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Book Reviews

The Eucharist—Its Origins and Contexts: Sacred Meal, Communal Meal, Table Fellowship in Late Antiquity, Early Judaism, and Early Christianity. 3 Volumes. Edited by David Hellholm and Dieter Sänger. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017. lx + 2199 pages. Cloth, \$435.00.

The subject three-volume project was a continuation of the previous three-volume research project “Ablution, Initiation, and Baptism” but with “reference to another subject”—the Eucharist (xxxiii). The Organizing Committee is represented by researchers of differing theological backgrounds from Germany and Scandinavia. Contributors to the project are “Christian and non-Christian” scholars “from all around the world,” and from multiple fields of research and study, including “History of Religion, Egyptology, Classics, Ancient History, Old and New Testament, Judaism, Patristics, Archaeology, and History of Art” (xxxiii).

The initial essay by Körtner acts as an introduction to the project and contours many of the essays, though it is provided in German only (1–21). The essay emphasizes ecumenism (9–13) and theology (18–20), while pushing for further study. The first English essay by Altmann (23–41) notes the trend in Eucharistic research towards “Greco-Roman symposium-esque features,” but also points out neglected Old Testament contexts (24). Concern over “the Passover Seder from the medieval Passover Hagaddah” and its anachronistic use is helpfully discussed (23; and *passim* vol. 1).

How meals functioned sociologically in the ancient world (both Jewish or early Christian, but also Greco-Roman), with interest on the feasting community and its variegated rituals, is contoured in several early essays (Altmann, 23–41; Eidevall, 43–59; Jacobs, 161–76; Sänger, 181–222) and some later essays (Leonhardt-Balzer, 258; Leonhard, 308; Kelhoffer, 313–29; Marguerat, 513–35; Winnige, 582–83; Vegge, 645–71; Ulfgard, 697–731). Among the earlier essays, roles (host, priest, victim, laity, etc.), arrangements (consecration, seating, calendar dates, lamb or goat, location, etc.), and elements (the sacrifice, wine, meat, blood, etc.) are explicated in terms of their social-symbolic meanings (honoring kinship and friendship, strengthening solidarity, Yahweh or the deity as a guest of honor, observing occasions of sacrifice, celebrating, dedicating the Jerusalem temple, royal banqueting, destruction, victory, covenanting, divine-human interaction).

Communal meals and their customs (e.g. purity/impurity) at Qumran are discussed in two essays (Wassén, 77–100; Frey, 101–30), as well as Magness’ reassessment of sacrificial practices at Qumran (131–55; towards a positive conclusion). Food/eating customs in Tobit and *Aristeas* are discussed by Jacobs (157–79). Sänger emphasizes the “formulaic references to the bread of life, cup of immortality, and ointment of incorruption” in *Joseph and Aseneth* as symbolic of Jewish religious customs in general, rather than pointing to a specific sacred meal (181–222). A further, inspiring essay by Hartvigsen draws richly on the same text while emphasizing the narrative importance of food, drink, ointment, and honeycomb (223–51). Leonhardt-Balzer’s essay examines Philo and Josephus’s mention of meals, and draws parallels with the Greco-Roman context (253–73; see 258 for the notable mention

of Philo's likening of the symposiarch to the Logos, συμποσίαρχος λόγος; Philo *Somn.* 2.249).

Moving into the New Testament, the importance of Exodus 12 as a script for Passover celebration is discussed by Leonhard, but with a negative conclusion; Exodus 12 is considered a cult etiology (276–87). A chronologically sensitive comparison of the Last Supper with later Rabbis and Haggadah is carefully discussed with several profitable insights (287–305). Further, for Leonhard, the Upper Room setting of the Last Supper is considered plausible, though the social status of those present is not (308). The association between Pesach and Eucharist is, then, one of early Christian “theological imagination” owing to the proximity of Jesus’ final meal with Passover (308). Finally, certain Seder features “must be understood as instances of Greco-Roman communal meals” rather than Jewish customs (276). John and Jesus and their respective non-participation and participation in meals inform the next essay by Kelhoffer, with careful exegetical argumentation and an interest in social capital/power (313–29). Ådna’s essay makes excellent use of the criteria of authenticity in establishing Jesus’ table fellowship with tax collectors and sinners against the skepticism of, specifically, Dennis E. Smith (331–53).

Holmstrand examines Jesus’ feeding of the multitudes (numerous texts are considered, though Mark 6:30–44 is given priority), and their reception in the first three centuries AD (355–88), a reception that is admittedly small (only eight references; cf. 385). Blomqvist and Blomqvist provide an exciting philological study of related Eucharistic vocabulary attested across several texts/sources from the period of c. AD 50–200 (389–421). Byrskog helpfully examines the symbolic actions of Jesus that are a critique of the Temple and cult (Mark 11:1–11; 11:12–14, 20–25; 11:15–19) as well as his counter-temple teaching (Mark 11:27–33; 12:1–9; 12:35–37a; 12:37b–40; 13:1–2), before examining the Mark/Matthew and Luke/Paul forms of the tradition while making use of social memory (428–36; 436–45). Specific features (forgiveness of sins, new covenant, etc.) that speak clearly of the Supper’s significance are taken as secondary, though Byrskog desires such significance for Mark (443). Lastly, a pre-Markan Supper text in Greek is neatly hypothesized (444). Sandnes’ essay (453–75) is an excellent comparison between the Markan and Matthean accounts and, taken together with Byrskog’s essay, stands in stark contrast to the negative findings of Kazen, who essentially repristinates the skepticism of Jesus questing observable from the late nineteenth century onward (477–502).

Popkes’ essay focuses on Luke 24 and John, and positively assesses their knowledge of the Supper’s institution, though neither is (said to be) explicit in their Gospels (503–512); meals in Acts (and Luke) are treated in the following essay by Marguerat, who points out their social significance (513–535). Next is Müller’s treatment (537–554) of the strong and the weak in Romans 14–15 (with reference to 1 Cor 8:10), followed by Duff’s helpful exegetical essay on 1 Corinthians 11:17–34 (555–78). Winnige’s essay comparing 1 Corinthians 11 with Luke 22 is a well-written study exploring several difficulties in Supper scholarship (e.g. the text-critical problem in Luke 22:19b–20, which he sees as textually authentic; Luke’s reliance on Paul mostly but sometimes Mark, as in “poured out ... for”; the memorializing aspect, also seen as a late development, perhaps owing to Greco-Roman culture; the new covenant, which is considered a later addition; Pesach, also a late addition; libation; etc.); he further details an (oral) traditioning history (579–602). Nevertheless, he observes a Greco-Roman symposium behind certain features of the Supper and discerns “*Pesach* connotations” as late (cf. 599–600). John examines Peter’s Antioch

controversy as attested in Galatians 2:11–21 (603–24; he understands the table fellowship controversy as encompassing the Lord's Supper and reflective of a Judeo-Christianity schism). Löhr (625–44) assesses the meaning of subsequent sacramental terminology, including *communio* and *participatio*. Vegge's essay (645–71) looks at additional New Testament scriptures, specifically Colossians and Jude 12, and is methodologically informed by the sociological models of Theissen and Lindbeck. His treatment of Jude is especially helpful.

Ulfsgard helpfully examines meals and eating in Revelation (673–95). Revelation 3:20 is seen as an eschatological messianic banquet (681); also discussed is the marriage supper of the Lamb and additional eschatological eating/drinking, including the tree of life and the hidden (eschatological) manna (683–90). "Antidivine meals," meaning meals symbolic of divine judgment (Rev 2:14–16, 20; 17:16; 19:17–18), are also discussed (690–92). Bormann (697–731) examines the cultural-anthropological dimension. And finally, Weidemann (733–69) draws a connection between baptismal accounts in Luke and Paul (primarily) and table fellowship/eucharistic practices.

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***The Books of Haggai and Malachi.* By Mignon R. Jacobs. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018. xlv + 377 pages. Hardcover, \$48.00.**

Mignon R. Jacobs is the Dean and Chief Academic Officer at Ashland Theological Seminary. She has chaired the Israelite prophetic literature section of the Society of Biblical Literature and is noted for her work in Old Testament narratives. Her work on Haggai and Malachi represents an update for the NICOT series on these two biblical books. The previous volume was written in 1987 by Pieter A. Verhoef. Together with Mark Boda's volume on Zechariah (2016), the NICOT has now completed an update of the Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi corpus.

Jacobs structures her commentary with an introductory chapter inserted before the main discussion of the text of both biblical books. The introduction to each book differs slightly. The introduction to Haggai includes discussion of the prophet and date, while the introduction to Malachi does not. The introduction to both books contains comment about the historical and sociopolitical context, conceptual framework, the text and intertextual indicators before ending with an overall analysis of the structure and message of the book. Jacobs's pattern of presentation of the text and commentary follows other volumes in the series. First, she presents her own translation with translational notes. Then, she engages scholarly discussion on the text along with her own notes while using transliterated Hebrew.

