robust exposition from the Psalms.

Matthew McKellar  
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***Nahum.* By Duane L. Christensen. The Anchor Yale Bible. Volume 24f. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009. 423 + xxxiv pages. Cloth, \$65.00.**

Christensen's volume on Nahum highlights many aspects of his work that is unconventional among Old Testament scholarship. In particular Christensen has devoted much of the commentary to the description and explanation of his method of analyzing poetic texts, which he calls "logoprosodic analysis." This kind of analysis "involves the counting of three distinct elements: (1) morae . . . (2) SAS units . . . and (3) words" (12). Morae are units for measuring a syllable in which "a syllable with a short vowel is one mora; a syllable with a long vowel is two morae" and SAS units refer to the "groupings of words between two successive disjunctive accent marks" (12).

By counting these distinct elements, Christensen uncovers certain numerical patterns that form the basis for his outline of the literary structure of the book. These numerical patterns are then related to letters of the alphabet through forms of gematria. The process results in uncovering coded messages within the text. For instance, Christensen states that originally “Nahum apparently had  $559 = 299 + 260$  words.” “The number  $559 (= 43 \times 13)$  may have been selected for its symbolic value, because  $43 (= 17 + 26)$  is the sum of the two numbers for the divine name and the number 13 is associated with the Hebrew word *’ehad* (‘one’). Yhwh alone is the true God, and he tolerates no rival” (10).

Christensen goes on to associate these numerical patterns and their alphabetic counterparts with musical composition and matrix mathematics. These patterns serve as metaphors that communicate theological truth through matrix arithmetic. Christensen states that “it is not yet clear how this system of thought eventually disappeared within the mainstream of Jewish and Christian thought” (26). Anticipating that contemporary readers may find these patterns and messages hidden or obscure, Christensen writes, “What appears hidden and obscure to modern eyes was not necessarily perceived that way in antiquity, at least in terms of matrix arithmetic and musical metaphor in relation to concepts developed from the tuning of musical instruments” (25).

On the basis of Christensen’s logoprosodic analysis and its relationship to musical composition and matrix arithmetic, Christensen argues that Nahum is a numerical composition that is the “product of a skilled scribal craftsman” (25). As the product of a scribe, the “work was written from the outset, not merely a work written to preserve the spoken words of the prophet” (157). As a result, the historical prophet Nahum fades into the background. Furthermore, Christensen argues that the scribal activity that produced Nahum is part of the larger Book of the Twelve Prophets. Christensen draws the following conclusion from these observations: “The book of Nahum was ultimately written as a numerical composition in the context of the Babylonian Exile or shortly thereafter. . . . In one sense, then, the redactor of that larger work [Book of the Twelve Prophets] became the ‘author’ of the book of Nahum, as we now have it, and the historical prophet was lost within the canonical process itself” (56).

This methodological backdrop sets the stage for Christensen’s comments on Nahum. Many of his comments are devoted to the structural and text-critical issues of Nahum. However, in each section he does provide a short summary of the intended meaning of the text and its theological import. For instance, his discussion of Nahum 1:1–10 consists of two sections: 1) fifty pages devoted to technical matters of structure (and the coded messages revealed by the structure), text-criticism, semantics, accentuation, historical and literary background, and other matters and 2) five pages summarizing the theological import of the passage. The numbers do not tell the entire story, but it should be clear that much of the commentary is devoted to technical matters of structure and discerning the encoded messages, if any, that the structure reveals.

On the one hand, Christensen’s commentary is an important resource for information regarding the structural and textual issues of Nahum. He interacts competently with the different voices in the history of research and provides a helpful resource with 80 pages of bibliography. He consistently applies his methodology to the book. On the other hand, because of the emphasis on poetic structure and his unconventional interpretations of it, many readers will find much of his work

inaccessible. I fear that those who come to the commentary in order to find clear explanations of a complex biblical book will find a mysterious, though meticulous, analysis that will itself feel hidden and obscure.

Joshua E. Williams  
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***The Historical Jesus of the Gospels.* By Craig S. Keener. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009. 831 + xxxviii pages. Hardback, \$60.00.**

Craig Keener, professor of New Testament at Palmer Theological Seminary, has written an excellent and helpful addition to what has become a field crowded with numerous writings in the last two decades: historical Jesus research. Interestingly, the book prologue is unusually frank. Keener admits he wrote this volume to impact this field because many scholars have otherwise ignored what he has written on this subject in his commentaries (xxviii–xxix). Keener’s commentaries on John (two volumes) and Matthew are great, but the field of historical Jesus research is so crowded with books that scholars tend to ignore what is written in commentaries.

Keener’s work has three sections. In the first section he gives a brief overview of historical Jesus research in order to show where his view fits (46), which is a refined and more conservative view of E.P. Sanders, under whom Keener studied. He views Jesus as an eschatological prophet (35, 41, 43–46). As do most New Testament scholars today (but not this reviewer), Keener believes in the Two Source Theory of Gospel origins, which includes Markan priority and the existence and use of the Q document (61, 71, 74, 127, 131–33, 236, 281).

It is the second section of the book that offers the best contribution to historical Jesus research. Here Keener gives valuable insight of Gospel genre in comparison to genre in Greco-Roman literature—primarily in biography and historiography. Four strengths are evident. First, although he makes distinctions between modern and ancient biographies as well as historiographies, he also demonstrates helpful similarities (81–84, 94–96, 109–10). Second, citing numerous historical examples, Keener proves that ancient biographers and historiographers were much more concerned with writing accurate historical details than modern Bible critics give them credit (79–81, 96–98, 123). Third, he proves that ancient historiographers valued eye-witness information as the most valuable source and understood that recent sources (such as what the canonical Gospel writers had—mere decades after the events), were much more reliable than later sources (102–05). This research is invaluable for answering Bible critics who claim that the Gospel writers disregarded actual historical events and simply created events for unprovenanced sayings of Jesus. Keener continually contends that the ancient biographer and historiographer rarely invented fictitious events because that practice brought scorn from both peers and patrons (97, 100–02). Fourth, Keener notes the value of and the ancient expectation that an historian would write from a certain perspective (it is impossible not to have any biases), but the writers still sought to be objective in citing historical events (118).

The third section of the book is the application section: going through the Gospels to test what is historically accurate, but this is mostly a thematic treatment. Although very good, it is simply too short. Keener should have created this section as a separate volume, similarly to what Darrell Bock did in his excellent informal trilogy that culminated with *Jesus according to Scripture*.

Why should a conservative Christian be interested in historical Jesus research? First, it is important for conservative Christian scholars to participate in this scholarly debate about how accurate the four canonical Gospels are in depicting the true, historical Jesus. Opinions vary from the Gospels being totally accurate (the most conservative view) to mostly inaccurate (the most liberal view), with a range of views in between. Second, it is important for non scholarly conservative Christians to be familiar with this scholarly conversation because one can glean much useful apologetic material to use when sharing with a skeptic about the Bible.

Although easy to understand, Keener's book adds to what can be a very technical and sometimes tedious field, so this book is most valuable to the scholar or student in the field of historical Jesus Research. So, the pastor, teacher, or student looking for insightful information from the Gospels would be better served by using Keener's commentaries on Matthew or John rather than this book.

Since the subject matter is so specialized, the decision to use endnotes (209 pages worth) rather than footnotes for this volume is quite puzzling. Normally publishers use footnotes for scholarly, technical works like this book because readers of these books want to read the numerous footnotes. Correspondingly, publishers use endnotes when a book has a popular audience because non-technical readers will be put off by footnotes. So, the scholarly reader must flip back and forth in this book several times every page or simply forego reading footnotes along with the text—neither one a good choice.

The conclusion is surprisingly short (barely half of a page) for a book this size, but the last sentence sums up well the tenor and the direction of the book: "Although scholars may differ with this or that aspect of the portrayal, I believe on the whole there is much that we can know about Jesus historically, and that the first-century Gospels preserved by the church remain by far the best source for this information" (349).

James R. Wicker

Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***Jesus, the Final Days: What Really Happened.* By Craig A. Evans and N.T. Wright. Edited by Troy A. Miller. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009. 116 + xii pages. Paperback, \$15.00.**

This excellent little volume consists of three chapters which were originally lectures that Craig Evans and N.T. Wright presented at the Symposium for Church and Academy lecture series at Crichton College in Memphis, Tennessee (vii). They were the first two lecturers in an annual lecture series devoted to help close the wide gap between the academy and the church (viii).

To keep this book on a popular level the chapters are modified versions of the lectures, and there are body notes rather than footnotes. However, neither scholar watered down the subject, and there are plenty of helpful citations and quotations from Scripture as well as rabbinical writings, Dead Sea Scrolls, and ancient historians, such as Josephus (e.g., xi–xii, 3–4, 12, 17, 26–27, 31, 48–52). Each scholar's lectures cover areas about which he has published (in much greater detail than in this book) and is a recognized expert: Evans on Jesus' death and burial and Wright on Jesus' resurrection. Both write from the perspective that these were real events and not merely theological ideas—refreshing claims in light of today's rampant skepti-

cism in Historical Jesus research (2–5, 72, 104).

Since the book is easily readable in one sitting, one might assume it is helpful only to the novice; however, this is not the case. Even the expert can find something new, such as Evan's noting that from examination of the bones of executed criminals in ancient Rome, in over half of the beheadings it took two or three stokes of the axe to sever the head (56)! This fact helps lend credence to Evan's assertion that it was common practice to bury executed criminals during peacetime (but not during wartime) in Rome, thus countering the critics' claim that no one would have buried Jesus' body (58–59, 62).

Both writers give helpful answers to common criticisms of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus: (1) the seemingly contradictory evidence of Jesus' hearings and trials (14–16), Pilate's Passover pardon (20–22), Pilate's wavering on what to do with Jesus (24), the alleged scandal of burying Jesus since He was crucified (62), the claim that the disciples went to the wrong tomb (64–65), the assertion Jesus did not die (3–5, 65), the claim it was merely a vision or metaphor rather than a physical resurrection of Jesus (101–03), the ludicrous belief that Jesus' family tomb and his ossuary have been found (65–68), and the seemingly contradictory accounts of the empty tomb and Jesus' resurrection appearances (79–81).

Highlights of Evan's chapters are his descriptions of the necessity of burial in the ancient Mediterranean world (46–53) and of archeological evidence of burial in the Roman era (53–59). Highlights of Wright's chapter are his seven ways the early Christian belief differed from the Jewish belief in resurrection (84–95) and four strange features of the canonical Gospel accounts that attest to their earliness and authenticity (95–100). It is refreshing that both Evans and Wright do not sideline the Gospel of John but use that Gospel on par with the Synoptic Gospels, unlike many scholars today (i.e., 15–17, 45–46, 83–84).

Even though the purpose of this book was to present the three lectures, it would have been interesting to have a short chapter where each lecturer gives a response on the lecture of the other. Also, although the body notes are helpful and especially ample in Evan's chapters, there are some references that did not have citations (39). Other criticisms are minor, such as wondering why Evans mentions reasons they offered Jesus wine during the crucifixion but does not mention that Jesus said, "I thirst" (John 19:28).

This book is an excellent volume, especially for people who are not familiar with scholarly writings on these subjects. It certainly is commendable for meeting its purpose of bridging the gap between the church and the academy.

James R. Wicker  
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***The New Testament in Antiquity: A Survey of the New Testament within its Cultural Contexts.* By Gary M. Burge, Lynn H. Cohick, and Gene L. Green. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009. 479 pages. Hardcover, \$49.99.**

*The New Testament in Antiquity: A Survey of the New Testament within its Cultural Contexts* is a beautiful volume and a student favorite taking you on a visual journey through the world of the New Testament. The twenty seven-chapter work covers the historical setting of the New Testament, the world of Jesus and world of Paul, each book of the New Testament (some books are grouped together), and the

canon and text of the New Testament. In addition to written material, each chapter contains numerous color images, maps, charts, and sidebars which bring the world of the New Testament to life like no other book on the market today. The images, which are one of the strongest features of the volume, include archaeological sites, landscapes, statues, coins, pottery, mosaics, inscriptions, and manuscripts, to name only a few.

The authors give four goals for the work: academic rigor and thoroughness, accessibility, a focus on the ancient context of the New Testament, and a confessional commitment to the evangelical tradition. In my estimation, they have accomplished the final three while only partially meeting the first. Although the work approaches 500 pages, each chapter is brief and full of images, providing only a sketch of some of the detailed information that one would expect in a New Testament survey or introduction. By eliminating the images, charts, and sidebars (which would certainly be a mistake), the volume would decrease by approximately 50%. As an example of the brevity, the discussion of the authorship of Ephesians spans a page and a half and that of 2 Peter half a page. While it may be appropriate to eliminate some of these items altogether in order to make a specific contribution, by discussing many of these items briefly, the goal of thoroughness has not been met. At the same time, the brevity of each chapter provides students a valuable and scenic overview of the landscape of New Testament studies. At the graduate level, the book is best used in tandem with other volumes that more thoroughly address introductory issues. At the undergraduate level, the volume could stand on its own depending upon the focus of the course.

In its first edition, the book is tainted slightly by a few too many editorial mistakes. While this may seem pedantic, such mistakes are perhaps more troublesome for a volume of this sort. As an example, one of the first images is mistakenly identified as papyrus manuscript 52. If an image is not what it is meant to be, it may do more harm than good. Furthermore, if there is one error of this sort, the possibility of others seems likely. Nonetheless, one can certainly forgive the editors inasmuch as the book contains hundreds of images of many different sorts, and only experts in each field could verify the legitimacy of each.

My strongest criticism of the work pertains to the lack of thorough documentation. Each chapter contains only a handful of endnotes, often leaving the reader with no clear place to go to substantiate the authors' claims. This too impacts the authors' goals of academic rigor and thoroughness.

These reservations notwithstanding, *The New Testament in Antiquity* makes a solid contribution to the field and will likely find its way into many classrooms in the coming years.

David Hutchison  
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***Paul, His Letters, and Acts.* By Thomas E. Phillips. Library of Pauline Studies. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2009. 243 pages. Softcover, \$24.95.**

In 1845 F.C. Baur published his two-volume work, *Paulus, der Apostel Jesu Christi*, in which he argued that the genuine Pauline letters present a different picture of the apostle than does the Book of Acts. Baur's arguments aside, his separation of the letters from Acts still marks New Testament studies (32–33). Phillips' book



purports to present the intersecting data from these two sources and how scholars relate them (xi). The footnotes refer to the author's views and other works, but the book carefully presents the biblical data and the scholarly discourse about them.

The first chapter summarizes two widely divergent reconstructions of the historical Paul (Chilton 2004, Crossan and Reed 2004) to illustrate that one's approach to the data of Acts is pivotal for reconstructing Paul's life (27). The second chapter briefly recounts the contributions of Baur, John Knox, and Philipp Vielhauer, all three of whom argued for irreconcilable differences between the Acts data set and the Pauline data (35–42). For his part, Phillips acknowledges that the biblical texts were not intended to answer modern critical questions, that they have significant areas of silence, and that the "inconsistency and diversity" within themselves and between each other allow many possible explanations (42–47). For each intersecting point, he proposes to focus on the historical data of the Pauline letters first before culling the larger data set from Acts, comparing them after they have been treated separately (47–49).

The last four chapters deal successively with the chronology of Paul's life, his personal background, those with whom he interacted at the Jerusalem Conference, and other associates who were absent from the Jerusalem Conference. Along the way, Phillips often points out ways that interpreters unwittingly merge the two data sets that they presume to keep separate. For instance, on Pauline chronology: "Even approaches that make no direct appeal to Acts often rely upon existing scholarly consensus for the dates and order of Paul's letters," which themselves often make use of Acts' data (51). The author also rates just how reconcilable the two data sets are on different issues. Many points of comparison appear not too difficult to reconcile. The most disparate data sets between Acts and Paul's letters are those that relate to: the number and purposes of Paul's visits to Jerusalem (72–82), the trumped-up social status of Paul in Acts (122–24), Paul's relation to and unity with Peter and James (146–47, 150–56), and Timothy's relative insignificance in Acts in comparison to the letters (184–87).

The conclusion returns to the issue of the Jerusalem Conference. Whether one correlates Acts 15 with Galatians 2:1–10 is the pivotal issue for understanding how Paul's letters and Acts relate to one another (191). If Paul's Jerusalem visit in Acts 11–12 correlates to Galatians 2:1–10, then Galatians would display a temporary rift between Paul and Peter. Subsequently, the Jerusalem Conference ameliorated Paul's relation to Jewish Christianity en masse. In sum, the Paul of history would "lean" toward the picture of him in Acts (192). However, if Acts 15 correlates to Galatians 2:1–10, then "Galatians comes to be regarded as a reflection of the central and abiding core of Paul's theological convictions" (193). This critical consensus implies that Paul's influence waned after his conflict with Peter (194). The collection for Jerusalem "had only meager hopes for success." When Paul claimed he had no room left to preach in the East (Rom 15:23), his rejection by many churches was the issue, not his unbounded success in evangelizing the Mediterranean coastlands (195). Paul died a failure, but one of his admirers saw the need to salvage his legacy. "Critical scholars are increasingly coming to argue that one of the major purposes of Acts was the rehabilitation of Paul for its late first- or early second-century readers." Phillips agrees (197).

