

CONCERNING  
HUMANITY



SOUTHWESTERN  
JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY

## *Book Reviews*

### **Biblical Studies**

***Jesus, the Temple, and the Coming Son of Man: A Commentary on Mark 13.* By Robert H. Stein. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2014. 160 pages. Paperback. \$18.00.**

Robert H. Stein, senior professor of New Testament interpretation at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, has a career-long interest in the Gospel of Mark. His dissertation dealt with Mark and redaction criticism. Through the years he has authored a number of articles on Marcan studies. More recently, he wrote an excellent volume on Mark in the Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament in 2008.

The current volume is a helpful commentary that takes the reader through the steps of a careful, conservative interpretation of the most difficult passage in Mark: chapter 13. This is often called “The Little Apocalypse” or “The Olivet Discourse” (although the latter title is more often given to Matthew 24).

This reader appreciates Stein’s attestations that: (1) there is “strong and convincing” proof of Marcan authorship of this Gospel (39), (2) there are clearly no post-70 AD elements in Mark 13, and the missing elements attest the Gospel was written pre-70 AD (35), (3) Marcan geography is correct (51), (4) Mark’s historical narrative is truthful—that he was a conservative editor of Jesus’ tradition (48), and (5) most relevant to this book: Mark faithfully recorded Jesus’ words to His Disciples in Mark 13, and this was not simply a Marcan creation. Stein provides a good brief overview of the three quests for the historical Jesus, a subject with which every student of the New Testament ought to be familiar (19–36). He also offers a valuable explanation of the warning against over-allegorizing of parables, showing the best way to interpret that genre as well as listing the different types of parables Jesus used (133).

One can easily cut to the chase and read the very helpful three-page chapter eight, which is Stein’s annotated interpretation of Mark 13 (136–38). However, the book is a fairly quick read, and it is greatly beneficial to let Stein take the reader through each interpretive step leading up to chapter 8. He says verses 1–23 refer to the coming destruction of the temple (which occurred in 70 AD), and he gives nine reasons for this assessment (66–69). He believes verses 24–27 refer to Christ’s return. Then the two parables refer to each future event again. The parable of the fig tree in verses 28–31 refers to the fall of the Temple, and the parable on watchfulness in verses 32–37 refers to Christ’s return.

In interpreting eschatological Scripture, there is much debate and disagreement—even among conservative scholars. In interpreting Mark 13 and Matthew 24 there are almost as many interpretive schemas as there are scholars. However, everyone greatly benefits when a scholar of Stein’s expertise leads the reader through a careful, thoughtful exegesis of the text. So, one does not need to agree with all of Stein’s conclusions to appreciate his excellent work and to benefit from reading his interpretation of the text.

Sometimes one can disagree with an idea while still appreciating it as interesting and thought provoking. For instance, Stein believes the best interpretation of the abomination of desolation (Mark 13:8) was the sacrilegious actions of the Zealots and their leaders prior to the fall of the temple (92). Of the other seven possibilities Stein lists (90–91), this reviewer prefers interpreting it as a future act of the anti-christ (2 Thess 2:3–4). Yet, Stein presents his argument well, is textually consistent, and gives good food for thought.

There are some minor areas in which this book could be improved. Although Stein makes brief references to Jesus' cleansing of the temple (54–55, 122–23) and cursing of the fig tree (Mark 11:12–26), more mining of the significance of Mark 13 in relationship with those acts would be helpful. The four indices (subject, author, Mark, and Scripture) are nice, but the subject index is lacking. For instance, none of these topics appear in the subject index even though they all appear several times in the book: genre, hyperbole, parable, theophanic signs, and watchman. "Because" is misspelled on page 130, and "Bar Kokhba" is misspelled in the subject index (147).

This excellent volume should interest and benefit any serious student of God's Word, and it deals with two important subjects. Much of this book deals with the 70 AD destruction of the Temple, a significant historical event for both Jews and Christians. This book also addresses the second coming of Jesus Christ—the blessed hope for all Christians.

James R. Wicker

Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***Studies in the Pauline Epistles: Essays in Honor of Douglas J. Moo.* Edited by Matthew S. Harmon and Jay E. Smith. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014. 320 pages. Hardcover, \$49.99.**

*Studies in the Pauline Epistles* is a festschrift for Douglas Moo edited by two of his former students, Matthew Harmon and Jay Smith. The articles focus on two areas in which Moo had his most significant scholarly impact: Pauline studies and Bible translation. This volume is divided into three parts: (1) exegesis of the letters of Paul, (2) Paul's use of Scripture and the Jesus tradition, and (3) Pauline scholarship and its contemporary significance.

The first section, exegesis of the letters of Paul, begins with Ardel Caneday's article, where he argues that the phrase "will . . . reign in life" in Romans 5:17 refers to "the believer's present dominion over sin in these mortal bodies" (28). This is followed by Chris Valchos, who argues that in Romans 6–7, "deliverance from the law and its catalytic function occupies a seminal place in [Paul's] teaching regarding moral transformation" (48). Next, Moo's son, Johnathan Moo, argues that Paul transforms family relationships around his view of God and his love, which he describes quite well as "a counter cultural model" (61). Smith provides the next article, where he attempts to persuade Moo (and potential readers) that 1 Corinthians 6:18b constitutes a Corinthian maxim. Following Jay Smith, D.A. Carson examines the various reconstructions of the background of Galatians 2:11–14 and argues that the best understanding of οἱ ἐκ περιτομῆς refers to unconverted Jews who were persecuting Christians in Jerusalem. To finish part one, Verlyn Verbrugge argues that in light of the construction μὴ . . . μόνον ἀλλὰ νῦν, in Philippians 2:12 the phrase "not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence" modifies the imperative, καταργήσεσθε, rather than the preceding indicative, ὑπηκούσατε.

Part two, "Paul's Use of Scripture and the Jesus Tradition" (127), begins with Craig Blomberg's article, "Quotations, Allusions, and Echoes of Jesus in Paul." Here, Blomberg uses Richard Hays's criteria for detecting Old Testament allusions in Paul to detect Pauline allusions to Jesus tradition. Next, Matthew Harmon adds to the debate surrounding Paul's use of the Old Testament in Galatians 4:21–5:1. He argues that instead of the usual either/or proposed here between allegory and typology, Paul is employing both methods. Osborne follows with his contribution, where he reverses his previous view on Paul's change of "received gifts" in Psalm 68:18 to "gave gifts" in Ephesians 4:7. He argues that this change is warranted based on the psalm as a whole.

Part three, "Pauline Scholarship and His Contemporary Significance" (179), begins with Robert Yarbrough, who argues that a salvation-historical approach to Paul is both beneficial and necessary to the interpreter. Beale follows by overviewing elements of Paul's eschatology that relate primarily to the idea that "the latter days" had already begun in Paul's time. The next two articles bear highly descriptive titles, James Dunn's "What's Right about the Old Perspective on Paul," and Stephen Westerholm's "What's Right about the New Perspective on Paul." N.T. Wright follows, arguing that a good translation of *δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ* should allow the reader to hear the resonant meaning, "covenant faithfulness," when reading it (250). Next, Thomas Schreiner discusses Paul's idea of truth and its relevance for postmodern culture. Mark Seifrid ends the volume by highlighting the contemporary application of Paul.

As a work honoring Douglas Moo, this volume fulfills its aim. In it, the authors engage in the contemporary debates surrounding Pauline studies and problems of translation, adding valuable insights to both fields. One of this book's overall strengths is that the contributors take widely divergent views, something that will be beneficial for students becoming acquainted with this area of study. Two articles are helpful here, "What's Right about the Old Perspective on Paul" by Dunn and "What's Right about the New Perspective on Paul" by Westerholm. These authors argue that there is some validity to their opponent's view and this in an area where authors seldom engage opposing views.

One article in particular stood out as an important contribution. Blomberg's article, "Quotations, Allusions, and Echoes of Jesus in Paul" is a much needed critique of Hays' assertion that it is difficult to prove that Paul had any knowledge of a Jesus tradition. By taking Hays' own criteria for detecting allusions, he showed that not only is it possible that Paul knew a Jesus tradition, but that applying Hays' method consistently nearly requires one assent that Paul knows that tradition. This adds a new point of legitimacy to a once-discarded theory.

While overwhelmingly positive in its contribution, one negative critique is noted. Beale's article, itself a helpful reminder of the already/not-yet concept in Paul, has some drawbacks. In some places, Beale asserts his ideas with no citation of Paul or other scholars to support his views. This is particularly striking in his assertion that the Sabbath continues and has been moved to Sunday (209). Also, when discussing justification, a central point of debate in Pauline studies, he provides a definition without at least acknowledging different views (207).

On the whole, however, this book is a positive contribution to Pauline studies. As mentioned above, it will aid the student who is entering this field by providing opposing views on Pauline studies. In addition, some articles, such as Blomberg's,



constitute valuable contributions to the field. *Studies in the Pauline Epistles*, then, is a fitting tribute to Douglas Moo.

Michael Scott Robertson  
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***Illustrated Life of Paul.* By Charles L. Quarles. Nashville: B&H, 2014. 300 pages. Paperback, \$29.99.**

The apostle Paul is one of the most important persons in the New Testament, and Charles Quarles has written a fine, well-illustrated introductory history of the ministry, writings, and theology of Paul (2, 37). In this book Quarles seeks to “wed deep love for the apostle Paul with deep love for the truth (ix),” and he certainly achieves his purpose. The book is aimed at lay people: the text is easy to understand, the Greek and Hebrew words are transliterated (e.g., 16, 31), and endnotes are used, although they are somewhat limited. However, this book will be of special benefit to beginning students of the New Testament.

The pictures and maps are excellent. The paper stock is a photographic quality on which the colors of the pictures are rich and vibrant. The pictures are top-notch. Fourteen of them are from the *Biblical Illustrator*, but most come from Wikipedia Commons (292). The full-color maps are excellent—not surprising since most of them appeared in the award-winning *Holman Bible Atlas* (see Thomas Brisco, *Holman Bible Atlas* [Nashville: B&H, 1998]).