The way that Jacobs accomplishes her goal of interpreting the text as prophetic literature while noting the intertextual voices within the text is helpful, as with many of the minor prophets. In her comments on Haggai 1:3b–4, Jacobs points out major intertextual connections with texts from Ezekiel, Isaiah, 1 Kings and Jeremiah. She also presents several minor connections of phrasing with other texts. Even though Jacobs presents the possible connections without judging their significance, her presentation of the connections is still helpful for those trying to make interpretive decisions although she does not make such decisions herself.

Jacobs has masterfully controlled the secondary literature on Haggai and Malachi. Her bibliography contains all the major players as one would expect, and her footnotes show detailed familiarity with their arguments regarding texts like Haggai

1:11 where some scholars see parallels with texts from Deuteronomy. Additionally, her notes on the text are detailed. When Jacobs translates Haggai 2:15–19, she then presents eleven notes concerning translational decisions plus footnotes (104–06).

Another strength of this book is the way in which Jacobs presents charts and maps. For example, the chart of Persian and Yehudite Leaders helps to understand the historical figures mentioned in and around 500 BC. Furthermore, the map of Yehud among the Persian Provinces (135) is an excellent visual aid for reading and understanding not only the references in Malachi, but those in Haggai as well. Those who are using this work as a textbook will find that Jacobs has presented charts and maps that will be useful for students to memorize.

The work does have a few shortcomings. One may expect a biblical commentator to claim something about the identity of the biblical book's author; however, Jacobs makes no such claims. She does argue that a real prophet named Haggai lived during the time the book describes (approximately 520 BC) as the book claims. Yet, she never makes any statements about authorship. In dealing with the book of Malachi, Jacobs quickly notes that scholars disagree whether Malachi refers to a person or functions as a title before she moves to the next issue. At the same time, it is true that the historical location of each book for which she argues could be used to bolster an argument for traditional authorship of both books (she dates Haggai to 520 BC, and Malachi to approximately 515–458 BC); however, she makes no such claim in this work.

Additionally, Jacobs states in the introduction that one of her goals is to “inquire about the significance of the text for both the ancient and the modern audience” (viii). She does an admirable job of demonstrating the significance of the text for the ancient audience. However, she often fails to suggest ways that the text is significant for its modern audience. For example, in discussing Malachi 2:16 (often translated “God hates divorce”) she makes no reference to the contemporary issue of divorce.

Similarly, discussions of theological and thematic elements are not given priority in this book. To be clear, she does list intertextual links between Malachi and the New Testament, but these discussions conclude at the textual level without moving to the theological level. Moreover, her discussion of four prevalent themes in Malachi takes up less than one full page (152–53).

To sum up, this work represents a significant step in terms of scholarly commentaries on the books of Haggai and Malachi. Anyone teaching a course on Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi will want to make use of Jacob's work, since the work of Meyers and Meyers is becoming dated. For the seminary student, and the local pastor with interpretation (not application) questions, this book will provide an excellent starting point for digging into the text of these two minor prophets. I highly recommend this book.

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***Worlds That Could Not Be: Utopia in Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah.* Edited by Steven J. Schweitzer and Frauke Uhlenbruch. New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016. xii + 211 pages. Hardback, \$114.00.**

This volume of collected essays addresses a growing trend in research concerning the books of Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah: the concept of utopia. Utopia itself is difficult to define, especially as it relates to Biblical Studies. Thomas More

coined the term as the name for a fictional island with a seemingly ideal society; however, the term has expanded considerably as a way of speaking of categories of literature, ideologies embedded in literary works, and sociological movements that produce this type of literature (cf. esp. 82). Admittedly, at first it may seem strange that a term coined in a fictional work from 16th century England would apply to religious documents emerging from the Near Eastern world nearly two millennia earlier. To understand why scholars have used the concept of utopia to study this literature, it is helpful to look specifically at Chronicles.

As is well known, Chronicles presents the history of Israel in ways that differ from Samuel and Kings. As previous generations of scholars tried to explain these differences, they generally relied on historical arguments: either Chronicles used a different historical source or Chronicles retrojected the practices of his present time into Israel's past. For instance, since pre-exilic documents do not mention the twenty-four priestly courses, some scholars argued that Chronicles retrojected this second temple practice into the time of David in order to authorize the practice for his own time. Utopia provides another explanation for such differences. If one thinks of utopia as expressing the desire for a better alternative reality (see especially Schweitzer's essay), one can argue that Chronicles may not attempt to authorize a current practice but change it. In this case, Chronicles was not intended to be an instrument to reinforce the status quo but an instrument of reform.

The essays in the volume address the questions of utopia and biblical literature from different points of view and different emphases. Some essays deal more directly with the texts. Others take on the feel of thought experiments, probing the possible historical, ideological, or literary assumptions and intentions behind a text and through modern approaches. Despite the diversity, some themes recur consistently. First, the essays admit that care is required to speak of biblical literature through the lens of utopia, though most find it beneficial in some way (see Uhlenbruch's comments on 1 Chronicles 1–9 as a "cyborg text," 76).

Second, many essays address the nature of utopia as a place that is better than the present one, at least viewed from a particular point of view. In light of this theme, Snyman probes the line between utopia and dystopia and considers the circumstances that would likely produce utopia, conditions he does not find easily in the context of Chronicles (38–58). Exploring the particular point of view of the returned community, Cataldo addresses how a sociological look at prejudice may inform the restoration efforts of Ezra and Nehemiah (144–68).

Third, the essays explore how these biblical books address power and authority. For instance, Polaski examines how scribes navigate their position of prestige within the Persian Empire by looking at the way writing functions in Chronicles. He points out that most often the scribes depict writing as inadequate since it requires some type of supplementation. However, he notes that writing in which "empire and Temple align" (e.g. the temple plans) requires no supplementation. This alignment reveals part of the strategy for the scribe to navigate his both his prestigious position as scribe and his subordinate position as subject of the Persian Empire.

Beyond these recurring themes, I would like to point out some individual essays. First, Stordalen's essay ("Worlds That Could Not Be: Realism and Irrealism in Thomas More's *Utopia*") takes a fascinating look at the world portrayed in More's *Utopia* and the way that More's reading audience mapped out their world. Important to realize is that such maps are "graphics [that] chart geographic, historical, symbolical, and religious matter in one and the same space" (20). Furthermore, these

maps often contained Paradise (Garden of Eden), but “the reader of the map would nevertheless not have expected to be able to go there” (23). Stordalen speaks of these features as real and unreal, drawing connections to the early chapters of Genesis to show that these chapters present a world in contrast to the world of experience.

Second, Schweitzer’s essay (“Exile, Empire, and Prophecy: Reframing Utopian Concerns in Chronicles”) lays out his influential utopian approach. He then models the approach by addressing three concerns of Chronicles: exile, empire, and prophecy. By looking at these themes, he emphasizes that Chronicles focuses on cultic concerns rather than political ones as the means for establishing a better world for the community. Prophets play a role in this world as they “give the impression of continuity between these ancient narratives and the present, as they interpret the past for the present audience to create a different future based on that same past” (101). The essay is a model example for applying this approach.

Third, Jendrek’s essay (“Taking the Reader into Utopia”) looks at the role of prayer in Chronicles to promote a hope for a future restoration of Israel. He works closely with a number of texts, pointing out textual connections between prayers. He points to Schweitzer’s argument that Chronicles presents Israel in an atemporal way. Then, he argues that these connections function within that atemporality to “bridge the times texts tell about and any reader’s present by transporting the motifs and the summons to worship YHWH to *any time* a reader reads them” (181). The essay illustrates how the shape of historical narratives themselves may help bridge the gap between text and reader.

I conclude with two remarks. First, the volume concludes with an essay by a specialist in utopian studies. Due to the nature of the essay, I have not addressed it above; however, I hope that other scholars working in a cross-disciplinary manner will follow the same example. Second, although I still wonder about the validity of a utopian reading of biblical literature and although I disagreed with a number of specific interpretations, the volume stimulated a number of questions that I hope to pursue and placed several observations in a new context for me to consider. This stimulating volume suits especially well anyone wanting to explore the growing academic trend of reading utopia in biblical literature.

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***Basic Introduction to the New Testament.* By John Stott. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017. 216 pages. Paperback, \$16.00**

John Stott’s introduction to the New Testament has aged gracefully since its first installment in 1951. This 2017 edition, revised by Stephen Motyer, succeeds in the quest to “lighten” language and acknowledge more recent biblical scholarship. It also includes a foreword by Alistair Begg, who vividly celebrates Stott’s capacity to “thread the needle” through a passage of Scripture without “tearing the text” or pulling it out of shape.

The nine chapters of this reader-friendly volume address the authors of the New Testament writings and their respective messages. The arrangement of each chapter is such that the reader may gain insight into the context and content of the author’s message. While acknowledging the foundational unity of the New Testament authors in terms of their awareness of the world’s estrangement from God and its need for deliverance from the affliction of sin through Christ, Stott also emphasizes the manner in which these authors supplement each other in light of

their individual purposes and concerns. This is particularly the case with regard to the Gospel writers.