Until the conclusion, the author's views only minimally color his presentation and comparison of the two data sets. The Jerusalem Conference rightly takes center stage in discussing whether the two data sets can be reconciled. One might wish

that Phillips had mentioned alternatives to the critical consensus besides the early date for Galatians, which is respectfully treated in chapter three. For example, some argue that Galatians 1–2 do not claim to recount all of Paul’s visits to Jerusalem. The language there allows for other visits to be omitted that do not pertain to the argument (cf. Silva’s *Interpreting Galatians*, 2nd ed., 129–39 for the brief argument). In this scenario, Paul’s conflict with Peter might have corrected real hypocrisy, clarifying how Gentiles would be included among God’s people.

John Mark Pittsworth  
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***The Pauline Canon*. Edited by Stanley E. Porter. Leiden: Brill, 2004. Reprint, Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009. 254 pages. Paperback, \$32.95.**

*The Pauline Canon* is a reprinted volume, which consists of eight essays on Paul and the early church’s use of his letters. Historically and also in biblical studies, the “canon” frequently refers to the 66 books of the Bible—39 of the Old Testament, and 27 in the New. These essays discuss the more specific Pauline corpus of writing as well the content of theology within this corpus. Among the writers of these articles, the idea of a “Pauline canon” falls short of a consensus, but setting aside the lack of a unified view, these articles explore the context, acceptance, and circulation of Paul’s letter writing.

James W. Aageson’s “The Pastoral Epistles, Apostolic Authority, and the Development of the Pauline Scriptures” examines the importance of Pauline authority in light of the theology that is embedded in the narrative world and the need to adhere to doctrine. The work of God is the larger story, which involves the community espousing the canon. Aageson concludes that the pastoral letters offer sound teaching of Paul to be used in the larger narrative framework of the church. Robert W. Wall looks at the function of the Pastoral Epistles and gives an overview of the formation of the canon in light of them. Wall works off of the premise that the Pastoral Epistles are not canonical but shed light on the canonical process. What is evident from them is the ecclesiastical discipline for forming the moral character of the church—a discipleship process in the community.

M-É. Boismard suggests that the letter to the Laodiceans is embedded in Colossians, by pointing to the apparent doublets, the repeated patterns, in the letter. By separating the doublets by thematic categories, Boismard attempts to reconstruct the Laodicean letter. Detlev Dormeyer explores the substitutionary presence of the author in letters—a feature that appears in Graeco-Roman letter writing and 1 Corinthians 5:3: “though absent in the body, I am present in spirit.” Cicero, Pseudo-Demetrius, and Aristotle are some of the authors mentioned.

Stanley Porter’s essay on the compilation of the Pauline canon serves as the crux of this collection. Porter presents five competing theories: 1) the gradual collection theory (Zahn-Harnack), 2) lapsed interest theory (Goodspeed-Knox), 3) anti-gnostic theory (Schmitals), 4) personal involvement theory (Moule: Luke, Guthrie: Timothy), and 5) Paul as collector and distributor (Trobisch). Mark Harding takes the given categories of disputed, undisputed, and spurious letters, and recounts the discussions both in history and present times. Harding is convinced that the early church was accepting of pseudepigraphal works for the sake of establishing apostolic authority and defending its faith.

J.C. O'Neill argues: "Paul wrote some of all, but not all of any epistles that bear his name; even Philemon was glossed" (167). O'Neill points to Paul's frequent use of a secretary (*amanuensis*) and E.E. Ellis' well-documented work on pre-formed traditions and documented copies of Paul's letter.

William O. Walker Jr., explores the plausibility of interpolations in Paul's letters. Walker defines an interpolation as "foreign material inserted deliberately and directly into the text of a document" (195–96). Walker presses his case *a priori* from the common presence of interpolation in ancient literature, as well as the suspicion of copyist errors and bundled collections of Paul's letters. Walker goes on to say that once editorial revisions began, there was no need to keep older copies.

The purpose of these essays is obviously not to put forward a unifying view or doctrine of Paul's canon of letters. The discussions often leave open-ended conclusions with no definitive answers to the questions posed, but rather there are more speculations, which are unsettling as to the issue of Pauline authorship and authority. These discussions are predisposed and inclined to questioning the integrity of the letters, suggesting that there is a constant editing and reworking of the text.

Although those interested in the academic forum may find these discussions of some interest, they will often discover these conclusions appearing rather hasty or even inconclusive. Readers hoping for breakthroughs in Pauline canon research may find the lack of consensus bitterly disappointing. Take for instance Porter's conclusion in his central paper: "This paper may appear to be simply a repetition of previously proposed views, with critical responses that leave each position seriously, if not fatally wounded. If such is the case, then that in itself is a positive result of sorts—there is no entirely satisfactory theory as to the origins of the Pauline letter collection" (121).

This conclusion may very well be fitting for the entire volume. The discussions will no doubt continue. The fruit of these discussions, however, may be too soon to tell.

Donald Kim  
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historiographical Approach.* By Michael R. Licona. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2010. 718 pages. Paperback, \$40.00.**

Michael Licona, External Research Collaborator at North-West University in South Africa, has caused quite a controversy with this mammoth monograph on Jesus' resurrection. Interestingly, the area of contention is a somewhat minor point of the book, and the people upset are some fellow theological conservatives rather than the nonbelievers Licona intends to impact with the book.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Writing this book led to Licona's departure from being Research Professor at the North American Mission Board on 31 December 2011, according to Ross. Bobby Ross, Jr., "A Grave Debate: Apologist's Interpretation of Matthew 27 Creates Theological War of Words," *Christianity Today* (November, 2011): 14. See also, Erin Roach, "Apologist's Views Brings Back Inerrancy Debate," Baptist Press, 9 November 2011, <http://www.bpnews.net/bpnews.asp?id=36522> (Accessed 9 January 2012). Well-known apologist Norman Geisler has posted three open letters on the Internet criticizing Licona's view as contrary to biblical inerrancy and calling for Licona to recant. The following citations give the letters and Licona's response in chronological order. Norman Geisler, "An Open Letter to Mike Licona on his View

### Much to Commend

Much of this book is excellent, so this review will begin by looking at the best parts. Although Jesus' resurrection continues to be the topic of numerous books today, Licona's book is unique in its historiographical approach—employing much interaction with secular historians as well as critics of Christianity. He wrote this book from the perspective of a philosopher of history (167), and it is an updated version of his doctoral dissertation at the University of Pretoria (22). Licona is correct that most biblical scholars are not trained historians. He carefully and effectively explains what a proper philosophy of history and historical method entail (29–70), and he ably demonstrates the weaknesses of postmodernist history (79–89).

There is much to commend in this book. First, and most important, Licona posits solid arguments for believing in the biblical account of Jesus' passion and resurrection predictions (300), his crucifixion (302–12), and his bodily resurrection—which is the apex of the book's presentation (582–610). Licona uses five clearly-delineated criteria (explanatory scope, explanatory power, plausibility, less *ad hoc*, and illumination, 600–01, see 606) to skillfully demonstrate how Jesus' physical, bodily resurrection is superior to five naturalistic hypotheses (championed by Vermes, Goulder, Lüdemann, Crossan, and Craffert), such as Michael Goulder's erroneous view that Jesus' followers experienced hallucinations and communal delusions (479–95).

Second, Licona has extensively researched his topic, and the book has copious footnotes as a result. Third, after explaining how one's horizons (core beliefs) can possibly influence one's research and conclusions (38–40, 127), Licona gives a refreshingly honest testimony and self disclosure about his conservative evangelical beliefs (130–32). Fourth, since he wrote from the perspective of a philosopher of history (167, 612) and employed a purposeful personal detachment from the subject (467) as well as a methodological neutrality in his investigation (99, 207), his research can have more impact on a nonbeliever than a typically-biased apologetic writing. However, one might find this unbiased evaluation of historical sources, including New Testament accounts, somewhat disconcerting (199–276)! For instance, he assigns the following rankings for biblical sources as to the "likelihood they provide independent testimony to apostolic teaching" (201): 'possible-plus' for Romans 1:3b–4a, 'possible' for Luke 24:34, and 'highly probable' for 1 Corinthians 15:3–8 (235). Fifth, the book is well written, and Licona uses excellent illustrations to aid one's understanding (e.g., 41, 72–73, 83, 97–98, 411). Thus, he rightly claims that some exegetes stretch biblical words in a 'torture chamber' in order to reach their mangled conclusions (109).

of the Resurrected Saints in Matthew 27:52–53," [http://www.normangeisler.net/public\\_html/openletterML.html](http://www.normangeisler.net/public_html/openletterML.html) (Accessed 9 January 2012); Norman Geisler, "A Second Open Letter to Mike Licona on the Resurrection of the Saints of Matthew 27," August 21, 2011, [http://www.normangeisler.net/public\\_html/openletterMLII.html](http://www.normangeisler.net/public_html/openletterMLII.html) (Accessed 9 January 2012). Licona's response is posted on Facebook: Michael Licona, "An Open Response to Norman Geisler," 31 August 2011, Facebook, <http://www.facebook.com/notes/michael-licona/an-open-response-to-norman-geisler/157410607676207>, (Accessed 9 January 2012). Geisler's third open letter to Licona is a response to Licona's August 31 open letter: Norman Geisler, "A Response to Mike Licona's Open Letter," Sept. 8, 2011, [http://www.normangeisler.net/public\\_html/responseMLIII.html](http://www.normangeisler.net/public_html/responseMLIII.html) (Accessed 9 January 2012).

### The Problematic Parts

It is disappointing when a conservative evangelical theologian posits arguments that undermine his or her position, and here lies the weaknesses of this book. The flash point is Licona's belief that the account of the saints who arose from the dead and went to Jerusalem to proclaim Jesus' resurrection was just an apocalyptic embellishment by Matthew rather than historical fact (Matt 27:52–53). The problem with such a belief is that if one interprets *any* such historical details in Scripture as embellishments, then drawing the line between historical fact and literary embellishment becomes subjective and arbitrary, thus playing into the very arguments of the most liberal Bible critics.

Licona has recently somewhat softened his view about the resurrected saints in Matthew. He now says he is just as inclined to believe this event is historical as he is to believe it is “an apocalyptic symbol”.<sup>2</sup> However, to return halfway between an error and truth is still to remain in error.

Yet, this claim of Matthean exaggeration is not the only example of Licona discounting the historicity of details in the New Testament. Here are some examples of similarly problematic claims: (1) Matthew's cataclysmic events and two angels are legendary (185–86), (2) many details of the canonical Gospel crucifixion and resurrection accounts may be fiction (309), (3) “three days” means just “a short period of time” rather than at least a portion of “three days” (325–28), (4) Gospel narratives had other possible embellishments because the Gospel genre allowed such liberties (338, 593–97), (5) Luke may have invented narratives in Acts for details he found in Paul's letters (387), and (6) Paul's resurrection reports are the only verifiable written eyewitness reports in the New Testament (437)—but what about Matthew's and John's Gospels since their writers were apostles? In each of these examples, Licona falls into the same trap that naturalistic scholars find themselves—explaining away biblical details as myth or embellishment rather than historical realities. Although he explains why one should not make the mistake of claiming Jesus' bodily resurrection is embellishment (553), his jettisoning of some attendant details of Jesus' resurrection story is at odds with the very hypothesis he proves.

### The Wider Issue of Inerrancy

One might rightly wonder why Licona's book is so controversial when the majority of it is excellent. Why not focus criticism solely on the numerous books about Jesus' resurrection that have extremely liberal views on the Gospels (as Licona does in chapter five)? The reason is that Licona's book mostly fits so well within the confines of conservative evangelical beliefs, including biblical inerrancy, yet it has some parts that definitely do not. Thus, some scholars who hold these beliefs are rightly compelled to point out the differences. Although addressing a different subject, Craig Keener gives a pertinent explanation: social conflict theory demonstrates that often when two parties agree on most issues they generate much friction when discussing their differences.<sup>3</sup>

Licona is a member of the Evangelical Theological Society (ETS), as is this reviewer. ETS members must annually affirm a belief statement that includes the inerrancy of the Bible in its autographs as defined by the 1978 Chicago Statement

<sup>2</sup>Licona, “An Open Response.”

<sup>3</sup>Craig S. Keener, *The Historical Jesus of the Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 230.

on Biblical Inerrancy (CSBI);<sup>4</sup> however, this reviewer does not believe Licona's problematic beliefs mentioned above are compatible with the CSBI. In 1983 members of ETS voted to ask Robert Gundry to resign, but in 2003 the motions to ask John Sanders and Clark Pinnock to resign failed to garner the needed votes. These three votes were all about aberrant views on biblical inspiration. Although Licona's views are nowhere near the erroneous nature or number of Gundry's, Sanders's, or Pinnock's views, there is a connection. The failed votes about Sanders and Pinnock likely indicate there are some evangelical scholars in ETS with unorthodox views on biblical inerrancy, and Licona's book is proof of that trend. There are some conservative evangelical scholars who claim to be of like mind but instead espouse some views about the Bible that do not fit within the confines of the CSBI. Geisler addresses this troubling erosion of the belief in biblical inerrancy and the need for vigilance against this erosion in his new book *Defending Inerrancy*.<sup>5</sup>

Some scholars respond that there is no problem with Licona's book because these are nitpicking issues or that the CSBI needs further revision or nuancing.<sup>6</sup> However, this reviewer believes the CSBI remains a sufficient explanation of biblical inerrancy, and the doctrine of biblical inerrancy is important enough to continually defend and clearly define for each generation. Thus, Licona's book presents a challenge and calls for a response.

### Conclusion

*The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historiographical Approach* is comprehensive in scope and commendable in many respects. Conservative evangelical Christians will agree with the majority of it, and for the most part Licona effectively argues for the truthfulness of Jesus' physical, bodily resurrection. Nonbelievers will find much well-reasoned food for thought in this book. Scholars, ministers, and students can all benefit from this well-researched book. However, it is unfortunate that some of Licona's biblical interpretations run counter to his central claim.

James R. Wicker  
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters: The Word, the Christ, the Son of God.* By Andreas J. Köstenberger. *Biblical Theology of the New Testament.* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009. 652 pages. Hardcover, \$39.99.**

Andreas Köstenberger is a well-known evangelical scholar who has published a significant body of work on the Gospel of John. Among other significant roles, he serves as Professor of New Testament and Biblical Theology at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. Köstenberger is the editor of a new series called *Biblical Theology of the New Testament*. Since *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters* is the first volume in the series, Köstenberger is able to describe the distinctive approach of the

<sup>4</sup>"Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy," Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals, Inc., [http://www.alliancenet.org/partner/Article\\_Display\\_Page/0,,PTID307086\\_CHID750054\\_CIID2094584,00.html](http://www.alliancenet.org/partner/Article_Display_Page/0,,PTID307086_CHID750054_CIID2094584,00.html) (Accessed 9 January 2012); "ETS Constitution," Evangelical Theological Society, <http://www.etsjets.org/about/constitution> (Accessed 17 January 2012).

<sup>5</sup>Norman L. Geisler and William C. Roach, *Defending Inerrancy: Affirming the Accuracy of Scripture for a New Generation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012).

<sup>6</sup>Ross, "A Grave Debate," 14.

series and provide the first example of the fruitfulness of the approach.

Having acknowledged that biblical theology is a field that stands in need of definition (26), Köstenberger sees a need for biblical theology that rests upon a solid foundation (45). Biblical theology's foundation should be both historical and literary. Consideration of historical elements, like "authorship and historical setting," is important if biblical theology is to maintain a close connection to history (45). Similarly, sensitivity to literary concerns, like genre and pivotal points of the narrative/discourse, connects biblical theology to a "close reading" of the biblical text (26). Attention to literary elements of the text is especially important, because they point to the "programmatically sections" where the author highlights his central theological concerns (47–50). As a result, Köstenberger structures his book so as to build the foundation first and then proceed to his treatment of theological themes. He proceeds from historical foundation to literary foundation in chapters 1–3. Then, chapters 4–5 provide a useful "literary-theological" overview of the Gospel of John and the Epistles of John. These chapters anticipate much of what comes later.

Chapters 6–15 treat central themes of John's Gospel and Epistles. The ordering of the chapters brings out a correspondence between John's themes and the "programmatically sections" of his narrative (48–50). Since Jesus as Messiah and Jesus' signs connect to John's purpose statement (John 20:30–31), they are considered first (chapter 7). Next comes themes associated with the beginning of John (1:1–18), like new creation and John's doctrine of God (chapters 8–9). In third place are the themes associated with the "preamble to part two" of John's Gospel (13:1–3; see pp. 49–50), including ethics and the cross (chapters 13–14). Furthermore, within each chapter, Köstenberger generally follows the development of each theological theme through the major sections of John's narrative so that one can see how John develops the theme.