This book has many strengths. First, Quarles shows a commitment to biblical inerrancy—in keeping with being a professor of New Testament and Biblical Theology at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. Second, he stays close to what the biblical text says. He is usually clear when he speculates beyond the text (e.g., 24, 57, 65), such as thinking that Paul may have been present to hear Gamaliel’s words in Acts 5:34–39 (21). However, other times Quarles does not indicate when he is speculating, which could mislead novices in Pauline studies (e.g., 5, 27, 64, 92, 127, 223, 226, 247). Third, the book deftly dovetails Paul’s travels and writings with the chronological order in Acts, so it is an excellent and quite complete introduction to Paul’s ministry and writings. Fourth, Quarles gives good descriptions of ancient practices, such as flogging (22) and stoning (23–24), and in describing places, such as the dangerous Sceironian Rocks near Athens (117). Fifth, he offers good analyses of some biblical events or teachings, such as the following: (1) three reasons Paul’s encounter with Jesus was more than just an internal revelation (it had external elements, 29–30), (2) two lessons from the conversion of Sergius Paulus (47–48), and (3) five aspects of justification (52–53).

The book is well written with a few minor mistakes. A picture caption should say “eleven miles” rather than “eleven mile” (47). The Damascus Gate depicted on page 193 was not the one Paul went through because this gate was built by Suleiman in AD 1537–41. The old Roman gate Paul went through has been excavated and visible for years, and this is the gate that is associated with Paul. Quarles indicates an ancient Jewish population needed to be sizeable to support a synagogue (99), but Jews formed synagogues with as few as ten Jewish men in a local area.

Here are some ways the book could be slightly improved. Give more information in the picture captions, such as (1) telling where the tomb of Gamaliel is (10), (2) explaining what a “tel” is (56), (3) noting that the mound at Derbe is a tel (83), and (4) stating that the picture of the Fortress Antonia is from a scale-model of Herodian Jerusalem at the Israel Museum. Adding a picture of the *bema* (judgment

seat) at Corinth would help since Paul appeared before Gallio at the Corinth *bema*. More explanation of a bronze prutah coin would help because most readers do not know what “1/1000 pound” means (214). It was worth 1/64 of a denarius, and a denarius was worth a day’s wage for a common ancient laborer. Also, a good discussion of the differences between a genuine site (such as the theater at Ephesus, scene of the riotous crowd in Acts 19:29, [167]) and a traditional site (such as the excavated prison at Philippi that *may* be the one in which Paul and Silas were imprisoned, [91]) would be helpful.

Quarles’s book makes an excellent companion volume to a similarly-illustrated book about Jesus by Herschel Hobbs (see Herschel Hobbs, *The Illustrated Life of Jesus* [Nashville: Holman Reference, 2000]). Also, Quarles’s book compares favorably with a similarly-illustrated book about Paul by Peter Walker (see Peter Walker, *In the Steps of Paul: An Illustrated Guide to the Apostle’s Life and Journeys* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008]). Both Quarles’s and Walker’s books on Paul are beneficial in different ways, so this reviewer recommends both of them. First, Quarles is more committed to the inerrancy of the biblical text, and this doctrinal stance is important. Second, Quarles’s book has better maps. Third, although Quarles uses fewer pictures, the paper is of better quality, so they look better. Fourth, Quarles’s text has more of a smooth narrative flow; whereas, Walker’s book is more episodic. However, Walker’s book has helpful excursus sections and includes helpful layouts of major buildings in ancient cities as well as key dates of historical events in those cities.

Charles L. Quarles has written an excellent, well-illustrated introduction to the apostle Paul. This reviewer highly recommends it to lay readers and Bible students.

James R. Wicker

Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***The Story Telling God.* By Jared C. Wilson. Wheaton: Crossway, 2014. 192 pages. Paperback, \$14.99.**

In *The Storytelling God*, Jared Wilson demonstrates that the parables of Christ are tales designed to point to the glory of Jesus, rather than moral urgings for upright living. Working against the tendency to moralize these parables, Wilson drives home the parables’ primary purpose of providing a glimpse into the kingdom of God.

Among the introductory matters charted in the book, chapters 1–2 explain the issues in defining a parable and common errors that can result. Wilson argues that rather than seeing them as inspirational short stories, Christians should understand the parables as “wisdom scenes,” illustrations that are meant to “run alongside their points and reveal them in rather immediate ways” (28). If these parables are truly wisdom scenes, then what wisdom are they depicting? As chapter 3 states, Christ is the embodiment of the wisdom of God, and these wisdom scenes underscore “the centrality and supremacy of Christ” (55–57).

Continuing along these lines, chapters 4–7 examine the nature of the parables specifically, focusing on the glory of Christ as the underlying theme of each parable. Chapter 5 states that by making a lowly shepherd or a woman the heroes of these parables, Jesus is identifying with these kinds of commonplace people. He is not lording over them but rather debasing himself to say that the kingdom is specifically for them. Through examples such as these, Wilson makes a case for the gospel in the parables by stating that Christ is willing to be put in the place of people such as these, or rather, such as us. Setting forth the idea that Jesus is willing to be numbered

among the transgressors (Isa 53:12, Luke 22:37) to become like us, that we might become like Him (71).

Chapter 8 notes that even much of the old covenant prophecy could be labeled a parable, as Wilson recalls that the Hebrew word for parable (*mashal*) in the Old Testament is also used for proverbs, riddles, and similes. Here, he identifies parables in the Old Testament that connect to the kingdom of God and convey God's prophetic truths, such as the prophet Ezekiel's parables (Ezek 20:49). Wilson evaluates poetic stories and narratives in the Old Testament to conclude that they serve to reveal God's truth in a parabolic way to their hearers, just as the parables of Jesus do.

Wilson has not sought to address every clearly identified parable of Jesus, much less every momentous occurrence of metaphor and symbol found in the Gospels. However, the seven peculiar statements from the Johannine narratives demand inclusion into his book because of the way they so closely resemble a parable's subject and object. That is to say, the "I am" accounts that Wilson deems fit to list in the book exist there because of their complex comparisons to the kingdom of Christ and revelation of the kingdom, not unlike the rest of the parables told by Christ. In the last chapter of the book for instance, Wilson addresses specifically seven of these "I am" statements (e.g. "I am the light of the world," "I am the bread of life," "I am the door") since these sayings reveal that Christ is ultimately the living parable. One might consider this point the climax of the book. Just as the parables themselves contain the spiritual power of awakening or deadening within stories of human experience, so Christ is the Spirit-conceived power of God undergoing human experience. (144–60).

Wilson's treatment of parables is a good example of Bible reading that takes into account the impetus of the kingdom of Christ in Scripture. Ministers and those in training would benefit from the content of each chapter as well as Wilson's underlying challenge to understand these parables as a window into the kingdom of God, designed to drive us to Jesus in wonder, reverence, and worship.

Joshua Chappell

Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***Hidden But Now Revealed: A Biblical Theology of Mystery.* By G.K. Beale and Benjamin L. Gladd. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2014. 392 pages. Paperback, \$30.00.**

One may be surprised to discover, as were G.K. Beale and Benjamin Gladd (hereafter, B&G), that until *Hidden But Now Revealed*, "a complete study of mystery in the New Testament" and reflection "on the biblical-theological implications of such a study" had not been attempted (7). As B&G also indicate, this dearth of studies is due to the project's sheer difficulty. The Greek term *μυστήριον* occurs in difficult passages concerning key doctrines and typically proving instrumental in the relationship between the two Testaments (7–8). Subsequently, one primary purpose of this study is "to unpack the relationship between the Old and New Testaments" (19). The two primary goals are: (1) to define the Old Testament and New Testament conception of mystery and to grasp its significance, and (2) to articulate as precisely as possible topics found in conjunction with "mystery" in its various uses throughout the New Testament (21–22).

Anticipating the charge of "illegitimate totality transfer" (a famous critique of James Barr against the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, and a danger

inherent in any word-focused project), B&G are quick to point out the technical nature of the term “mystery” and thus its general immunity from such a critique. Even so, B&G carefully undertake in each chapter an investigation of the immediate context of the passage where the term appears, and its connection with other words and phrases (20–21).

Chapters 1 and 2 are introductory. The former canvasses “mystery” in Daniel 2 and 4 while the latter examines evidence from various early Jewish texts. In Daniel the term “mystery” plays a pivotal role and informs use of “mystery” in the New Testament (29). B&G conclude that revelation of a mystery can be defined roughly as “God fully disclosing wisdom about end-time events that were mostly hitherto unknown” (43). Mystery in Daniel entails a twofold characteristic wherein an individual first receives a symbolic dream which is then fully interpreted, signaling “the hidden nature of the revelation and its subsequent interpretation—largely hidden but now more fully revealed” (43). Early Jewish texts explored in chapter 2 generally maintain the eschatological nature of “mystery,” as well as its twofold aspect (53).

Chapters 3–10 contain a detailed study of the twenty-eight instances of *μυστήριον* in the New Testament and their respective contexts and significance for biblical theology. B&G highlight that features of “mystery” laid out in chapter 1, that is, the eschatological emphasis and twofold characteristic, occur overwhelmingly in these contexts. They also emphasize the lines of continuity and discontinuity between testaments when discussing topics related to “mystery”. Frequently the “mystery” in the New Testament fulfills an Old Testament prophecy or prototype in a surprising way, remaining in continuity with the Old Testament but also introducing new elements.

Following their examination of the New Testament texts concerning mystery, they draw the work to a close. In part, they address the relationship, or lack thereof, between Christian mystery and pagan mystery religions, concluding that scholars who have attempted to draw parallels have been “overly confident and going in the wrong direction,” since “the biblical conception of mystery not only differs from the mystery religions, but also contradicts the pagan understanding of the term and concept in many ways” (312). Following the conclusion, Beale appends a thought-provoking essay addressing instances where a New Testament quotation of the Old Testament appears “on the surface to have a very different meaning than the Old Testament passages from which they come” (340). To reconcile this apparent disjunction, Beale proposes taking account of the author’s “cognitive peripheral vision,” recognizing that Old Testament authors “knew more about the topic of their speech act than only the explicit meaning they expressed about that topic” and that New Testament authors picked up on and developed the Old Testament author’s “implicit wider intention” (341). Though such an approach may seem speculative, Beale is convinced the speculation can be “controlled” and provides helpful insights into the New Testament authors’ use of the Old Testament (363).

This book may serve as a model for how word studies ought to be done, with the meaning(s) of the word drawn from the biblical text itself, both its immediate context and its place in salvation history. Such an approach eschews overly simplistic statements about the term’s definition, requiring the interpreter to account for every occurrence. Though B&G are right to emphasize the term’s technical nature and thus their ability to “overload” it with nuance, a few instances where attempts to fit a particular use of the term into the overarching scheme feel a bit forced (for instance, see discussion of 1 Cor 13:2 and 14:2).