Although it does not include an exhaustive treatment of background and exegetical matters, this book, with its economy of words and concise organization, seems to supply more weighty and significant content than other standard introductory works. For example, Stott begins with Mark's Gospel and briefly summarizes the case for Marcan priority, noting that 600 of Mark's 662 verses may be found in Matthew's Gospel. Additionally, Stott succeeds in identifying for the reader the distinguishing features associated with each of the synoptic Gospels. Mark is described as the Gospel of the Christ the suffering servant. The fact that a third of Mark recounts events directly connected to Christ's death supports this designation. Matthew's Gospel is hailed as the Gospel of Christ the ruling king. With a shorter narrative style than Mark, Matthew repeatedly references the Kingdom of heaven and links events in the life of Jesus to Old Testament prophecies, with the result that Jesus is presented as the unique Son of God who is the fulfillment of Old Testament promises. Luke's Gospel is fashioned as the Gospel of Christ the universal savior. Identifying Luke as the only Gentile among the New Testament writers and as an educated historian, Stott highlights this Gospel's appeal to the masses and to the marginalized in society. He also views the book of Acts as a continuation of Luke, recording the expansion of the early church and providing encouragement and hope to a suffering church.

In a chapter devoted to the writings of John, the reader is presented with a portrait of him as an eyewitness of the ministry of Jesus, a person with intimate knowledge of the Lord and one who was profoundly changed by Him. Stott calls attention to the prologue of John's Gospel which affirms the Son's pre-existence with the Father and to the Gospel's evangelistic intent that is indicated in John 20:30–31. John's letters are described as supplements to his Gospel which address the subjects of Christological error, moral deception and self-exaltation.

With his thirteen letters comprising exactly a quarter of the New Testament, Paul is the focus of the book's fifth chapter. His letters trumpet the message of salvation by the grace of God in Christ. Stott observes that Paul viewed the grace of God as both an attitude and action of God in relation to fallen humans. He then proceeds to arrange the chapter along the themes of justification, sanctification, edification and glorification. This arrangement allows for a helpful overview of the main thrusts of Pauline theology.

Successive chapters on Hebrews, James, Peter, and Revelation round out the composition of this New Testament introduction. After acknowledging the age-old dilemma of authorship, Stott identifies the finality of Jesus Christ as the theme of Hebrews. This theme is then developed through emphases related to Christ's supremacy, sacrifice, and suffering. In his brief chapter on James, Stott asserts that any perceived conflict between the teachings of James and Paul may be resolved by understanding that the two differed "in emphasis, not in message." He attributes authorship to James, the brother of our Lord, and presents James as a general letter which relies on the teachings of Jesus and that stresses the significance of practical obedience in the Christian life. Stott's treatment of Peter seems somewhat limited and general in scope when compared to the other chapters. Peter is identified as the apostle of hope who writes to suffering Christians and points them to the example of Christ in suffering.

The final chapter of the book addresses Revelation. This reviewer found Stott's apparent unwillingness to identify the author of the fourth Gospel as the author of Revelation troubling. At the very least, one wonders why so much attention was focused on the issue in an introductory text. The chapter does include a summary of the preterist, historicist, futurist approaches and, what Stott terms, the timeless-symbolic approach.

Aside from the concern expressed regarding the authorship of Revelation, this reviewer was baffled by the decision to leave out any treatment of the book of Jude. Any argument for "balance" in the alignment or arrangement of chapters fails to justify such an exclusion. Nonetheless, despite these issues, this book, in view of its concise style and overall clarity, should be a helpful resource for students of Scripture seeking a basic introduction to New Testament writings.

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***Seeing God: The Beatific Vision in Christian Tradition.* By Hans Boersma. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018. 467 pages. Hardcover, \$55.00.**

To followers of Hans Boersma's writings over recent years, *Seeing God*, Boersma's recent ambitious opus tracing the doctrine of the beatific vision through the Christian tradition should not come as a surprise. Nor will Boersma's readers be surprised as he attempts to view the beatific vision through his familiar lens of "sacramental ontology." As Boersma puts it, "A sacramental understanding of the beatific vision takes seriously the teleological character of history ... We usually deal with the topic of sacramental ontology by using vertical or spacial metaphors ... [but] in connection with the beatific vision, however, we have to think in horizontal or temporal categories. We anticipate seeing God at the end of history" (10).

In *Seeing God*, Boersma attempts to trace the doctrine of the beatific vision through Christian history and tradition in order to articulate a holistic and catholic doctrine of the beatific vision. In doing so, Boersma acts as a historical theologian, tracking the beatific vision throughout Christian history, breaking the book into five parts: introduction/beatific vision in modernity, the beatific vision in the early church, the beatific vision in the medieval church, the beatific vision in Protestant thought, and concluding with a dogmatic appraisal of the beatific vision. Examining the pieces and the work as a whole, this reviewer was particularly impressed with Boersma's strong work in the early church and medieval fathers, in particular Gregory of Nyssa, Symeon the New Theologian, John of the Cross, Bonaventure, and Nicholas of Cusa. With regards to patristic thought, Boersma has worked on Gregory of Nyssa for years, and in *Seeing God*, his work with Nyssa continues to add to our modern understanding of this underappreciated Cappadocian father. Boersma also helps the reader understand important aspects of medieval mysticism by highlighting the distinction between Symeon the New Theologian (the "theologian of light") and John of the Cross (the "theologian of darkness"). Likewise, Boersma's contrast of Bonaventure's and Nicholas of Cusa's views on mysticism show the sharp distinctives between affective mysticism and intellectual mysticism respectively and is quite helpful in parsing out the distinctions that occur between the two even within the church today.

Boersma does an excellent job emphasizing the importance of the beatific vision to church doctrine throughout Christian history, as well as citing its decline in contemporary Protestant theology. Boersma cites several Reformed theologians

as partially responsible for this decline, but specifically cites Hermann Bavink, who says, “A corollary vision of God in his essence would be the deification of humanity and the erasure of the boundary between the Creator and creature. That would be in keeping with the Neoplatonic mysticism adopted by Rome but not with the mysticism of the Reformation, at least not with that of the Reformed church and theology” (35).

However, while *Seeing God* is strong in many areas, there are a couple of places where this reviewer believes critiques are in order. In his section on the beatific vision within Protestant thought, Boersma spends most of his time examining the Reformed tradition, with the only exception being John Donne, who falls squarely within the Anglican tradition. Boersma fails to discuss the beatific vision as it manifests within either the Lutheran or the Anabaptist branches of Protestant thought, a correction that I believe would greatly enhance this work. Likewise, I believe that Boersma overstates his case with regards to some of the Reformed theologians supposedly high view of the doctrine of the beatific vision (most prominently seen with Boersma’s claims made in reference to John Calvin). Fortunately, even Boersma recognizes that his views on this issue are not mainstream, and instead tries to present an alternate case, saying, “So far, most Calvin scholarship has argued that Calvin simply abandoned the traditional doctrine of the beatific vision. This chapter will take issue with that view” (258). While he has not fully convinced this reviewer, he does bring up some excellent points for critical evaluation.

But perhaps the most important critique for *Seeing God* is Boersma’s somewhat vague definition of sacramental ontology. This is not a one-time issue, but Boersma’s lack of a concrete definition for sacramental ontology seems to be recurring throughout his recent works. While I think many readers would agree with Boersma that the beatific vision is ontologically holy and sacred, is that all that Boersma means by Christians needing to view it through a lens of “sacramental ontology?” Or does he intend for his reader to go further? Regrettably, Boersma does not say, leaving this reviewer in the dark as to how much of Boersma’s final conclusions he can ultimately agree with.

All in all, in creating a resource tracing the doctrine of the beatific vision through the ages, Boersma does an excellent job of tracing the beatific vision from the pre-Christian era with Plato and Plotinus through to the post-Reformation era with Jonathan Edwards. *Seeing God* is an excellent resource for those interested in the beatific vision. Additionally, despite the vagueness of “sacramental ontology,” Boersma arrives at a healthy and helpful hypothetical conclusion on the reality of the beatific vision. The reader may or may not agree with all of Boersma’s conclusions, but due to Boersma’s excellent scholarship, his readers will understand how and why this esteemed Christian scholar has arrived at his conclusions.

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***Theologies of the American Revivalists: From Whitefield to Finney.* By Robert W. Caldwell. III. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2017. 246 pages. \$35.00.**

Over the past decade or so, Robert Caldwell has established himself as a leading authority on Jonathan Edwards’s thought, having written two significant monographs and a number of helpful essays. In *Theologies of the American Revivalists: From Whitefield to Finney*, Caldwell expands his focus to cover the period lasting roughly

1730 to 1830, a century that included both the First and Second Great Awakenings. For the sake of his study, Caldwell focuses on the interplay of three related themes as central to one's revival theology: "their theologies of salvation, the ways they practically preached the gospel, and the conversion experiences they expected from those experiencing salvation" (6). He then devotes eight chapters to both well-known figures and influential movements, as well as more obscure revivalists and less-familiar movements, resulting in a "theological history of what it meant to 'become a Christian' during the age of America's Great Awakenings" (10).