The strength of Köstenberger's plan of organization is clear enough. It shows how John's theological points are connected to the structure and progress of the narrative. The plan also comes with a couple of liabilities that Köstenberger tries to mitigate. First, Köstenberger's organization creates the impression of a closer focus upon the Gospel of John and neglect of his epistles. Second, some of John's themes are not easy to develop by following the narrative of John's Gospel. Sometimes, John repeats earlier points or provides the central elements of a theme in such a way that it helps to compare the relevant verses side by side, even if they occur several chapters apart. As a result, Köstenberger's approach works best when he helps the reader to follow a theme through the narrative by drawing special attention to a theme's high points or by connecting later aspects of a theme to earlier ones. His treatment of the fulfillment of the Passover is a good example (414–20). In some cases, a stronger summary section might help to draw together John's points related to a particular theme. For example, the section on the Spirit would probably benefit from a stronger summary to help the reader to incorporate the central emphases of John's theology.

Given the vast scope of the book, Köstenberger covers a lot of ground and does so with clarity and a strategic use of charts. The contents often line up with the emphases of Köstenberger's own work on the Gospel of John, like his concern for historical issues and John's use of the Old Testament (chapters 1, 6). One area in which the book seems to be a bit light is in its treatment of John's teaching regarding the cross. Some of the themes related to the cross are already treated by the time one gets to the cross in chapter 14. Chapter 14 does not do justice to the theme in its own right and could do a better job of drawing together elements from previous

chapters. Yet this is really a small criticism of a book that handles so many themes and does so admirably.

As Köstenberger notes early on, the theology of John's writings has been generally neglected in New Testament scholarship, especially in comparison to Pauline theology (28). Köstenberger here makes a very significant contribution to Johannine theology. His work is carefully crafted and readable. Someone who wishes to preach or teach on the Gospel of John (or his epistles) would benefit from reading Köstenberger's literary-theological overview (chapters 10, 11). Then, one could use the chapters on theological themes to bring out John's theological emphases. Köstenberger's work is an insightful and trustworthy guide for anyone who wants to engage more seriously with the theology of John's writings.

Paul M. Hoskins

Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

### Theological Studies

***God Incarnate: Explorations in Christology.* By Oliver D. Crisp. New York: T&T Clark, 2009. 192 pages. Softcover, 34.95.**

Oliver Crisp's *God Incarnate: Explorations in Christology* examines a set of historic and contemporary doctrinal problems regarding the person of Christ, specifically those problems related to the incarnation. As "an exercise in analytic theology," Crisp borrows certain technical resources and the general rigor of contemporary analytic philosophy in order to construct a logically coherent apology for orthodox Christology in light of contemporary advancements in philosophy and science, an effort he refers to as "retrieving doctrine" (1–3). As in his other works on Christology, Crisp's *God Incarnate* sets out to "interrogate, correct, and amend contemporary theological myopia" (15).

Following "a traditional dogmatic ordering of Christological topics," Crisp's work falls into eight chapters (4). In brief, they are: "Christological Method"; "The Election of Jesus Christ"; "The Pre-Existence of Christ"; "The 'Fittingness' of the Virgin Birth"; "Christ and the Embryo"; "Was Christ Sinless or Impeccable?"; "Materialist Christology"; and "Multiple Incarnations." That Crisp's methodology and objective might be made clear I consider the first two chapters in some detail.

First, consider the logical priority of the Christological method and the sources of authority that inform it found in chapter one. Here, Crisp introduces the reader to a complex of questions regarding the proper place of Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience for theological construction. Crisp appeals to a four-fold hierarchical authority structure (17). Beginning with Scripture, what he refers to as the "final arbiter of matters theological," he then appeals in descending order of authoritative value to the (first seven) ecumenical statements of the Christian church (e.g. the Chalcedonian Creed of 451), Confessions and conciliar statements (e.g. the Westminster Confession of 1646 or the Belgic Confession of 1561), and lastly, to *Theologoumena* or theological opinions expressed by theologians of the church (e.g. Augustine, Jonathan Edwards, or Karl Barth). Crisp then proceeds to a helpful section titled, "Christology from above and below" and another called "high and low Christology." These categorical distinctions describe, without delimiting, a number of representatively active approaches to contemporary Christology. It is clear from chapter one that Crisp sets out these certain, clear structures for the theological task



in a manner broad enough to invite those of various traditions to consider a series of legitimate and urgent problems that face contemporary Christianity. This is by far the most pedagogical chapter of the work. Though not perhaps as scrutinizing and rigorous as the others, this chapter is certainly the most accessible. It is carefully written and highly instructive and perhaps ought to be well read twice before proceeding with the rest of the work.

Next, consider the controversy that surrounds the Reformed doctrine of the election of Jesus Christ in chapter two. This is the idea that “election depends in some important and substantive sense on Christ’s merit” (38). Chapter two contains four parts. In part one, Crisp offers a historical survey (one that certainly overcomes criticisms to the analytic program as being ahistorical) of the doctrine of election in Reformed theology with particular emphasis on the dogmatic theological developments of the post-Reformation. And carefully working through a number of confessional statements and *theologoumena*, he illumines what he labels, “the conservative Reformed position” (36). That is, the position that Christ’s (atoning) work is the mechanism by which the divine decree to elect obtains (37). In the course of his exposition, he points out that not all in the Reformed tradition speak with the one voice on the matter. Some, he observes, like those of the French, “Amyraldian” wing of the Reformed tradition, make certain (and often very subtle) distinctions at this point, claiming inverse to the conservative position that Christ’s work is the “causal factor” by which election obtains (36). In part two, Crisp lays out a series of instructive propositions from the work of the seventeenth century Swiss theologian, Francis Turretin in favor of the conservative Reformed position. In so doing, Crisp illumines the subtle but important distinctions of the various Reformed positions on the doctrine of Christ’s election. In the third part, Crisp develops an argument for what he calls a “moderate reformed position,” one that makes sense of the disparate theological opinions in Reformed theology. In the fourth and final part, Crisp considers the contemporary value of his position in light of certain Barthian ideals. Though the meticulousness of this chapter may repel some, there is great reward awaiting the careful and patient reader. And these chapters are archetypical for what the reader will find in each successive chapter.

Of the many virtues of Crisp’s work, its accessibility and great reservoir of content are its chief marks. However, those who set out to profit from Crisp’s mental labor will not find easy answers to hard questions in *God Incarnate* (or any of Crisp’s other works for that matter). *God Incarnate* is an invitation to *think* through contemporary Christological problems *with* Crisp. An invitation of this value beckons a clear response

S. Mark Hamilton  
University of Bristol

***Christ the Key.* By Kathryn Tanner. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010. 309 pages. Paperback, \$29.99.**

Kathryn Tanner in her work *Christ the Key* offers a theological feast for those interested in historical Christian theology and systematic appropriation of it for present purposes. In exemplary fashion she constructs theology by dialoging with the early church fathers, and considering pre-critical and critical forms of scriptural scholarship for contemporary purposes. Readers may disagree with her especially

as it pertains to her Platonic foundations/assumptions, political conclusions, and views on the atonement, but the reader ought not to reject her insights, skill, and method outright. Theologians and philosophers of religion have much to gain from her through dialogic interaction.

As the title suggests, the reader will quickly note the theme of the book, namely *Christ is the Key*. More specifically, Tanner argues for the notion that God fulfills his desire to give us all good things in Christ, which is keeping with her previous systematic theology, *Jesus, Humanity, and the Trinity* (vii). She begins the discussion by showing how Christ unlocks for us the mysteries of human nature by drawing from the likes of Augustine, Aquinas, Gregory of Nyssa, Irenaeus, and Athanasius, in a strongly neo-platonic fashion Tanner seeks to answer how it is that Christ is the “image of God” and how Christ fulfills our human nature as it is intended in the Genesis narrative. Her specific contribution in this chapter is a more explicit appropriation and fusion of neo-Platonism and Christological theologizing that is arguably unique in the contemporary theological scene and an extension beyond the expressed views of many theologians in history, thus serving as the foundation for the rest of the book.

In chapter 2, she considers the nature of God’s grace in relation to man’s nature, the good in nature, and the problem of sin by considering the discussion between Catholics and Protestants. Chapter 3, Tanner considers other issues related to grace specifically as it concerns the Catholic understanding of natural desire inherited from an Aristotelian ontology of final causes, arguing that this creates a two-tier system within divine providence. In an almost Barthian manner chapter 4 on the “Trinitarian Life” is concerned with the abstract relations of the trinity in view of Christ’s redemptive role with humanity (174). Chapter 5 is concerned with socio-political issues not from an abstract Trinitarian perspective, as is common in much modern theology, but from a concrete Christological perspective. In chapter 6 Tanner discusses a cluster of controversial issues surrounding the atonement. Finally, Tanner considers the debate on the work of the Spirit in chapter 7 as either mediate or immediate.

Every chapter is full of insight and constructive engagement with contemporary literature and church history, yet there are two noteworthy examples worth mentioning here. First, Tanner argues that humans are the image of God in a weak and strong sense. Humans are the image in a weak sense as all creatures are, yet to a greater extent and in a strong sense only by grace in Christ. Debatable issues worth interacting with further include Tanner’s interpretation of the “image” and the substantial nature of humans theologically. While debatable there is much insight and fresh thinking deserving reflection. Second, Tanner contributes to the discussion over the divide between nature and grace, within the Catholic-Protestant dialogue, by arguing the solution for sin and nature is the same—grace. Although interesting, this solution does not fare with the biblical portrayal of sin as the immediate reason for grace or the moral foundations of sin, responsibility, and the need for atonement.

One criticism is the book’s lack of a clear moral framework undergirding responsibility and sin, thus lending itself to a confused view of the atonement. A moral framework that includes the notion of retribution or some modified form of retribution can coherently be accounted for by either a satisfaction or penal model of the atonement, views that Tanner dismisses without justification.

In the end, Tanner’s work is deserving of thoughtful engagement. The need for

evangelical encounter is clear when it comes to bringing scriptural portrayals of sin, morality, and the atonement to bear on the contemporary setting. Not only that but evangelicals may learn much from Kathryn Tanner regardless.

Joshua R. Farris  
University of Bristol

***The Return of Christ: A Premillennial Perspective.* Edited by David L. Allen and Steve W. Lemke. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2011. 285 pages. Softcover, \$24.99.**

Among today's pastors and theologians there seems to be an apathetic attitude toward the events surrounding the return of Christ. The contributors to *The Return of Christ: A Premillennial Perspective* confront this apathy, arguing that the Scriptures reveal a premillennial understanding of Christ's second advent. The essays are the result of the Acts 1:11 Conference which was held over two days in November of 2009 at North Metro First Baptist Church in Lawrenceville, Georgia, and co-sponsored by Jerry Vines Ministries and a number of Baptist seminaries and a Baptist college. The book is divided into two parts: part one includes the seven presentations from the conference while part two includes five additional scholarly reflections on premillennialism.

Vines' brief article introduces the good news announcement of Acts 1:11. The announcement involves the person of Jesus Himself who has promised to return to the earth for His saints. Those who await the fulfillment of the promise are to worship, work, and eagerly wait for the promise to come about. After a brief argument that any viable eschatological position must include the affirmation of Christ's return, Ergun Caner surveys six views of the return of Christ and the throne of David. Then he offers five reasons for understanding Jesus' return as premillennial. Danny Akin argues for a pretribulation rapture, a position that he writes is even more opposed today than premillennialism (49). He surveys five views on the time of the rapture, concentrating on the concept of imminency within pretribulationism. Akin concludes, "If a person rejects pretribulationism, he must either deny imminency or redefine the tribulation" (55). In his discussion of the three figures in Revelation 12, Paige Patterson discusses Israel's unique role during the tribulation, which he describes as "God's final appeal to sinful humanity" (71). David Allen argues that numerous Old Testament and New Testament texts describe a future millennial reign of Christ upon the earth and concludes that the "hermeneutics of amillennialism simply cannot account for the national and geopolitical aspects of these Old Testament prophecies of blessings" (78). The subject of Richard Land's essay is God's judgment as described in Revelation 20–22. Distinguishing between the temporal place of torment known as Hades and the eternal lake of fire known as hell, Land affirms the devastating judgment of unbelievers in Revelation 20 and the promise of the new heaven and new earth (Rev 21–22), in which the redeemed will live with God forever. In light of the response of the two men in Acts 1:11, Junior Hill exhorts believers to not be like the disciples who, in gazing into the sky, were asking the wrong question, looking in the wrong direction, and laboring in the wrong power.

Stanton Norman begins the five articles of part two with an introductory survey of eschatology. In a section on individual eschatology, he discusses what the Bible says concerning death, the intermediate state, and resurrection. Then he covers

corporate themes such as the kingdom of God, the day of the Lord, and the certainty and manner of Christ's return. Norman completes the chapter suggesting some ways in which eschatology has implications for life and godliness. Craig Blaising defends premillennialism by arguing that Old Testament descriptions of the kingdom and the coming day of the Lord indicate a two-phased kingdom, one that is temporarily in existence between the time of Christ's return and the final judgment, and one that is eternal and follows the consummative judgment of sin and death (143–45). He argues that Paul's multiple-stages description of the resurrection and the two-phased resurrection described in Revelation 20 also point to the two-phase kingdom idea. Lamar Cooper investigates "the pre-Christian development of aspects of the messianic movement in the Old Testament as a foundation for understanding the Second Coming of the Messiah" (160–61). He argues that there are both implicit and explicit examples of the second coming in the Old Testament and offers an extensive treatment of Zechariah 12–14 as inextricably linked to Jesus' Olivet Discourse (176–92, 204–05). Steven Cox continues the discussion of the Olivet discourse by discussing the implications of Jesus' words on eschatology. He also discusses eschatological passages in the fourth gospel that deal with false messiahs, eternal life, and the judgment of believers and nonbelievers, respectively. In the final chapter, Michael Vlach discusses the primary themes of eschatology within Pauline theology, distinguishing between those aspects which are present in the church age and those which are reserved for a future time. In discussing Paul's theology of the covenants and the people of God, Vlach focuses on the Jew/Gentile ethnic distinction within Paul's writings (239–48). He also discusses Paul's understanding of future events related to the day of the Lord, the temple, the gathering of the saints, bodily resurrection, judgment, the kingdom, and the future role of the nation of Israel.

There are a few minor ways in which the contributors' positions could have been stronger. Caner is correct to point out the nuanced differences between premillennialism and dispensationalism and between amillennialism and preterism, respectively. In distinguishing millennial views, however, these nuances are perhaps not necessary. He could have also been clearer in his defense of "the imminence of premillennialism" (38–45) by stating that he is arguing for pretribulational premillennialism, which includes both the premillennial position and dispensational position as he has described them. Also, the language about hell that Steven Cox employs could be better stated (222, 234). Nonetheless, he is correct to point out the distinction between Hades and the eternal lake of fire (hell).

As a whole, the work should be commended for its fairness. When opposing positions are described, they are usually done so in an accurate manner and in an irenic tone. Still, Caner's description of the positions of Hymenaeus and Philetus (2 Tim 2:16–18) as "a form of amillennialism or preterism" (27) is perhaps anachronistic and incorrect. While pointing out numerous helpful intertextual connections, Cooper may overstate his case regarding explicit affirmations and signs of the second coming in certain Old Testament texts. Allen argues that the earthly events described in certain Old Testament texts can only be fulfilled during the millennium (79–80). It could have been added here that there are new creation premillennialists who understand the millennium as a transition to the new heaven and new earth and thus see more continuity between the present earthly state and the eternal state of the new creation.

These relatively minor points of disagreement do not take away from the contribution that has been made by each writer and the value of the work as a whole.

Whether it is among dispensational premillennialists or among its detractors, future discussion of eschatology will benefit from *The Return of Christ*. The work includes both introductory and advanced material, giving it a wide range of accessibility. While some redundancy is to be expected in a work like the present one, the editors and contributors have done well to minimize it by keeping their respective contributions focused, allowing the other contributors to cover other topics. The book accomplishes the very difficult feat of touching upon every major eschatological issue dealing with the return of Christ, and it does so with zeal and brevity.

Steven L. James  
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***A Case for Historic Premillennialism: An Alternative to "Left Behind" Eschatology.* Edited by Craig L. Blomberg and Sung Wook Chung. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009. 208 pages. Softcover, \$24.99.**

Distinguished New Testament scholar Craig Blomberg and his colleague, Korean scholar Sung Wook Chung, have edited the latest apology for "historic premillennialism." However, the work is not totally apologetic in character, which is revealed by the polemical subtitle, "An Alternative to 'Left Behind' Eschatology." By "Left Behind" eschatology, Blomberg and Chung attempt to prejudice the reader from the outset by referencing the fiction of Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins in the popular series of novels about eschatology. The attempt is to wrap the dispensational premillennialist package with a "Left Behind" ribbon in the hope that the package will never be opened and seriously considered.

Contributors to the volume include a number of well-known evangelicals with historian Timothy Weber in the initial historical survey of competing premillennial movements. Richard Hess adds a chapter on "The Old Testament and the Millennium," followed by a chapter on "Judaism and the World to Come," which does little to address the actual subject of the book but in other ways may be the best chapter in the book. Then Craig Blomberg writes, "The Post-tribulationsim of the New Testament: Leaving 'Left Behind' Behind," followed by the perceptive chapter by Don J. Payne on "The Theological Method of Premillennialism." Donald Fairbairn asks the historic question about the early church and its position regarding contemporary millennial and tribulation debates, while Sung Wook Chung argues that Reformed and Covenantal theology can certainly embrace a form of premillennialism without compromise to its own principles. The final chapter by Oscar Campos places premillennialism within a holistic missiology in the Latin American context.