Amidst chapters dealing with *μυστήριον* in the New Testament, it is easy for the reader to get bogged down in the technical details. But such attention to detail raises the book's potential as a future reference for specific passages. Some of the most outstanding chapters were actually the introductory and concluding chapters, and the appendix on "cognitive peripheral vision." These chapters help the reader see how extensive the implications of the study might be while Beale's appendix proves particularly thought-provoking.

In *Hidden but Now Revealed*, B&G provide an in-depth and useful examination of a very difficult and often confusing biblical theme, as well as thoughtful insights and potential paths forward in the discussion of the New Testament use of the Old Testament. In a field where the constant tug-of-war between unity and diversity is ever present, the authors do an excellent job of representing the diversity of the New Testament witnesses while still demonstrating their unified purpose and use of the Old Testament. Evangelicals hoping to contribute meaningfully to biblical theology should emulate this model.

R. Colby Jones

Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

### Theological Studies

*Two Views on the Doctrine of the Trinity*. Edited by Jason Sexton. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014. 240 pages. Paperback, \$19.99.

The doctrine of the Trinity is the central tenant of the Christian religion. With the advent of Social Trinitarianism, new work on the Trinity has been revived to counter this departure from traditional doctrine. Jason Sexton brings together four theologians offer their perspectives on new ways to think of the Trinity. Two theologians argue for the classical version of the Trinity while the other two argue for a new relational model of the Trinity.

Stephen Holmes argues that the doctrine of the Trinity has suffered throughout history from people redefining words such that the doctrine is reduced to incoherence; thus, he proposes to return to the roots of the doctrine (26–28). He does not believe that Eastern and Western Christianity developed different theories from each other as many have argued (28–30). Both groups see the relations between the divine persons as merely logical so as to point out the distinction between the persons of the Trinity. Rather than being persons with substantial divisions in the modern sense of the word, Holmes argues that each member of the Trinity is a subsistence in the divine being logically related to each other and nothing more (38–39). Any further understanding is impossible since God is ineffable (43, 46). Holmes also does not see the *filioque* doctrine as an important point of dispute (46). It is argued against Holmes that ineffability implies that God cannot be understood making Christianity useless and incoherent. Further, Scripture appears to imply personal as well as logical relations between the Godhead.

Paul Molnar argues that the Trinity is a mystery that cannot be fully understood; therefore, it should be taken in faith (73–74). We cannot understand the Trinity by appeal to anything human. There are three persons who all equally share the divine being. The Son and the Spirit are generated from the divine being, not made according to an act of the Father's will (85). Generation is different from creation in that God is free to will in respect to creation but not generation (89). Further, the

filioque doctrine is inconsequential since the Spirit proceeds from the divine being shared by both Father and Son (85). Against Molnar, the other respondents disagree over the generation of the Spirit from the divine being rather than from the other persons of the Trinity. Further, the notion of mystery is seen to bring up the problem of understanding the Trinity again. Lastly, it is argued that people use humanity to understand God all of the time; otherwise, no one would know anything about God.

Wanting to emphasize personal relations, Thomas McCall argues that the Trinity is a necessary relationship of love (113). The Persons share I-Thou relationships indicated by use of personal pronouns in speech by each Person in Scripture (117–18). While the actions of the Trinity are not divided, each act is performed by a different person with the other two operating in support or agreement. Thus, actions within the divine being are predicated to a particular person, but there is still one being, one mind, and one will shared by all three (121–24). The divine persons are necessarily related such that no one can exist without the other, yet they are distinct speech-agents who know and love each other in unity (130–33). A concern with McCall's theory is that it leads to tritheism by emphasizing three centers of consciousness with their separate parts. Further, it is argued that all biblical instances of personal pronouns in speech used by the divine persons do not actually indicate that the Persons are personal in McCall's sense of the word. Lastly, can the divine persons talk to each other if they share one intellect? It does not seem so.

Lastly, Paul Fiddes sees the divine subjects in the Godhead as movements in divine life (160). Divine persons are just relations in the divine being that are distinct from each other (164). These movements are seen in the acts of the divine being, particularly in the movements of generation of Son and Spirit (169–70, 175). Fiddes believes that people participate in the divine movements as the divine movement ultimately embraces creation in a very personal way and people join in that personal movement of divinity. Reality is described as a dance between God and humanity that involves personal interaction between the two such that the mysterious God comes to be known (182). Fiddes is charged by his companions as denying the personhood of God by reducing each subject to a mere relation. Such a move, it is argued, along with humanity's participation in divine movements, looks suspiciously like pantheism and endangers orthodox Christology.

The issues this book raises come down to how to understand the divine unity. Holmes and Molnar stress divine unity such that the modern understanding of personhood cannot be applied to the divine. As a result, it becomes difficult to draw real distinctions between the divine subjects. Therefore, they appeal to divine mystery. McCall and Fiddes downplay divine unity so as to incorporate some modern understanding of personhood as they believe Scripture indicates. As a result, Christian monotheism seems endangered. The book demonstrates the need for carefully balancing the issues, avoiding both inexplicability and unorthodoxy.

Graham Floyd

Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***The Rapture and Beyond: God's Amazing Plan for the Church, Israel, and the Nations*, rev. ed. By John C. Whitcomb. Indianapolis: Whitcomb Ministries, 2014. 230 pages. Paperback, \$9.99.**

John Whitcomb espouses classical dispensationalism, futuristic premillennialism, and a pretribulational rapture. In this contribution, he shares his theological

conclusions regarding the culmination of world history, extending the research of his mentor and colleague, Alva J. McClain.

The book is divided into three parts: “The Destiny of the Church” (13–68), “The Tribulation and Christ’s Return” (69–139), and “The Millennium and Beyond” (141–214). Seven of the fourteen chapters are reprinted or adapted from other publications (4). An “Author Index” (215–17) and a “Scripture Index” (218–30) round out the volume.

Building on the first edition, the revised edition adds three chapters: chapter 10, “God’s People and the Future of Egypt” (147–50); chapter 13, “The Thousand-Year Reign of Christ over the Earth” (195–210); and, chapter 14, “Beyond the Millennium” (211–14). The new edition also includes two of Whitcomb’s previously available charts: “Israel’s 70th Week and Christ’s Second Coming” (106) and “The Thousand-Year Reign of Christ over the Earth” (210).

Concerning the interpretation of the prophetic corpus, this book offers a number of intriguing possibilities. As an example, Whitcomb suggests that God tests the Israelites in two time periods of 490 years—the first resulting in the seventy-year Babylonian exile, and the second consisting of Daniel’s seventy sevens. He reasons, “If 490 years of disobedience had brought 70 years of punishment, is it not *probable* that the testing period for Israel which was announced to Daniel would cover another 490 *years?*” (75, italics his).

The demise of Gog from Magog in Ezekiel 38–39 comes to fruition near the middle of the tribulation (91–100). Gog’s alternate appellations include the king of Assyria/the Assyrian (Isa 10:12, 24–27; Mic 5:5–6), the northerner (Joel 2:20), and the king of the north (Dan 11:40–45). He is also the king mentioned in Daniel 8:23–25. Whitcomb suspects Russia as his domain, but sagaciously adds, “The name . . . may indeed change with the flux of history, but the general location remains fixed” (95).

Ten lines of argumentation support the notion that Ezekiel 40–48 foresees a millennial temple on planet earth (152–65). Like the Jewish animal sacrifices of antiquity, the animal sacrifices of the millennial temple have nothing to do with salvation, but accomplish a ceremonial cleansing and temporal forgiveness so that a holy God can dwell among a sinful people (194). The two witnesses of Revelation 11, Elijah and Moses, minister during the first half of the tribulation period (107–29). Whitcomb lists three reasons why John the Baptist was not Elijah (117–18).

Certain facets of the book lack balance, organization, consistency, or substantiation. Three of the chapters only span four pages each (chaps. 9, 10, 14), whereas three different chapters exceed twenty-five pages each (chaps. 1, 6, 12). Sixteen characteristics describe the millennial age, but two of them (the sixth and seventh) transpire before the millennium (203). Inconsistently, pages 107–8 assign the 1,260 days of Rev 11:3 to the *first* half of the tribulation, but pages 76 and 90 designate them as the *last* half of the tribulation. Moreover, sometimes debatable and dogmatic conclusions appear without corresponding support. For example, the twenty-four elders represent the church (197), the antichrist reigns as the seventh king/kingdom in Revelation 17 (98), the abomination of desolation refers to a statue of the beast that comes to life (88, 98), and the two olive trees of Zechariah 4 denote Joshua and Zerubbabel (62, 108).

A few points of clarification might enhance the volume. First, Whitcomb suggests that the Jews will use the tribulation temple during the millennium. Immediately after the tribulation, “the Lord will set aside those THIRTY days to purge

and purify the temple for His people to use during the kingdom age” (104, emphasis original). He also anticipates a distinct millennial temple “located about ten miles north of Jerusalem” (159). Is Whitcomb proposing that the tribulation temple will serve as a makeshift temple during the millennium until the millennial temple is built?

Second, while distinguishing the church and Israel, Whitcomb implies that Christians remain partially under the Law of Moses. In his words, “The Church has been given . . . freedom from the nonnormative aspects of the Law of Moses” (65). In no way, however, is the church under the Law of Moses. The church submits to a different law, known as the Law of Christ (Gal 6:2), the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus (Rom 8:2), the perfect law, the law of liberty (Jas 1:25), and the royal law (2:8).

A missed opportunity hobbles the discussion of what Nicodemus should have known about the new birth from the Old Testament (132–36). The author fails to mention the Old Testament excerpt that Jesus alludes to while talking with Nicodemus (cp. Prov 30:4 and John 3:8, 13). Furthermore, he bypasses the preeminent passage in the Old Testament concerning the new birth (Ps 87).

From cover to cover, this study of the eschaton highlights the unity of Scripture. As Whitcomb puts it, “The Bible is its own best interpreter” (32). For those interested in an eschatological treatise by a seasoned theologian, this book is full of interpretive insights and canonical correlations.

Mark A. Hassler  
The Master’s Seminary

***Systematic Theology and Climate Change: Ecumenical Perspectives.* Edited by Michael Northcott and Peter Scott. London: Routledge, 2014. 180 pages. Paperback, \$44.95.**

To date, there has been little formal work done to connect systematic theology to environmental ethics using traditional doctrinal headings. *Systematic Theology and Climate Change* is a collection of essays that approach Christian theology to discern how it intersects with climate change.