The first chapter establishes Caldwell's benchmark as moderate evangelical revival theology, which was a pietistic form of Calvinism that emphasized personal conversion. Moderate revival theology included: conviction of sin, typically through confrontation with one's failure to obey God's moral law and attempts to attend to the "means of grace"; conversion, a process that included regeneration, repentance, and faith, and which could last an extended period of time; and consolation, or assurance of salvation, which normally came after one's conversion and was sought through rigorous self-examination and the pursuit of personal holiness. Curiously, Caldwell seems to imply Whitefield was a moderate evangelical in his first chapter, though in this second chapter Whitefield is noted as a key shaper of Crosswell's revivalism. Most scholars would identify Whitefield as a radical rather than a moderate.

Jonathan Edwards emerged as the leading defender of moderate revivalism, though as the second chapter recounts, his constructive reflections on original sin, imputation, and human free will, as well as his "spirituality of disinterestedness," which minimized focus upon one's own self-interests, opened the door to later Edwardseans revising and even abandoning traditional Reformed categories in their respective revival theologies. Furthermore, the views of radicals such as Andrew Crosswell emphasized immediate conversion and collapsed assurance into conversion, paving the way for a transition from traditionally Reformed to modern evangelical accounts of how one becomes a Christian.

Chapter three discusses the New Divinity theologians, second-generation Edwardseans who further developed Edwards's thought to make it friendlier to immediate conversion and less focused on the means of grace as prerequisite to regeneration. They offered a robust understanding of human sinfulness and maintained belief in predestination, but rejected imputation and argued that merit is specific to individuals. The latter ideas led to revisionist understandings of original sin, the atonement, and justification. The following three chapters offer various denominational responses to these revival theologies during the Second Great Awakening. Pro-revival Congregationalists and Presbyterians tended to embrace the New Divinity, with progressives such as Nathaniel Taylor further developing these ideas into the New Haven Theology, which denied predestination and original sin, while affirming an unbound will capable of responding to God in faith. Methodists were uniformly pro-revival, adopting the Arminianism and holiness views pioneered by John Wesley. Whereas various forms of Calvinism thrived on the Eastern Seaboard, Arminianism took root on the frontier, where it was spread through camp meetings and itinerancy.

Most readers of this journal will be especially interested in Caldwell's treatment of the Baptists. Not surprisingly, the Baptists were less defined by their soteriology than their ecclesiology, and traditional Calvinism, the New Divinity, and Arminianism each found Baptist proponents. While most of the Arminians

identified with the Free Will Baptist tradition, the spectrum from Jesse Mercer's conservative Calvinism to the New Divinity of Jonathan Maxcy and William B. Johnson transcended the divide between Regular Baptists and Separate Baptists. Caldwell's identification of this spectrum, coupled with Thomas Kidd's arguments that Regulars were moderate evangelicals and Separates were radical evangelicals, offer a more fruitful way of interpreting Baptists of this era than the tired dichotomies between pro-revival and anti-revival and/or Calvinist and non-Calvinist. The older interpretations often serve polemical ends, but they do not reflect careful historical investigation.

In chapter seven, Caldwell turns his attention to Charles Finney, the most controversial revival theologian. Caldwell demonstrates that Finney was not a heretic who abandoned traditional Calvinism, but rather was a New School Presbyterian who embraced New Haven Theology. When it came to the application of that theology in his "new measures," Finney did not invent new practices, but rather popularized heretofore frontier Methodist strategies, such as the anxious bench and protracted meetings, to historically Calvinist congregations on the East Coast. Finney's New Haven revival theology thus offered a bridge between Reformed denominations and Arminian practices.

In the final chapter, Caldwell discusses two responses to modern revival theology. The theologians of Princeton seminary exhibited hesitancy toward revivalism that was rooted in their confessional Calvinism. The Princeton theologians were in favor of revival, but they were suspicious of Edwards because of the role he played as a bridge to innovations in Reformed theology that, to them, represented a theological downgrade. The Campbellite movement represented a more rationalistic response to revivalism. The Campbellites affirmed an intellectualist view of saving faith, immediate conversion, and a view of regeneration that combined belief and baptism. Campbellism thrived in the nineteenth century, especially in frontier contexts where their restorationist message appealed to evangelicals skeptical of interdenominational competition for converts.

Theologies of the American Revivalists is a landmark study that summarizes and synthesizes the best of recent scholarship about the history of revival theology. Caldwell treats each figure and movement with empathy, avoiding a narrative about good guys and bad guys. The book is scholarly without being stolid, edifying without being preachy, and accessible to non-experts. It is ideal for classroom use, though interested pastors will also find much to learn. Caldwell's work will help to reframe how historians (and pastors!) think about revival history. Highly recommended.

Nathan A. Finn
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***Destroyer of the Gods: Early Christian Distinctiveness in the Roman World.* By Larry W. Hurtado. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2016. xiv + 290 pages. Paperback, \$19.95.**

"Among both the scholarly guild and the wider public, there is a widespread presumption that all religions are basically the same, with insignificant variations of belief and practices, but essentially fitting one conceptual box" (xii). Hurtado argues that this common assumption is essentially "flawed" (xii). He explains, "I want to highlight some major features of early Christianity that made it distinctive, noteworthy, and even peculiar in the ancient Greek and Roman setting" (6).

The opening chapters discuss how outsiders referred to Christians as “different, odd, and even objectionable” (15). Hurtado surveys the views of Pliny, Galen, Marcus Aurelius, Lucian, and Celsus. The Greco-Roman world did not lack for deities—indeed, it was “a world full of gods” (44). Religion was woven into the warp and woof of society, and citizens participated in a smorgasbord of worship (47). Nonetheless, the pagan stance of *eusebeia* (piety) was considered *asebeia* (impiety) by the early Christians (50). In turn, the pagans accused the Christians of “atheism” (56). To express their disdain for the pagan gods, early Christians adopted the Jewish vocabulary of “idol” (*eidōlon*) and its linguistic blends (51).

In Christian belief, the one Creator God was “radically transcendent” (62), yet he redemptively loved humanity (65–66). Early Christians particularly distinguished themselves from Jewish monotheism by the “genuine novelty” and “historic innovation” of their “extraordinary” reverence and devotion directed to Jesus Christ (66, 73, 75). Furthermore, they were rather sectarian in their exclusivist claims (70).

Hurtado recognizes that “our notions of ‘religion’ do not map directly onto the concepts and practices of the ancient world” (80). Moreover, he critiques past scholars who have contrasted Christianity as “a religion of beliefs” with Judaism and paganism as religions of ritual. Christianity also emphasized practices and rites (91). In fact, claims Hurtado, for the early Christians “particular religious practices were as central as beliefs in defining them and expressing their religious identity” (91).

Chapter 3 draws attention to the self-designation of Christians as a “people,” “race,” and “nation” (101; cf. 1 Pet 2:9). This reader retained a desire for more investigation into the early Christian understanding of “race,” “ethnicity,” and “culture” vs. contemporary notions (cf. 79). The book emphasizes how early Christians transcended “ethnic” and “racial” identifications, yet the primary sources often designate Christians as a “new race” or a “third race.” A footnote briefly interacts with the work of Denise Kimber Buell (234n65), mentioning “reservations” with her *Why This New Race? Ethnic Reasoning in Early Christianity*, but one thirsted for more development.

Chapter 4 discusses the “bookish” nature of early Christianity. The movement was “phenomenally prolific and varied in literary output” (119) and was characterized by an essential “textuality” (126, 141). Notwithstanding, Christians were “at odds with the larger book culture of the time” due to their preference for the codex, and they exhibited this penchant “precisely for texts that they most highly valued, those that they treated as scriptures” (135–37). The chapter closes with a discussion of the *nomina sacra*—a topic with which readers of Hurtado’s other works will be well-acquainted (138–41).

Chapter 5 relates the distinctive social and behavioral practices of early Christians. Paganism did not underscore ethical conduct as embodied in a description of moral “dos and don’ts” (154–55). Early Christians opposed the cultural practices of abortion, infant exposure, gladiatorial combat, and *porneia* (which Hurtado interprets as comprising a wide spectrum of “illicit sex”). The early Christian “household codes” were distinctive as well—when these “codes” were read in congregational contexts, “those in the various subordinate social categories also heard the exhortations given to those in the corresponding dominant positions” (179).

While pagan men were “allowed great latitude in their sexual activities” (157), the Apostle Paul espoused an equality of conjugal rights and mutual marital faithfulness (164). The Pastoral Epistles emphasize being “a one-woman man,” paralleling the cultural elevation of being a “one-man woman” (166). “It seems that for early Christians what was good for the goose was also thought good for the gander!”