Like most such books, the chapters differ in their respective contributions. Weber's assessment of the history of the millennial movements breaks no new ground but does succeed in providing a readable and succinct account of the oft-repeated history of the two movements. Generally, he is fair, except for some assessments such as, "Sometimes all that was needed to keep the dispensationalist rank and file happy was a good second edition. Dispensationalists have proven themselves to be quite willing to forgive and forget their teachers' mistakes, and they seem eager to accept new explanations" (18). One need only respond that the same thing might be said of "historic premillennialism" as well as other positions. Furthermore, Weber complains that part of the problem is that "dispensationalists simply have a better story to tell" (21). Such special pleading falls short of scholarly assessment.

The chapter by Richard Hess, "The Future Written in the Past," makes the point that the whole discussion is not just about Revelation 20. Hess, in one of the shorter chapters, points to the Old Testament text as the basis for millenarianism. Hélène Dallaire's chapter, "Judaism and the World to Come," is probably the most informative chapter in the entire book. There are places where she is perhaps less than forthright in her representation of dispensationalism, but she does bring a wealth of information from Jewish sources such as the Talmud and the *Pseudepigrapha* that are rarely seen in a book of this nature. Furthermore, she has clearly grasped the content of these and provides significant wisdom. Blomberg's chapter on the post-tribulation view of the New Testament basically is no more than a recounting of what has been said by a large number of scholars before him. If one is looking for new insight, this chapter is probably the most disappointing in the book.

Don Payne's chapter, "The Theological Method of Premillennialism," is a fair assessment and is worth the price of the book. The chapter will be valuable to premillennialists of all stripes. Donald Fairbairn's chapter on the witness of the early church, by which he means the developing church after the first century, is fair and accurate but fails to mention the fact that the early church, while closer to the New Testament than anyone else, still got some things wrong. For example, it is difficult to believe that Ignatius's advocacy for episcopacy represents the New Testament pattern. The issue ultimately is not how the early church conceived anything although their witness is important. The issue remains: What does the Bible teach? In Sung Wook Chung's chapter on premillennialism among the Reformed, he not only documents the fact that there have been Reformed scholars who have also been premillennial, but also provides an adequate assessment of why such a position is entirely plausible within the contours of the Reformed faith. Finally, the chapter by Oscar Campos takes the whole matter into the Latin American arena where Christianity is growing rapidly and brings to bear the insights of particular theologians such as Rene Padilla, Samuel Escobar, and Emilio Antonio Núñez.

As a general statement favoring post-tribulation-premillennialism and as a polemic against pretribulation-premillennialism, the book is standard with the same arguments being repeated from the past, differing only in that they are less effectively presented in this volume. On the other hand, some legitimately new ground is broken, and there are insights to be gained from several of the chapters, as mentioned above. Roger Olson, Craig Keener, and J. Andrew Dearman all provide glowing affirmations of the volume, and Baker Academic Press adds viability for those who wish to have a survey of the present waterfront in eschatological studies. While I can certainly commend the book as the kind of reading that seminary students and pastors ought to encounter, the book must be read with a couple of continuing questions in the mind of the reader. First, "Is this really a fair presentation of the opposing position?" and second, "Have the authors of these chapters actually succeeded in painting a compelling picture for 'historic premillennialism?'" This reviewer's conclusion, while itself undoubtedly biased, would find the overall drift of the case less than compelling.

Paige Patterson  
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

## Historical Studies

***Commentaries on Romans and 1–2 Corinthians.* By Ambrosiaster. Edited and Translated by Gerald L. Bray. Ancient Christian Texts. IVP Academic, 2009. 270 pages. Hardcover, \$60.00.**

Gerald L. Bray, Research Professor of Divinity History and Doctrine at Beeson Divinity School, provides the first English translation of Ambrosiaster's commentaries on Romans and 1–2 Corinthians. Ambrosiaster was the earliest Latin exegete who produced commentaries on the entire Pauline corpus. Unlike Ambrose, his Latin contemporary, Ambrosiaster does not have any interest in an allegorical reading of Romans and 1–2 Corinthians.

To read Ambrosiaster's *Commentary on Romans* may be a big surprise to many contemporary evangelicals who might have believed that the doctrine of justification by faith alone was completely lost during the patristic era but restored later during the Protestant Reformation. This work is replete with Ambrosiaster's frequent appeal to justification by faith alone without the works of the law (Rom 3:24 [29]; 4:5[32]; 9:28[80]; 11:32[93]). He uses not only the concept but also the actual term *sola fide* more frequently than does any patristic writer. Ambrosiaster's *sola fide* could be clear evidence of the continuity between Paul and fourth century Latin Christianity on justification by faith alone apart from works. On the other hand, Catholic readers would reject such an evangelical reading of Ambrosiaster, since he sometimes uses the term 'the works of the law' as a reference to the ritual observation of the Mosaic law, such as circumcision and the Sabbath (Rom 4:4[31]; 9:28[80]). Therefore, Catholics could argue that Ambrosiaster's *sola fide sine operibus legis* is not his rejection of good works as a necessary ingredient of justification but simply his condemnation of the social and religious exclusivism of first century Judaism. However, does Ambrosiaster's reference to the Jewish ceremonial law as the works of the law necessarily mean that he admits good works are an essential condition to justification? The critical question we have to ask is not about whether Ambrosiaster's *sola fide* intends to exclude the Jewish ritual regulations as a necessary channel by which man is justified. Instead, the question must concern whether Ambrosiaster ever argues that the exclusion of the ceremonial laws is all that Paul meant regarding the lack of salvation by the works of the law. Abraham's *sola fide* shows not only ceremonial law but also that the moral sanctity to avoid evil does not contribute anything to his justification (Rom 3:24[29]; 4:31[37]). Not only pre- but also post-justification merits cannot cause believers to be justified (Rom 4:4[31]). Another interesting aspect of Ambrosiaster's commentary on Romans is a striking theological agreement between Ambrosiaster and Augustine who attributed Ambrosiaster's commentary to Hilary and honored this work. Ambrosiaster teaches the doctrine of original sin and guilt inherited from Adam by interpreting Romans 5:12. Everyone already sinned "in Adam as though in a lump" (Rom 5:12[40]). Evil is "the perversion of what is good" (Rom 7:18[58]).

In *Commentary on 1–2 Corinthians*, Ambrosiaster holds the Roman church's tradition on rebaptism and rejects Novatianists and the Donatists who practiced rebaptism. Like Ignatius, he strongly advocates the monarchy of a bishop as the "head" of the church (1 Cor 1:17[123]). Those who will be "saved only as through fire" (1 Cor 3:15[134]) are not heretics but some Christians who simply followed false teachings. These Christians will be purified through the punishment of fire,

although they will not be reproved eternally in hell. Ambrosiaster's exegesis of 1 Corinthians 3:15 anticipates the later Catholic doctrine of purgatory. Ambrosiaster has a concept of congregational discipline based on 1 Corinthians 5:4 but also maintains the administrative leadership of a bishop in that congregational discipline. Modern readers of Ambrosiaster will be disappointed concerning his discrimination of women in the matter of divorce. He does not allow a woman to remarry even though she divorces her husband because of his fornication and even apostasy. However, a man can remarry if he divorces a sinful wife because "the headband [the superior party in the law] is not restricted by the law as a woman [the inferior party] is, *for the head of the woman is her husband*" (1 Cor 7:11[151]). Ambrosiaster could be called an ancient complementarian: "He is greater than she is by cause and order, not by substance" (1 Cor 11:5[172]). Unlike modern paedobaptists, Ambrosiaster interprets the holiness of the children born from a Christian parent as meaning the legitimacy of their birth from a lawful marriage, not any theological ground for infant baptism. It is historically worth noticing that 1 Corinthians 7:14 had not been a universal exegetical basis for the legitimacy of infant baptism until the mid-fourth century in Latin Christianity although infant baptism was being practiced. Despite Bray's argument that Ambrosiaster is "not a 'cessationist' in a modern sense" (xvi), Ambrosiaster seems not to differ from modern cessationists in understanding the nature of tongues in 1 Corinthians 14. He does not teach or even imply that tongues could be incomprehensible utterances or the languages of angels. Ambrosiaster is the first orthodox patristic writer in the history of Christianity who believed that some Christians in the day of Paul were really baptized on behalf of the dead because of their fear that "someone who was not baptized would either not rise at all or else rise merely in order to be condemned" (1 Cor 15:29[196]). Paul did not endorse that erroneous practice but used it as an illustration of "a firm faith in the resurrection" (1 Cor 15: 29[196]).

Ambrosiaster's commentary on 2 Corinthians is relatively short, and the length of this commentary would be only half of his commentary on 1 Corinthians. He is not aware of limited atonement or double predestination. For him God never wanted anyone to be excluded from his gift of redemption. If there are some unbelievers, it is because they did not receive the gospel. In his exegesis of 2 Corinthians 5:18–21, Ambrosiaster explained the incarnation well, as Christ's assumption of the nature which was not previously his but now added to his divine nature. The incarnation was necessary in a sense because our human nature became sinful and needed to be redeemed by his death. Interestingly, Ambrosiaster followed Athanasius and other Greek fathers in interpreting the incarnation in the context of deification. Christ humiliated his almighty status "so that he might obtain for men the riches of divinity and thus share in the divine nature, as Peter says [in 2 Pet 1:4]. He was made man in order to take man into the Godhead. As it is written: I have said, you are gods [Ps 82:6]" (2 Cor 8:9[237–38]). Both biblical verses are well-known proof-texts for the Greek fathers' understanding of salvation as deification. This shows us not to exaggerate the theological gap between Western Christianity and Eastern Christianity. In addition, we can infer that Augustine could have learned the doctrine of deification primarily from his own Latin tradition rather than the Latin translations of the Eastern patristic writings.

Dongsun Cho  
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary



***Commentaries on Galatians-Philemon.* By Ambrosiaster. Translated and Edited by Gerald L. Bray. Ancient Christian Texts. IVP Academic, 2009. 166 pages. Hardcover, \$60.00.**

This volume contains commentaries on ten Pauline epistles from Galatians through Philemon. The translator's introduction in this volume is the same as that in *Commentaries on Romans and 1–2 Corinthians*. Like *Commentary on Romans*, as well, *Commentary on Galatians* is an important work in understanding Ambrosiaster's doctrine of justification by faith alone. In Galatians 1:4, Ambrosiaster refers to union with Christ through forgiveness, which is possible by faith. Whoever is under the law is cursed whether he is under the ceremonial law or the moral law because the law of God requires us to obey all its requests. Therefore, Ambrosiaster laments, "the [moral] commandments are so great that it is impossible to keep them" (Gal 3:10[16]). *Sola fide* does away with human pride because man is always justified before God with imputed, not earned, righteousness by faith alone. Paul presents Abraham as an "example" of "imputed [*inputari*]" righteousness "not by the work of the law, but by faith" (Gal 3:6[15]). Ambrosiaster uses the same verb '*inputo*' in another place (Gal 3:21[20]). However, Bray's rendering of that Latin word in Galatians 3:21 as "reckoned" weakens Ambrosiaster's keen perspective of the legal aspect of justifying righteousness. Nevertheless, readers must remember that Ambrosiaster, long before Luther, already understood the importance of imputed righteousness by faith alone, not by merits.

Ambrosiaster draws attention to the cosmic aspect of the gospel in Ephesians 3. Through Paul's preaching that proclaimed the revelation of Christ, God wants to "impress the spirits in the heavenly places, who are the principalities and powers" (Eph 3:10[44]). The preaching ministry of the church is beneficial to the heavenly spirits who are serving Satan under his tyranny. The gospel challenges them to "turn away from their error" and "renounce their allegiance to the devil's tyranny" (Eph 3:10[44]). However, Ambrosiaster does not speak of whether they will truly repent and be saved after hearing Paul's preaching of Christ. Ambrosiaster's exegesis of the gifts of Christ for the church in Ephesians 4 reveals that some Roman Christians in the fourth century realized the leadership structure of their catholic church differed from that of the New Testament church. Ambrosiaster tries to justify his church's deviation from Paul by appealing to the temporality of some in ecclesiastical leadership in first century Christianity. He argues, "By apostles Paul means bishops, and by prophets he means expositors of the Scriptures" (Eph 4:10[48]). Without denying that the New Testament spoke of prophets like Agabus who exactly predicted the things that would occur in the future, Ambrosiaster points out the temporality of the foretelling function of prophets. They were given only "in order to support the beginnings of the faith" (Eph 4:11[49]). In other words, such a function is no longer necessary in the advanced life of the church. To call the expositors of the Bible prophets is not wrong at all because they reveal the hidden meanings of the Bible and speak of the future hope that is not yet realized. Evangelists are "deacons" like Philip and Stephen who freely preach without having a fixed ecclesiastical see. Pastors are not bishops but the "readers" who "instruct the people with readings" (Eph 4:11[49]). Teachers are the "exorcists" who "restrain and beat the unruly" (Eph 4:11[49]). All these different functions are found in the bishop who is the chief prophet, evangelist, pastor, and teacher in the church.

In order to explain why his contemporary church is different from the New

Testament church in practice and leadership, Ambrosiaster emphasizes that his church is in a dispensation different from the New Testament church. God allowed everyone to preach, baptize, and even interpret the Bible in order to make the church grow everywhere. However, the church is now established everywhere and needs a system to maintain an order in the church. Therefore, deacons are no longer able to preach or baptize, and people should not be anointed on any day. Interestingly, Ambrosiaster admitted that bishops and elders are not two different positions but interchangeable in the New Testament.

In the exegesis of Phil. 2:9, Ambrosiaster strongly condemns adoptionism: "If Christ is not God but a man adopted as a mighty son of God, what is the point of Paul's preaching on humility? A man and every other creature must be humble. There should be no praise for someone who humbled himself before God. Likewise, if Christ was not God but a man, what is a striking element of his being in the likeness of a man? Is every man not in the same likeness?" (Phil 2:9[71]).

If the theology of Ambrosiaster in his commentary on Romans has an Augustinian element concerning original sin, the theology of Ambrosiaster in his commentary on 1 Timothy has an Arminian element concerning free will. For Ambrosiaster, no grace exists that man cannot resist. After reminding his readers of the biblical truth that God wants everyone to be saved (1 Tim 2:4), Ambrosiaster asks, then, why is His will not fulfilled as He wishes? He answers his own question: "God wants everyone to be saved, but only if they come to him. He does not want this if it means that people are saved when they do not want to be" (1 Tim 2:4[125]). There is no true salvation without voluntary acceptance on the part of sinners. Ambrosiaster refuses to understand the salvific power of the gospel as if it is a physical force or a medicine for the body. Indeed, the gospel is powerful, but it is a "spiritual medicine" that requires the "mind" of its recipients to accept it "with total willingness" (1 Tim. 2:4[125]). Since the church is the great house of God containing not only gold silver but also wood vessels, Ambrosiaster reprimands the Novatians for their ecclesiology of the pure church (2 Tim 2:20[148]). It is not surprising to note that later Augustine condemned the Donatists who claimed their pure church by using the same verse.

Ambrosiaster's exegesis of 1 and 2 Thessalonians shows his eschatology. Concerning the second coming of Christ, Ambrosiaster warns his audience not to be deceived easily by those who pretend as if they receive special revelation from the Holy Spirit as the Montanists did. Since God is not self-contradictory, whatever the Spirit reveals is not to be contradictory with the written Word of God. However, Ambrosiaster has no perspective of the millennial kingdom on earth as an intermediate stage between Christ's *parousia* and eternity, although advocating the literal eternal punishment of sinners in hell. Paul also warned, according to Ambrosiaster, that Christians should not receive any book written in the name of the apostles naively because false teachers tried to deceive them with spurious authority. Interestingly, Ambrosiaster regards the fall of the Roman Empire as the last event of the world right before the second coming of Christ:

"The Lord would not come back until the Roman Empire fell and the anti-christ appeared, who would kill the saints and give the Romans back their freedom, but under his name" (2 Thess 2: 1-4 [115]).

If we expect a contemporary commentator's critical analysis of a word or syntax from Ambrosiaster, we will definitely be disappointed. If we look for a practical implication of a passage from his commentaries, as with the NIV Application Com-

mentary series, we will be also disappointed. However, if we want to know how early Christians, who were closer to Paul than we are, understood Paul without having the presuppositions of contemporary readership on Paul, this volume will greatly help us. This volume also provides many valuable details about Roman Christianity in the fourth century.

Dongsun Cho  
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***The Westminster Handbook to Medieval Theology.* By James R. Ginther. Westminster Handbooks to Christian Theology. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009. 207 pages. Paperback, \$30.00.**

In his 1954 inaugural lecture as the Chair of Medieval and Renaissance Studies at Cambridge University, C.S. Lewis remarked that a former student once described the Middle Ages as a “dark surging sea.” Observing the changes in historical scholarship that led to the creation of his academic chair at Cambridge, Lewis recognized that this “great, dark surging sea of the Middle Ages” had come to flood the continent of the Renaissance period. Although scholars had once contrasted the darkness of the Middle Ages with the enlightened Renaissance, they were coming to recognize the continuity between these eras. (C.S. Lewis, “De Descriptione Temporum,” in *They Asked for a Paper: Papers and Addresses* [London: Geoffrey Bles, 1962], 10).