The goal of the volume is “to at least persuade the reader of the fruitfulness of systematic theology in developing and undergirding the Christian response to anthropogenic climate change.” (12) After the introductory chapter, the book includes nine additional chapters treating a different locus of doctrine. In Chapter 2, Timothy Gorringer begins the discussion of the Trinity. He argues for the necessity of the Trinity, but moves quickly to outline the relational nature of the Trinity with creation to inspire action against climate change. Niels Henrik Gregerson unpacks a Christology for climate change in the next chapter. The incarnation of deity and his participation in the created order should lead Christians to reenact the redemptive nature of Christ’s life before the world, drawing Christians into actions that mitigate climate change as acts of neighborly love. Chapter 4 is a connection between climate change and the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Michael Northcott finds connections between Yahweh and animistic beliefs in the sun god, which he uses to explain the radiative power of the Holy Spirit. The Anthropocene period, according to Northcott, is caused by the Enlightenment abandonment of wonder in nature—a denial of the spiritual nature of God and his Spirit’s work in the world.

In the fifth chapter, Celia Deane-Drummond modifies the concept of *creatio ex nihilo*, proposing to adopt *creatio ex amore*. God creates all things, but the focus

becomes the purpose of creating instead of the nature of creating. This shift enables Deane-Drummond to emphasize the loving Creator-creation relationship, which inspires right living. Chapter 6 presents the nature of creatures in the created order, rejecting anthropocentrism and focusing on God's relationship with non-human, living creatures. This essay by Rachel Muers attempts to promote a deeper level of sympathy with the non-human creatures. In the seventh chapter Peter Scott delves into a theological discussion of the human relationship with creation. His emphasis is on understanding the human ability to disrupt natural processes in hopes of inspiring a curtailment of human freedom. Chapter 8 unpacks the doctrines of sin and salvation. According to Neil Messer, sin is a radical distortion of the human relationship with God and the rest of creation. Salvation is thus the renewal of both relationships, which must include ecologically friendly living. He asserts that to understand ourselves as sinners also enables us to understand ourselves as saved by God; that salvation should lead to repentance and hope. In the ninth chapter, Tamara Grdzeldze examines the doctrine of the church: the church exists to emphasize the restoration of relationships of creatures to God and to each other through the Eucharist. Thus the mission of the church is to embody and encourage the unity of all creation in anticipation of the coming salvation of all things by God. This mission will be carried out not just ecclesially, but politically through activism and lobbying. Chapter 10 discusses eschatology in greater detail than the previous chapters. Stefan Skrimshire emphasizes the cosmic hope in eschatology over personal hope. Eschatology is framed as a motivation to political action against climate change. Skrimshire, however, limits the divine participation in the renewal of all things because it allows forgiveness for present ecological sins and undermines motivation for climate action. Thus, eschatology motivates bringing in a desired order instead of inspiring future hope of divine restoration.

*Systematic Theology and Climate Change* is intended to bring voices from different backgrounds together to do systematic theology for climate change. Using a different author for each chapter leads to unevenness between the chapters. Many of the essays are informative, but taken as a whole, the project lacks cohesion. Additionally, although each chapter deals with a different theological heading, many seem to overlap with different perspectives on the value of creation, the human role in creation, and the fate of the created order. In some cases, as with the treatment of ecclesiology, the focus of the chapter seems to be somewhere besides the title doctrine. Also, notably absent from the volume is any appreciable treatment of the gospel. The chapter on sin and salvation assumes a general salvation while the chapter on Christology ignores the concepts of atonement and redemption. These seem to be significant oversights for a systematic theology, even one emphasizing climate change. To miss the essence of Christianity—Christ crucified and resurrected—points toward a methodological difficulty with this approach.

Environmental ethics is a theological enterprise, particularly for a faithful Christian. This volume brings together significant voices to relate systematic theology to climate change. There are some revealing points of application, but the book falls short of demonstrating a model approach to uniting concerns of climate change with traditional doctrinal headings of systematic theology. There is room for further development along these lines, but it may be helpful for future treatments to



focus on the major doctrines that influence systems of environmental ethics. Such an approach would have improved this volume significantly.

Andrew J. Spencer  
Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary

### Historical Studies

***Augustine Deformed: Love, Sin and Freedom in the Western Moral Tradition.* By John M. Rist. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014. 430 pages. Hardcover, \$124.00.**

John M. Rist's purpose in writing this volume is to demonstrate that Western culture has, since Augustine's death, witnessed a continual attempt to build on Augustine and correct his errors. As Rist notes, *Augustine Deformed* is not necessarily a history of *good* ideas, but it does seek to present one plausible explanation for some trajectories in Western philosophy (16). The result has been an increase in false problems and false assumptions as each succeeding generation attempts to correct the preceding one without adequately evaluating the questions being asked. The progression of errors from Augustine's own have led to atheism and nihilism, according to Rist.

After the introduction, where Rist explains his purpose and qualifies his method, he begins by explaining some of the debates that were ongoing before Augustine came onto the scene. Of particular interest are the topics of love, sin, and freedom. Interest in these topics is perhaps both the cause and result of his choice of Augustine as a beginning point. Rist focuses on the various philosophical interpretations of each of these topics, setting the stage for this volume to focus on broader philosophical debates and not only Christian concerns. Augustine preserves features of his classical foundations within these topics of his thought. For this reason, many recent scholars have searched in detail for platonic themes in Augustine's work. Chapters 2 and 3 both deal with Augustine himself. The former focuses on those aspects of Augustine which Rist dislikes, such as Augustine's notion of original sin and of the nature of God's sovereignty in matters of salvation. The latter emphasizes Augustine's thoughts on love, desire and knowledge, which Rist finds more palatable.

Following these three foundational chapters, Rist moves into an in-depth, chronological analysis of major thinkers in the Western tradition. His trek through Western thought traces Augustine's influence through history from Anselm to Heidegger and Sartre. There is an amazing scope to this volume, but there is depth in Rist's writing as he carefully and accurately describes the major elements of each group's ideas without belaboring his explanations. Having concluded a whirlwind journey through Western tradition, Rist closes the book by first summarizing many of the points of philosophical error that developed through history. He then concludes by returning to Augustine's thought, pointing out the errors that, if properly addressed, he believes would rectify Augustine and allow for a truer philosophy that would be less caustic than the modernisms and postmodernisms that developed in the wake of Augustine's alleged errors.

A significant strength of this volume is its comprehensiveness. This book is an excellent commentary on a broad sweep of Western intellectual history. As with any commentator, each reader will find various points of disagreement, qualification, and confirmation. However, given the wide range of material covered in a succinct

manner, Rist's presentation is an agreeable approach. There are few scholars who could accomplish such a monumental task successfully. The chief strength of this volume is the unity of the themes considered. The concepts of love, sin, and freedom, which were significant emphases in Augustine's writing, are traced clearly through each chapter. Those ideas prove to be identifiable across the centuries and significant in describing the contemporary philosophical milieu. This provides cogency for the project.

Despite its many excellent qualities, this volume suffers from an overemphasis on philosophy as the driving force for theology. Thus Rist, himself primarily a philosopher, continues the popular focus on philosophical themes in Augustine's intellectual development, finding more continuity than discontinuity between Augustine's pre and post-conversion thought. This approach means that the role of classical Greek philosophy in Augustine's later theology is a bit overplayed in Rist's presentation. While it is clear that the Bishop of Hippo never fully resolved his platonic suspicion of matter, particularly with respect to his sexual ethics, on many topics a gracious, chronological reading of Augustine reveals a progressive growth in the influence of Scripture and a diminution of the influence of classical Greek understandings. Rist does not allow sufficient room for Augustine's growth in theology.

This book has explanatory power. It is not necessary to agree with every aspect of Rist's analysis to gain significant value from reading this volume. It is a text that will be useful in the seminary classroom or a scholar's library for years to come.

Andrew J. Spencer  
Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary

***A Companion to the Eucharist in the Reformation.* Edited by Lee Palmer Wandel. Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition, volume 46. Boston: Brill, 2014. 518 Pages, Hardcover, \$239.00.**

While *sola fide* and *sola scriptura* have historically been identified as the chief articles of debate which enveloped sixteenth-century Christendom, Lee Palmer Wandel and her team of contributors affirm that distinct eucharistic theologies and liturgies were significant contributing factors that further divided Catholicism and Protestantism. With a goal towards exploring "early modern thinking in texts written and sung, images, objects, architecture, music, and practices on the Eucharist," Wandel devotes ample space to each of the aforementioned themes (11).

Although Gary Macy's introduction on the Medieval Mass is helpful, it has two significant shortcomings. First, Macy's label of Berengar's eucharistic theology as "straightforward," in the sense that he staunchly denied any "real" presence of Christ, is misleading (23). Christopher Wild's later survey of Lessing's *Laocoön*, which attests Berengar's affirmation of a "pregnant sign," meaning that the eucharistic contains not merely the sign, but also the thing signified, directly contradicts Macy (494–95). Second, Berengar's personal reference to the eucharistic elements as the "true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ" confirms that his eucharistic theology was anything but straightforward (494).

Part one, a summary of Eucharist theologies, is useful for its inclusion of every major Reformation theology, but unsuitable for the reader who desires to track any possible development of eucharistic theology over the course of the Reformation. For example, while the Reformed Church is thoroughly represented through the writings of Calvin, Zwingli, and Bullinger, Luther is the sole Lutheran representative. Frankly,

it is inexcusable for Wandel to ignore both the later Lutheran development and the later reconciliatory attempts between the various Reformed parties. While the eucharistic divide between Luther and Zwingli has traditionally been oversimplified into a mere disagreement concerning Christ's presence, the contributors effectively demonstrate that their altercation rested more on Christology (52). John D. Rempel's emphasis on the centrality of Pneumatology for Anabaptist theology is helpful in analyzing their seeming preference for Johannine theology over Pauline theology (123). The significance of part one lies not in the publication of eucharistic theology, but instead in the affirmation that Christendom's rift rested far deeper than Christ's presence, for it centered on foundational differences in Christology, Soteriology, and Ecclesiology.

The nature of Wandel's work, twenty contributors discussing overlapping subject matter, makes discrepancies likely. Similar to Macy and Wild's earlier contradiction, Rempel and Michele Hanson clash concerning the influence of the Eucharist in early Anabaptist communities. While Rempel asserts, "the Eucharist remained for them the primal sign of Christ and the Church," Hanson claims, "Anabaptists in the 1520s did not make the celebration of the Eucharist central in their religious life" (119, 266). While Wandel acts appropriately in allowing disagreements, the extreme positions taken by each contributor ultimately prove irreconcilable.