(167). Ecclesiastical authors also condemned the sexual exploitation of children, even forming a new vocabulary (*paidophthoreō* and *paidophthoros*) to express revulsion at such abuse (181).

The appendix (191–96) succinctly critiques the *religionsgeschichtliche Schule* that once dominated German scholarship. The book's endnotes are definitely worth perusing. In note 43 on page 257, Hurtado thanks Jan Bremmer for pointing him to Euripides' *Hippolytus* as a Greco-Roman example of having sexual relations with "your father's wife" (cf. 1 Cor 5:1). I would also point readers to Seneca's version of *Phaedra* and its interesting parallels with Paul's rhetorical purpose. In a minor oversight, a Latin misspelling (*univria* for *univira*) slipped by the copy-editors (260n60).

Hurtado concludes, "Early Christianity of the first three centuries was a different, even distinctive, kind of religious movement in the cafeteria of religious options of the time" (183). Today we tend to think of religion as matter of voluntary choice distinct from cultural ethnicity, we tend to assume that religions teach a system of ethics, and we tend to distinguish between those who believe that "God" exists and those who deny that "God" exists. The fact that such sentiments have become commonplace reveals just how much the distinctive nature of early Christianity has affected the modern world (187). Hurtado affirms, "I hope that we who are so very conscious of our own time will perceive better the importance and influence of this remarkable religious movement of the ancient Roman world" (p. 189).

Hurtado traces "The Particular Christian Offence" reflected in the New Testament documents (52–62), but the book does not interact with Paul's discussion of the *skandalon* of the cross (1 Cor 1:18–25). This theological crux was a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, and it affected behavior as well as belief. Christian authors emphasized a cruciform ethic of self-donation and humility—a virtue not accentuated in the Greco-Roman milieu. In various instances, Hurtado tips his hat to the distinctive nature of early Christian theology (especially how devotion to Jesus modified the strict monotheism inherited from Judaism). At other times, his purposeful approach of studying Christianity like "any other historical phenomenon" limits his musings upon questions that beg theological input (5–10, 35). Nevertheless, he performs admirably, even while contending with his theological hand tied behind his back. Like early Christianity, Hurtado's work impresses "with high distinction."

Paul A. Hartog

Faith Baptist Theological Seminary

***Divine Simplicity: A Biblical and Trinitarian Account.* By Jordan P. Barrett. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2017. 228 + xiii pages. Hardcover, \$79.00.**

Jordan Barrett addresses a critical ancient doctrine which has a long pedigree within Christian thought but has recently sparked a contentious debate among scholars. This young theologian thus takes on an important and difficult task, and the Emerging Scholars series should be commended for choosing to publish his monograph, a revision of a Wheaton doctoral dissertation written under Kevin Vanhoozer.

Barrett argues the doctrine of divine simplicity should not be rejected as an imposition from classical philosophy but must be received as rooted in Scripture. To prove his point, he first surveys contemporary critics of divine simplicity; second, traces the history of the doctrine's reception in the early, medieval, and modern periods; third, discusses a biblical basis for its development; and, fourth, boldly offers his own Trinitarian account for divine simplicity. Did he demonstrate his thesis?

In chapter one, Barrett surveys the contemporary scene. Numerous well-respected authors have rejected divine simplicity, including Robert Jenson, Alvin Plantinga, and John Feinberg. These critics appeal to their readings of Augustine and Aquinas, doubt it has a biblical basis, and believe it compromises other major doctrines. Yet others, including Colin Gunton, John Frame, and Eberhard Jüngel, retain the doctrine but with major revision. Revisionists opine that divine simplicity is too dependent upon Hellenistic philosophy and reframe it according to the gospel conception of God. Finally, a “minority” has stepped forward to defend divine simplicity, including Peter Sanlon, Stephen R. Holmes, and Steven J. Duby. Their defenses range in presentation and sophistication but assert it is fundamental to the Christian conception of God.

In the second, third, and fourth chapters, the author traces the construal of the doctrine according to various patristic, medieval, and Reformation theologians. While the fathers may have borrowed from philosophy, they derived divine simplicity from scriptural exegesis in order to repudiate the rise of heresies. In particular, the claim of Eunomius to name the divine essence prompted the Cappadocians to construct a corollary doctrine from the divine name(s) and God the Trinity’s operations, distinguishing the persons without dividing the essence. (This correlation informs Barrett’s later proposal.) Similar conclusions are drawn through a survey of Augustine, which includes exegeses of 1 Corinthians 1:24 regarding the simple richness of the divine attributes shared within the Trinity (58–61) and of John 5:19 concerning the Trinity’s distinguishable yet inseparable operations (62–65). The chapter on the Middle Ages clears away misattributions of perfect being theology and rationalism and discusses Aquinas’s theological exegesis of the divine name in Exodus 3 (85–89). The chapter on Reformation developments focuses on the Reformed and their modern successors. The doctrine was either assumed or explicitly affirmed from Calvin through the Scholastics, while Herman Bavinck and Karl Barth provide helpful discussions. Both Bavinck and Barth stressed the transcendence and graciousness of God, who reveals a “richness” about himself that transcends both simplicity and multiplicity (124–25).

While the first four chapters of the book establish the doctrine’s historical and contemporary context, in the final two chapters Barrett offers his own contributions. First, in chapter five, he grounds the doctrine of divine simplicity within the biblical witness. Barrett believes there is a more direct biblical way to the doctrine than that provided by affiliating the doctrine with divine aseity or divine holiness (133–34). His strategy is to show that the name(s) of God and the inseparable operations of the three Persons of the Trinity provide a scriptural “pattern of judgments” (135–37) requiring the doctrine. Extending the introduction of the divine name, YHWH, in the book of Exodus (3:14, 6:6–8, 33:12–13), Barrett agrees that Exodus 34:6–7 is “the climax of the meaning and significance of the divine name” (145). Through this significant revelation, God’s various attributes provide “the fullest statement about the divine nature” (146). The way various Psalms treat the divine name doxologically fortifies this claim (147–50). Moreover, the New Testament includes Jesus and the entire Trinity within the name of the Lord, *kyrios* (150–54). Barrett concludes the divine name “is God himself in his self-revelation,” contains no contradictions, and requires “many different descriptions” to convey his fullness (154–55). The second part of chapter five turns to Scripture’s presentations of the work of the Trinity, evincing indivisible yet distinct operations which correlate with an indivisible yet distinguishable nature (156–60).

The author's second major contribution is to provide a Trinitarian account of divine simplicity, which he established biblically in chapter five but develops dogmatically in chapter six. The "task" of divine simplicity is to "properly confess the nature of God set forth in Scripture in ways that avoid either dividing God into parts or removing all distinctions" (163). The nuances of Trinitarianism thus provide a parallel for the doctrine of divine simplicity. After drawing on medieval philosophy to navigate between the errors of realist identity and nominalist distinctions, his own "theological discernment" from the textual witness is presented (178). Barrett's key theological innovation concerns a likeness between Trinity and essence, *analogia diversitatis*. By "analogy of diversity," he means that "as the triune God is one nature in three distinct persons, so the simplicity of God affirms one nature in multiple perfections" (180). After summarizing seven implications of the analogy, he claims his proposal is a development within the tradition.

This book should be taken seriously by every theologian concerned with identifying properly who the God is whom true Christians say we worship. While there are yet other biblical routes to the doctrine of divine simplicity, and while Barrett's proposal of *analogia diversitatis* will require widespread testing before it should be fully accepted, he has added a significant piece to the academic discussion on theology proper. Stylistically, this is a clean text, except that the author might have meant *diversitatis* rather than *divinitatis* in a few places (184, 187).

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***40 Questions about Church Membership and Discipline.* By Jeremy M. Kimble. Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2017. 272 pages. Softcover, \$19.99.**

Throughout this helpful volume, readers are invited to investigate the closely related topics of church membership and church discipline with the help of biblical, systematic, and pastoral insight. These closely related subjects occupy an interest from the academic guild as well as professional clergy, all of whom seek to assess cogent answers and their implications for effective 21st century ecclesial ministry. Jeremy Kimble, assistant professor of theology at Cedarville University, offers readers yet another selection in the popular and well received *40 Questions* series of books, all edited by Benjamin Merkle. Each volume in this series follows the same approach within its specific inquiry. Authors ask direct questions of the subject matter at hand, provide a three to four page response, and conclude each chapter with insightful reflection questions.

In Kimble's volume, the forty questions are divided into four parts: Part One addresses "General Questions about Membership and Discipline" (consisting of four questions); Part Two addresses "General Questions about Church Membership" (consisting of sixteen questions); Part Three addresses "General Questions about Church Discipline" (consisting of eighteen questions); and finally, Part Four addresses "Concluding Questions about Membership and Discipline" (consisting of two questions). Thus, the bulk of Kimble's focus lies within parts two and three, yet he addresses every question with the same strategy. For every question, Kimble states his inquiry clearly, situates the importance of the question with historical and cultural clarity, and then turns to providing answers formed from the disciplines of biblical and systematic theology. While space does not allow Kimble to treat every

relevant biblical passage related to his inquiry, he consistently brings to light the salient exegetical labor necessary to support his solutions.