It seems today that the floodwaters of this “dark surging sea” have now risen, in scholarly circles, to the heights of modernity and postmodernity. Following in the footsteps of historian Heiko Oberman, many Reformation scholars recognize, despite the attempts of reformers to return to antiquity, that the Reformation grew out of the intellectual and theological climate of the late Middle Ages and that the theology of the reformers must be interpreted in this context. Moreover, in his study of early medieval Christianity, *The Rise of Western Christendom*, historian Peter Brown claims that the Western Christianity we have inherited took shape not in the Patristic period, but in the Middle Ages—even that early medieval period called the Dark Ages. (Peter Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom* [Oxford: Blackwell, 2003], 23–24).

In the introduction to *The Westminster Handbook to Medieval Theology*, James R. Ginther testifies to our indebtedness to the Middle Ages. From this epoch we have inherited, among other things, universities, biblical concordances, and the ‘satisfaction theory’ of atonement as described by Anselm of Canterbury in the eleventh century (xi). The Middle Ages, however, now receive a mixed reception: Some look on this period with nostalgia, with longing for a lost Golden Age; others see it as an age when corrupt church leaders grasped political power while their flocks fumbled in spiritual darkness. Ginther has refused to accept either of these perspectives, choosing instead to describe the complexity of the age: “We recognize that there are some horrible features of the Middle Ages—just as there are in every age of human history—but there are also some fascinating ideas and arguments that ultimately still hold sway over (post)modern theology” (xii).

Despite the significance of the Middle Ages, many students, when they first study medieval theology, truly feel as if they stand at the brink of a “dark surging sea.” Fortunately, with *The Westminster Handbook to Medieval Theology* in hand,

the student may stay afloat as he confronts the strange world, the odd names, and the foreign theological systems and sensibilities of the Middle Ages. Indeed, while Ginther makes no claim to have written a comprehensive guide to medieval theology, his handbook is valuable as an introduction to the subject.

Ginther provides a useful introduction to his handbook, describing the nature and sources of medieval theology, as well as the method of his handbook. He avoids any definition of “medieval theology” that would incorrectly limit the term as a reference to scholastic theology alone. One can better understand the term by considering the “sources theologians read and used” in the Middle Ages, namely, “Scripture, the liturgy, and the early church fathers” (xiii–xiv). Contrary to the popular caricature of dusty intellects brimming with their own “clever arguments and minute distinctions,” medieval theologians appealed to Scripture as “first and foremost the singular source for theological work”: “[T]hose who commented on Scripture were also the ones who were interested in using reasoned arguments to make a theological point; conversely, those who excelled at argument were deeply immersed in the sacred page” (xiv). This is a welcome correction to the popular belief that the Bible was utterly passed over during the Middle Ages, but readers must always keep in mind the methods and assumptions with which medieval theologians approached Scripture. Some of these methods and assumptions led to an inappropriate use of Scripture by medieval theologians.

Describing the conventions of his handbook, Ginther notes “three basic categories” for the entries in his handbook: namely, “major Christian thinkers, socio-cultural developments, and key terms and concepts” (xix). Understandably, he tries to avoid anachronism by using only those terms which medieval theologians used, placing the Latin terms beside their English equivalent in each entry. Of course, this could have its own drawbacks. For example, this could lead people to assume that these terms were used consistently by medieval theologians to describe all of the concepts discussed in each entry. Ginther successfully avoids this pitfall, however, by relating the nuanced use of each term by various theologians in different periods.

Although some volumes in *The Westminster Handbook* series employ numerous experts to write entries, Ginther writes every entry in this volume. As a result, this handbook contains consistent, well-written prose entries, which clearly explain the theological, philosophical, and social intricacies of the Middle Ages. Speaking generally, Ginther’s entries on the “major Christian thinkers” of the medieval period are concise but helpful. They contain information about each theologian’s life, works, and key theological contributions. His entries on “sociocultural developments”—such as his articles on “Marriage” and “University”—are nuanced and enlightening, as are his entries on various “key terms and concepts.” He handles philosophical concepts with ease and clarity, and he often places key concepts within a helpful framework. For example, he discusses the various levels of social, ecclesiastical, and theological authority under one heading of “Authority,” thereby revealing the complex nature of authority in the Middle Ages.

A few other facets of *The Westminster Handbook to Medieval Theology* make it a helpful introduction to the field. Following his introduction, Ginther includes a discussion of “Resources for Studying Medieval Theology.” He notes some of the most helpful, comprehensive and up-to-date secondary sources on medieval theology and informs readers where to access primary sources. He includes several online resources, such as JSTOR and Iter Italicum. At the end of this volume, Ginther also includes a 10-page bibliography of useful sources. He also refers to appropriate

sources at the end of each entry within the handbook. Alongside Ginther's insightful introduction and entries, these facets of the volume make this *Westminster Handbook* a good resource for the novice who desires to dive into the "dark surging sea" of medieval theology.

Benjamin Hawkins  
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***A History of Biblical Interpretation, Volume 2: The Medieval through the Reformation Periods.* Edited by Alan J. Hauser and Duane F. Watson, alongside Schuyler Kaufman. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009. 570 pages. Hardcover, \$50.00.**

Surveying the rich and varied traditions of biblical interpretation during the medieval and Reformation periods, this second volume to *A History of Biblical Interpretation* is a valuable contribution to the library of any pastor or scholar. Even while affirming the Reformation doctrine of *sola Scriptura*, a Bible student benefits by evaluating his own Scripture reading in light of past biblical interpretation, and this new collection of essays will greatly aid his task.

By drawing together essays on both medieval and Reformation exegesis into one volume, the editors of *A History of Biblical Interpretation* have portrayed two important insights: First, the editors recognize that the Middle Ages were not as dark as often assumed. Medieval scholars, both among Christians and Jews, read and taught Scripture, probing it for answers to a wide span of questions. They also labored for centuries to defend, preserve, and translate the Bible. Second, the editors recognize the connection between the medieval and Reformation periods: "The Renaissance and Reformation eras, much as they often claimed to be going back to the learning of the ancient period, firmly based their interpretive analyses on the achievements of Jewish and Christian interpretation of the Middle Ages" (vii–viii).

This volume consists not only in a collection of astute essays on biblical exegesis during the Middle Ages and the Reformation. It also provides helpful bibliographies and charts that point the reader to both primary and secondary resources accessible in print and on the internet. The volume also opens with a summary essay, assessing biblical exegesis during this period as a whole. Throughout the remainder of the book, scholars introduce the reader to a variety of interpretive traditions: Christian exegesis in the medieval West; Eastern Orthodox interpretation; Jewish exegesis; scholasticism and humanism; and exegetical traditions among both Protestant and Catholic reformers. Three chapters also highlight the transmission and translation of the texts of Scripture throughout the medieval and early modern periods.

Especially significant in this volume is an essay devoted to an often overlooked group of biblical expositors: the Anabaptists, with whom Baptists share a fundamental conviction concerning believer's baptism. In this essay, Stuart W. Murray, author of *Biblical Interpretation in the Anabaptist Tradition* (Pandora, 2000), outlines six characteristics of Anabaptist hermeneutics: "Scripture is Self-Interpreting"; "Christocentrism"; "The Two Testaments"; "Spirit and Word"; "Congregational Hermeneutics"; and the "Hermeneutics of Obedience" (408–23). The congregational approach to exegesis is especially interesting, for by it the Anabaptists avoided both "autonomous individualism," on the one hand, and the papal or magisterial "tyranny" that threatened the common priesthood of believers, on the other hand (416).

Sincere interest and scholarly responsibility contribute to the success of Murray's

investigation. First, he shows a deep appreciation for Anabaptist hermeneutics and for its value to modern exegetes. At the same time, however, he willingly notes the flaws of the Anabaptist approach. Second, while he generalizes about the nature of Anabaptist hermeneutics, Murray never forgets that “Anabaptism was a diverse, complex, and fluid but coherent movement” (404).

The reader will also benefit greatly from the essays on John Calvin and Martin Luther. Barbara Pitkin’s essay on the hermeneutics of John Calvin will be especially helpful to the novice in this field of study, since she summarizes past and present trends in the research of Calvin’s hermeneutic (341–71). Examining Luther’s hermeneutic, Mark D. Thompson finds both consistency and change: “From his earliest lectures right through his death [Luther] insisted on the authority of Scripture, its God-given clarity when dealt with honestly and with faith, and its fundamental unity in its focus on Christ crucified” (306). He argues, *contra* Karl Barth and other scholars, that Luther conceived of Scripture as the Word of God, not as a vessel that merely contains God’s Word (300).

Thompson also tracks the change in Luther’s approach to Scripture. He insightfully summarizes the manner in which Luther cast aside the allegorizing, four-fold exegesis of Scripture and replaced it with his familiar Law-Gospel dichotomy. Thompson also provides helpful information on Luther’s emphasis upon the devotional character of biblical exegesis and upon the preaching of Scripture (306–314).

With insightful essays on the various traditions of biblical interpretation in the medieval and Reformation eras, this volume of *A History of Biblical Interpretation* is a helpful tool for any Bible student or church historian. Readers can only hope for the same in the anticipated third volume on the modern period.

Benjamin Hawkins  
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***John Calvin: Pilgrim and Pastor.* By W. Robert Godfrey. Wheaton: Crossway, 2009. 207 pages. Paperback, \$15.99.**

The 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Calvin’s birth brought a wave of new works and editions in celebration of the influential thinker. Robert Godfrey’s *John Calvin: Pilgrim and Pastor* is part of that renewed interest, offering an accessible introduction to the life and thought of the patriarch of the reformed tradition, of which Godfrey’s Presbyterian denomination is part. Aware of the many negative stereotypes with which Calvin is nowadays associated, Godfrey hopes to present Calvin as both a pilgrim journeying through the struggles of his own faith and a pastor leading others in the paths of their faith by the light of biblical doctrine and practice.

What particularly sets this biography apart is that it attempts to describe Calvin as the man he was in his time and who he viewed himself to be. The historical Calvin can easily be lost when so often viewed as a paragon and progenitor of theological creativity but Godfrey narrated the life of Calvin as being first concerned with the pastoral responsibilities of his day. Godfrey’s Calvin is not a reclusive academic solely focused on leaving the heritage for which he is known. Godfrey’s Calvin is a pastor whose heart was set to tend to those under his care.

Godfrey was careful to note several of the instances when Calvin put current needs before the work that would define his legacy. He had set aside writing in order to care for his ailing wife (8–9). He would have tended to those struck by the plague

had not the council prohibited him in order to preserve his own often frail health (62). Godfrey's primary emphases were to display Calvin as a reformer of worship and the sacraments, an organizer of an educational program, and as counselor, not just the theologian of predestination and the *Institutes*.

Continued care is given to placing Calvin within his own context. While appeal is often made to Calvin in matters such as soteriology and free will, Godfrey preferred to handle such issues with the same importance that Calvin had assigned to them. After introducing Calvin biographically up to the point of the beginning of the Genevan ministry Godfrey presented surveys of several prominent theological topics. He began, not with predestination or election, but with worship, for Calvin himself, in listing the two most important doctrines of the faith, placed worship before salvation (77). Even with a key element of Calvin's theology such as providence, Godfrey wrote that Calvin's motivation was not the formulation of scholastic ennui but rather to present the doctrine as a comfort to the saints (ch. 10).

This biography is suitably written for the church. It grants access to a solid understanding of Calvin and his time while maintaining a readability that engages readers who might be reading it to satisfy their curiosity about the name they might so often hear. Unfamiliar terminology and historical references are generally either avoided or, more often, adequately explained. Godfrey's presentation will not lose anyone in excurses on the aggregated literature that has built up around Calvin and his theology. There is instead within this volume an insistence to let Calvin speak for himself. Explanation of Calvin's theology does not come from Godfrey's analysis but rather from an appropriately extensive use of quotations directly from Calvin's pen. Hopefully, this reliance on the primary sources will serve as an impetus for readers to read more of Calvin's works directly.

The hazard in this method must be recognized alongside this advantage. The natural consequence of leaving aside debate on issues, although it provides for a clean reading, is that such a presentation is inherently one-sided. One manifestation of this idealism is when Godfrey wrote that Calvin taught double predestination "because Paul taught it" (122). Not all would agree with Calvin or Godfrey that that was Paul's teaching. While Godfrey did not have any particularly egregious views against which readers must be guarded, it is helpful to be aware of this. This is the case if this book were to be used in a church setting, which would be an excellent use of the book. The leader of a study group would be obliged to be aware of more than what the scope of this biography covers.

Godfrey has given the church a fresh biography of a reformer whose identity is often lost in his theological heritage. He gives a clear reminder of who Calvin was in his own time—a pastor, educator, expositor, and a man whose life was committed to the city he served. In his service to the church and in his own spiritual pilgrimage Calvin left a legacy that Godfrey has shown must not be forgotten 500 years later.

Peter Coleman  
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

*A Catholic Reformed Theologian: Federalism and Baptism in the Thought of Benjamin Keach, 1640–1704.* By D.B. Riker *Studies in Baptist History and Thought* 35. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2009. 257 pages. Softcover, \$32.00.

In another valuable installment in the recent renaissance of Benjamin Keach studies, D.B. Riker has attempted to locate Keach as a theologian, not just a pastor. This book is the culmination of Riker's Ph.D. studies at the University of Aberdeen, and he now serves as the president of the Equatorial Baptist Theological Seminary in his native Brazil. In summary, Riker denies James Berry Vaughn's assertion that Keach was merely a practical theologian. He argues that Keach was neither sectarian nor Calvinist, but rather a catholic Reformed theologian in the Reformed Orthodox tradition. To do so, he presents a very helpful biography, then a thorough study of Keach's theology of covenant and baptism, concluding that "Keach is a theologian, working as a Reformer, to restore the church to what he perceives to be the biblical pattern" (127).

To make his argument, Riker begins by painting the Reformation as a continuation of that element of the medieval church that did not emphasize the oral tradition. The Reformed Orthodox tradition (which included the Puritans) highlighted its continuity with Scripture and the catholic tradition embodied in the ecumenical creeds and systems. Riker identifies the central beliefs of Reformed Orthodoxy as the five points of Calvinism, the Trinity, the dual nature of Christ, and paedobaptism. It primarily disputed with Socinians, Papists, Anabaptists, and Arminians. An important emphasis of this tradition is the covenant, monopleuric in its commencement but dipleuric in its continuance. Riker specifically locates Keach in the high (middle) stage of Protestant Orthodoxy as a movement. He clarifies that "Orthodox" refers to the content of teaching and "catholic" refers to its Christian adherers.

Riker presents a full exposition of Keach's own federal theology and baptismal theology with an eye toward several claims. First, Keach spoke positively about the ecumenical creeds, and the Reformed Federalist John Owen was his "most cherished" author (52). Second, Keach rejected both Baxterianism as Arminianism and Antinomianism. Third, Keach moved away from the Reformed tendency of conflating the covenant of grace with the covenant of redemption. Fourth, Keach made believers' baptism a central element of his own federalism. Riker draws some very important conclusions from these claims: Keach was neither a Biblicist nor successionist, making him catholic; Keach held to a middle way of Orthodox thinking; Keach's rejection of paedobaptism did not exclude him from mainstream Reformed thought. These are very interesting conclusions sure to generate discussion among students of Baptist thought.

On the positive side, Riker is absolutely correct that Keach cannot be labeled a Biblicist, a practical theologian, a sectarian, or a Calvinist. Keach's thought and intentions were much more diverse than historians have sometimes given him credit. However, Riker may have oversold his case that Keach should be primarily classified a "catholic Reformed theologian." It seems that Riker wants to make Keach an intentional part of a broad tradition (as in more than Particular Baptist; Timothy George even uses the word "ecumenical" in his foreword), but his own arguments do not support this conclusion. In the first place, he does not fully appreciate the importance of Keach's belief in believers' baptism by immersion. This is not merely a blip in Keach's Reformed Orthodoxy, but the foundation of a wholly unique way of thinking in which Biblicism *does* trump a system. For Keach, paedobaptism



completely undermined the congregational nature of the church, something Riker notes without fully exploring. Riker even relates Keach's quote, "I am for Catholick communion and charity with all Saints, tho not for church communion with any unbaptized, as I believe you all are that have only had infants rantism" (126). There is nothing "catholic" (or ecumenical) about this statement in the sense that Riker tries to use it. Keach would not hold communion with most of the Reformed tradition—how could he then be catholic Reformed? He even maintained a separation from other Particular Baptist churches which rejected his views of congregational hymn singing and the laying on of hands.