Part two, a helpful companion to theology, focuses on the diversity of liturgical practices in the Reformation. Isabelle Brian's contribution on Catholic liturgy is insightful as it engages the reader in the Medieval Eucharist, answering both how and why the Mass possessed such a crippling hold on society. As the Feast of Corpus Christi and the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament developed, Christ's presence in the Mass became "an identifying mark of Catholicism," enveloping Catholics throughout life (203). Since the eucharistic celebration focused more on language for Lutherans and the Reformed, the imagery that encapsulated the Medieval Mass largely subsided (208). However, the difficulty in aligning one's theology with one's liturgy forced a struggle within Evangelicalism, leading a cautious Luther to maintain the elevation of the Host (222) and Thomas Cranmer to drastically alter the *Book of Common Prayer* between its 1549 and 1552 editions (276–77).

Part three briefly examines the effect of sudden theological and liturgical alterations on regional churches. For the most part, Evangelicals sought to undo the Medieval Mass systematically, specifically the high altar and rood screens (325–26). As Andrew Spicer rightly notes, the Evangelical church became less about "gradations of holiness" and more about a biblical, sacramental administration (331). While the Reformed took a hardened stance towards removing all semblance of the Mass, Lutheranism preserved the altar and the use of vestments, which "occasionally confused visitors to these churches" (342). Spicer's contribution is paramount for his imagery of woodcuts and communion tables, allowing the reader to engage in the Eucharist visually.

Parts four and five focus on the artistic elements of the Eucharist. Unfortunately, the breadth of Wandel's volume forces the reader to question the inclusion of certain chapters, and quite frankly, these chapters prove least crucial. Although presented from an artistic perspective, the underlying affirmations are essentially the same as previously provided. However, Wandel's chapter "The Reformation and the Visual Arts" in R. Po-Chia Hsia's *The Cambridge History of Christianity: Reform and Expansion 1500–1660*, manifests Wandel's interest in the subject, and thus, their

inclusion. Nevertheless, these chapters effectively manifest the frequent tendency for the Eucharist to shift between worship, ritual, and superstition.

In part six, Christopher Wild's chapter is a fitting conclusion to a volume dedicated to analyzing the theological and liturgical eucharistic elements and their possible influences. Utilizing Lessing's *Laocoön*, specifically the eucharistic relationship between Berengar and Lutheranism, Wild seeks to draw a seminal connection between religious media in the Reformation and aesthetic media in the Renaissance (491). While Wild abstains from affirming Lessing's conceptual link, he nevertheless finds a link between the Lutheran use of religious media and Enlightenment aesthetics (507). Even if one disagrees with Wild, he has nevertheless preserved Wandel's holistic goal by affirming that the chasms in Eucharistic theology ran far deeper than simple affirmations or denials of Christ's presence.

Overall, Wandel's focus on historical theology, art, media, and liturgics in the Reformation makes this volume a scholarly addition to historical studies. While the volume's length and cost will certainly be drawbacks to intrigued readers, the substance and usefulness of Wandel's work prove well worth the time and expense.

Marc Brewer

Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***American Exceptionalism and Civil Religion: Reassessing the History of an Idea.* By John D. Wilsey. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2015. 262 pages. Paperback, \$22.00.**

I am by birth an American and by baptism a Christian. Before reading this book, I was fairly sure that the only possible reaction I could have to that combination was profound guilt for the way American civil religion has co-opted faith. John Wilsey believes that there is another way.

Wilsey distinguishes in this book between "closed" and "open" American exceptionalism. The closed version, which is what I grew up distrusting, "involves at least five theological themes imported from Protestant Christian theology and applied to America: (1) chosen nation, (2) divine commission, (3) innocence, (4) sacred land and (5) glory" (18). The open version "points to moral and civil example" and "leads to compassion, justice, and general human flourishing" (19).

The book outlines both of these ideas through American history. Wilsey begins with the roots of exceptionalism. Theologically, it came from Puritan ideas of covenant (God was specially calling Puritans as his "chosen people with a divinely ordained mission" [42]), typology (Puritans saw themselves as God's new Israel and applied other scriptural imagery to the American experience), and millennialism (the idea that "history is progressing toward a Christian utopia, that God is using nations to bring about his kingdom on earth" [45]). Politically, it grew from the "Real Whig" ideology that stressed "religious toleration, liberty of the press, parliamentary supremacy, and rule by consent" (51) and a "Christian republicanism" that attempted to justify rebellion against England on biblical and theological grounds. Finally, American historiography up through the nineteenth century told of "a superior America serving the world as exemplar" (61).

According to Wilsey, this exceptionalism bifurcated in the nineteenth century into closed and open versions over the issues of slavery and manifest destiny. The closed version, which favored both those endeavors, centered on the idea that "God's business was about establishing the supremacy of the Anglo American race in North

America" (77). The open version, which Wilsey roots in Abraham Lincoln's thought, exalted American commitments to justice, the rule of law, and democracy but argued that God's providence only worked through American actions "insofar as the people were acting in accordance with God's moral laws" (89). Justice was always right and American commitment to it was a moral good, but Americans were not always just and righteous in practice.

The book then turns to the five theological commitments Wilsey identifies as central to closed exceptionalism, explains how each of them has worked out in American history, and presents an open exceptionalist response. To the idea of America as a chosen nation (including the idea that Anglo-Saxons are the chosen people and nonwhites are not) he responds that being chosen "does not deny religious people their prophetic voice" (116); prophets should criticize problems in order to "set the nation on a more sure moral footing" (117). To the idea that America has a national mission he responds that "if America has a mission in the world, it is the same mission given to all people. . . . found in Micah 6:8," i.e. to "do justice and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God" (144). To the idea that America is an innocent nation he responds that "Christianity teaches that no one is innocent; all are guilty of unjust actions," including nations. To the idea that American land is somehow special, he responds that *all* land is a gift from God for human flourishing and that American land is only sacred because "its land is part of the good creation of God" (190). Finally, to the idea that America is glorious (which he illustrates from a selection of homeschooling curricula) he argues that our understanding of history must allow for the realities of "change over time, context, causality, complexity, and contingency. . . . It is not appropriate to consider American exceptionalism—closed or open—as an essential aspect of the Christian worldview" (214). He ends with a plea that American Christians engage the public square committed to the ideas of "liberty, democracy, world peace, and cultural tolerance" (231), proud of their country but also able to see its flaws and missteps and work to correct them; never tempted to identify the country as sacred, but instead working to "differentiate the church from the nation while situating [it] within the national community" (222).

Wilsey's grasp of American history is broad-ranging and his conclusions compelling. This is an important book at this particular moment. It is helpful in modeling to those of us who have been afraid to claim patriotism how a loving critique on Christian principles can co-exist with love for nation. I can only hope that it also reaches the over-patriotic audience I think Wilsey had more in his sights. He describes (through a perceptive analysis of W.E.B. Dubois) how closed exceptionalism can lead "well-meaning Christian people . . . to potential for wrong in the name of right. While the rock bottom of this progression was militant white supremacy, a key step was . . . the idea that America was always right and must be defended and justified at all costs" (229). That audience seems to be climbing in the polls. Read Wilsey's book, and you will know why. You will also have the tools to point out another way.

Jennifer L. Woodruff Tait  
 Managing Editor, *Christian History Magazine*



### Studies in Philosophy and Ethics

*Apologetics Beyond Reason: Why Seeing is Really Believing.* By James W. Sire. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2014. 176 pages. Paperback, \$18.00.

If one has never seen God, then how can one properly believe that God is real? James Sire is a Christian author and apologist who argues that everything that exists is an argument for the existence of God as understood in biblical faith. He proposes the proof of God's existence is embodied both in God's revealed Word and within the created World. One way to transcend the limits of autonomous human reason, Sire argues, is to connect to the reality of God through literature which he views as distinct "signals of transcendence." This signal of transcendence provides an eclectic "apologetic beyond reason." Sire's objective is for readers to understand one's direct perception of the world, particularly as it is articulated in the worldviews espoused by authors who produce great literature. Such understanding allows one to intuit convictions about what is reality.

Sire states that adumbrations of God as Creator and the reality of Christ's presence can be detected in daily life. These foreshadows provide not only a rational apologetic, but one that is emotional and takes hold of both the heart and the head leading to a commitment to follow Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Sire's apologetic approach is to make an argument for Jesus Christ from literary theory, an approach that is not necessarily dependent upon Descartes-styled rationalism, but can come via intuition. Sire offers this approach because literature projects a specific worldview when it tells a story and this worldview provides a meta-narrative. This meta-narrative brings one into another world and allows the reader to see, feel, and experience the power and significance of the story.

Stanislaw Lem's science-fiction work, *The Cyberaid* (1965), contends against the cosmological argument and goes on to consider naturalism as the basis for truth. In Lem's worldview, all ultimate views of reality are suspect. Lem's readers are forced to conclude that naturalism cannot be the foundation for trusting our senses and reason because it is also suspect. Present neo-atheists, including such notables as Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens, Sam Harris, and Daniel Dennett, believe they have the basis for making up their own mind and grasp that which lies outside of oneself by their own autonomous reason. Sire points out that such autonomous human reasoning is actually a dead end. It is spiritual blindness and a failure to grasp properly the truth of reality. In contrast, Christians have a proper grounding for reason because they maintain that it is rooted in the ontological reality of God. Taking the biblical argument that man is made in the image of God (Gen 1:27) and that we are His creatures, it is our interactions in the Creation that surrounds us that inform our belief. That is to say that the general revelation of God's created cosmos provides evidence that points towards God (Rom 1:18-32). Sire maintains that the created surroundings humans find themselves in provide signals of transcendence that best explain how one came into and is sustained in existence.

Literature is a signal of transcendence that yields a window into a viewpoint, whereby the author has become a creator of a secondary world, a world of imagination and imitation. The reader allows himself to be transported into this secondary world and experience it. The worldview or system of reality in this secondary world is a representation of what the author believes to be the case about the primary world of reality.

Sire proceeds through a number of authors and provides a literary professor's insight into what is going on in their secondary world. Gerald Manley Hopkins' work *God's Grandeur* reflects a Christian worldview that incorporated the themes of Creation, Fall, and Re-Creation. Virginia Woolf writes of a world without God in *Jacob's Room* (1922), where a desire to escape the present world is reflected in despair and the emptiness of being and her characters in *The Waves* (1937), reflect her own loneliness, an inner despondence that ultimately led her to suicide. The greatness of the music of Johann Sebastian Bach is viewed by Sire as a testimony to the truth of the Christian faith and an aesthetic Christian apologetic. The arts and human pain may also be a signal of transcendence as they produce inside the heart a way for God to shout to the soul through a still small voice.

Sire concludes that the best argument for God is the meta-narrative of God's revelation to man through His Word (Scripture), Jesus Christ, and His ongoing presence. Jesus invites all people to come to Him and to know Him intimately and personally. Jesus is a transcendent signal to God. Jesus Christ is the Savior that mankind needs because He can forgive man of his sins while judging righteously. Jesus Christ makes human reason meaningful. The Bible is the ultimate work of literature because it is a giant beacon that points the way to God through faith and trust in Jesus Christ. The Bible is the literary work that provides mankind with the starting point for that which is real concerning God, creation, and humanity's situation. Sire invites the reader to come and see Jesus, the one who makes all reality real.

Paul A. Golata

Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***The Soul: How We Know it's Real and Why it Matters.* By J.P. Moreland. Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2014. 208 pages. Paperback, \$14.99.**

Few topics titillate the contemporary philosophical admirer more than the mind and body debate. Physicalists, believing they have the higher philosophical and scientific ground, are ever ready to defend their stance and castigate the dualist. Indeed, physicalists do have powerful and thoughtful arguments to bolster their claims, not to be taken lightly by the dualist. Nonetheless, the dualist is not left to the fate of philosophical obscurity. In his new book, *The Soul: How We Know It's Real and Why It Matters*, J.P. Moreland defends the existence of the non-physical soul, detailing why the belief in and existence of the soul is important to the social structure and its moral foundation.

Moreland begins the book with a brief introduction to the topic, noting that "[t]hroughout history, the vast majority of people, educated and uneducated alike, have been dualists" (9). This situation, however, has changed with contemporary philosophy. Today, dualism, at least within academia, seems to be the minority view. Moreland writes that the Bible clearly teaches that "consciousness and the soul are immaterial," and this reality has massive ethical implications for the Christian (18).

In chapter 1, titled "A Toolbox for the Soul", Moreland gives a general overview of the debate, explains basic terminology, and summarizes dualism and physicalism. He need not (and does not) delve into the nuances of contemporary scholarship that often obfuscate rather than elucidate. In fact, his explanations of "substances" and "properties" are probably the most difficult area of the chapter, but he writes with the clarity of an experienced educator.

Chapter 2, titled “The Bible on the Soul and Consciousness”, gives a detailed assessment of the biblical understanding of human nature. Moreland skillfully interprets not only Scriptural passages indicating the duality of human nature, but also the original words within the texts. While there are certainly different interpretations of Moreland’s selected texts, he shows that dualism has the stronger biblical defense.

Chapter 3, titled “The Nature and Reality of Consciousness”, analyzes the minutiae of consciousness. Here Moreland gives a quasi-defense and critique of property dualism, two objections to substance dualism, and lays out his best critique of a scientific defense of physicalism. Plus, it is within this chapter that he draws the specific conclusion that consciousness is non-physical. The chapter seems a little out-of-place, but in conjunction with chapter 4, the arrangement makes sense.

In Chapter 4, titled “The Reality of the Soul”, Moreland gives descriptions of three types of substance dualism: Cartesian, Thomistic, and Emergent. His preference is Thomistic dualism, but he is not concerned with defending his druthers here. His focus is to present arguments that prove the “self or ego is an immaterial substance that bears consciousness” (118). Here Moreland gives his most detailed arguments for dualism (for the most part, these arguments are for a specialist in the field).

Chapter 5, “The Future of the Human Person”, is a general (sometimes anecdotal) look at the afterlife (i.e., what happens to the soul after the physical body dies). The Christian reader will find Moreland’s defense for eternal punishment and eternal reward interesting; however, the chapter does not add to his overall claim; it simply discusses peripheral topics.

Moreland has at least one questionable claim that is difficult to overlook. In the last chapter, Moreland gives a defense to the question: Why would God create people that He knew would not choose Him? To answer this question, Moreland borrows a move developed by William Lane Craig’s defense of middle knowledge. Moreland writes,

Creating a world with a large number of people may have the result that a number of them may be permitted to be lost in order to respect human freedom and accomplish some task known by God . . . God prefers a world in which some persons freely reject Christ but the number of saved is maximized, over a world in which a few trust Christ and none are lost (184).

Thus, according to Moreland, “[t]he actual world contains an optimal balance between saved and unsaved, and those who are unsaved would never have received Christ under any circumstances” (185).

This proposition seems problematic. Assuming that middle knowledge is an accurate description of God’s foreknowledge, are we to postulate there is no possible world in which God both actualizes a maximal number of people that freely choose Christ and refrains from actualizing anyone who would freely reject Christ (and thereby be damned)? Given the standard parameters of possible worlds, it seems God could create this world. Middle knowledge certainly does not rule out such a world.

Ultimately, Moreland’s answer does little to alleviate these problems, and forces the Christian to bunt to mystery. To claim that it is possible God could not have created a world in which no one freely rejects Him, leaves open that He possibly

could have created such a world. And if God could have created such a world, then a middle knowledge move seems to be a philosophical stalemate.

Though there are many positive and important aspects of *The Soul*, three need be mentioned. First, since the depths of this topic are generally reserved for the specialist, it is advantageous for Christians to have a clear and simple (though intellectually stirring) description of dualism. The debate regarding this issue has become so philosophically nuanced that only the trained philosopher can understand much of the contemporary discussion. *The Soul* is a lucid, concise reflection that a novice in philosophy could understand. Second, Moreland keeps the subject focused and narrow. Thus, he gives the reader the essentials of the conversation by centering on the dominant points of the debate. Third, Moreland, having years of teaching and writing experience, does not simplify the topics to such an extent that he cheapens the depth of the given information. Readers can be sure they are getting a standard, precise explanation of the debate, articulated from the simple to more complex. Thus, *The Soul* is a valuable contribution to a conversation that commonly ostracizes the curious neophyte.

Chad Meeks  
Navarro College

***Beyond the Control of God? Six Views on the Problem of God and Abstract Objects.* Edited by Paul Gould. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014. 224 pages. Paperback, \$29.95.**

The debate over abstract objects goes back to Plato and is still heated today. Realists claim abstract objects exist while nominalists do not. Famed for its explanatory advantages, versions of Platonism eventually found their way into the Church. Platonism, however, raises crucial questions concerning God's relationship with abstract objects. Paul Gould states the problem with his Inconsistent Triad:

1. Abstract objects exist.
2. If abstract objects exist, then they are dependent on God.
3. If abstract objects exist, then they are independent of God.

Claim 1 is Platonism. Claim 3 is the traditional assumption of Platonism; however, claim 2 appears correct given orthodox theology. Christians are thus placed in a quandary. Which claim do they reject: that abstract objects exist, that all reality is dependent on God, or that abstract objects are outside God's control? Gould pulls together six views addressing this quandary along with critiques of each view.

Keith Yandell is a Platonist and argues that claim 2 is false. He believes that abstract objects (propositions) are necessary in order to explain human language, such as making claims about reality and interpreting speech. Further, abstract objects cannot be dependent on God since abstract objects are necessary, but God is not necessary; the necessary cannot be dependent on anything. Instead, God is dependent on abstract objects for his knowledge and being. The major criticism against this view is that it violates the doctrines of divine sovereignty, aseity, and creation of all reality.

Paul Gould and Richard Davis are Modified Theistic Activists and argue that claim 3 is false. They claim that propositions are by nature intentional, and only thoughts can be intentional. Subsequently, they equate propositions with divine ideas. Other abstract entities are by nature nonintentional, so they must be

necessarily created by God. Thus, abstract objects exist necessarily but depend on God for their existence. God's properties exist *a se* and are not dependent on anything outside God. Major criticisms against this view are that all abstract objects are by nature intentional and must be in the divine mind, that divine ideas are not abstract objects, and that God's mind would consist of inappropriate ideas if his ideas were propositions. Greg Welty argues for Divine Conceptualism and also rejects claim 3. Welty believes that a good theory of abstract objects will include the following aspects: objectivity, necessity, intentionality, relevance, plentitude, and simplicity of kinds. Welty believes this task can only be accomplished if the divine ideas function as abstract objects and provide the building blocks of reality. Further, such a theory gives us a good argument for God's existence. There are two major criticisms of this view. First, it is not certain that divine ideas can function as abstract objects. Second, God is not subject to abstract objects like human beings, which seems to make God a nominalist. If nominalism is true for God, why cannot nominalism be true for all of reality?

William Lane Craig argues for nominalism and rejects claim 1. He believes that abstract objects conflict with the doctrines of divine sovereignty and creation because God would not control and would be dependent on abstract objects. Furthermore, God would not be creatively responsible for all of reality. As a result, nominalism should be explored, particularly fictionalism where our talk of abstract objects is just a useful device for expressing ourselves. The major criticisms against this view are that Craig has misinterpreted Scripture creating a false conflict and that fictionalism gives us false knowledge of reality because our words and claims do not actually describe reality.

Scott Shalkowski believes that claim 1 is false. He sees no warrant for believing in abstract objects. Like Craig, language is merely a tool for communication, not ontological commitment. However, he does not believe that abstract entities are a threat to God. As necessary entities, abstract objects, like the laws of logic, are not things that God could control anyway, so no problem exists. Further, there is no reason to think that the writers of Scripture had abstract objects in mind when they claimed that God is the creator of all things. The major criticisms against Shalkowski are that language is more than a tool but does ontologically commit despite our lack of intention or ignorance in committing, that truths prior to human existence would have nothing to bear their truth if nominalism is correct, and that Shalkowski interprets Scripture incorrectly.

Graham Oppy argues that metaphysics favors neither theism nor atheistic naturalism. Abstract Reality is separate from Causal Reality; therefore, abstract objects cannot be caused/dependent nor can they cause anything. Both theists and atheists can accept this point. Nominalism involves only human beings and their speech; again both theists and atheists can accept this point. Major criticisms against Oppy include an incorrect definition of causation that biases the argument in atheism's favor, a misinterpretation of nominalism, and a confusion of dependency with contingency.

In short, the book comes down to two questions. First, do abstract objects exist? Second, what is the nature of abstract objects if they exist? Craig, Shalkowski, and Oppy are against abstract objects. Yandell, Gould/Davis, and Welty disagree over the nature of abstract objects. The question for the reader is who is correct if any.

Graham Floyd  
Tarrant County College



***We Can Make the World Economy a Sustainable Global Home.* By Lewis Mudge. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014. 176 pages. Paperback, \$18.00.**

In Lewis Mudge's book, *We Can Make the World Economy a Sustainable Global Home*, he argues that we need to reset our understanding of human spirit (*Geist*) after the wake of the Great Recession. Whereas modern culture has defined human spirit solely in terms of economic value, Mudge claims that we need to return to a political economy where everyone, including theologians, is involved in a public discussion on how the national and even world economy should be run (11–13). According to Mudge, humanity is *homo oeconomicus*, which means that human beings and their economic activities are primarily based in spiritual and familial relationships. Economics is not just mathematics but also cultural and humanistic. As a result, Mudge introduces his concept of covenantal humanism where followers of the Abrahamic faiths (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) have a covenant with God to bring blessings to the earth and not a curse. Such faiths must covenant together to show the rest of the world the way forward (13–17).

Connected to this concept is the notion of stakeholderism where all humans have a stake in and right to the earth's resources and how they are used. Mudge argues that the global economy should look at all people as stakeholders in all international business. He believes such a view would change the way that business operates and would ensure a more equal playing field among earth's household of people as well as protecting earth's finite resources (17–19). He rejects what he calls the Western mindset of neoliberalism where society is reduced to rational market forces that can be plotted mathematically and interference in business is not tolerated or questioned. He considers such a model imperial (50–56).

Instead, we need a worldwide stakeholderism where people manage their resources with the global community in mind (common global good) and not for their own self-interests. We are all part of the global *oikos* (household), so we should treat the world as a global household. Instead of representing only ourselves, we represent the earth and all who live on it (77–81). Mudge claims that this is not a political system *per se* but a general attitude built into the economic system with minimum standards to uphold these attitudes (83). Such attitudes can be carried by national and international legislation as well as faith communities who are the drivers for such change (89). In this way, we can build a better global economy that ensures equality and justice for all mankind.

Unfortunately, Mudge's claims are simplistic, misguided, and inconsistent. Much of what he states concerning economic matters is lacking in careful attention to detail. His understanding of the causes of the Great Recession is very surface level, which is probably due to his death in 2009. While he accurately notes the banking scandal that led to the economic downfall, he is ignorant of the political issues that undergirded that scandal. Mudge's attention to detail is also lacking in his understanding of economic principles, particularly when it comes to free market economics. He consistently utilizes a caricature that most proponents of the free market system would reject. He always equates self-interest and rational choice with maximization of profit and a lack of ethical awareness, which is simply not true. He also rejects rational market forces as a means to correct ethical misconduct and establish a just system even though such forces have inspired him to seek for economic reforms. Such a lack of understanding serves to undermine Mudge's claims.

A surprising lack of theology is noticeable in Mudge's work though he himself is a theologian. He touches on theological and scriptural issues briefly. The majority

of his book is spent pontificating on economic and political issues. Even in the places where he deals with theology, he falls far short. He takes Scripture out of its context and uses it to make analogies to contemporary issues. He even states that justification by grace is just being sincere in one's beliefs (20–21). Though certain vices are mentioned as causes to economic distress and humanity's capacity for evil is acknowledged, Mudge never discusses the effects of sin on economics and the need for divine salvation in order to restore the global economy. He is content to let the rational and legislative powers of man solve the problem. This move is all the more bewildering since he is highly critical of Enlightenment rationalism and the reduction of humanity or rational considerations. What he denies with his right hand, Mudge reasserts with his left.

Mudge's work also lacks the necessary detail to demonstrate how such a system would work. Who will ensure that everyone's rights are maintained? Who will regulate the world economy? Who owns what? Who decides how resources and businesses are used? How will all of this be paid for? Mudge is content to only provide broad and unspecific suggestions. His writings seem to indicate two broad possibilities: 1) either the world will be controlled by an international organization that has the power to enforce regulations and protect individual rights for the common good or 2) all people will ultimately consent to Mudge's thesis and live in a perfect utopia where no one has an absolute right to their own property and everyone seeks his neighbor's good. The latter view is hopelessly naïve.

In the end, Mudge's thesis is untenable. While I appreciate his criticism of the maximization-of-profit-at-all-cost mentality, his replacement is neither well thought out or even original in thought. It is simply socialism warmed over.

Graham Floyd  
Tarrant County College

### Studies in Preaching and Pastoral Ministry

***Recapturing the Voice of God: Shaping Sermons Like Scripture* by Steven W. Smith. Nashville: B&H, 2015. 230 pages. Paperback. \$24.99.**

If the Bible is full of literary variety, why is the preaching of the Bible often predictable and structurally repetitive? Three points and a poem was an overstated cliché a generation ago; unfortunately modified to three points and a story in many modern pulpits. But does it have to be so Sunday after Sunday? It should not be so according to Steven W. Smith in his latest work, *Recapturing the Voice of God: Shaping Sermons Like Scripture*.

Smith makes the case that the pitch, rate, and volume (literary genre) of the biblical text is often ignored in the excavation of a biblical text for preaching points. Once the truth is mined, the form of the text is discarded and the sermon is developed utilizing a propositional homiletical form. In the first chapter, Smith introduces an alternative grounded in the revelation of Christ. We encounter the full image of the Father revealed in both the person and ministry of Christ through the Spirit-given biblical text. The iconic nature of Christ as the image of the Father invites the preacher to avoid a false dichotomy between the propositional truth found in Scripture and the genre in which we receive that truth.

In the second chapter, Smith argues that our sermons should convey not only the substance of the text, but also be influenced by the structure (semantic shape of the passage) and spirit (emotive design of the biblical author) of the text. He offers a helpful caution that some biblical genres are not easily imitated in a sermon (such as a poetry and proverbs). The call is for re-animation and not slavish imitation of the genre structure at all times in the sermon.

Three axioms guide the development of the rest of the book: (1) The sermon should reflect the genre; (2) there are at least nine discernable genres; (3) preaching those genres may be facilitated by mastering three basic templates. The three literary templates are story, poem/wisdom, and letter. Story is further divided into Old Testament Narrative, Law, Gospel/Acts, and Parables (chaps. 4–7). Psalms, Wisdom Literature, and Prophecy are listed under the template of Poem/Wisdom (chaps. 8–10). The final letter template includes both the Epistles and Revelation (chaps. 11–12).

In each genre specific chapter, Smith provides broad hermeneutical guidelines specific to the genre along with specific steps for developing that particular genre into a sermon. He helpfully includes cautions and guidance in preaching Christ from each biblical genre. These often come in the form of exegetical fallacies to avoid. For example, we read that in historical narratives the preacher must avoid the three-fold temptation of moralizing, spiritualizing, and allegorizing.

One of the most helpful contributions of each genre chapter is the “sample sermon.” While a full sermon manuscript is not presented, the overall development and structure is given in an outline form. This reader would have benefited from a fully formed sermon manuscript to give more than the structure of the sermon but also to engage the full substance of the sermon.

For the pastor, Smith’s work offers a helpful guide that moves him from the interpretation of a text to the composition of a message. A pastor could consistently draw upon the insights of this work to stimulate the creative movement from interpretation to sermon development. One will not find hard and fast rules for sermon structure here, lest he be tempted to replace one predictable sermonic structure for another.

Another helpful contribution is the suggested readings at the end of each chapter along with a clearly organized bibliography. Smith points the reader to a broad array of current hermeneutical and homiletical works that expand his engagement with each literary genre. Every pastor would be served well by consulting these suggested readings prior to beginning (and during) a series in the appropriate genre of Scripture.

For the homiletician, Smith builds on the work of two previous contributions to the field of genre-sensitive preaching. He expands on both Thomas Long’s *Preaching and the Literary Forms of the Bible* (1988) and Jeffrey Arthurs’ *Preaching with Variety* (2007). His decision to provide clear steps from interpretation to sermon composition along with the sample sermon outline are helpful improvements upon the previous works. Both Long’s and Arthurs’ works serve primarily as homiletical introductions to selected literary genres. Smith puts sermonic flesh on their homiletical and hermeneutical bones. Smith additionally expands the scope of coverage of Long and Arthurs by adding his chapters on the law, Gospel/Acts, and prophecy.

For both the preacher and the homiletician, Smith has provided a significant contribution that will aid many generations of preachers in creating sermons that are shaped by not only the substance, but also the structure and spirit of the text. I am

confident that the Spirit of God will use this work so that preachers and congregants will be shaped by the voice of God revealed in the preached Word.

David Eldridge  
First Baptist Church Clinton, Mississippi

***Blessed are the Balanced: A Seminarian's Guide to Following Jesus in the Academy.* By Paul E. Pettit and R. Todd Mangum. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2014. 112 pages. Paperback, \$13.99**

In *Blessed are the Balanced*, Paul E. Pettit and R. Todd Mangum hope to protect seminary students from the danger of losing spiritual vigor while increasing in spiritual knowledge. They write, “a good number of students graduate with a head full of biblical and doctrinal knowledge, but with a heart that has grown cold to God” (7). The authors, then, “[focus] on how students of God and the Scriptures can achieve a healthy balance between both rigorous academic scholarship and a growing piety” (8).

In order to assist seminarians in achieving the desired balance, the authors distinguish between Christian maturity and higher education. Christian maturity, they posit, is a matter of the heart: “(a) putting away childish things and becoming an *adult* in Christ, (b) partnering with the Holy Spirit to produce *good fruit*, and (c) walking in the *light* of God’s truths” (21). Higher education, however, is a matter of the mind (or head). The authors provide a brief primer on disciplines (spiritual and academic), before charging their readers to strive for balance.

The authors rightly emphasize the importance of prayer and spiritual discipline in the life of the student. Seminary students certainly may fall into the trap of rightly dividing the Word of truth (2 Tim 2:15), while failing to allow the Word to divide them (4:12). When done with proper motivation, spiritual disciplines have the power to provide the ballast needed when sailing the waters of higher education. The authors’ suggestions of academic disciplines are of equal importance. Seminary education is not an entitlement, but rather an investment entrusted to them. Students are given a stewardship with which they must demonstrate great care and responsibility.

The authors also emphasize church involvement while in seminary. Theological education exists for the sake of the church, and as such, must not be undertaken in the absence of church membership. Lessons learned in the classroom find their ultimate purpose in the sanctuary. The church is the laboratory in which the student teaches that which he has been taught, and develops relationships that provide perspective on his education. It is the place where friendships and accountability take place. These emphases were the strengths of the book.

There was, however, one point of concern. The author of chapter 1 introduces the analogy of a teeter-totter which is carried throughout the book: the desire is to help the seminarian achieve “the final goal of *balancing* the teeter-totter” (18). The danger of using this analogy is that it presents piety and knowledge—Christian maturity and Christian education—as ends of a spectrum at odds with one another, as though an increase in the one necessarily mandates a decrease in the other. It assumes that theological study leads to spiritual dryness, hence the need to “keep academics and spirituality, study, and godliness in balance” (137).

Balance, however, demands that one restrict one end to make allowance for the other: to restrict learning in order to make allowance for more piety, or to restrict piety in order to make allowance for more learning. Is the seminary student

faced with such a moral impasse? Perhaps it would be better to challenge seminary students to dive headlong into the Scriptures, wrestling with God's Word until they are held captive by it. Perhaps the seminary's mandate must be to teach the Word of God to the people of God in such a way that they are moved by God to share the love of God with the world—whether in the church, the mission field, or the academy. Perhaps it would be better to view exegesis as the method of interpreting the text that affects not only belief, but action and application as well. Perhaps managing our weight and maintaining, then, should not be the end goal. It may be that the problem is not a lack of balance, but a lack of truly being held captive and transformed by the Word of God.

*Blessed are the Balance* is a helpful little book, designed to assist the seminary student in maintaining his spiritual fervor while in classes. Its overarching analogy is a poor choice, but its message is of incredible importance: Christian growth is not a matter of the head *or* the heart. It concerns the whole person: heart, soul, strength *and* mind (Luke 10:27).

David Norman, Jr  
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***The Rise of the Nones: Understanding and Reaching the Religiously Unaffiliated.* By James Emery White. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014. 224 pages. Paperback, \$15.99.**

Many are disassociating themselves from formal religious groups, instead choosing “none of the above” as their religious affiliation. What does this mean for society and evangelism? In *The Rise of the Nones*, James Emery White argues that the rise of the “nones” indicates a significant cultural transformation that requires Christians reevaluate their understanding of society and alter their evangelistic out-reach strategies.

White organizes his work into two sections. Section one analyzes the rise, characteristics, and cultural impact of “nones” (i.e., the religiously unaffiliated, 7). Section two outlines “the new mentality and approach” necessary to evangelize this growing group (8). He shows that since the 1990s “nones” have been the “fastest-growing and second-largest religious category” (17). He attributes this to two factors. First, a “perfect storm” created by the church's recent activities and failures (37–41); second, to “secularization, privatization, and pluralization” (46–51). Religiously, he shows that “nones” are indifferent toward religion, though many consider themselves spiritual (ch. 2). Thus, a new paradigm and new evangelistic strategies are required.

In section two, White argues that churches must undergo a “paradigm shift” regarding church growth (73). They must strive for conversion growth rather than biological, transfer, and prodigal growth (ch. 6). This necessitates churches analyze their “atmosphere” as related to “nones” (ch. 7). Also, he proposes three changes: adoption of “cause” (ch. 8), focus on “grace and truth” (ch. 9), and a “new apologetics” (ch. 10). To help accomplish this, White calls for “unity” (ch. 11) and proposes churches “open the front door” to “nones” (ch. 12).

White offers a thorough analysis of the religiously unaffiliated by citing numerous studies. Furthermore, he shows that their recent growth requires new mind-sets and approaches to evangelism. Despite his evidence, however, there are two areas of weakness. First, he attributes the “perfect storm” in part to several headlines, social movements, and fads of the 1990s. He does not, though, show why these were more influential than the events of the 1960s (34–36). Second, in his analysis of the “nones,” White does not address a possible pushback. There will be some who



reject his conclusions regarding society and his call to reevaluate traditional outreach methods.

In section two White offers proposals to reach the “nones” with the gospel. First, he reminds his readers to focus on conversion growth (ch. 6). Second, he clearly articulates the error of some traditional outreach methods, brilliantly illustrating his point using car sales (76–79). As for specific application, four of White’s recommendations are noteworthy. First, he calls for a renewed emphasis on Christ and the cross (i.e., “grace and truth,” ch. 9). Second, he recommends adopting a “new apologetics” emphasizing meaning more than empiricism (ch. 10). Third, he calls for unity among believers (ch. 11). Finally, he offers five specific keys to creating a church welcoming to “nones” (ch. 12). Despite the helpful—and much needed—information, section two’s usefulness is limited. In chapter 7, White discusses six “atmospheres” but only clearly defines two: “none hostile” and “none indifferent.” Those that receive the greatest emphasis, “none targeted” and “no man’s land,” remain ambiguous.

Second, White focuses on “cause” as a means to reach the “nones” (ch. 8). However, his explanation of “cause” lacks clarity and thus invites misinterpretation. Although he attempts to distinguish social action from social transformation, his lack of clarity opens the door to social justice, the social gospel, and religious progressivism.

Third, although he rightly emphasizes “grace and truth,” he does not clearly define “truth” (ch. 9). White refers to “truth” as rules imposed by man (cf. Islam and Christian legalism). With only this definition offered, one is left wondering if “grace and truth” means preaching both the cross and imposing legalistic rules?

Finally, White overlooks two vital areas: small churches and submission to God. At times he calls for changes some may find difficult, e.g., changing musical instrumentation, building renovations, and implementing multimedia. However, he fails to help small churches understand how to make these adjustments. How will a small country church of fifty people with an average age of 65 implement these changes? Not only does White overlook small churches, he also omits submission to God. There is no specific discussion on submission to the Holy Spirit, the supremacy of Christ, or the sovereignty of God. Without submission a paradigm shift is unlikely and unity is unachievable.

James Emery White’s work, *The Rise of the Nones*, has the potential to be groundbreaking, especially section one, wherein he analyzes the rising group of the religiously unaffiliated. However, its usefulness in application is hindered by limited elaboration, undefined terms, and overlooked issues. As such, White accomplishes most, but not all, of his stated goal. Nevertheless, *The Rise of the Nones* offers insight into an unprecedented modern cultural phenomenon. He shows that “nones” are indifferent to religion and do not necessarily hold a Christian worldview. Thus, White’s work is pivotal to both understanding culture and devising new strategies to reach that culture.

John L. Rothra  
Longview, Texas

***Autopsy of a Deceased Church: 12 Ways to Keep Yours Alive.* By Thom S. Rainer. Nashville: B&H, 2014. 112 pages. Hardcover, \$12.99.**

Many churches die every year all across the United States. While one might argue that some need to die, a church’s death is sad, and in many cases, preventable. In this brief work, Thom Rainer examines the conditions of multiple churches

that contributed to their ultimate demise. Based on his findings and the knowledge gained from years of research, Rainer outlines nine symptoms of sick or dying churches, then offers twelve “responses” intended to help the members of those churches confront their situation.

Despite the book’s brevity, the content is weighty and insightful, offering readers information to help identify areas within their churches that indicate sickness or impending death. The book is divided into two parts: the autopsy and the responses. In the first section Rainer explains that for many the journey toward death is slow and often goes unnoticed (ch. 2). Chapters 3–11 outline conditions, or symptoms, of a sick or dying church. Some of the symptoms Rainer discusses include idolization of the past, self-serving budgeting, being “preference-driven,” and a fixation on church facilities.

Although the book is intended for a more general audience, it can be a useful resource for church leaders. Rainer strips the information of illustrative fluff and provides church leaders—in a direct, yet loving, manner—the necessary information to recognize and address spiritual sickness in their church. Pastors will find the information useful in that it (1) provides a snapshot of the American church’s spiritual condition in the early twenty-first century, and (2) can work well in conjunction with Revelation 2–3 (and other passages) in identifying how the American church relates to churches of the first century.

Despite its usefulness, *Autopsy of a Deceased Church* is not without weaknesses. First, some of the individual symptoms seem forced. For example, based on his explanations, it is unclear how being “preference-driven” (ch. 7) is distinct from the church refusing to look like the community (ch. 4). In both cases, Rainer indicates that the congregation is self-serving rather than kingdom-serving.

In addition, one must ask whether the individual conditions are truly symptoms or merely byproducts of the symptoms of selfishness and pride. On the one hand, a case could be made that pride and selfishness are the disease and the nine issues Rainer addresses are the symptoms. On the other hand, one could argue that the disease is sin, selfishness and pride are the symptoms, and Rainer’s nine conditions are the byproducts. This lack of clarity is exacerbated by the fact that throughout the autopsy, Rainer repeatedly returns to the theme of the church being selfish and prideful.

Another weakness is Rainer’s dependence on his own ethos (i.e., “trust me” moments). Multiple times Rainer offers broad generalizations, especially regarding statistics, that he indicates are based on his overall research and experience. When discussing the nature of a pastor’s tenure, Rainer lists five stages (58–60). However, he precedes this section by referencing his “more than two decades” of research. He then admits that although his time-designations are “not precise,” he has “some level of confidence” in them.

A second example of Rainer’s ethos-dependence is in chapter 12. Rainer estimates that 10% of churches are healthy, 40% have some symptoms, 40% are very sick, and 10% are dying. The given basis for these numbers, which he admits are “not precise,” is simply “I believe they reflect the actual condition” (86).

The final weakness comes in part two: the “responses” to spiritual sickness. Although the subtitle states that the book will include “twelve ways to keep yours alive,” Rainer actually only offers eight. The final four responses recommend letting the church die, albeit gracefully (ch. 14). Furthermore, Rainer qualifies his recommendations for a “very sick” church (ch. 13) by indicating that change would require

a miracle because, though not impossible, it is very unlikely that such a church can avoid death (94).

Thom Rainer's work, *Autopsy of a Deceased Church*, offers tremendous insight into the spiritual conditions that plague many churches in America. A few are healthy, some have early symptoms, while others are very sick or dying. It can be difficult to recognize sickness in a church at any stage, especially for the members of that church. Rainer's work offers insight and information to help laity and church leaders identify and address areas of spiritual sickness. Despite its brevity, the book is a tremendous value to Christians willing to read it with an open mind and help slow the rate of church death in this nation.

John L. Rothra  
Longview, Texas