Christians outside of the Baptist tradition will quibble with some of Kimble's answers. Kimble's footnotes provide readers with additional source material for further study spanning the Christian tradition, but the questions related to baptism and membership assume traditional Credobaptist moorings. This approach would not preclude Paedobaptists from benefiting from the overall substance and tone of the book, but the outworking of Kimble's hermeneutic necessarily exposes the consistency to his advocacy of traditional Baptist convictions of baptizing professing Christians within a church family whose membership is visible both in its celebration of communion and redemptive church discipline.

Readers within the Baptist tradition may not find agreement with Kimble on some points. One example might include Kimble's advocacy for delayed baptism. Noting the pastoral difficulties related to offering false assurance to the unconverted on the one hand, and withholding baptism from legitimate Christians on the other hand, Kimble proposes a modified delayed baptism position. He avers, "there is wisdom in delaying baptism until at least ten or twelve years of age, or perhaps early teen years" (119). Kimble wisely and helpfully encourages local church leadership to investigate these instances on a case-by-case approach. Further, some Baptist readers may question Kimble's advocacy for distinguishing two types of membership based upon one's age at the time of baptism. For example, teenage Christians can enjoy the benefits and blessings of the Lord's Supper and discipleship, but churches may withhold other membership responsibilities (participating in church discipline, for example) until a later age. While there is hardly a Credobaptist consensus to these difficult issues, readers can commend Kimble's approach while disagreeing with some of his answers. In every case, even where there may be disagreement, Kimble assists pastors and church leaders in clarifying and substantiating their answers to these questions.

Readers will detect numerous strengths to this volume. In his introduction, Kimble states his intent for his book is to "assist Christians, pastors, and churches to rightly understand and apply biblical truth regarding church membership and church discipline" (9). While scholars may not be his intended audience, they too will benefit from Kimble's solutions to the practical issues he raises. If for no other reason, Kimble's solutions could provide scholars with an opportunity to think alongside a member of the guild who presents a cogent case in irenic tones. Question 30, for example, addresses how church discipline can be introduced into one's church, and Kimble's solution warrants a reading from the academy and the parish.

Pastors should include this volume to their immediate reading list. Even if one disagrees with Kimble on one or more questions, one will no doubt find his answers to be clear and representative of many evangelicals today. Further, this book should be read and studied by various members of church leadership because many lay leaders are convinced of the theological rationale but remain unaware of how to initiate a corresponding ministry response. The reflection questions in each chapter would facilitate the sort of discussion needed among church leadership today.

Readers of all evangelical faith traditions will appreciate Kimble's clarifying answers to many of the practical questions facing the church today. Examples include, "What are the responsibilities of being a church member? (Question 20); "How does a church discipline one of its leaders?" (Questions 29); "What kind of sins require

church discipline?” (Question 35). These questions permeate contemporary ministry dialogue, and Kimble carefully shepherds readers to helpful and applicable answers.

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***Rethinking Holiness: A Theological Introduction.* By Bernie A. Van De Walle. Grand Rapids. Baker Academic, 2017. xvi + 176 pages. Paperback, \$23.00.**

What is holiness? Why has it been misunderstood for so many years? Bernie Van De Walle, professor of historical and systematic theology at Ambrose University, seeks to answer these questions and many others on the topic of holiness. Van De Walle states that there has been a renaissance in the interest of holiness recently in evangelicalism. The focus has been on ethics and morals. However, Van De Walle presents holiness as primarily an issue of relationship to the only holy being, God, rather than of behavior and ethics. This is not a “how-to” book but rather a theological treatise on what it means to be holy.

Van De Walle begins by presenting his observations in the church, and outside the church, of a desire for holiness in chapter 1. He sees patterns in evangelical churches such as the return to ancient liturgical practices, an emphasis on a holistic gospel that values both body and soul, and a desire for social activism, to name a few. Outside the church there are many who are seeking spirituality—albeit through fads and gurus. Many also criticize the church concerning its practice not matching its confession. With this said, the need for an emphasis on holiness is crucial for the church’s witness today.

The following two chapters cover biblical, theological, and historical descriptions of holiness and then Van De Walle seeks to define holiness. In chapter 2 Van De Walle defines holiness according to Scripture and the cultures in which the books of Scripture were written—the ancient Near East, ancient Israel, and the Greco-Roman world. While there has been too much emphasis on behavior when it comes to the topic, holiness should be considered as “the transcendence or absolute otherness that is basic to God’s being.” Holiness is a characteristic of God alone. Any object that is “holy” derives its character only from God. Holiness is displayed in God’s transcendence and moral perfection as chapter 3 explains. Christ is the example and picture of this concept of holiness.

Chapters 4–6 examine holiness in relation to anthropology. Chapter 4 recounts what it means to be human and God’s purpose for humanity. Man is a holy creation, so fallenness is not the true nature of man. Van De Walle holds to the relational view of the *imago dei* which considers the image as the actual relationship of collective humanity within itself and with God. His argument for this view is quite confusing and at worst—problematic. However, he does explain that the purpose of fallen humanity is not simply a return to original innocence but a transformation into full and perfect communion with God and His creation. In chapter 5 Van De Walle outlines the metaphors for sin as described in Scripture. Sin is not primarily a contrast to universal virtues, ethics, rules, or regulations but a contrast to God’s nature and character. Sin is personal and relational. Van De Walle describes the whole scope of salvation in chapter 6. He notes that, since Luther, there has been an overemphasis on justification to the neglect of sanctification in Protestantism. Salvation is not simply justifying a sinner and that is it. Salvation includes a work of

progress by the Holy Spirit to make humanity what it was created to be, like God. Therefore, believers are being conformed into the image of Christ.

Chapter 7 examines holiness in relation to Church. Van De Walle explains that the Church is holy only in its relation to God. It is positionally holy in that it is called the body of Christ, the temple of the Holy Spirit, and the people of God. Obviously, there have been many shortcomings in Church during its history. Van De Walle uses the language of “already but not yet” to describe the Church’s holiness. The church is holy in its relation to God, but not yet there in active expression.

The obvious strengths of *Rethinking Holiness* is its keen observations of the current streams of thought and practices that have arisen because of the desire for holiness. Van De Walle also builds his argument for the need for holiness for the Church’s witness. It is a readable treatise and, for the most part, he defines his terms well. Many readers would not get lost in the jargon.

Weaknesses of this book would include its lack of references for his claim that many contemporary evangelicals do not care about holiness in the Christian life. While this is indeed true in many circles, citing several sources of quotes and books would have strengthened his argument. Second, there were some not so clear theological claims he made that would confuse his audience. His view of the *imago dei* is not a majority position and at times he contradicted himself. His view on justification was more understandable but still not fully developed. While he brings to light the overemphasis in evangelicalism on justification, he seems to add to the definition of justification that almost merges it with sanctification. One last weakness would be the lack of concrete examples of holiness. Even though he does state that this book is not a “how-to”, a few examples would have helped advance his view of holiness as a way of being.

Overall, this book is a needed contribution to current evangelical thinking on an often neglected topic. He rightly outlines the two wrong views of the Christian life, legalism and license, and clearly shows the flaws of both. Aside, from some unclear points of his theology, Van De Walle has written a book that I expect many pastors and students will thoroughly enjoy.

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***When is it Right to Die?* By Jonie Eareckson Tada. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018. 203 pages. Softcover, \$16.99.**

Joni Eareckson Tada is a Christian evangelist, radio personality, author and the CEO of Joni and Friends, an organization that ministers to special-needs families and churches with similar ministries. She is the author of numerous books, including *A Step Further*, and *A Spectacle of Glory*.

Although there are numerous publications that discuss assisted suicide, disabilities, and other bioethical issues, Tada’s personal history of struggling through quadriplegia, breast cancer, and depression adds considerable weight to the discussion of how to respond to dying. Her time spent as an advocate for the disabled also gives her many personal anecdotes and real-life scenarios to draw upon in her examples. Her experiences make her undoubtedly one of the most qualified persons to write on this particular subject.

As the title suggests, the thesis concerns the moral judgments that must be made at the end of life and how to find the right way to approach death as a Christian.

In a sense, Tada's book is about having a *good* death, not to seek it prematurely and neither to prolong a natural process unnecessarily.

Tada uses concrete examples from her experiences with those whom have had to make difficult moral decisions in ambiguous situations. Each chapter asks a question of the reader, presents gray-area cases, and ends with group discussion prompts, making the book suitable for group or private Bible study. Tada discusses in detail the meaning of suffering and pain, what it really means to die with dignity, if life is worth living under certain conditions, and how the moral decisions made by the dying are a testament, for either good or ill, to those around them.