Most importantly, Riker tries to confine Keach to the magisterial Reformation. He looks at Keach's positive estimation of the work of the great Reformers (particularly Luther and Calvin) as proof that Keach sees himself in that same sense, concluding that "he only departed from the earlier established Reformed Orthodox thought where necessary to continue the work of the Reformation" (127). He later argues, "Keach understands catholicity not as maintaining ties to particular institutions, but rather conscientious adherence to what he perceives to be catholic truth" (220). These statements simply cannot be held to mean what Riker says they mean. Keach was not "catholic" in the sense that Riker uses the term. Keach did not see himself in the same boat as other Protestants; his ministry is filled with disputes against almost every Christian tradition. He was not continuing the Reformation, he was correcting it; he was making it more biblical, not maintaining its system.

Those concerns aside, there is no doubt that Riker's book is a valuable contribution to any student of Benjamin Keach or early English Baptists. Filled with excellent footnotes and a practical index, this book is well designed and easy to follow. Riker has left plenty of work, however. He does not explore what it means that Keach was inconsistent and indiscriminate in his use of sources. He also does not mine the majority of Keach's sermons, his hymns, or his study of tropes and figures. Those elements will play a large role in future Keach studies.

Matt Ward  
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***A Messenger of Grace: A Study of the Life and Thought of Abraham Booth.* By Raymond Arthur Coppenger. Ontario: Joshua, 2009. 180 pages. Paperback, \$19.99.**

Due to the prominence of Baptists like Andrew Fuller and William Carey, the legacy of Particular Baptist Abraham Booth (1734–1806) has gone practically unnoticed. However, Raymond Coppenger's work on Booth rightly draws attention to a man who changed Baptist life, whether it be on issues of slavery, Calvinism, the Lord's Supper, or denominational affairs. As Coppenger demonstrates, no Baptists can be compared to Booth when it comes to the influence he had in contributing to the spiritual awakening of England.

As the title of Coppenger's work reveals, Booth's life fell within the context of the debates between the General and Particular Baptists. Booth began as a General Baptist and his early Arminian convictions came to fruition in his first publication, *On Absolute Predestination*, where he defended the doctrine of universal redemption. Nevertheless, Booth would later come to call his work theologically despicable and detestable, "an impotent attack on the honour of divine grace" and a "bold opposition to the sovereignty of God" (26). Booth's change of doctrinal conviction from

Arminianism to Calvinism manifested itself most famously in his work *The Reign of Grace* (1768). As a Calvinist Booth accepted a call to pastor Little Prescott Street Baptist Church, which was the oldest and strongest Particular Baptist church in the world during Booth's lifetime. As a pastor, Booth not only dedicated himself to the affairs of his church and denomination—as exemplified in his opposition to open communion advocates Robert Hall, Daniel Turner, and John Ryland,—but Booth also concerned himself with social problems, most importantly the abolition of slavery. Though the eradication of the slave trade was slow, Booth and his congregation took tremendous strides to abolish the slave trade by making generous donations towards the expenses needed to petition Parliament. Not only was Booth on the forefront of the abolition of the slave trade, but he was a major supporter of Baptist mission endeavors, particularly that of Andrew Fuller and William Carey. As Coppenger observes, it was Booth who first supported the Baptist Missionary Society in London. Perhaps one of Booth's most unexpected influences on Baptist foreign missions came when Adoniram Judson read Booth's *Paedobaptism Examined* on his way to the mission field and became America's first Baptist foreign missionary. In the end, Booth's impact on foreign missions is immeasurable and is yet another example of the harmony that exists between Calvinism and evangelistic zeal for the lost.

One of the strengths of Coppenger's work is the emphasis he puts on Booth's passionate affirmation of the "doctrines of grace." In *The Reign of Grace*, Booth seeks to demonstrate from the Scriptures the sovereignty of God in salvation. Yet, Booth did not fall prey to the errors of hyper-Calvinism and the Antinomianism that so often accompanied it. Nevertheless, Booth was a moderate Calvinist, for as Coppenger explains, Booth and Fuller disagreed on the precise application of grace. "Booth went so far as to say that if regeneration precedes believing, men would be in a safe state without coming to Christ" (82). Fuller, however, believed Booth to have confused the warrant to come to Christ with the act of actually coming. "Fuller held that a sinner may have a warrant to come to Christ, but if he is unwilling to exercise it, he cannot receive eternal life in his state of unwillingness" (83). Such fine distinctions became manifested on the issue of the extent of the atonement as well. Nonetheless, though Booth and Fuller disagreed, they remained in general agreement on the basic tenets of Calvinism that held the Particular Baptists together.

If there is one weakness to Coppenger's work, it is the haziness in which he defines hyper-Calvinism. Coppenger observes that Booth was supralapsarian (the decree of election is logically prior to the decree to permit the fall) and Coppenger concludes from this that Booth gave way to hyper-Calvinism (91). However, historically and theologically, supralapsarianism is not synonymous with hyper-Calvinism, nor does the latter necessarily follow from the former. Hyper-Calvinism has typically been characterized by those who accept fatalism and consequently see no reason to evangelize for God will save whom he will save anyway. However, historically Calvinists of the supralapsarian type have rejected fatalism and wholeheartedly affirmed evangelism and missions as God's foreordained means to his predestined ends. Coppenger errs in defining hyper-Calvinism as über-Calvinism instead of a pseudo-Calvinism which draws the inference from God's sovereignty that there is no need for missions. Therefore, to equate the two is neither historically nor theologically accurate.

Coppenger has provided contemporary Baptists with an outstanding treatment of the life and theology of Abraham Booth. Booth's theology was not only staunchly orthodox but characterized by Calvinism's emphasis on the sovereignty of

grace. Thanks to Booth the “grace of God, the doctrine proclaimed so ably by Abraham Booth, is reigning again in modern theological thought” (133).

Matthew Barrett  
Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

***The Challenge of Being Baptist: Owning a Scandalous Past and an Uncertain Future.* By Bill J. Leonard. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010. 162 pages. Paperback, \$24.95.**

***Baptist Questions, Baptist Answers: Exploring Christian Faith.* By Bill J. Leonard. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009. 112 pages. Paperback, \$13.00.**

Respected moderate historian and dean of the Divinity School at Wake Forest University Bill Leonard has never been shy to print his perspective on Baptist self-identity, particularly with respect to the Southern Baptist Convention. Having written *God's Last and Only Hope: The Fragmentation of the Southern Baptist Convention*, *Baptist Ways: A History*, and *Baptists in America* (as well as co-edited the new and interesting *The Acts of the Apostles: Four Centuries of Baptist Interpretation* with Beth Barr, Mikeal Parsons, and Doug Weaver), Leonard is a popular speaker on issues related to Baptist identity. Indeed, his lectures sponsored by Baylor University, the Associated Baptist Press, and the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship were the genesis for *The Challenge of Being Baptist*, which in turn helped give shape to *Baptist Questions, Baptist Answers*. These two books overlap in so many ways that they should be treated in the same review.

*The Challenge of Being Baptist*, while suffering from a few critical flaws, is a very interesting read in that it offers Leonard's answer to the question, “Why would anyone want to be a Baptist?” After finishing the book, the reader may not know, but he or she will know Leonard's agenda for future generations of Baptists—his re-vision of Baptist identity. Leonard's pessimism is understandable but disappointing in that it obscures some valuable insights. He identifies five central concepts that Baptists cannot ignore: Baptist self-consciousness, trends in Baptist polity, Baptist hermeneutics, a theology of conversion, and cooperation. Squished between his overgeneralizations and underdemonstrations are valid concerns that readers should not miss.

Leonard bases this book on his observation that many Baptist churches today “are historically Baptist, but few of their younger members know why or really care” (12). He goes on to say that the basic Baptist principles of Biblicism, conversionism, baptism by immersion, and congregationalism may be uniquely situated to answering the challenges of twenty-first century religion and culture. But he worries that Baptists are losing these principles without knowing it. First, he argues that many Baptists' self-consciousness is based on either their regional identity, their denominational structure, their separatist/independent attitude, or their revivalist culture. Unfortunately, none of these are uniquely Baptist. He encourages individual churches to explore their Baptist heritage for themselves. Second, he worries about structural trends among Baptists that he cannot reconcile with Baptist trends, particularly megachurches and Baptist “bishops.” To Leonard, basic Baptist polity consists of radical congregationalism and associational cooperationalism, and he insists that the societal model better reflects this than the denominational model (more on this

to follow). Third, he accuses Baptists of forgetting their hermeneutic, based largely on the observation that Baptists hold to contradictory systems of Calvinism and Arminianism which has led to subsequent contradictions, the most reprehensible of which being the concurrent hermeneutics of slavery and liberation. He summarizes his argument with the memorable line, "From a historical perspective, Baptists are Biblicists except when they are not. Then they often split" (72). Fourth, Leonard accuses Baptists of being silent about a clear theology of conversion, baptism, and re-baptism. Modern conversionist individualism combined with propositional evangelism has disintegrated Baptist community and confused countless church members about the meaning and purpose of their baptism. Because believers' baptism by immersion is so important to the idea of a believers' church, and consequently Baptist identity, churches cripple themselves by ignoring issues of alien immersion and child baptism. Finally, he encourages churches to return to a societal model, which means that they choose how and with whom to cooperate on any and all ministries. He hopes this will lead to more interdenominationalism and ecumenism, as well as social involvement.

Leonard's keen, if cynical, eye has certainly identified massive concerns for Baptists. If Baptist churches are basing their identity on anything other than Baptist principles, their identity will be generationally conditioned. Furthermore, it is very difficult to see how Baptists can have bishops. Most importantly, the lack of a unifying hermeneutic or theology of conversion is a tremendous obstacle to cooperation and growth. Leonard even blames current polity on exacerbating the problem, including the lack of effective moderators, clergy/laity power blocs, divisions and polarization, and a growing emphasis on individualism. So why would anyone want to be a Baptist? Leonard himself may not even be sure.

Though Leonard does make these strong points in *The Challenge of Being Baptist*, the reader comes away from this book wondering why he chose to publish it. To use the phrase "fish or cut bait," Leonard seems to be quite clearly cutting bait with most Baptists in America, especially those in the South. It very well could be that his accusations are justified, but his associated condescending tone is a barrier to his potential audience. Furthermore, he assumes that his reader has a reasonable familiarity with Baptist history and Reformation history (considering that he believes most young Baptists are ignorant of these very things, to whom exactly is he writing?). But his lack of citations and documentation for many of his generalizations will turn away a more scholarly readership, as well. His historical surveys are useful and engaging, but too brief and limited for scholarly use and too laden with jargon for introductory use. He tries to remain historically neutral, but his biases trickle into his interpretations. Ultimately, *The Challenge of Being Baptist* suffers from over-generalizing, under-demonstrating, and not having an audience.

Those three concerns are not a problem for *Baptist Questions, Baptist Answers*, a format designed for generalizations and with a built-in readership. In it, he follows volumes written by Donald McKim (*Presbyterian Questions, Presbyterian Answers*; incidentally, McKim has recently released a second volume) and F. Belton Joyner, Jr. (*United Methodist Questions, United Methodist Answers*). In some places, he even follows their order of questions. In a simple question-and-answer format that is too vague to be confessional but too broad to be catechetical, he describes who Baptists are, what they believe about God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, man, salvation, the church, the Bible, and theology. His primary resources are confessions of faith printed in Lumpkin's famous compilation and hymns sung in Baptist churches. In

the process, he shares the gospel with his readers, stands on the soapboxes clarified in *The Challenge of Being Baptist*, and takes great concern with his readers' salvation.

*Baptist Questions, Baptist Answers* is a very suitable format for Leonard's tone and purposes because he can only gloss over the various Baptist views. This is something Leonard does well, fairly, and consistently, highlighting shared views on congregationalism, believers' baptism, the authority of Christ, conversionism, and religious liberty. Unfortunately, where Baptists do not agree, Leonard must speak vaguely (as with respect to biblical authority) or universally (as with respect to Baptist views on Calvinism and Arminianism), and the format is too short to allow sufficient explanation.

Indeed, this format leads to a number of significant limitations. Most importantly, it attracts an introductory readership. These readers are not interested in footnotes or documentation, and Leonard does not burden them therewith. Unfortunately, this means that the readers are taking Leonard's word that he is accurately portraying Baptist beliefs. For example, he says, "Debates over the virgin birth continue among certain Baptists, although with perhaps less intensity than in the twentieth century" (22). That seems reasonable, but Leonard offers no data in support. Furthermore, introductory readers are not terribly interested in historic Baptist confessions, which are the only documents Leonard cites (which makes sense considering his profession). They are interested in who Baptists *are*, not who they *were*; considering Leonard's frequent lament that Baptists are historically ignorant, his approach is quite curious. The much more valuable—and significantly more time-consuming—approach would be to survey current confessions of faith with the same purpose. The same is true of his use of hymns, which may or may not be known by many Baptists today, but the reader would certainly not know because Leonard does not identify any of these hymns or define their usage.

Leonard also steps away from his introductory purposes in subtle ways. Every once in a while, he speaks prescriptively instead of descriptively, using words such as "should" and "would do well." He also can speak rather strongly for an introductory audience, saying for example that re-baptism is "surely" taking the Lord's name in vain (69). There are also some places where he chooses odd wording, saying for example, "Some Baptist groups and individuals, no doubt a majority, oppose any homosexual behavior" (91), instead of "A majority of Baptists oppose any homosexual behavior." These subtle elements tend to muddy an otherwise straightforward project.

In summary, Leonard has fired two more literary shots across the bow of Baptists in these two books. Readers should be very concerned with his generalizations and lack of documentary support (or even a helpful list of further resources), but they should not question his Baptist heart. Leonard believes in multiple Baptist traditions—"many ways to be a Baptist" (*The Challenge of Being Baptist*, 38), and the reader does not have to agree with his "way" to appreciate his concern for a Baptist believers' church. However, the introductory readership for which Leonard seems to writing may not know this.

Matt Ward  
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***Understanding Jonathan Edwards: An Introduction to America's Theologian.* Edited by Gerald R. McDermott. New York: Oxford, 2009. 228 + xvii pages. Hardcover, \$99.00.**

The task of introducing the thought of any theologian within a few short pages of a book is a daunting one, compounded exponentially when the subject is Jonathan Edwards. Long heralded as “America’s theologian”, or “America’s Augustine”, Edwards has been a person of much interest and influence since his pastoral days at Northampton during the Great Awakening. The presses continue to burgeon with articles, dissertations, and books at an accelerated rate and Edwards can now even be found in the noted *Cambridge Companion* series. So why the need for another introduction to Edwards?

Gerald McDermott, professor of religion at Roanoke College, Virginia, observes that *Understanding Jonathan Edwards* fills a niche between two general types of books on Edwards: books written by non-scholars to a general audience—helpful, but commonly ignorant of current scholarship and often plagued with inaccuracies and misrepresentations, and books written by scholars which are often only understood by scholars. *Understanding Jonathan Edwards* is the first book produced by Edwards scholars directed to the non-specialist. McDermott is adept at writing on Edwardsean themes in an accessible manner. He is the author of numerous articles and books on Edwards, notably *Jonathan Edwards Confronts the Gods: Christian Theology, Enlightenment Religion, and Non-Christian Faiths*, and most recently *Seeing God: Jonathan Edwards and Spiritual Discernment*.

*Understanding Jonathan Edwards* issued from the papers presented at the May 2007 conference entitled “Jonathan Edwards in Europe” held at Károli Gáspár University, Budapest, Hungary. The volume offers a unique international perspective on Edwards. As expected, familiar Edwardsean scholars such as Harry Stout, Douglas Sweeney, Sang Hyun Lee and others are present along with European scholars including Tibor Fabiny and Miklos Vetö.

The volume begins with a helpful timeline of Edwards’s life followed by sixteen chapters which treat various aspects of Edwards’s life and thought, ending with six pages of further reading and an adequate four page index. McDermott contributes an introduction and conclusion as well as two chapters. Chapters are arranged in a point-counterpoint fashion. Chapters 1 and 2 treat the life and career of Edwards. Ken Minkema, Executive Editor and director of the *Works of Jonathan Edwards* and Jonathan Edwards Center at Yale University, offers an essay in Chapter 1 which focuses on Edwards’s societal context and Edwards as a person.

Chris Chun, Associate Professor of Church History at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, and editor of a volume in the critical edition of *The Works of Andrew Fuller* (forthcoming), responds to Minkema in Chapter 2. Chun notes that Minkema’s assessment of Edwards as “one of the great fountainheads” of the modern mission movement is incomplete if Edwards’s *The Life of David Brainerd* is considered as his sole contribution. Chun supplements Minkema’s assessment with two additional treatises through which Edwards exerted great missiological impact upon Particular Baptists: *Freedom of the Will* and *Humble Attempt*. Chun notes the appropriation that Andrew Fuller makes in his *Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation* of Edwards distinction between natural and moral inability. Fuller develops Edwards’s views to their “maximum potential” and applied them to “the formulation of a precise theology, which became the basis for what was to become known as the Modern

Missionary Movement.”

The following chapters address the topics of Edwards and revival, the Bible, biblical typology, beauty, his literary life, philosophy, and world religions. McDermott concludes with a discussion of Edwards’s continuing relevance for today. *Understanding Jonathan Edwards* compares favorably with recent overviews or introductions to Edwards’s life and thought. When placed along side *The Cambridge Companion to Jonathan Edwards* and *The Princeton Companion to Jonathan Edwards* the similarities are obvious, due in part to the fact that some of the same Edwardsean scholars contributed to each volume. Beyond authorship, all three volumes share significant overlap in themes and structure, yet the *Cambridge* and *Princeton* volumes differ from McDermott’s volume with their extensive footnotes and general density.

It is due to the points noted above, along with the helpful point-counterpoint format and international scope, that *Understanding Jonathan Edwards* shines. The non-specialist should find McDermott’s volume an unintimidating, illuminating, and enjoyable read. The contributors to this fine introduction have produced a beautifully-executed engagement with the thought of one of Christendom’s greatest luminaries.

Rob Boss

Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

### Studies in Ethics and Philosophy

***The Triumph of God over Evil: Theodicy for a World of Suffering.* By William Hasker. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2008. 228 pages. Softcover, \$20.00.**

William Hasker’s *The Triumph of God over Evil* offers readers a unique, highly accessible, lucid attempt at providing Christians a justification of evil in the world. Instead of trying to offer a theodicy for skeptics, Hasker wishes to provide a theodicy for those who already embrace the main tenets of Christian orthodoxy. But, as an open theist, Hasker’s spin on theodicy is driven in part by his willingness to jettison one key concept traditionally held by Christians—that God possesses exhaustive knowledge of the future.

Hasker demonstrates a keen awareness of the contemporary literature concerning the problem of evil, both in its logical forms, as well as evidential forms (which he discusses in chapter seven). Hasker begins by clarifying his intention, which is to provide a theodicy rather than a defense against the problem of evil. As such, he seeks to move beyond skeptical theistic defenses and free will defenses with his project. Hasker carefully distinguishes philosophical problems of evil from existential (or pastoral) problems of evil. He notes that the crisis of faith that often ensues from serious tragedy causes the deep search for a justification of evil while simultaneously (although perhaps unintentionally) stifling the search for truth.

Regarding the Holocaust, Hasker relays the quote attributed to Irving Greenberg, who said, “No statement, theological or otherwise, should be made that would not be credible in the presence of the burning children” (22). Evils such as the Holocaust lead Hasker to discuss various post-Holocaust theodicies. He explains that some people employ statements such as Greenberg’s in an effort to undermine genuine attempts to refute atheistic arguments motivated by the problem of evil. Greenberg’s statement suggests that anyone who would dare venture a philosophical

response to the problem of evil doesn't adequately feel the moral seriousness of the issues. "The speaker thereby claims for him- or herself a moral seriousness which is supposedly lacking in the opponent" (23). Hasker acknowledges the seriousness of evil, especially evils such as the Holocaust, but he insists (rightly) that attempting to provide a philosophical theodicy does not entail the conflation of the existential problem of evil with the logical/evidential problem of evil. That is, there is a place for weeping with those who weep (cf. C.S. Lewis, *A Grief Observed*) and expounding the difficulties of Christian theology in the face of philosophical problems of evil (cf. C.S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*) (22).

Describing John Roth's theology of protest (31–41), Hasker writes, "In many respects it [Roth's theodicy] is surprisingly traditional and orthodox" (35). But orthodoxy is not something that comes in degrees. Even if Arius walked the straight and narrow concerning other matters of doctrine, his heretical Christology was enough to earn him the label "heterodox". A theological system either is, or is not, orthodox. Roth's insistence that the Holocaust demands that "human repentance will have to be matched by God's" entails an outright denial of divine holiness. Surely this is enough to label such a position heterodox. In all fairness, Hasker ultimately rejects this position, but I find it surprising that he could find anything even remotely Christian about a theodicy which cites approvingly of David Blumenthal, a Jewish theologian of protest, who "crafts prayers in which, after repenting of their sins, the congregation asks God to repent of his sins." Continuing on to discuss the theodicy of D.Z. Phillips, Hasker agrees that justifications for evil relying on soul-making theodicies fail, for it won't do to have the Good Samaritan saying, "Thank you, God, for another opportunity to be responsible" when coming across a victim of robbers (48).

The book continues with stimulating discussions about the Plantinga-Mackie exchange and the success of Plantinga's freewill defense against the logical problem of evil (55–69). Hasker goes on to reject the so-called "best of all possible worlds" theodicy first promulgated by Leibniz. Hasker bases his rejection of this thesis on contemporary arguments, and his interaction with this literature again displays his profound awareness of a vast amount of contemporary philosophy of religion. Nonetheless, even if attempts to defend the coherence of such an idea prove successful, Hasker's open theism prevents him from accepting the best of all possible worlds theodicy, for invariably free creatures play a creative role in determining which world God has actualized, and (given open theism) God could not know those decisions in advance.

Chapter five introduces the meat of Hasker's free will theodicy. He disagrees with both Henry Morris and William Dembski, who argue that natural evil is the result of human sin (103–09). Instead, Hasker maintains that natural evils are the result of certain structural features of our world, and those structural features contribute to the goodness of our world in such a way that this "goodness" outweighs the negatives brought about by natural evils.

In chapter six, Hasker sets out his arguments concerning the value of free will (154–56). He suggests that the evils that result from our possession of free will do not outweigh the benefits of having genuine freedom. Hasker takes it as obvious that it would be better to parent an autonomous child (even if not perfectly predictable) rather than a robot-like, perfectly controllable child because of the genuine joy that it would bring the parent even amidst some suffering and pain. By parallel reasoning, Hasker concludes that it is better for God to create a world with free agents rather



than a world of robots.

But free will—which Hasker finds so valuable—isn't the solution to the problem of evil. In fact, by Hasker's admission, free will is the very cause of all the problems. If the analogy concerning parenthood holds, it must have been well within God's ability to create a world without free will—thus a world in which there was no Holocaust. As both Roth and Phillips suggest, if the Holocaust was the result of God's endowing us with the "gift" of significant freedom, then "bestowing free will on the creatures was simply too great a risk and should not have been done" (37). This is all the more true if God, despite his lack of knowledge of what *would* happen, possessed prior to creation at least the knowledge of what *could* happen (i.e., knowledge of all modalities, which is exactly the sort of knowledge Hasker and other open theists maintain God does have). Furthermore, Hasker's parenthood analogy shows the value of free will for the parent, not the child. But the problem of evil is a problem for us—we are the victims of evil, even if we are also the perpetrators. Besides this oversight, as a parent, given the eschatological consequences of sin, I would absolutely prefer to create my children without free will, for such would guarantee that my children would be saved from the *everlasting* terrors of hell. So, while free will seems to provide an adequate defense against the logical problem of evil, much more is needed before we can conclude that free will provides an adequate theodicy.

Of course, it isn't surprising that Hasker sees such value in free will, given that he is willing to deny divine foreknowledge in order to preserve it. When outlining the theology that informs his theodicy, he repeatedly qualifies open theism with the adjective "orthodox", suggesting that mere assertion is enough to guarantee the outcome. Of course, if one is inclined to see openness theology as orthodox, perhaps one will be more inclined to see other compromises with traditional doctrines as not-so-problematic. In conclusion, I felt that Hasker's open theism creates as many problems for a free will theodicy as it solves, but space precludes a more detailed accounting of the impact of open theism on theodicy, the doctrine of God, or Christian theology more generally. Nonetheless, in spite of those concerns, Hasker's book is an important work that deserves that attention of not only professional philosopher/theologian, but also pastors who are likely to face open theism with increasing regularity as it continues to grow in popularity.

Benjamin H. Arbour  
University of Bristol

***What Does the Lord Require? A Guide for Preaching and Teaching Biblical Ethics.* By Walter C. Kaiser Jr. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009. Softcover, \$22.00.**

The book title indicates that it is a work written to address ethical subjects with the intention of being able to teach and preach on those contemporary moral concerns. Walter Kaiser is a conservative Old Testament scholar of renown, who is also well known for his poignant biblical insights, careful commentary, and good humor in his public speaking.

This volume is a companion piece to that of Kerby Anderson's *Christian Ethics in Plain Language* (Nelson, 2005), which is a work cited in almost every chapter. The difference in the two works is that Kaiser adds more biblical insight, utilizing an analysis of one specific passage to Nelson's broader based moral discourses. The typical presentation in each chapter by Kaiser is that of briefly presenting a moral

problem (which Nelson presents in more detail), giving an outline for teaching and/or preaching on the selected passage, and then developing the outline with a mix of biblical commentary and practical application. He also adds a brief bibliography and some discussion questions at the end of each chapter.

The subjects that are addressed include contemporary moral concerns such as media, entertainment, and pornography; cohabitation and fornication; abortion and stem cell research; genetic research and artificial reproduction; animal “rights” and factory farms; and care for the environment. Some of the concerns that have a more familiar biblical ring to them are those of the poor, oppressed, and orphans; gambling and greed; adultery; divorce; homosexuality; crime and capital punishment; suicide, infanticide, and euthanasia; alcoholism and drugs; civil disobedience; wealth, possessions, and economics; and war and peace.

The style of presentation is decidedly conservative and evangelical. Kaiser tends to give a description of the moral problem without particularly offering any detailed solutions. Following the presentation of the problem, he offers a biblical principle to guide the ethical thinking and moral problem solving of the reader. This approach does not always provide the specific guidance that evangelicals are seeking, because it leaves a gap between the biblical concepts and how to manage the moral quandaries being addressed. Thus, reading Kaiser with Nelson is a healthy approach to address biblically these moral concerns.

William E. Goff

Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

### Studies in Evangelism and Missions

***Christian Encounters with Iran: Engaging Muslim Thinkers after the Revolution.* By Sasan Tavassoli. London: I.B. Tauris, 2011. 308 pages. Hardcover, \$96.00.**

Sasan Tavassoli, a former Shi’i Sufi born in Iran and current i2 Ministries professor and minister in the Presbyterian Church of Iran in America, writes *Christian Encounters with Iran: Engaging Muslim Thinkers after the Revolution*, a work focused on post-revolutionary Iranian Islamic intellectual thought as it relates to Christianity. Tavassoli desires to: 1) inform English readers about modern Shi’i thought as it relates to Christianity; 2) assess the achievements of Iranian Muslim dialog with Christians; and 3) demonstrate that Shi’i Muslims in Iran are open to engagement with Christians (9). His thesis is that since the Islamic revolution of 1979, changes are occurring among Iranian Muslim intellectuals regarding Christianity that allow for more open and honest discussion.

Tavassoli divides *Christian Encounters* into six parts. Chapters one and six are the introduction and conclusion, respectively. Chapter two provides an overview of Iranian attitude toward Christianity. It addresses the history of Christianity in Iran and notes some of the Muslim dynasties that helped Iran connect with Christianity (Safavid with Shah Abbas and the Armenian Christians, for example). The chapter also attends to some of the theological, cultural, historical, and political influences that aid in shaping Iranians’ understanding of Christianity. Chapter three discusses Iranian Islamic publications that concern Christianity. These distributions fall into one of three general categories: traditional/polemic, objective/descriptive, and comparative/dialogical. Chapter four summarizes inter-faith discourse between Iranian

Muslims and Christians worldwide. Much of this chapter centers around four academic organizations that have fostered dialog with Christianity; three in Tehran, one in Qom; two governmental, two non-governmental. Chapter five focuses on three Iranian Shi'i intellectuals that have taken an active role in Muslim-Christian involvement. All three are at the cutting edge of progressive Islamic thought.

While there is some discussion of the negative characteristics of Iranian society and Iranian Muslim intolerance toward Christianity, the majority of the work centers on the advances made in Iranian Muslim-Christian dialog since 1979. Tavassoli's intent to focus on the positive aspects of Iranian Muslim discussions with Christians (particularly during the presidency of Mohammad Khatami) marks the overall tone of *Christian Encounters*. Tavassoli explains that some Iranian thinkers' interpretation of the Qur'an and Hadith promotes communication with Christians (19, 106). He notes some intellectuals believe that Islam and Christianity can unite against common ills, such as secularism and globalization (108). He mentions similarities in doctrinal themes between Shi'i Muslims and Christians, Roman Catholics in particular (21). Tavassoli also shows that bridges are being made into Western culture and philosophy (22). He quotes part of Khatami's interview with CNN in 1998 when he shared his view on America's foundation and religion: "In my [Khatami's] opinion, one of the biggest tragedies in human history is this confrontation between religion and liberty which is to the detriment of religion, liberty, and the human beings who deserve to have both. The Puritans desired a system which combined the worship of God and human dignity and freedom. . . . Therefore, the Anglo-American approach to religion relies on the principle that religion and liberty are consistent and compatible. I believe that if humanity is looking for happiness, it should combine religious spirituality with the virtues of liberty" (38).

Tavassoli's irenic tone toward Iranian Muslim intellectuals portrays them as thinkers who desire to gain a better understanding of Christianity. Many Muslim Iranian intellectuals desire to teach Christianity accurately, and not just from an Islamic perspective. This includes Christian doctrines that are controversial for Islam such as the resurrection of Christ, divine sonship, and the Trinity (71, 112). Of these doctrines, interestingly, the belief that one Iranian scholar sees as the most divisive and irreconcilable is the doctrine of original sin (82). Within this largely liberal tradition of Iranian Muslim thought, there is an aura of acceptance of divergent beliefs. A thought pattern appears to be developing where Christianity could be seen as a way to salvation—Tavassoli notes this is seen through a traditional understanding of Islam that states all prophets have brought the same message (127). While this is helpful in some regards, Tavassoli indicates correctly that a promotion of pluralism lessens the need to focus on Christian distinctives (128) and thus could diminish the very dialog Iranian Muslim intellectuals intend to promote.

Being Iranian himself, Tavassoli understands acutely the importance of a non-confrontational style to his people's psyche. Treating those whom he encounters with respect and equality seems to have provided the work with its greatest strength: through his research and interaction with Iranian Muslim intellectuals, he has helped make available to Westerners data on institutions, publications, and people associated with Muslim-Christian discourse in Iran. The organizations Tavassoli mentions—The Organization of Culture and Islamic Relations (OCIR), The International Center for Dialogue Among Civilizations (ICDAC), The Institute for Interreligious Dialogue (IID), and The Center for Religious Studies (CRS)—all promote, to varying degrees, discussion with Christians. While there are inherent

weaknesses in some of their strategies (126–28), these government-sanctioned institutions that arose after the revolution (after 1990) show the interest Iranians have in religious discussion. The publications he references are valuable, too. The volume of material written by Iranians on Christianity and the Western works being translated to Farsi by Iranians reveal an openness toward dialog with Christianity not seen in many Muslim countries. Again, as Tavassoli notes, there are concerns in what is being written and translated (85), but works from Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff, Augustine, Aquinas, and evangelical scholar-theologian Alistair McGrath are being translated. Tavassoli's discussion of Abdol Karim Soroush, Mostafa Malekian, and Mojtabeh Shabestari, is noteworthy. They are Iranian Shi'i thinkers trained in Qom and have an acute knowledge of Islam, while at the same time understand Christianity. Each is influential, each has taught courses in theology, and each has published extensively. Each of them is fluent in English (130) and willing to converse with Christians. Tavassoli's discussion of these people and themes corrects a misunderstanding of Iran: Iran is not an exclusively monolithic, fundamentalist religious state. Many opinions exist within the framework of the Islamic Republic.

There is much to like about this work, but two matters are problematic. The title, *Christian Encounters with Iran*, is a bit of a misnomer. The piece is not necessarily about Christian encounters with Iran. There is no mention of Christian missionary endeavors toward Iran or the current exponential growth of the Iranian Christian church inside Iran. Little attention is given to the current indigenous Iranian Christian communities (Assyrian and Armenian) or persecution of Iranian Christians. While these concepts are not the focus of the book (and thus it is understandable that they are not referenced), the title should perhaps read: *Iranian Encounters with Christianity*, a more accurate depiction of Tavassoli's theme of Muslim-Christian dialog in Iran. More noteworthy, Tavassoli does not define the term "Christian" or explain the type of Christians he is referencing. *Christian Encounters* is a piece dealing with Iranian Muslim thinkers' interaction with a certain type of Christianity—orthodox (biblical) Christianity—one that is not inherited or passed on from one generation to another. Contrary to Islam, one must convert to Christianity; no one is born a Christian. Perhaps the reason a definition is not mentioned is that the author assumes others know this distinctive, or that a too narrow or a too broad definition could detract from his desire to show the overall breadth and depth of Muslim-Christian dialog in Iran. Nonetheless, some type of explanation and clarification would have been helpful.

Iranians, even at the highest level of government, are interested in engaging Christianity. Since Iran is fast becoming an international power, and it has a history of religious tolerance dating to the days of Cyrus the Great, much can be learned about Muslim Iranian thinkers' understanding of Christianity. Part of a series published by I.B. Tauris that delves into the history and culture of Iran, *Christian Encounters* is a fascinating look into the complex scheme of Muslim-Christian dialog with Iranians since the revolution. Tavassoli provides the reader with a wealth of information, and much can be researched further. Originally a Ph.D. dissertation, this piece provides careful documentation of its sources. Written well and temperate throughout, those interested in Iran, particularly Muslim-Christian dialog in Iran, would do well to read this work.