Related topics touched upon are famous euthanasia cases, the widespread abortion of Down Syndrome babies, life support systems, unresponsive wakefulness syndrome, minimally conscious states, and hospice care. One of the most helpful subjects she brings up is that of Advance Care Directives versus Living Wills and the questions everyone should ask before signing such documents.

As far as Tada's ethical system is concerned, on the surface it appears to be a Christian situation ethic, but the conclusions she arrives at are far from Joseph Fletcher's. Unlike pure situation ethics with its human-centered perspective that can devolve into sheer relativism, Tada reshapes her circumstantial or situation ethic by encouraging prayer and Scripture reading before making any serious moral decision like the ones described in her examples. She always points to God as the ultimate source of wisdom during these times, keeping the Holy Spirit as the foundation of the moral choice, not simply the situation itself. Therefore, her ethic remains a biblical ethic but retains some important elements of situation ethic, such as motive and intention.

Certain subject matter pertaining to her topic that she does *not* touch upon such as the movement to change the laws regarding organ harvesting from people diagnosed as persistently unconscious and the euthanizing of dementia patients who cannot give consent can be found in the work of authors and advocates like Wesley J. Smith, a common contributor for *First Things*.

This reader found *When is it Right to Die?* to be approachable and appropriate for the average reader or to be used as a group study, which it is clearly formatted for. It is easily digestible despite the painful subject matter and non-academic in nature, intended for a mainstream audience, whether Christian or not. Tada's honesty, insight and optimism is a testimony in itself, and she repeatedly points her audience toward salvation in Jesus Christ, making her book an evangelical tool as much as an informative and sensitive look into humanity's deepest fear: death.

Kristin A. Vargas

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***Four Views on the Church's Mission.* Edited by Jason S. Sexton and Stanley N. Gundry. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017. 208 pages. Paperback, \$16.99.**

The views represented in this volume are an "intra-evangelical conversation seeking to bring mission and church closely together, as it belongs" (12). Jason Sexton serves as the book's general editor. He is a lecturer at California State University, Fullerton, and serves as a research associate with the University of Southern California's Center for Religion & Civic Culture. Sexton provides both introductory and concluding essays for the book. Due to the nature of the discussion, the conclusion one draws will have tremendous practical ramifications. Naturally, both scholars and

laymen have a vested interest in how the church understands its mission. Thus, the audience for the book is not only limited to theologians and missiologists, but also pastors and interested laypeople.

The first view, which is called the soteriological mission, is represented by Jonathan Leeman, who serves as editorial director of 9Marks Ministries. This view places the verbal proclamation of the gospel at the center of the church's mission. The fundamental problem that the world faces is a spiritual one, in which a holy God has been offended. Humanity stands condemned before a righteous God due to their own sin. Jesus Christ has come into the world to seek and save the lost. His life, death, resurrection, and ascension into heaven secure salvation for all who would repent of their sins and place their faith in him. The church's primary task is to bring this message of the gospel to a broken world. While the inclusion of social justice is important to the broader contours of the mission of the church, the specific task is to make disciples and that is what frames and drives its mission.

The second view is called participatory mission. This view is represented by Christopher J.H. Wright. He serves as the International Ministries Director for the Langham Partnership. If Leeman takes the narrow view, Wright takes the broad view. This approach places the mission of God within the larger biblical narrative. Wright binds the church's mission with the mission of God. He sees an inseparable link between the two. Thus, the church participates in a mission in which God is the primary actor. God acts in space and time to redeem the world. When the church proclaims the gospel, loves their neighbor, and cares for other aspects of God's creation, they are joining with God in his mission.

The third view is called contextual mission. This view sees the mission of the church as primarily bearing witness to the whole world. This essay is written by John R. Franke, who is the lead coordinator of the Gospel in Our Culture Network. His view stresses the contextual nature of the church's mission. Christians are to be witnesses to God's activity in the world. The mission of the church will look different as it adapts to each individual culture and context. Due to the diversity and uniqueness of God's creation and the needs of different people, the church must adapt to the distinct context in which it finds itself. Just as Christ served in the power of the Spirit to bring about God's Kingdom in a specific place and time, so too must the church.

The fourth view is called sacramental mission. The essay is written by Peter J. Leithart, who serves as the president of the Theopolis Institute. This view has an ecumenical and political emphasis which gives form to the mission of God in the world. The church's sacraments serve as catalysts to love and serve the world. Leithart traces the importance of communal ritual acts in Scripture as integral to the life of God's people. The sacraments allow for a Christocentric vision in which the global church can be united in Christ and act as instruments of righteousness, justice, reconciliation, and peace. When the church partakes in this sacramental life, they become visible and engage the socio-political structures of the world.

As is typical with many books of this type, many intriguing points of agreement and disagreement come out in the response essays. All the contributors generally affirm that Leeman's distinctions between a broad and narrow understanding of mission are helpful, although some would not want to split the categories so sharply. His more conservative approach is the most targeted due its emphasis on the "narrow" understanding of mission. Wright's essay seems to be the least objectionable to the position of the other contributors. His conciliatory style is warm and agreeable.

However, they tend to criticize him not on what he says, but what he emphasizes or fails to say. Franke's position is criticized by its elasticity and diversity. The boundaries of plurality appear to be too wide (if they exist at all). Leithart's contribution seems to be the most elusive. All the other contributors ask for clarity or further elaboration. Although he writes persuasively and with great profundity, it is hard to see the full implications of his position. The most helpful point to come out in these essays is the place of hell, which Leeman brings to the forefront. The volume raises the question: What are the consequences for the church and for the unconverted if they are not in line with the mission of God?

Adam Cavalier

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***Transcending Mission: The Eclipse of a Modern Tradition.* By Michael W. Stroope. Downer's Grover, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2017. xviii + 457 pages. Paperback, \$40.00.**

Sure to provoke controversy, Michael W. Stroope's latest book challenges many commonly held practices in the church today regarding mission. In *Transcending Mission*, Stroope confronts how the church talks about mission. He offers a blistering critique of the modern rhetoric surrounding the terms mission, missions, missional, etc. Stroope says that this problem has distorted hermeneutics, obfuscated our view of church history, and damaged the vision and efforts of the local church. As the subtitle indicates, Stroope maintains that the way in which the contemporary church talks about mission is problematic and should be remedied with a more nuanced approach.

In the first major section of the book, Stroope critically analyzes modern attempts to justify mission rhetoric. Instead of shedding light and clarifying, Stroope sees the term mission, and all its related terms, as a confusing mixture of ideas. Illustrating the ambiguity of the term, he identifies as many as seven different ways authors use the word! "The problem with *mission* is not that there are so many meanings; the problem is the word itself, *Mission is the problem*" (10). Stroope proposes that we should not attempt to simply revise our language about mission. Rather, we should completely move past this unhelpful terminology and adopt entirely new ways of communicating about the church's purpose and task in the world. In short, this section identifies the multilayered problem of mission language in the church.

In the second section, Stroope looks at how a concept of mission has been used to reinterpret history. He sees the modern notion of mission, specifically western approaches, anachronistically applied to earlier periods. Here, Stroope interprets how the modern tradition of mission first began and developed as a Roman Catholic movement and evolved into a Protestant phenomenon. He sees its roots in the Crusades and later development in western Christendom. These factors have established socio-political overtones in mission rhetoric.

In his third section, Stroope considers the modern mission movement as the pinnacle of the tradition. He sees this period in history as expanding mission and increasing its prominence in the church at large. Various key events like the Edinburgh Mission Conference in 1910 reinforced old ideas, developed the terminology, and shaped the tradition.

The previous sections primarily focus their criticism of the modern mission tradition's methodology and terminology. In an epilogue that follows, Stroope puts forth a case for how we should begin to think and talk about the church's purpose

and role in the world. Thus, the majority of the book is spent negatively evaluating the tradition, and the last section of the book is where he positively puts an alternative in place. Stroope proposes that we begin to talk about the church's task as a "pilgrim witness." He suggests that we return to a language that highlights divine revelation and eschatological hope. "Rather than preaching mission, advocating for mission, mobilizing for mission, or revising mission, the biblical injunction is to proclaim, promote, and live the kingdom of God" (361). The term *pilgrim* conveys the idea of transition and dependence. The church should not primarily seek worldly power and success. Stroope insists that terrestrial conquest, occupation, and triumph must not be a part of the church's mission purpose and vocabulary.

Indeed, Stroope is to be commended in his quest to sharpen and improve the church's terminology. His efforts to redirect language to reflect biblical concepts and truth should be welcomed. He is particularly wise to point out the problems in the recent tendency to draw a sharp distinction between the words "mission" and "missions" (the former emphasizing divine activity and the latter stressing the role of human agency). He is also particularly strong as he advocates the use of kingdom language. He believes this approach eliminates the problematic issues that come with mission language.

Although Stroope does concede that it would be unwise and nearly impossible to eliminate all mission language (29), he does not provide a way forward in how mission language could continue. Providing a path forward in retaining missional language would have been helpful. This slight concession on mission language causes the reader to question how it might be redeemed. Furthermore, Stroope's assessment leaves out the possibility that his alternative terminology would be subject to later distortions by others—suffering the same problems as mission language. While the new vocabulary has the potential to sharpen our understanding of the church's purpose and practice today, why would the new terminology be immune to subsequent problems brought on by others?

A similar argument continues over the term "evangelical" and its subsequent usages. It has been subject to misinterpretation, abuse, and ambiguity. Surely, that term comes with unwelcome connotations. Does that mean we should abandon its use as well? Or should we continue to seek precision and clarity? The church needs to continue its conversations on both fronts. While Stroope's volume is sure to generate strong opinions, his effort is well-researched, clear, and passionate.

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***Preaching as Reminding: Stirring Memory in an Age of Forgetfulness.* By Jeffrey D. Arthurs. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2017. xi + 166 pages. Paperback, \$20.00.**

In *Preaching as Reminding: Stirring Memory in an Age of Forgetfulness*, Jeffrey D. Arthurs, professor of preaching and communication at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, argues that preachers function as the Lord's "remembrancers," tasked with stirring memory of God's grace and work in the hearts and minds of God's people (9). Preaching need not be defined by novelty, but rather by a retrieval of what Christians know already yet forget or grow numb to in this age of distraction.

The book is divided into two halves. The first three chapters provide a biblical theology of memory. Arthurs stresses that, according to Scripture, "remembering

is more than mental recall. It involves emotion and volition as well as cognition” (13). This is why both the Old and New Testaments are filled with admonitions to “remember” and with activities, structures, and rituals that recall God’s faithfulness in the past. The Bible is clear about two aspects of memory: God remembers his covenant and his children, and his children all too often forget him. Chapter three serves as a bridge from a biblical theology of memory to how preachers are God’s chosen instruments to help believers remember correctly. Arthurs draws from preachers in the Bible, notably Moses, the prophets, and Paul, and demonstrates that the discipline of remembering was a central element of their preaching.

The second section is methodological in nature and outlines how preachers can best serve their hearers as the Lord’s remembrancers. Arthurs explains how style, delivery and ceremony can stir memory in both the individual and collective consciences of the congregation. He gives practical insight on how preachers can leverage tone, intonation, body language, facial expression, corporate reading, and the ordinances to “keep the truth warm in heart and mind” (126).

Preaching as Reminding is a helpful volume with three noteworthy strengths. First, the subject matter—memory—is not often addressed in the field of homiletics. Arthurs gives his readers a unique lens through which to view their task. Using the vocabulary of 2 Peter 1:12–13, Arthurs reminds preachers of their calling: “One of the most crucial functions preaching accomplishes, a function often neglected in homiletics textbooks, is the stirring of memory. We need not—indeed we should not—scurry about like a character in a video game searching for originality. That is not our calling” (4). Arthurs helps preachers develop an attractive unoriginality in their preaching and hopes to see sermons remind and, in a sense, reunite (*re-member*) Christians to the life, death, and resurrection of their Lord. This framework will invigorate and encourage the preacher who feels the pressure of homiletical innovation.

Of course, preaching should not be characterized by a drab rehearsal of uninspiring truths. Rather, preachers should take stock of, and improve upon, their emotional intelligence, non-verbal cues, and delivery skill. Preachers should not be “charlatans” or “hucksters,” but should be authentic communicators who, as far as possible, remove all hurdles to effective communication (105). Chapters four through six are excellent in helping preachers understand how delivery and style can either advance or inhibit people’s understanding and internalizing of the sermon.

Second, Arthurs’ use of neuroscience throughout brings an interesting dialogue partner to the conversation. To be clear, he does not rely upon neuroscience to argue his case; the book is filled with biblical references and logical argumentation that the stirring of memory is a *biblical* call upon preachers. Instead, Arthurs uses neuroscience to show how God has designed the human brain. His use of neuroscience and memory is a way to appreciate and uphold the *imago Dei*, for we are people wired for memory because God is a God who remembers. Preachers would do well to understand this aspect of human nature. Had Arthurs emphasized this point at the expense of biblical data, this would be a significant weakness. Thankfully, he avoids this pitfall.

Finally, Arthurs is a superb writer whose prose, illustrations, and insight are a delight to read. The book is simultaneously theological and practical, serious and entertaining, weighty and light. It is wide-ranging in terms of quotations and illustrative material, giving it a compelling depth and color.

Preaching as Reminding is not a manual on sermon preparation nor a primer on preaching basics. Beginning preachers will be better served by resources that address the foundations of preaching: exegesis, hermeneutics, outlines, illustrations, application, and the like. However, for the preacher who has these tools firmly in his belt, *Preaching as Reminding* is an excellent volume that will energize his passion for proclamation and will shed new light on the preaching moment.

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***Progress in the Pulpit: How to Grow in Your Preaching.* By Jerry Vines and Jim Shaddix. Chicago: Moody, 2017. 237 pages. Hardcover, \$29.99.**

Are the majority of preachers as good as they will ever be by age 25? The claim often appears true. Why? Because many preachers fail to grow in their preaching. They start preaching. They find a rhythm. They get comfortable. They hit cruise control. True of you? Yes or no, Vines and Shaddix have composed a book to help all preachers rise to the next level in their preaching. Of course, no one ever arrives at homiletical perfection. Yet, based upon 1 Timothy 4:15, Vines and Shaddix claim that those called of God to herald His Word must strive by God's grace to steward their responsibility with increasing faithfulness.

Progress in the Pulpit provides a unique combination of homiletical fundamentals and advanced ideas to remind and challenge all preachers. The content proceeds according to the following categories: Defining the Sermon, Developing the Sermon, and Delivering the Sermon. With these categories, both authors desire "to enhance the preaching ministry so the message of the gospel continues in America and even to the ends of the earth" (18).

Preaching today comes in all shapes and sizes, but the essential conviction of this book is "that biblical exposition should serve as the foundational approach to preaching" (22). Therefore, the trajectory of homiletical growth espoused here is unashamedly a growth in expository or text-driven preaching. Shaddix argues that if the Bible is and does what it claims, then to do anything other than fully expose God's Word to God's people would be the equivalent of "possessing a cure for cancer and withholding it from the public" (32). In order to expose God's Word to God's people, Shaddix encourages planning one's preaching and suggests keeping the following food groups in mind for a balanced diet: systematic exposition, doctrinal instruction, and prophetic interpretation (51).

This volume presents an encyclopedia of suggestions for homiletical growth. The following points, however, highlight some of the most helpful information to consider. In chapter seven, Shaddix takes on the heated debate of how to preach Christ from any text and argues that the Gospel must be preached in every sermon. His clear and concise argumentation crystalizes the way to understanding the connection of any text to Christ and hence the open door to the Gospel message.

Second, Vines delves into sermon clarity in chapter nine. The heart of clarity beats by crafting a single, brief sentence that communicates the essence of the entire sermon. As elementary a concept as this may seem, many ignore it every Sunday. Vines suggests putting the point of the text in a tweetable 140 characters. This simplification of the point from the pulpit is critical for clarity in the pew.

A third highlight might be an aha moment for many and for some will be worth the price of the book. Have you ever wondered why some sermons seem to

hold the audience's attention while others fail? Based on rhetorical research and insight from TED Talks, Vines posits the idea that retaining the audience's attention past twenty minutes requires building in "soft breaks" (147). These breaks needed every ten minutes or so are moments that re-grip the audience with stories, humor, an illustration, a demonstration, or something the breaks out of the ordinary.

Next, Shaddix offers in chapter 12 what might be the most neglected element needed for progress in the pulpit—teaching the congregation how to listen to a sermon. As counterintuitive as this might seem, progress in the pulpit is not just about the preacher improving, but also improving the fruitfulness of his preaching. Unfortunately, most Christians have never received teaching concerning the purpose and function of the sermon. They have heard even less on how to listen for maximum benefit. Most preachers take this teaching and knowledge for granted. As a result, people suffer from not knowing how to make the most of next Sunday's sermon. Shaddix highlights the issue as an area where most all preachers can make progress.

The homiletical wealth *Progress in the Pulpit* provides might leave one staggering and wondering where to begin. The book does not offer a systematic plan or map out any recommended starting points. This perhaps, would have been helpful. The authors, however, do provide recommended reading for progress at the end of each chapter and a sermon presentation feedback guide in the appendix. The reader will notice a slight difference in perspective by each author as is to be expected. The writing style changes from one author to the other, but the trajectory of their thought remains aligned.

Overall, this volume easily attains the goal of enhancing the preaching ministry of those willing to read and heed its advice. The authors write simply and personally so that the book reads more like a conversation with two wise preachers than it does an academic tutorial. Vines and Shaddix write as pastors who have given their lives to progress in their preaching. They offer more to the preacher willing to grow than he can possibly implement next Sunday. Arrival, however, is not the point, progress is.

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