Philip O. Hopkins  
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***The Convergent Church: Missional Worshipers in an Emerging Culture.* By Mark Liederbach and Alvin L. Reid. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2009. 302 pages. Softcover, \$19.99.**

Much has been written in recent days about the Emerging Church Movement (ECM) in all its various forms. While the leaders of this movement continue to publish works defending their positions, critics have feverishly critiqued, evaluated, and dismissed their volumes for a number of theological and methodological reasons. In this volume, Mark Liederbach and Alvin Reid, both of whom are professors at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, attempt to fashion a *via media* between the proponents and the critics. They write, "It is our conviction . . . that while many of the ECM's criticisms and critiques have validity, there is a better way forward that will take us beyond the overreaction to the real and perceived failures of the modern Conventional Church. This way forward involves listening to the critiques and ideas of the ECM while being careful not to reject the necessary foundations or truths of the gospel message" (21–22). The authors hope that this convergence of two streams of thought—the emerging church and the conventional church—will bring about a more effective and biblically sound "convergent church."

The book is divided into three main sections which, on some level, could almost be read independently of each other as long as one has read the introduction. In the first section comprising four chapters, the authors take their readers on a journey through the development of modernity into its transition to postmodernity. The book provides a basic overview of the thought and influence of Descartes, Hume, Kant, Wittgenstein, Foucault, and Derrida. While the overall nature of this historical review is fairly basic, it certainly provides any reader without a background in philosophy the context from which to see how contemporary culture reached postmodernism. Then the authors demonstrate how different ideas along the way found their way into the church. Finally, this section concludes with an evaluation of the prevalent characteristics of the ECM, including vintage faith, missional emphasis, holistic orthopraxy, communal authenticity, contextual relevance, and postevangelical movement.

The second section of the book provides a discussion on missional worship. These three chapters consider three distinct ideas that serve as a foundation to answering the criticisms coming from the emerging church. The first is the concept of life as worship. In this chapter, the authors challenge their readers to view every thought and deed as worship. The end goal is that the lives of Christians would reflect the glory of God in every aspect. The next concept to challenge the readers is to view Christianity as a movement and, as a result, be moved to the mission of spreading the gospel message. The final idea is that doctrine serves as a foundation for both worship and mission. This is the authors' most direct attempt at redirecting the drifting tendencies of the contemporary church. They argue that not only has the emerging church sacrificed doctrine at points but that evangelicals as a group suffer from doctrinal illiteracy among many of their people.

The final section of the book considers the idea of living out missional worship. It is in this section that the authors attempt to place some practical application to the concepts they have discussed in the previous chapters. The first two chapters of this section are also the most helpful of the book. In them, the authors discuss the subject of ethics. They propose that the two common streams within Christian ethics—deontology and virtue—need not be mutually exclusive; rather, they propose

that the goal of Christian ethics should be a life of virtue informed by deontological commands and content, resulting in a deontological virtue ethic. In the second chapter on ethics, the authors challenge their readers to reconsider social justice issues apart from the Social Gospel movement. It is in this chapter that many within “conventional” churches will encounter the struggle between being the church that cares for its own and the church that cares for the poor, widows, and orphans. The final three chapters of the book discuss the concepts of evangelism and discipleship. In these chapters, the readers are asked to evaluate their traditional methodologies of evangelism and discipleship for the sake of developing the most effective means possible to make disciples and teach them everything Christ has commanded.

As with any book written by multiple authors, there are times when the various chapters of this book appear to be somewhat disjointed from each other and do not follow a consistent theme. Even with that in mind, there are certainly some significant contributions made by this book. For the average reader with no background in the history of Western thought or philosophy, the historical survey of modernism and postmodernism in the first section is invaluable for understanding why the church is in her current position. The chapter entitled, “Converging on Ethics, Part 2: Who’s Afraid of the Social Gospel?” is probably worth the price of the book. It challenges and convicts both the conventional and the emergent approach to ethics. Overall, this volume is a worthy read and would make a good addition to the library of anyone addressing the problems of the contemporary church.

Evan Lenow  
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***Redeemed by Fire: The Rise of Popular Christianity in Modern China.* By Lian Xi. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010. 292 pages. Hardcover, \$45.00.**

Although we will never know the exact figures, modern China has experienced amazing growth in the number of Protestant Christians during the twentieth century. Lian Xi’s valuable book postulates that this growth came largely because the “alien faith preached and presided over by foreign missionaries” was transformed “into an indigenous religion of the masses.” (2) Xi unveils modern Chinese Christianity in his carefully researched and written book, providing a much-needed overview of the rise of the indigenous church in the Middle Kingdom.

Xi begins his investigation with a brief historical treatment of early Christianity in China, tracing the religion from its initial introduction, through the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, and culminating in the Boxer Uprising. Having introduced us to his opinion on the failure of mission-directed, western Christianity to provide significant results, the author quickly turns to the major, indigenous Christian sects that arose after the start of the twentieth century, examining the history, method, and extension of these Chinese adaptations of Christianity. Weaving together his own research with unpublished materials, Xi provides chapters on the True Jesus Church, Watchman Nee and the Little Flock, and the underground church under the Chinese Communist Party, to name just a few of his topics. Xi contends that one cannot understand modern indigenous Chinese Christianity without understanding the pentecostal, chiliastic roots of Chinese folk Christianity, which he deems the “defining feature of popular Christianity in . . . twentieth-century China” (47).

Lian Xi has gathered a large amount of disparate material into a single volume,

attempting to demonstrate why apocalypticism/millenarianism has flourished in the Chinese Christian church. The author's handling of the Chinese sources alone makes this volume of immense value to scholars in the field. Xi seems to have analyzed all the most relevant scholarship in the field of study, and his laudatory effort has provided scholars with tantalizing hints for further research. The addition of an exhaustive bibliography of relevant source material, coupled with a glossary providing *pinyin* and *hanzi*, make this a resource for every person interested in this field.

In many ways, *Redeemed by Fire* echoes the thesis expounded by Norman Cohn in his 1957 work, *The Pursuit of the Millennium*. According to Cohn, "eschatology came to exercise a powerful and enduring fascination" for European culture, when "needy and discontented masses were captured by some millennial prophet." Following the basic theme of Cohn's research, Xi applies the British historian's interpretation to his own reading of Chinese religious history. Xi compares the "Great Harmony" teaching of Confucianism (83), the White Lotus tradition, and the Eight Trigrams (73–74; 237), to the developments experienced in western Europe during times of cultural stress. Cohn ended his famous work by observing that the western world had yet to see "what happens when a paranoiac mass movement captures political power." For Xi, Christianity may provide the Chinese answer to Cohn's question, even if Communism does not.

By relying heavily on Chinese sources, and particularly on post-Liberation governmental documents, Xi sometimes falls victim to assuming the veracity of the "party line." For example, he generally presents orthodox Christianity, for him a representative of the "foreign domination" of the Chinese church, as oppressive. Heterodox Christianity, found in varying degrees within the indigenous millenarian movements, he terms "indigenous," and praiseworthy. In fact, early in the book Xi informs us that by the simple addition of Christian terminology, heterodox millenarian movements became "Christian." By positing that all indigenous movements were positive developments in creating an autonomous Chinese Christian church, Xi obfuscates the very definition of "Christian." Thus, the repeated condemnation of developing millenarian sects by those within the mainstream of Christian orthodoxy, becomes simply the work of western minions of a "foreign religion" as the investigation unfolds. Often, terminologies found within these unsympathetic sources leads the author to use terms such as "fundamentalist" (110), "proselytizing" (rather than "evangelizing," 17), and "eschatology" (168), without providing adequate conventional definitions.

Laying aside the small criticisms voiced above, a reviewer would be remiss in not giving *Redeemed by Fire* its proper accolades. Lian Xi's work fills a tremendous void for scholars of missionary history and indigenous church growth in China, as well as those studying millenarian revolts around the world. This work will continue to occupy a central place in the ongoing discussion of the growth of Protestant Christianity in China for some time to come.

J.L. Williams Jr.  
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

### Studies in Preaching and Pastoral Ministries

***Christ-Centered Worship: Letting the Gospel Shape Our Practice.* By Bryan Chapell. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009. 320 pages. Hardcover, \$24.99.**

The important subject of congregational worship has received a great deal of attention in recent years from many distinct perspectives; in *Christ-Centered Worship*, Bryan Chapell (*Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon* [Baker Books, 1994]; president of Covenant Theological Seminary) offers a conservative Presbyterian viewpoint, arguing that every church that truly understands and rightly holds the gospel of Jesus Christ will naturally gravitate to the particular pattern of worship he describes, concluding that “if our worship structures are to tell [the gospel] story consistently, then there must be certain aspects of our worship that remain consistent” (85), namely the individual’s gospel experience.

In the first part of the book, Chapell seeks to prove that key historic liturgies and biblical passages describe an essentially uniform approach to worship. The historic liturgies he chooses are those of the Roman Catholic Church (pre-Trent), Martin Luther, John Calvin, Westminster, and founding Covenant President Robert Rayburn. The key side-thesis in this section is the proposed deficiency in Westminster’s focus on right thought above right experience and Rayburn’s desire to reincorporate revivalist elements of authentic worship therein. With respect to the biblical data, he focuses on gospel worship (Isa 6), Sinai worship (Deut 5), Temple worship (2 Chron 5–7), spiritual worship (Rom 11–15), and eschatological worship (Rev 4–21). From these examples, he determines a common progression of adoration, confession, assurance, thanksgiving, petition, instruction, communion, charge, and blessing (118), which just happens to be the same elements of the individual’s gospel experience (99). He argues that the gospel is a superior organizing principle to worship than other well-meaning concepts such as “Trinity, sacrifice, covenant loyalty, community, kingdom, synagogue, worship, ecclesial catholicity, early church continuity” (142). The second part of the book is a more detailed description of the components (or resources) of gospel worship consisting primarily of defenses and examples of his proposed elements.

There is much to commend *Christ-Centered Worship* to a general readership. Writing with the warm and comfortable tone of authors such as Robert Webber and Harold Best, it is easily accessible to almost anyone, and its basic premise is very meaningful. Christian churches should be intentional about the way they presume to approach God in worship, and it is very hard to find fault with a unifying principle of the gospel of Jesus Christ! Churches should be as intentional about their confession of sin, personal and corporate repentance, and thanksgiving for forgiveness as they are about adoration and preaching (if indeed they are “intentional” about those times in the first place). They should heed well Chapell’s sections on the recovery of carefully prepared Scripture readings as well as redemptive expository preaching.

The primary concerns with *Christ-Centered Worship* have to do with its basic argument and organization, which unfortunately muddies its overall conclusions. In short, Chapell starts with the historic liturgies and works backwards to the Bible. Unfortunately, his choice of historic liturgies includes a pre-Trent liturgy of his own creation, a largely unsuccessful Westminster liturgy, and a heretofore invisible Rayburn liturgy, and completely ignores a vast range of others. Also, his biblical analysis (which does not address 1 Corinthians 14 at all) is laced with frequent hedges such



as, “I do not mean to imply that Scripture intends” (103). Such selectivity strongly indicates an agenda. This is even more evident in the gap between his proposed “aspects” and “components” of Christian worship identified in the first part and the elements he actually defines in the second part.

In short, *Christ-Centered Worship* is a helpful resource for a church leader who wants a fresh look at the structure of congregational worship. But it is neither a thorough overview of historic worship practices, nor a careful study of the Bible, but only a presentation of one man’s opinions. It is a better alternative to no reflection on the practice of worship, to be sure, but not an ultimate reference.

Matt Ward

Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***The Early Preaching of Karl Barth: Fourteen Sermons with Commentary.* By William Willimon. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009. 171 pages. Paperback, \$25.00.**

In *The Early Preaching of Karl Barth*, William Willimon has compiled fourteen sermons preached by Barth during his pastorate at Safenwil followed by Willimon’s own critique of the homiletical practice of young Barth. This era was definitive in Barth’s life as he was in the process of making his break from the classical Liberalism under which he had been trained, resulting in the development of his own dialectical theology for which he would become known.

As wisdom is justified by her children, so is a theology justified by its sermons. In this compilation the reader will gain an insightful glance into the inner struggle of Barth as his sermons slowly betray his learned theology. The earliest sermons were the obvious productions of an intellectual liberal, focused on the problems of the day and how a better humanity would be able to overcome any challenge.

However, as Barth simultaneously wrote a commentary on Romans and wrestled with the frustration of the non-transforming message of Liberalism, he eventually became bound to expositional preaching. Barth’s struggle with his evolving theology becomes most evident in his sermon from Romans 12:1–2 delivered on March 3, 1918, only a few months before the publication of his Romans commentary. By the final sermon delivered in December of 1920, Barth had moved from anthropological to Christological centrism.

Though one gains much insight into Barth as a preacher, the focus of *The Early Preaching of Barth* is Willimon’s commentary that follows each sermon. Willimon is equally complimentary and condemnatory to Barth’s early preaching. He at times holds forth Barth as the model homiletician. Barth’s sermon from Matthew 9:14–15 is said to be “up-front and even exuberant in its apparent supposition that here are thoughts that no one has ever had—before listening to the sermon! Well done, you prophetic troubler of Israel!” (110). Contrarily, Willimon says of Barth, “He assumes too much for his listeners, is far too subtle in his exposition, and is too abstract in his treatment of a biblical text that bristles with corporeal vividness and stirring exhortation” (55).

Though Willimon offers beneficial contextual commentary surrounding each sermon, his attempt to use Barth’s homiletical mistakes as criticism for current well known preachers, including Rick Warren and Joel Osteen, require overreaching. The criticisms may be accurate, but they seem misplaced.

However, many developing pastors will find kinship with Barth as he fails to remain faithful to the text in an attempt to be relevant to the circumstances of culture. Any experienced pastor who blushes at the reminder of his own first sermons will be encouraged by young Barth's failed efforts, providing hope for improvement.

*The Early Preaching of Barth* should be read by those who proclaim the glorious mysteries of Christ if for no other reason than to see that a faulty theology leaves the pastor with no message and the people with no hope. Pragmatics must finally give way to conviction. The sermons that are birthed reveal the theology from whence they came. A discouraged pastor and a hopeless congregation are poor justifications for a weak theology. Barth's early preaching is an historical illustration of this truth; a lesson for all who preach.

John B. Mann

Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***The Lost Sermons of Scottish Baptist Peter Grant. Transcribed and Edited by Terry L. Wilder. Mountain Home, AR: BorderStone, 2010. 218 pages. Softcover. \$10.95.***

Though Peter Grant was once of the most influential preachers in early eighteenth century Scotland, many contemporary evangelicals are unaware of his preaching ministry. In Scotland, Grant's Gaelic (a predominant language in the Scottish Highlands) hymns still provide Scottish Baptists exposure to the evangelistic thought to this pastor/ itinerant preacher. However, the present volume affords readers on both sides of the Atlantic an encounter of the preaching of the Baptist pastor from the Scottish Highlands. In addition to the sermons, the volume includes a helpful, though brief, preface by Donald Meek, Retired Professor of Gaelic Studies that gives a glimpse of the stature of Peter Grant among his eighteenth-century Scottish hearers and an Afterword by Michael Haykin providing a timely reminder of the ongoing legacy of the evangelistic preacher. Terry Wilder adds his own helpful introduction to Grant's ministry in Grantown-on-Spey, which Wilder describes as strictly Baptist and as "warm-hearted, evangelical Calvinism" (viii). Wilder also notes that in Grant's sermons he "proclaimed salvation found only in God's grace in Christ, warned against sin, preached judgment and wrath to come for the unrepentant sinner, and also described heaven's glories" (viii). Grant's sermons are reflective of his pastoral ministry of over forty years to the Baptists in Grantown-on-Spey.

The sermons themselves are actually sermon briefs versus full manuscripts and were probably all recorded by the church clerk rather than produced in writing by Grant himself. The collection comprises over forty sermons from the year 1851 and a few selections from the following spring. Wilder arranges the sermons chronologically, thereby giving the reader some sense of how the congregation would have received the sermons in the first hearing.

Among the sermons, Grant preached a cluster on Matthew 12–16 during 1851. In these sermons, Grant contended for the souls of his hearers. He particularly exhorted them in the areas of hypocrisy noted in the Gospel texts. He distinguished between hypocrites and true believers by how they respond to a truth that rebukes their sinful hearts. He warned, "When hypocrites are made known, it gives an unpardonable offence . . . just because it sends a stab to their heart." A true child of God will receive the rebuke of the Lord's truth (69). In a later sermon, he continues his

pleas against the hardened heart. He pleads, "We should see the necessity of being born again. Unless God changes our heart, it never shall see heaven . . . So unless the Lord converts us, we of necessity must go to hell" (77). Grant returned to the theme of the necessity of salvation drawing on both Old and New Testament texts. In November 1851, he preached a two-sermon series on preparing to meet God from Amos 4 (123, 129). These gospel appeals were a constant feature of Grant's sermons. Since there are no indices to sort the sermons by theme or biblical text, the contemporary reader might find that simply reading through the sermons in order (perhaps even devotionally) an apt way to be exposed to the preaching of this passionate, Scottish Baptist pastor.

Jason K. Lee  
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary