

Interpreting the Wisdom Books: An Exegetical Handbook. By Edward M. Curtis. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2017. 208 pp. \$21.97.

Edward M. Curtis, professor of biblical and theological studies at Biola University and Talbot School of Theology in California, provides a welcome addition to Kregel's Handbooks for Old Testament Exegesis, covering the four wisdom books of the Hebrew Bible. His goal is to provide a general discussion of the background and perspective that characterizes these books, as well as to offer some guidelines for interpreting and proclaiming them (18). The volume is divided into six chapters along with an appendix prepared by Austen M. Dutton, who explains how to search through various electronic resources such as BibleWorks, Accordance, Logos, Olive Tree, the Word, Shebanq, among others.

The first chapter describes the nature of biblical wisdom, its perspective, and goal in the history of Israel. The author rightly sees חָכְמָה, "wisdom," as the ability to skillfully apply the principles of life with the goal of developing mature, godly character (30). He understands the importance of genre in the Bible and discusses poetry and proverbs as two genres of wisdom literature. When discussing poetry, Curtis challenges the three types of parallelism described by Lowth (synonymous, antithetic, and synthetic) and agrees with Berlin and Kugel that the Hebrew writers use the second line to supplement, intensify, and stress the first one. He also explains how proverbs can capture a tiny cross-section of the truth, describing the way things usually work in a general sense (50). Therefore, he advises the reader to use wisdom to rightly interpret, teach, and apply proverbs in daily living (51).

The second chapter explores the major themes of each book. In Job, the author correctly notes that human suffering is not always a result of sin. In this case, the doctrine of retribution is not in view because the Bible describes Job as blameless (Job 1:1). Since human knowledge is limited, wisdom from above is necessary to accept the circumstances of life (61-63). That wisdom, as described in Proverbs, centers on the fear of the LORD, a concept that implies total dependence on God which ultimately leads to discretion, understanding, and humility (66-

68). The fear of the LORD is also a key theme in Ecclesiastes, according to Curtis. Once man understands that all is *לָהָרִיחַ*, “a puff of air,” he will see life as an opportunity given by the sovereign God and learn to enjoy it wisely (72-77). Finally, he argues that the Song of Songs values human love, sex, and marriage between a man and a woman (78). Hence, the “one-flesh” relationship in Genesis 2 should function as “hesed,” a mutual love and commitment that reflect the nature of God (82-84).

Chapters three and four deal with the exegetical method applied to the wisdom books. Curtis begins by noting the importance of the Ancient Near Eastern culture to these materials (chap. 3). He also deals with the issue of textual criticism and uses examples from Proverbs and Job to explain how to determine the original reading of the Hebrew text. He offers a detailed and annotated bibliography of resources for both the Ancient Near Eastern background and textual criticism, before providing some general guidelines for interpreting each individual wisdom book (chap. 4). Chapters five and six offer various useful tips for preaching and teaching in the wisdom material. Here, Curtis encourages the exegete to slowly and reflectively read the chosen text multiple times, preferably in the Hebrew language, while paying attention to the historical and literary context. He uses Proverbs 2 and Job 28 as examples to show how to proclaim these four books. Finally, he provides four steps to show the interpreter how to put all the pieces together in a sermon. Here, the author walks through practical illustrations to explain how to accomplish that goal. Pastors will be thankful for this section.

Curtis does a good job explaining these four difficult wisdom books. By identifying their primary key themes, he allows the reader to grasp the message well. For instance, knowing that human suffering may not always be the result of sin, as in the case of Job, believers who suffer today can be encouraged. Curtis also captures the semantic nuance of the Hebrew term *לָהָרִיחַ* in Ecclesiastes, which he describes as a “puff of air” (70-71). This is important because the message of the book depends largely on the meaning of that theme. Lexica and most commentators agree that *לָהָרִיחַ* refers to “breath” or “vapor.” Thus, rendering it as “breath” is not saying that life is meaningless under the sun, as

some suggest. Rather, everything is important in its time (3:1). With that in mind, Qohelet calls the reader to enjoy life as an opportunity given by God because it is temporary, fleeting, and soon flies away. This meaning is consistent with the rest of the Bible (see Ps 103:15-16; Ps 90). Similarly, Curtis correctly explains the meaning of the word אֲשֶׁר usually translated, “fortunate,” or “blessed” even though he translates it as “truly happy” in some instances (154-55). In wisdom literature, the term אֲשֶׁר refers to someone who fears the LORD (Prov 1:7), abstains from evil (Ps 1:1; 40:5), and lives by faith in God (Hab 2:4), as opposed to someone who is emotionally happy. This meaning will be consistent with the equivalent Greek word μακάριοι, meaning “blessed” in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5. Finally, by arguing that the Song of Songs “lacks indicators that it was written as an allegory,” Curtis challenges an interpretation that has prevailed throughout history (78-79). However, his approach allows the reader to better appreciate the message of the book. Overall, this volume succeeds in its goal of offering pastors and seminary students essential tools for properly exegeting and proclaiming this section of Scripture.

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Reading Jesus’s Bible: How the New Testament Helps Us Understand the Old Testament. By John Goldingay. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017. 270 pp. \$24.00.

The New Testament’s use of the Old Testament remains a popular topic, and John Goldingay, Professor of Old Testament at Fuller Theological Seminary, enters the fray with his *Reading Jesus’s Bible*. His goal in the book is to observe how the NT writers used the OT to understand Jesus, “in order then to consider a question that is the reverse of theirs: to look at the pointers they suggest for understanding the Old Testament itself” (1). The author offers his understanding of Matthew’s five ways of reading the OT as his outline for how readers today might

effectively read the OT (which Goldingay calls the “First Testament”) for themselves (2–3).

Too often readers of the Bible either ignore the OT by not reading it or miss the deep dependency of the NT on the OT. Goldingay addresses this omission in his book, showing how

- the story of the NT is inextricably linked to the OT (chap. 2),
- the promises of the OT are fulfilled or “filled out” in Jesus (chap. 3),
- readers cannot understand aright the images, ideas, and words found in the NT without knowledge of their OT roots (chap. 4),
- the OT provides background for a right relationship with God (chap. 5) and ethics in the world (chap. 6).

Goldingay is emphatic that the NT fills out OT story and pattern. He notes typological comparison as one way the NT does this. Yet many other times he could have noted typological comparisons that fit with his definition of type (14–16), for example in Matthew’s use of Isaiah 7 (62, 64, 70, 114). Sadly, he refers to typology only in passing one other time (153). Instead, Goldingay appears to promote something akin to a *sensus plenior* understanding of NT authors’ use of the OT, referring to it as a “fuller significance” (e.g., 66).

Reading this book, I often felt like a student looking over the shoulder of an elder professor, or like a friend having a conversation with him. *Reading Jesus’s Bible* is informal, with few footnotes to reveal sources. I do not imply the book is simplistic. Far from it. Goldingay addresses a dozen or more difficult issues between the Testaments (e.g., fuller sense/significance, typology, Matthew’s use of the word “fulfill,” and supersessionism, which the author is strongly against). Nevertheless, the author often gives limited support for his views.

Admittedly, many times Goldingay’s explanations are quite lucid and helpful, even pastoral. Yet at other times, his exposition requires just one or two more sentences to communicate what is clear in his mind. Too often, I found myself having to reread a section to uncover the insight the author attempted to communicate, only to find myself befuddled by vagueness. The

farther into the book I read, the more I sensed that the book was incomplete, put together too hastily. One expression of this is the lack of conclusions to summarize the thrust of each chapter. Instead, Goldingay provides questions for discussion. Similarly, the concluding chapter is a short two pages, contributing less than the introductory chapter on his topic. I do not doubt the author's acumen in the given subject, simply the clarity of his expression of it in this book.

Goldingay's audience for the book is clearly contemporary Western Christians, whose (mis)understandings of the First Testament he often compares with what he judges to be correct (first century or ancient) Jewish understanding of the OT. Goldingay wants his audience to read the OT for themselves in context. Therefore, when he discusses links between the OT and the NT, he often quotes large passages from the OT. On the one hand, this is refreshing and keeps the reader from having to flip through his own Bible to find half a dozen references (or from ignoring parenthetical references). On the other hand, Goldingay often provides too little exposition and sometimes vaguely alludes to NT authors' links to the OT (without indicating the reference to which he alludes). Maybe he did not feel further exposition is necessary since the OT translations are apparently his own and thereby suffice for his interpretation.

One might be inclined to recommend the book to those interested in an introduction to a NT understanding of the OT. However, the book includes many assumptions of its audience's understanding of exegetical intricacies. Although the author promotes evangelical views of the gospel and biblical inspiration, he also questions Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch (53); believes the book of Jonah (but not Jonah himself) is fictional (58); and promotes the view that Isaiah was written in three phases, with the second and third parts written by "prophets whose names we do not know" (98). This view of Isaiah is integral to his observations (later in *Reading Jesus's Bible*) on NT links to Isaiah.

For those who already have solid convictions on OT authorship and dating, *Reading Jesus's Bible* offers many helpful insights, unpacking a NT hermeneutic from a strong OT perspective. Though I have studied this topic for several decades,

I am grateful to Goldingay for revealing still more connections between the First and New Testaments, and for encouraging his readers to take seriously the OT foundation of the NT and the Christian faith.

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Discovering the Septuagint: A Guided Reader. Edited by Karen H. Jobes. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2016. 351 pp. \$39.99.

The book *Discovering the Septuagint: A Guided Reader*, edited by Karen Jobes, is an essential resource for anyone interested in gaining better proficiency in reading the Septuagint. Jobes, a former professor at Westmont College and Wheaton College, designed this book specifically for students to gain greater competence in LXX vocabulary. She is no stranger to Septuagint studies, having co-authored the first and second edition of *Invitation to the Septuagint* with Moisés Silva.

Jobes states, “The idea for this book emerged during the years I’ve taught advanced koine Greek reading classes at Wheaton College” (7). In her experience, two primary obstacles needed to be overcome for the student to successfully engage the text of the Septuagint. This book is therefore designed to provide a resource to address these issues: “1) The vocabulary in the Septuagint is quite vast and extends far beyond the words learned for reading the New Testament.... 2) Although the syntax of the Septuagint is largely the same as the syntax in the New Testament, there are many places where the underlying Hebrew syntax has so influenced the syntax of the translation that the resulting Greek is strange at best and occasionally quite difficult to comprehend” (7). By addressing these two issues, Jobes provides a resource that can greatly assist the student in improving his or her ability to read widely in the Septuagint.

Discovering the Septuagint is designed with the student in mind. It is divided into ten chapters: (1) Genesis 1:1-3:24; (2) Exodus 14:1-15:27; (3) Exodus 20:1-21/Deuteronomy 5:6-21;

(4) Ruth 1:1-4:22; (5) Additions to Esther; (6) Selected Psalms; (7) Selections from Hosea; (8) Jonah 1:1-4:11; (9) Malachi 1:1-4:6; (10) Selections from Isaiah. Each chapter is formatted similarly to the others. Each begins with an introduction to the issues involved with the Septuagint text and the quality/method of translation. Subsequently, a brief selected bibliography is provided for the reader's further study.

Jobes has divided each Septuagint passage into manageable portions for students to work through in one sitting. In each case, the Greek text is provided in a verse-by-verse fashion, listing key vocabulary words, syntactical issues, and important historical references beneath the text. Wise students should try to work their way through each verse before consulting the notes below. At the end of each of these sections, Jobes provides the NETS translation of the LXX text for reference. This provides students with an easy way to check their translations for errors. Finally, each section ends with a chart of uses of each specific LXX passage in the NT. Jobes provides the LXX reference, the NT reference, and the theme that is developed by the NT author.

Prior to the release of this text, the only other resources that interacted substantively with the Septuagint for the student in this manner were Rodney Decker's *Koine Greek Reader: Selections from the New Testament, Septuagint, and Early Christian Writers* (2007), and Conybeare and Stock's *Grammar of Septuagint Greek: With Selected Readings, Vocabularies, and Updated Indexes* (originally published in 1905). Although these resources are of significant value, it is surprising that in the growing field of Septuagint studies, Jobes's *Discovering the Septuagint* is the first reader devoted solely to the LXX that has appeared in the past hundred years. For this reason alone, it is well worth the price to purchase.

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Preaching Old Testament Narratives. By Benjamin H. Walton. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2016. 255 pp. \$18.99.

“There is a reason why more than forty percent of the Bible is narrative. People, by God’s design, want to see how their personal narrative fits into a larger one” (45). Most people love stories and the video-driven age can especially be impacted by God-inspired narratives. But, how can a Bible expositor prepare and deliver sermons from this genre with the greatest impact? Benjamin Walton has provided useful guidance for this challenge. His goal in writing was “to create a resource you’ll want to turn to when you preach OT narratives” (19).

Dr. Walton, a former pastor and professor, leads Preaching Works, an organization dedicated to helping pastors improve their preaching potential. The organization’s website (www.preachingworks.com) describes his consulting service for preachers and also has free downloadable worksheets for studying OT narratives. Walton acknowledges his debt to homiletics Haddon Robinson, Donald Sunukjian, and Jeffery Arthurs. In fact, he stated, “Chapters 4-10 are a conscious attempt to apply, in my own way, Donald Sunukjian’s homiletic to the preaching of OT narratives” (19).

The book is divided into two parts—Discover the Message and Deliver the Message. Part I appropriately begins with a survey of the hermeneutics of OT narratives. Walton emphasizes taking note of the latest old covenant expansion in any context.

The author then presents a method for studying narratives in five steps—selecting a complete unit of thought, identifying the theological and historical context, studying the plot, determining the original theological message, and crafting the take-home truth. He provides useful tools and approaches well suited to analyzing narratives. For example, he lists the common beginning and ending markers for recognizing complete units of thought which should be preached together. He also explains how to write scene summaries and provided a chart for identifying clearly what the narrative dwells on or stresses. He explains how to ask good questions before using good commentaries. He shows how to use the dialogue and action of each scene to determine its theological and literary contribution.

Such careful study should lead to a “take-home truth” that is accurate and faithfully exposit the inspired narrative. Walton closes Part I with a “Succinct Commentary of 2 Samuel 10-11” that models the tools and steps involved in studying OT narratives.

Part II on Delivering the Message calls for preaching that is accurate, relevant, orally clear, and inspiring. Walton analyzes and discourages narrative preaching that is a verse-by-verse running commentary, that is overly alliterated, that is mere principlization, or that relies on the “big idea” approach without adapting it to presentation of narratives. He argues for the effectiveness of Sunukjian’s mini-synopsis approach and of “movements” instead of “points” to present OT narratives.

Then, in chapters 5-12, the author leads the reader through the homiletical process of creating the introduction, preaching through the complete unit of thought, sharing the take-home truth, helping the listener “buy” the take-home truth, developing picture-pointing applications, moving to Christ, and designing an affirming conclusion. These chapters included helpful general homiletical advice as well as a recommended process for packaging narrative preaching. Chapter 13, “From Good to Excellent,” gives additional general coaching for preachers. Sprinkled throughout the chapters of Part II are sample sermon paragraphs that model the approach being described.

Walton footnotes and recommends Steve Matthewson’s *The Art of Preaching Old Testament Narrative*, which is still my personal favorite on this subject. Matthewson does rely on the Hebrew text more than Walton, whose English Bible approach may make his volume more accessible to many.

However, I found Walton hard to digest at times because of his heavy reliance on homiletical jargon. He used abbreviations constantly for the CUT (complete unit of thought), EI (exegetical idea), OTM (original-theological message), PPA (picture-painting application), and THT (take-home truth). He added other terminology like “focus” and “engage” to produce sentences that left me stopping to unravel them, such as, “An effective way to open the sermon is to put the first half of one or more PPAs in the Engage. Later, in the application section we would call back these situations to complete the PPA by showing

listeners how to put the THT into practice in them” (116). Personally, I had to dog-ear the abbreviation page at the beginning so that I could flip back to it often so as to recall the scheme for abbreviated jargon.

While basically appreciating the author’s approach to OT hermeneutics, a couple of statements were disappointing. For example, in explaining Israel’s view of the retributive principle and the afterlife, he argues, “Israel expected it to be carried out in this life. This is because Israel had no concept of *reward* or *punishment* in the afterlife until the book of Daniel, one of the latest books of the OT” (52). This is an overstatement, as some verses in Job, Psalms, and Proverbs strongly imply resurrection or reward after death (for example, Job 14:7-14 and 19:23-27; Pss 16:9-11; 17:15; and 73:21-26). He was also too dismissive of young earth creationism in one brief section (119-120).

The book would also have been helped by a stronger emphasis on the power of the self-authenticating word of God to penetrate human hearts. For example, the section on “Reasons People Don’t Buy THTs (take-home truths) from OT Narratives” (158-62) could be taken to imply that whether people take truths home depends more on the preacher’s technique than the Holy Spirit. In the author’s defense, he did say, “Using the Bible and a few illustrations—stories, props, humor, metaphors, etc.—God can work through us to convince and inspire listeners to want to follow the THT” (163). As preachers, we do need to hone our craft as sharply as possible, but also need frequent reminders not to depend on our techniques more than on the inherent power of God’s word and God’s Spirit. In that regard, the author *is* to be commended for listing “Pray” as the first section in his concluding chapter on “Good to Excellent.”

I recommend *Preaching Old Testament Narratives* to biblical expositors as well worth reading, pondering, and applying. Most of us need such help in continuing to grow in our effectiveness in preaching this powerful genre of inspired Scripture.

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The Lost World of the Israelite Conquest: Covenant, Retribution, and the Fate of the Canaanites. By John H. Walton and J. Harvey Walton. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2017. 269 pp. \$20.00.

John H. Walton, Professor of Old Testament at Wheaton College and Graduate School and his son, J. Harvey Walton, a graduate student at St. Andrews University and researcher in biblical studies, co-author this installment of the *Lost World* series, following *The Lost World of Genesis One* (2009) and *The Lost World of Adam and Eve* (2015). Walton and Walton take issue with the “traditional” understanding of the conquest and sympathize with those who are “baffled” with the portrait of the God of the Old Testament, clashing as it does with the “peaceful love of God proclaimed in the New Testament” (1).

Walton and Walton organize their work into 21 propositions under six main headings: (1) Interpretation; (2) The Canaanites are not depicted as guilty of sin; (3) the Canaanites are not depicted as guilty of breaking the law; (4) the language and imagery of the conquest account has literary and theological significance; (5) What God and the Israelites are doing is often misunderstood because the Hebrew word *herem* is commonly mistranslated; and (6) How to apply this understanding. They write clearly and with the commendable objective of trying to clarify a troubling issue. However, their thesis suffers from omissions, dubious conclusions, and special pleading.

First, regarding the “peaceful love” of God, the New Testament ultimately depicts Jesus as a leveling conqueror. Regardless of one’s eschatological view, Jesus’ second coming involves worldwide cataclysm and eternal judgment. Outside of Revelation, the Gospels and epistles depict Jesus as one who will “slay with the breath of His mouth” the man of lawlessness and judge others who “perish because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved” (2 Thess 2:8, 10). The conquest is not an issue unless a person has a problem with the judgment of God in general.

After the Interpretation section is some questionable exegesis. The second section centers around the *kî*, “because,” clause in Genesis 15:16: “for the iniquity of the Amorite is not

yet complete.” Walton and Walton question each part of the clause: “iniquity,” “yet,” and “not complete.” In each case, they take a possible reading for each word or phrase and combine them to make the entire clause look more obscure and dubious than it is. For instance, they write: “The root of the word *šālēm* normally connotes wholeness or completeness but the exact form . . . occurs only here” (53). The “exact form” difference is the negation, “not,” which they then use to call into question the predominant meaning of the adjective “complete.” Another example is the word *’āwōn*, “generally interpreted to refer to spectacular sin” (54) but really, according to Walton and Walton, “the emphasis of *’āwōn* is on the punishment, not the crime” (55) so technically, the passage does not “indicate that the Canaanites were committing sin” (50). It is this type of relentless nuancing that makes one think that Walton and Walton insist on driving on the edge of what is a really a straight thoroughfare.

The third section, that “The Canaanites are not depicted as guilty of breaking God’s law,” rests almost solely on the point that God gave the law to Israel, so that the Canaanites cannot be guilty of breaking that which they never received. Although this is true, YHWH does say, “Do not defile yourselves by any of these things; for by all these the nations which I am casting out before you have become defiled” (Lev 18:24). However, according to the fourth section, such talk is a “common ancient near eastern literary device,” “rhetoric” designed “to generate a negative profile of those who live outside the established order” (140) so that “the text is not claiming that the Canaanites were actually, observably wicked” (147). The fifth section then argues that the word *herem* does not always mean “utterly destroy,” since the word can apply to inanimate objects, and that the essence of *herem* is not destruction but removal of ethnic identity. Therefore, Sihon and Og (Josh 2:10) and the Amalekites (1 Sam 15:18) were all *herem*, but it is Rahab who is the “embodiment” of *herem* since she removed her Canaanite identity and assimilated with the people of God (213). Ultimately, for Walton and Walton, *herem* has nothing to do with destruction and is a NT principle (section six) for all Christians who must surrender their identity (*herem*) and retain no other identity than Jesus (247). As an example, Walton and Walton

claim that NT *herem* requires Jewish Christians to “surrender their own Jewish identity” (247) which simply is untrue. Jewish Christians must surrender only those cultural practices that exclude Gentiles.

The Waltons discuss many Hebrew words, provide many cultural parallels, and include interesting metaphors. However, their thesis is unsubstantiated. Except for one passing reference (83) and one footnote, the authors fail to deal with one of the most troublesome verses, Deuteronomy 20:16: “Only in the cities of these peoples [in Canaan] that the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance, you shall not leave alive anything that breathes.” The verb in this verse *hyh*, “let live” in the negative, one cannot explain away. They also dismiss other key verbs like *hrg*, “kill” (Josh 10:11), and *šmd*, “annihilate” (Josh 11:14), with phrases like “words like *šmd* (“annihilated”) are rhetorical; this kind of language is ubiquitous in ancient conquest accounts” (177). Even their “*herem* as cultural assimilation” theory runs afoul of the accounts of Ezra (9:2; 10:2) and Nehemiah (13:25) that portray the assimilation of the Canaanites as sinful.

The Lost Word of the Israelite Conquest is interesting historically and culturally, but it of limited value in giving an accurate interpretation of Joshua’s conquest.

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Preaching in the New Testament: An Exegetical and Biblical Theological Study. By Jonathan I. Griffiths. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2017. 153 pp. \$22.00.

At the outset of *Preaching in the New Testament*, Jonathan Griffiths points out that although many would agree that preaching the word of God is at the core of God’s plan, they struggle to articulate a comprehensive definition of preaching from the Scripture. Griffiths believes that the history and pragmatism of preaching is valuable, but neither should be the controlling dynamic of theology. He points out the lack of books

dealing with the character and theology of preaching according to the Scripture (1).

The author tackles two vital questions: First, is “preaching” in any way to be distinct from other forms of word ministry? And second, is there a relationship between OT prophetic, the apostolic, and contemporary preaching? (2)

Griffiths moves readers from the mere assumption of specialized preaching in the post-apostolic age to actually identifying the phenomenon. He demonstrates the believers’ involvement and expectation of perpetuity in the evangelistic mission of the church woven throughout the Scriptures. He calls for the recognition of a wide variety of believers engaging in the word ministry beyond just the pastoral preaching in the church.

The continuity of post-apostolic preaching with the ministries of the OT prophets and Jesus or the apostles is carefully accentuated through careful analysis of key NT texts. Based upon the theological distinctiveness, Griffiths addresses the issue of gender roles in the ministry of the word (4).

Griffiths presents an overview of the biblical theology of the word (as preaching is a ministry of the word) and an overview of key Greek terms related to preaching in the NT and meticulously considers a study of the New Testament’s teaching concerning the scope and character of other ministries of the word in the church (5).

Griffiths explores the features of a biblical theology of preaching in the NT by observing that God is the source of all Scripture and he speaks even today as he acts and encounters people through his word.

The author, based upon Claire Smith’s scholarly work, avers that the semi-technical Greek terms *euangelizomai*, *katangelo*, and *kerysso* refer to the concept of proclamation of the gospel or the word to non-Christians and establishes preaching as a distinct activity in the NT (19). He meticulously considers every occurrence of these verbs in the NT to help readers see that the speaker in most cases is a person of authority, speaking in a public context, and the content of the message is the gospel, with few exceptions. He asserts that the language that is used for evangelistic proclamation and edification is different (34). He

believes that these three Greek terms are not synonyms, but share vital commonalities (36).

It is observed that the NT does not instruct believers as a whole group to “preach,” but using language that is similar to preaching, encourages them to minister the word to one another. The word ministry of the believers in general flows from the public ministry of the leaders (47). Griffiths states that the three Greek words already mentioned are not part of this general exhortation (49).

Griffiths carefully exegetes selected passages from the NT and articulates that the post-apostolic preaching ministry has its roots in the OT and perpetuates through the prophets, John the Baptist, Jesus, the apostles, and apostolic agents. For example, Paul’s charge to Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:2 is significant as it concerns the pastor-teacher’s role and traces the line of continuity from the apostolic preaching ministries to the preaching ministry of apostolic agents like Timothy in the post-apostolic age. The designation “man of God” (1 Tim 6:11 and 2 Tim 3:17) and the word “preach” (2 Tim 4:2) show the continuity between OT prophets and NT preachers (59-60). The use of five verbs in the imperative mood demonstrates dynamic and didactic proclamation of God’s word.

Additionally, Paul’s use of OT quotations related to Moses (68-69) and Isaiah (70-72) in Romans 10:6-17 show the perpetuity and authority of preaching by those whom Christ commissions and sends. God speaks through the preachers so that the hearers would encounter God (Rom 10:17). From 1 Corinthians chapters 1-2, 9, and 15, Griffiths observes that Paul’s authority of preaching comes from the power of God and not from worldly rhetorical devices (77). He is of the persuasion that the nature of the new-covenant ministry in some respects aligns with the prophetic ministry of the OT (93), but the preaching under the new-covenant is glorious and carries forward beyond the apostolic office (83). Paul explains this idea in 2 Corinthians chapters 2-6 and compares it with the old-covenant ministry of the word through allusions to Moses and Isaiah.

Griffiths, in the backdrop of Acts 17 for 1 Thessalonians 1-2, articulates that Paul’s ministry was a public ministry of proclamation with authority, and the use of genuine first person

plural implies that his associates also preached as God's approved agents and were channels to bring about change in the lives of the hearers (98). Griffiths observes that the unique sermonic nature of the book of Hebrews provides a model for shaping preaching today in exposition and application. Though the identity of the author is obscure in the epistle, yet the sermon sent in the capacity of a leader implies his authority in the post-apostolic preaching ministry (106). He also observes the consistent use of the term *ho logos* as accentuating the centrality of a biblical theology of the word (108-9). Further, the author uses the verb *euangelizomai* for the announcement of the good news in public and the use of "today" when God's voice is heard as also applying to the people listening to a sermon today (111-12). Griffiths asserts that the function of "speaking the word of God" is the responsibility of church leaders (117).

In the first excursus, Griffiths examines the word "brothers" in Philippians 1:14-18 in its contextual and exegetical milieu and believes that it refers to the preaching activity of the co-workers rather than that of the Christians in general (43). In the second excursus, he demonstrates the biblical-theological framework for the continuity of preaching through the Old and New Testaments and beyond (66).

However, Griffiths affirms that such perpetuity does not imply any new revelation and hence the language of "prophet" and "prophecy" is not assigned to the Christian preacher operating under a new covenant (127). A preacher is definitely commissioned by God himself to preach and has a right to material support from the church (78), but the author does not explain how the commissioning process takes place in the post-apostolic age.

Here are some positive aspects of this book:

1. The book is an easy read for students, pastors, and professors.
2. Biblical-theological themes, lexical information, and exegesis of choice NT passages are used to set forth a convincing argument.
3. The data presented in tabular form is very useful and easily understandable for readers.

4. Griffiths instills confidence in the post-apostolic preachers to preach the word with authority in public to non-Christians as prophets of the OT, Jesus, apostles, and their associates preached, and he distinguishes this from other forms of word ministries that the general congregation can engage in.

5. Although Griffiths admits the limitations of the scope of his research, he demonstrates thoroughness in his footnotes and bibliography and argues for the need for further study.

6. The conclusions are characterized by modesty and brevity.

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The Greek New Testament, Produced at Tyndale House, Cambridge. Edited by Dirk Jongkind and Peter J. Williams. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017. 526 pp. \$49.99.

Conversations began in 2005 during tea and coffee breaks at the Tyndale House in Cambridge that ultimately brought about the publication of this new Greek text by Crossway. The stated goal was “to present in an easily readable format the best approximation to the words written by the New Testament authors, within the constraints of the documentary evidence that survives” (505). Therefore, Jongkind, Williams, and many other assistant editors spent about a decade carefully composing this Greek New Testament in order to offer the reader the benefit of knowing that this text rests on the early testimony of its authors.

This edition of the Greek NT began with an electronic transcription, produced in 2009, of Samuel Prideaux Tregelles’s text from the late nineteenth century. Although Westcott and Hort used the text by Tregelles for their influential edition in 1881, Jongkind claims it was “undeservedly ignored” in future editions of Greek texts. Therefore, due to this oversight of Tregelles’s text and its early testimony of witnesses, Jongkind adapted and used it as the base for this edition. Actually, Jongkind and Williams state that the revision was more extensive than anticipated; therefore, they have provided the reader with a completely new edition.

In the introduction to their text (505-23), the editors discuss four key areas that were carefully considered, and therefore, implemented to create the text so as to differentiate this Greek text from its counterparts (e.g., UBS⁵ and N/A²⁸). Thus, they produce a more readable and less interpretive text for its readers.

First, Tregelles's documentary approach was kept intact by insisting with each variant that the text "be attested in two or more Greek manuscripts, at least one being from the fifth century or earlier" (506). In the evaluation of these textual variations, the priority was given to the scribal tendencies that were well documented and found elsewhere, such as immediate contexts and/or in the same book.

Second, the textual apparatus is limited. The choice of variants to include in the apparatus was limited to those that were "close contenders for consideration for the main text ... have high exegetical importance ... [and] illustrate scribal habits" (515). Because the emphasis of the edited text is upon the earliest of witnesses, the apparatus provides information regarding the papyrus and majuscule witnesses. A list of the witnesses is provided in the back of the text.

Third, the editors pride themselves on insisting to use the spelling from the fifth century or earlier. It is important, however, that the reader of this Greek text understand that the editors required adequate evidence to suggest the conventional spellings. In other words, the editors' goal was to present the most widely documented spellings believed to be closest in time to the biblical authors themselves. For example, the editors decided to accept and print the epsilon-iota (ει) as a representation of the etymological (ι). One example is γείνομαι, "become," in Mark; Luke; portions of John; and Romans–Colossians. It is the editors' belief that the received spellings of some of the words found in the dictionaries and grammars today may not be the same as what the scribes accepted or used.

Fourth, is the editorial design that fashions the text such as paragraph breaks, punctuation, and the order of the books. The paragraphs in the text most closely conform to the manuscripts from the fifth century and earlier, and these differ from those that are most widely accepted and followed today. Accents and breathing marks are also printed consistent with the earliest

manuscripts. And last, the order of the books follows that which is preserved by the earliest of manuscripts. Most manuscripts preserve the NT books in four groups: four Gospel accounts; Acts and Catholic Epistles; Pauline Epistles, including Hebrews; and the Apocalypse.

There is little doubt as to the impressive readability of the text. The font, the spacing of words, and the limited apparatus are all supportive to accommodate the reader's eyes. For the joy of reading one's Greek New Testament, Jongkind and Williams are to be commended. Also, noteworthy of praise, is the editors' careful construction of a Greek text that emphasizes the use of the earliest manuscripts in the paragraphing, capitalization, punctuation, spelling, and even the order of the books. The complaints I offer include its limited apparatus and a lack of inclusion of later-dated manuscripts (e.g., Majority Text MSS), and its order of books is not convenient. This Greek text will not likely serve as one of my classroom resources. I am, however, impressed with its ease of readability and its consistent, careful attention to detail; therefore, I plan to utilize it in my personal study and growth.

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Jesus and the Future: Understanding What He Taught About the End Times. By Andreas J. Köstenberger, Alexander Stewart, and Apollo Makara. Wooster, OH: Weaver Books, 2017. 196 pp. \$15.99.

In their work *Jesus and the Future: Understanding What He Taught about the End Times*, authors Andreas J. Köstenberger (Senior Research Professor of New Testament and Biblical Theology at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary), Alexander Stewart (Academic Dean and Associate Professor of New Testament Language and Literature at Tyndale Theology Seminary, the Netherlands), and Apollo Makara (lecturer at the Pastoral Training School and the Christian Leadership Institute

of Rwanda) present a survey of Jesus' teachings on eschatology. Addressed to a general audience (17), *Jesus and the Future* seeks "to guide you through the Olivet Discourse and Jesus' teaching about the future in all four Gospels" (27). The authors divide Jesus' teachings into two parts. Part 1 (chapters 1-4) addresses the major issues of the Olivet Discourse, including the abomination of desolation, the identity of "this generation," and the coming of the Son of Man in relation to the destruction of the temple. Part 2 (chapters 5-9) expounds the other eschatological teachings of Jesus, including coming persecution, the period of delay between the first and second comings, and the final judgments. The primary and most significant conclusion of the text is as follows: "In the Olivet Discourse, Jesus ... focuses on two future events. One of these events, the destruction of the temple, was in Jesus' near future (his current generation) and is in our past. The other event, Jesus' return, has not yet taken place and is still future" (85).

Köstenberger, Stewart, and Makara have accepted a daring and bold quest in *Jesus and the Future*. The Olivet Discourse is one of the most debated pericopes in the Gospels and perhaps all of Scripture, and thus it is no small feat to address the issue, even at the popular level. For this endeavor, the authors are to be commended.

Jesus and the Future succeeds in a number of different areas. As a text, it provides a readable introductory volume to the issues surrounding the interpretation of the Olivet Discourse and other prophetic elements in the Gospels. *Jesus and the Future* also rightly critiques the various preterist and partial preterist views of the Son of Man's return (68-70). It seems very unlikely that the destruction of the temple in AD 70 fulfilled this coming, especially when Jesus argues that the coming will result in the final judgments (Matt 24:29-25:46), and the authors confidently defend this point.

On the other hand, in focusing upon Jesus' view of eschatology alone, *Jesus and the Future* creates a difficult problem. By its very definition, eschatology is the study of what all of Scripture says about the end times, not just what one portion of Scripture states. Even the authors cannot help but cite other eschatological passages to support their views, for

example, the authors cross-reference 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 to demonstrate that Christ's second coming should not be associated with the destruction of the temple in AD 70 (69). Interestingly enough, Christ told his followers to read the prophet Daniel to understand his teachings on the future, and during His Olivet Discourse no less (cf. Matt 24:15). The writers admit this difficulty (174), but unfortunately the lack of exposition of influential eschatological passages is problematic because one's interpretation of other texts will influence one's interpretation of Jesus' words. For example, how would the authors synthesize Daniel 11 and 2 Thessalonians 2 with their view of the abomination of desolation (cf. 55-56)? On another note, it would have been helpful to include more interaction with competing views. For example, how would dispensationalists push back against the authors' arguments that "this generation" refers only to Jesus' contemporaries (cf. 75)?

In conclusion, *Jesus and the Future* is a good popular introduction to Jesus' view on the end times. Even those who disagree with the authors will find its organization and survey of the key issues helpful. However, one must approach the text understanding that its very nature creates limitations and should include *Jesus and the Future* alongside other studies of eschatology.

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Greek for Life: Strategies for Learning, Retaining, and Reviving New Testament Greek. By Benjamin L. Merkle and Robert L. Plummer. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2017. 152 pp. \$19.99.

Do you know Greek? And if so, how well do you remember your Greek? Or has it been too long since you've taken Greek that it is beyond repair? How often do you use your Greek? Do you schedule consistent time to read and/or translate from your Greek New Testament? Regardless of your vocation—pastor, missionary, professor, or layperson—if you want to communicate God's word effectively, then spending consistent

time with your Greek NT is a must. The heartbeat of Benjamin Merkle and Robert Plummer is to offer the necessary encouragement and motivation to help readers use Greek to learn, minister, and communicate God's word for the benefit of the reader and hearer.

This book is a practical guide for all people with varying levels of Greek knowledge from the beginner to the scholar. As a matter of fact, Merkle and Plummer wrote the book with the following readers in mind: the student, the teacher, the pastor, and the one sheep "who has wandered from the [Greek] fold" (x). This book has eight chapters and is a joy to read; once you begin, you will not want to put it down. Each chapter is equipped with just the right amount of inspiration and motivation to learn, retain, or revive your Greek; with helpful sections that accommodate most chapters that provide necessary resources to assist your own knowledge and understanding of Greek; and a devotional reflection from the Greek NT.

The first chapter is centered around one goal: that is learning Greek, first and foremost, so that one knows God as he is revealed in the NT. Although the task of learning Greek is great, the payout is even greater; keep the end in sight. Learning Greek is a means of God's grace in one's life.

The second chapter is designed for those who have become undisciplined and, quite frankly, lazy with their study of Greek. Topics such as laziness, diligence, discipline, time management, efficiency, and technology are explained as possible reasons for losing Greek. Simply put, the authors encourage the reader to be disciplined with Greek. But, how can readers do this?

The third chapter walks through some practical ways to study Greek. The bottom line is to review, review, and review some more. There just is no substitute for a consistent review of Greek to know Greek. While chapter three provides ways to study Greek, the fourth chapter is designed to provide assistance with memorization. Merkle and Plummer's goal is to help readers move their Greek from short-term memory to long-term memory. Easy-to-use, practical methods flood this chapter with ideas on how to memorize Greek in order to retain it.

The fifth chapter provides recommendations on how to develop a reading plan. The authors offer suggestions on what to

read by offering a chart that reports the level of difficulty of vocabulary for each NT book; how to read Greek, by offering a number of sources combining various tools (e.g., interlinears and lexicons); and how long to read, focusing on the consistency of reading, not the time spent reading.

The sixth chapter comes alongside those on the journey of learning Greek for life and discusses various resources that aid in the use of Greek. These resources include software, websites, smartphone apps, lexicons, word-study tools, Greek guides, handbooks, Greek grammars, commentaries, and communities of accountability. This chapter is worth the price of the book, especially given the plethora of resources today. A guide offered by these experienced authors is extremely helpful.

Whereas the second chapter dealt with discipline, this seventh chapter can be narrowed down to one word as well: accountability. But it is more than *just* accountability; it discusses keeping one's Greek. In other words, don't waste your breaks/time off. For the student, this could refer to the time between semesters, and for the pastor/missionary, this could refer to time between appointments or downtime in the office. Whatever one's situation might be, the point is to set a realistic goal with retaining/learning Greek, write down a plan, commit to the plan, and have another person keep you accountable.

The final chapter offers some guidelines to get your Greek back, if you have wandered from the fold. A number of testimonials encourage readers toward revitalization of their Greek.

As a professor of Greek for the past seventeen years, I can honestly say that this book is an excellent resource for those passionate about the Greek NT. If you are in a position (pastor, teacher, missionary, etc.) to use Greek, this book must be on your shelf. The practical, easy-to-use, and experienced advice from these seasoned authors will be the encouragement that you need at just the right time.

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Constantine Tischendorf: The Life and Work of a 19th Century Bible Hunter. By Stanley E. Porter. New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015. 190 pp. \$29.95.

In Stanley E. Porter's *Constantine Tischendorf: The Life and Work of a 19th Century Bible Hunter*, Porter confesses "a longstanding fascination" with this remarkable scholar (viii). His brief biographical profile of Tischendorf presents him as a highly motivated man who meticulously pursued his passion of "locating and publishing as many ancient manuscripts as he could" (73). Porter identifies the three main areas for which Tischendorf is known today: (1) his relentless pursuit of ancient manuscripts, primarily consisting of NT sources, but also other important ones, not the least of which is *The Epistle to Barnabas* and the *Fragment of Papias*; (2) his work as a textual critic; and (3) most famously, his discovery of the *Sinai Codex* from St. Catherine's monastery located at the Sinai Peninsula in Egypt (6). This last item has generated questions about Tischendorf's ethics and integrity. Porter weighs in on this and makes a good case to show that Tischendorf did not—as some have accused him—abscond with *Codex Sinai*, and (as the accusations go) deceive its stewards (viz., the resident monks) who were oblivious to its true value.

Porter's fascination with Tischendorf is infectious. He observes that although this tireless "Bible hunter" has received only anecdotal references in textbooks on the subject matter, his contributions are under-appreciated and perhaps inestimable. Not only was Tischendorf a major contributor to advancing the discipline of textual criticism, he was even more a defender of biblical authority against men like Hegel, Schliermacher, and Bultmann, whose liberal German scholarship had the effect of supplanting the authority of the Scriptures. Thus, as a pious nineteenth-century conservative German scholar himself, he sought to establish the authenticity of the most ancient NT manuscripts through his skill as a paleographer. He especially set out to discredit F. C. Bauer, who assigned second-century dates to many of the NT books, effectively calling into question the historicity of the NT Gospels, as well as removing Pauline authority from the majority of the letters traditionally credited to

the esteemed apostle. His achievements in this area alone, as Porter so faithfully presents them, are a marvel of human endurance and skill.

Constantine Tischendorf is a relatively brief book of 190 pages. Aside from a foreword, bibliography, and index, there are two main divisions. In the first part, Porter devotes seventy-six pages to Tischendorf's life. The first sixty of these pages offer a biographical profile, focusing mainly on his academic and professional career. The remaining pages outline his two primary areas of expertise: paleography and textual criticism, which he applied to the *Greek Old Testament* and to the *Greek New Testament*. Porter assesses these achievements as both "monumental" and "magisterial" (70).

Part 2 of Porter's *Constantine Tischendorf* spans a total of ninety-six pages, sixty-four of which are reproductions of Tischendorf's own writings (translated from the German into English). After a very helpful thirty-two-page introduction by Porter, which contextualizes this amazingly well-rounded individual, the reader has the privilege of reading a firsthand account of Tischendorf's discovery of *Codex Sinaiticus* when Tischendorf visited St. Catherine's monastery. Following this Porter presents Tischendorf's *When Were Our Gospels Written?*, published originally in 1866 as a pamphlet containing five main topical sections, later to be published in book form with chapter divisions, as presented here: Chapter I: Ecclesiastical Testimony; Chapter II: The Testimony of Heretics and Heathen during the Second Century; Chapter III: Apocryphal Literature; Chapter IV: Testimony of Apostolic Fathers: Barnabas and Papias; Chapter V: Manuscripts and Versions of the Second Century.

These five chapters not only give us insight into the bright mind of Constantine von Tischendorf, but they are also still relevant for pastors or students of the Scriptures as a means of helping equip them to answer skeptics who assail the authenticity of the NT manuscripts.

Perhaps some who read this brief treatment of Tischendorf's life—including this reviewer—will be left with a desire for more. Although it was not in Porter's purview (and thus he should hardly be criticized for it), one wishes that he had included, say, another twenty or thirty pages that would have presented a more

detailed account of the controversies that swirl about this intriguing man. As even Porter himself admits (see p. 73), this makes him vulnerable to criticisms of undue bias in favor of Tischendorf. Despite that, this reviewer is satisfied that Porter has offered a fair and balanced treatment of a servant who has served Christ's church admirably.

All in all, this is a superb reference for those interested in textual criticism. In fact, I would recommend this for professors who teach the subject matter in the classroom who undoubtedly encounter many students apprehensive about its highly technical nature and demands for attention to tedious detail. I would even suggest it being placed on the "required reading" list of textbooks for the course. Even though this is not Porter's main aim, I believe it would ably serve to enthrall students with a man who dedicated his life to textual criticism, and by doing so, may not only allay many of their apprehensions, but also impress upon them its great significance as a discipline.

Beyond the discipline of textual criticism, this book will be of great interest to those who enjoy church history or simply enjoy reading biographies of great men who have made significant contributions to the church. Though the overall target readership is admittedly narrow, those who do choose to pick it up and engage with it will find it rewarding both on a technical level and on a personal level.

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The Extent of the Atonement: A Historical and Critical Review.
By David L. Allen. Nashville: B&H, 2016. 820 pp. \$59.99.

David L. Allen is the Dean of the School of Preaching, Professor of Preaching, George W. Truett Chair of Pastoral Ministry, and Director of the Center for Expository Preaching at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. He was previously Dean of the School of Theology from 2004-2016. He received the BA degree at Criswell College (1978), Master of Divinity at Southwestern Baptist Theological

Seminary (1981), and PhD in Humanities with a major in linguistics from University of Texas at Arlington (1987). Dr. Allen served two congregations as senior pastor and has served as interim pastor for several churches. He is the author of several books, articles, and chapters in edited volumes.

As a theologian, pastor, and preacher, Allen has had ample reason and opportunity to wrestle with the question of how to get the gospel right. The biblical and theological issue of the extent of the atonement of Jesus Christ became a substantive part of that quest. The poles of the issue, while simply stated, have been controversial through the centuries of the existence of the church. Did Jesus die for the sins of all people, or only for the sins of the elect? Allen explores this question historically, biblically, and theologically in his book.

In fact, Allen clearly states that his “ultimate goal ... is simple: to demonstrate historically, and then biblically and theologically, why universal atonement is a more excellent way, and that from the pens of the many Calvinists who have believed such” (xviii). One of the fascinating results of his investigation is the demonstration of the “unity between all moderate Calvinists, Arminians, and non-Calvinists on the specific issue of the extent of the atonement” (ibid). Allen writes not from a Calvinist, nor from an Arminian perspective, but rather as a Baptist whose heritage has contained elements of both Calvinist and Arminian soteriology.

The bulk of the volume (from page 3 to page 653) is devoted to a historical treatment of the doctrine in the writings of authors from the early church to the present. This includes lengthy treatments of the positions of Northern and Southern Baptist writers on the extent of the atonement. Distrustful of secondary sources, Allen has laboriously worked through the actual writings of these authors to determine and to demonstrate their positions. When he does quote from secondary sources, he does not hesitate to respond to their characterizations of the position of the writer under discussion.

To this quite thorough (though admittedly not exhaustive) review, Allen adds a critical review of Gibson and Gibson, eds. *From Heaven He Came and Sought Her: Definite Atonement in Historical, Biblical, Theological, and Practical Perspective*

(published 2013). Due to the endorsements that book received (“definitive”), the standpoint of the authors of its essays (“defending the notion of definite atonement”), and inaccuracies he discovered in the essays, Allen felt it necessary to respond to the authors of the book. While giving credit to the writers who accurately dealt with the primary evidence, Allen carefully and incisively points out those statements that misquote the sources or inaccurately generalize about the positions of the original writers concerning definite, particular, or limited atonement.

Not only has there been a difference between the Arminians, moderate Calvinists, high Calvinists, hyper Calvinists, and Hypothetical (Conditional) Universalists in their understanding of these terms, but there has also been confusion about other aspects of soteriology along with the extent of the atonement. As Allen frequently insists, “Failure to distinguish properly between intent, extent, and application with respect to the atonement is a critical error when investigating the subject historically” (680).

Fundamental questions asked regarding the extent of the atonement include the following: Could Christ have paid the price for the sins of the whole world, and yet not all be saved? What is the significance of the word “for” in the statement “Christ died only for the elect”? Could a person for whom Christ died suffer in hell? Does the provision for salvation become effectual only when a person exercises faith? Is the good news only good news for the elect? Through patient historical, exegetical, and theological interaction with those who have asked and answered these crucial and long debated issues, Allen in a clear and remarkably readable way has pointed out the inaccuracies and logical inconsistencies of many who have ventured into this important area of soteriology.

In conclusion, Allen provides a helpful chapter on “Why Belief in Unlimited Atonement Matters.” Moving away from historical theology, *per se*, he presents a theological argument for unlimited atonement, and against the fundamental arguments of those who hold to limited atonement. For Allen, the boldest proclamation of the gospel will be based upon assurance that Christ died for the one to whom the gospel is preached. He claims that the burden of proof is on the teacher of limited atonement to demonstrate exegetically, in the face of NT texts that say that

Christ died for the sins of all people, that Christ died only for some people's sins.

If one is looking for a theological treatise on limited or unlimited atonement supportive of a theological persuasion or school, this is not the book, though it is difficult to imagine an exegetical or theological argument that is not thoroughly discussed in it. If one is interested in learning what theologians have written—and are still writing—about the subject, this is the book to read. It will be eye-opening for those who have not researched the subject to learn how many of the great teachers of the past have held to unlimited atonement, believing that Christ's sacrifice was a sufficient provision for all humans, even if they have also believed that only the elect and/or only those who believe will receive the salvific benefit of that sacrifice.

Whatever the theological persuasion of the readers, they will benefit from this massive tome. In this major work, David Allen has provided a resource that will not likely be duplicated in the foreseeable future.

The book has no bibliography, but the complete indices and footnotes suffice to point the reader to sources.

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Old-Earth or Evolutionary Creation?: Discussing Origins with Reasons to Believe and BioLogos. Edited by Kenneth Keathley, J. B. Stump, and Joe Aguirre. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2017. 256 pp. \$24.00.

Bringing any groups who disagree about doctrine to the same table has the potential to end in greater division than understanding. However, Keathley and the fellow editors of *Old-Earth or Evolutionary Creation?* masterfully play up the tensions between Reasons to Believe (RTB) and BioLogos's understanding of science and theology enough to create an

engaging and insightful conversation regarding science-faith issues, specifically about creation in this work.

Old-Earth or Evolutionary Creation? begins with a brief presentation by the leaders of RTB (Hugh Ross) and BioLogos (Deborah Haarsma) regarding the history and mission of their respective organizations. Following these statements, Keathley, on behalf of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) academy affirms the positions of the professors involved in this particular conversation as “conservative evangelicals” and affirming of both the Baptist Faith and Message and the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy (6). The introduction closes with Keathley’s recommending the model of this work in which “two creationist organizations can strongly disagree with one another while treating one another with Christian charity” and serve as a pattern for the Christian community to “lovingly pursue reconciliation on this and other controversies threatening to divide the church” (7).

Each of the eleven conversations that follow Keathley’s introduction begins with the topic presented from the SBC moderator, followed by initial presentations from each organization stating its position on the question. Following the initial presentations, the moderator leads each organization to engage with the tension created by asking them to further clarify the stated position, challenge their opponents’ position, or address subsequent questions that have arisen from the initial presentation. Following the final responses from both organizations, the moderator closes each discussion with a summary of the discussion as well as comments regarding their personal perspective of where each organization closed or created greater tension on the matter.

While there is certainly a high level of scientific discussion within *Old-Earth or Evolutionary Creation?*, this work is clearly and thoroughly an integrated work of science and theology. Each of the eleven conversations detailing the positions of RTB and BioLogos concern topics involving the interpretation and application of Scripture including the nature of biblical authority, viable positions concerning Adam and Eve, death and predation prior to the fall, God’s interaction with the natural world, and

geological and fossil evidence as well as anthropology and genetics.

As a young-earth creationist, I'm thankful this work has helped me recognize that old-earth creation proponents are not only within the church, especially a church located in a scientific research-based university city like Rochester, but they are also leaders of conservative evangelical churches. They are not merely prolific thinkers, writers, and influencers but also passionate Christ-followers who play a crucial role in determining the next generations' interpretation and application of Scripture. Though I may frequently and strongly disagree with their conclusions and at times even shudder at their interpretative models, I am not only better for hearing their positions and understanding why they hold those conclusions, but I am also better because I am able use utilize their sources, questions, and arguments to better articulate my own position.

Through this work, Keathley's team was able to successfully reach their stated goal of creating a written dialogue characterized by respect for each other and love for the Savior designed to serve as an example for future dialogues to follow as they discuss doctrinal matters with those inside and outside of the faith community. Because of the successful conversation presented in *Old-Earth or Evolutionary Creation?*, it is a resource that is well worth the investment, regardless of one's position on the age of the earth.

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Between One Faith and Another: Engaging Conversations on the World's Great Religions. By Peter Kreeft. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2017. 213 pp. \$17.00.

Professor and well-known author Peter Kreeft believes there are basically two great conversations in the world. The first, and

most important, is the vertical conversation between humans and God. The second greatest conversation, and the one on which his book is based, is the conversation “*Between One Faith and Another.*” In this engaging conversation on the world’s great religions, Kreeft addresses a specific question: Is one religion greater or truer or better than another? To put it another way: Are the different religions incompatible or compatible (1)? Kreeft states,

This book considers that question of comparative religions. It is also a very quick tour through the essential teachings of seven of the world’s great religions to gather enough data...to form a reasonable opinion or theory of comparative religions, a theory that judges the data. The questions...are motivated by an attempt to find that unfashionable thing called truth. (2)

Kreeft accomplishes the task of finding truth via a dramatic presentation. He utilizes three characters: Thomas Keptic (a hard-headed, logical, nonreligious *exclusivist*), Bea Lever (a postmodern, open-hearted, intuitive, religious *inclusivist*), and Professor Fesser (a neutral, scholarly, objective *pluralist*) (3). Throughout this dialogue, Kreeft magnificently employs the Socratic method to stimulate the reader as he or she thinks through the distinctions of each religion and/or faith.

Each chapter takes place at the conclusion of Professor Fesser’s “World Religions” lecture for that day. After class, Thomas and Bea—along with the occasional guidance and challenges from the professor—reignite their “debate” of a specific religion from that day’s lecture. The flow of the conversation is incessantly influenced by each character’s intellectual paradigm (Thomas—empirical *exclusivism*; Bea—existential *inclusivism*; and Professor—neutral *pluralism*). Starting in the first chapter, one of the most frustrating yet reoccurring issues is the attempt to define “religion.” As each faith is scrutinized, religion seems to continually cloud the discussion. Yet, through the process of challenging each other (often employed through Kreeft’s delightful humor and sarcasm), Thomas and Bea come to a point where they are able to narrow every religion down to three dimensions: “Creed, code, and cult.

Or words, works, and worship. Theology, morality, and liturgy. Every religion tells you what to believe, how to live, and how to worship or pray or meditate or do some specifically religious practice” (22).

The existence of God is another issue that causes dissension between the three individuals. For Thomas, the idea of God’s existence is based exclusively on empirical evidence—clear, unadulterated, scientific logic. Bea, on the other hand, views the existence of God from a mystical type of existentialism that relies on the senses. When the professor enters the conversation, he brings a neutral experientialism to the mix. These two points of discussion—religion and God—continue to emerge throughout the rest of the book challenging, and often frustrating, Thomas’s and Bea’s views of the various faiths.

Chapters three through ten involve a concise but focused overview of various eastern and western religions. Kreeft gives a synopsis of Hinduism, Buddhism, Zen, Confucianism, Taoism, Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. Despite the fact that Kreeft succinctly presents the points of each religion throughout the trialogue, the continual back and forth banter between Thomas, Bea, and the professor becomes a bit tiresome. Yet, the mystical “punches” and logical “counterpunches” thrown between the characters display a linguistic brilliance that makes this book a masterpiece.

Throughout their discussions I found myself drawn to one of the three individuals in the trialogue. It was very difficult to remain neutral as every individual—myself included—has a specific bent toward one of the three theological/philosophical paradigms that are conveyed by each character. As I “listened in” on their conversation, I found myself “siding” more with Thomas and his exclusivistic logic even though I disagreed completely with his agnostic conclusions. At the same time, I was able to understand and agree with some of Bea’s inclusivistic perspective as well as the professor’s pluralistic perspective. I do applaud Kreeft for specifically bringing Thomas to a “logical” conclusion of who Jesus really is based on both the “Lord, liar, or lunatic” reasoning as well as the challenge from “Pascal’s Wager” (200-201). I believe this was an important key element to the whole book—both for Thomas as well as all who read it.

In conclusion, I do appreciate that Kreeft recognizes from the outset that we are not God; therefore we can in no way—at least not in this life—know how the different religions sound to God (2). At the same time, he unequivocally states that he, personally, is an exclusivist regarding Christ. He continues, “Christ cannot be half of the way, the truth, or the life: he is all of it” (6).

I would recommend this book to anyone trying to reach this postmodern millennial generation. Yet, this recommendation comes with a caveat: Be prepared to be challenged in your own thinking about how the three dimensions of theology, morality, and liturgy all function *Between One Faith and Another*.

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Finding Truth: Five Principles for Unmasking Atheism, Secularism, and Other God Substitutes. By Nancy Pearcey. Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2015. 383 pp. \$22.99.

Nancy Pearcey, a scholar-in-residence at Houston Baptist University, provides an engaging analysis of the Christian worldview and its substitutes. The volume does not just preach to the choir—it also preaches *at* the choir. The Foreword reminds Christians that “individuals are under no obligation to affirm as true something they have not adequately examined” (14). Therefore, apologists should be like Jesus Christ himself, who evinced “an attitude of openness to examination so that inquisitive people are welcomed to explore and investigate” (16). Pearcey herself warns against the assumption that church leaders can override doubts and questions “merely by cultivating a more intense devotional life” (57). “If my students are at all representative, teens regard emotional tactics as manipulative anyway. They know it’s easy to manufacture an artificial sense of belonging with loud music, water-balloon fights, and Ultimate Frisbee games” (59).

Pearcey's apologetic method is difficult to pin down fully within the common classifications. She often employs forms of the "transcendental argument," as emphasized by presuppositionalists (30), and she charges skeptics with suppressing the *sensus divinitatis* (31). Yet she also highlights the integration of various evidences and rational arguments. Her overall approach especially mirrors the apologetic method of Francis Schaeffer, who greatly influenced her during her formative years. Pearcey's argumentation also reminds one of the worldview apologetics of Douglas Groothuis, who considers his theology to be "reformed," but has sympathetically yet openly critiqued Van Tilian presuppositionalism. Some have classified Schaeffer, Groothuis, and Pearcey as adapting a modified "verificationist" approach (as espoused by Gordon Lewis).

Pearcey's interpretive analysis of Romans 1 becomes foundational, as humans are either oriented toward the Creator or toward creaturely substitutes, thus worshiping "the gifts instead of the giver himself" (38). With this Pauline framework in place, Pearcey identifies five apologetic "principles" or tactics (42-51): (1) Identify the idol. (2) Identify the idol's reductionism. (3) Test the idol: Does it contradict what we know about the world? (4) Test the idol: Does it contradict itself? (5) Replace the idol: Make the case for Christianity. In sum, "at some point, every idol-based worldview contradicts reality. This creates an opportunity to make a positive case for Christianity" (48). This fivefold approach reflects Pearcey's understanding of "total truth," that the Christian *Weltanschauung* is consistent, coherent, and comprehensive (48).

First, one must begin by cutting to the heart of any alternative worldview by identifying its "idol" (85). If one presses far enough back, one reaches "an ultimate starting point" (assuming there cannot be an infinite regress), "something that is taken as the self-existent reality on which everything depends" (62). Either God or a "God-surrogate" is "the self-existent, eternal reality that is the origin of everything else," that which is "beyond or behind everything else" (66-67).

Second, one should demonstrate that the worldview, as founded upon its "God-surrogate," does not adequately preserve the humanization of humanity: "We could say that every concept

of humanity is created in the image of *some* god. And because the divinity will always be lower than the biblical God, its view of humanity will also be lower” (98). In unadulterated naturalism, for example, morality is nothing more than “self-interest in disguise” (100). Freedom of deliberation is a mere illusion, as “all our actions are really the effects of unconscious physical causes” (107). A comprehensive relativism is self-refuting as a truth claim: “Like every other evolving idea, it is relative to its own moment in history, and therefore not true in any transhistorical sense” (116). In fact, a postmodern hermeneutics of suspicion can become self-devouring, as its own perspectives may be reduced to social constructions situated within particular social-historical contexts (120-23).

Third, Pearcey recommends that one examine the liveability of the alternative worldview within the “real world”: “Because idols deify a *part* of creation, they produce maps that cover only *part* of reality. As a result, in the course of ordinary life, humans keep walking off the map” (150). Such lived experience results in “cognitive dissonance” and “double-think” among adherents of the worldview (149, 152, 162), resulting in the loss of “unified truth” (152). For this reason, even if unwittingly, “Many stop short of working out the full implications of their worldview” (153). Therefore, one must bring the ultimate implications and the gaps in explanatory power to the surface (163). One senses here a parallel to Schaeffer’s tactic of “taking the roof off” alternative worldviews (cf. 161; 306 n43).

Fourth, Pearcey advocates testing the surrogate worldview for internal consistency. For instance, logical positivism “insisted that any statement not reducible to sense impressions is not only false, but cognitively meaningless—that is, not even subject to standards of true and false” (184). Pearcey responds, “But is *that* statement empirically testable? Of course not. It is not an empirical observation. It is a metaphysical one—an arbitrary definition of what qualifies as knowledge. Thus when the criterion of logical positivism was applied to itself, it was discredited. It stood self-condemned” (185). Postmodernism insists that truth-claims are expressions of economic interests and social power, which would seemingly relativize the truth-claims of postmodernism’s own “language games.” And the reduction

of humans to biological programmability and adaptive survivability is no ultimate guarantee of human rationality and the truth value of their thoughts.

Finally, Pearcey calls upon her readers to make the case for Christianity: “Scripture says all people are made in God’s image, live in God’s world, and experience God’s common grace. As a result, in practice they experience the truths of general revelation, even if they selectively suppress that knowledge” (224). Overall, Pearcey’s fifth section remains somewhat defensive and polemical in tenor, although Pearcey sets out to build a positive case for Christianity. Quoting William Provine, Pearcey insists that if God does not exist, then “no ultimate foundations for ethics exist, no ultimate meaning in life exists, and free will is merely a human myth” (246). In and of itself, this is not a positive argument *per se*. One could, after all, choose to be an atheistic, amoral, naturalistic nihilist and remain logically consistent with Pearcey’s disjunctive dilemma.

Pearcey ultimately proclaims that Christianity “fulfills humanity’s highest hopes and ideals,” as the “good news” of the gospel serves as a beacon to those “jaded by the failure and inhumanity of reductionism” (234). One wonders if such a kerygmatic turn is ultimately unavoidable, if one moves beyond a negative polemic to a full, positive accounting (an observation, not a criticism). “At its best,” insists the closing chapter, “apologetics includes not only the *critique* of idols but also the *creation* of life-giving alternatives” (269). Since believers themselves are sometimes entangled by “counterfeit gods,” are not all ultimately dependent upon the creative, life-giving *verbum Dei* of the Christocentric gospel (2 Cor 4:1-6)? An “Appendix” (321-26) provides the biblical text of Romans 1:1-2:16, which is foundational to Pearcey’s approach. One wonders if the apostle Paul might consider his discussion in 1 Corinthians 1-2 to be *apropos* to the discussion as well, as one moves beyond the “general revelation” of Romans 1-2 to the Christocentric *euangelion*, which remains a *skandalon* to those saturated in surrogate worldviews that have not been upended by the cruciform message. In the gospel, the self-giving Christ overpowers opposing “strength” through the active reversal of his humble weakness.

The endnotes on pages 277-321 provide the documentation for the volume and are worth perusing in and of themselves, as they provide a window into the resources that have affected Pearcey's thinking. Pages 331-73 provide prompts for further discussion and a sample exam. The inclusion of "Acknowledgments" (327-29) and an "Index" (375-83) round out the volume. But the last word left ringing in the reader's ear may be found on page 252: "Christians will be effective in reaching out to others only when they reflect biblical truth in their message, their method, and their manners."

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Should Christians Fear Outer Darkness? By Dennis Rosker, Tom Stegall, and Kurt Witzig. Duluth: Grace Gospel Press, 2015. 520 pp. \$24.95.

What will become of lazy, disobedient, or carnal Christians after the return of Christ? Will they "get off scot-free?" Or will they have to suffer some form of retribution for their failure to live a victorious Christian life? This question has generated significant discussion in free grace circles during the past few decades. In order to retain free grace distinctives while simultaneously providing a retributive mechanism for carnal Christians, some have embraced a view called *kingdom exclusionism*. According to this view, believers who are disobedient in the present age will be excluded from the millennial kingdom and/or suffer punitive damages at the judgment seat of Christ. This, so the theory goes, provides a powerful impetus for righteous living.

The authors of *Should Christians Fear Outer Darkness?* write to critique and confute this view. They are themselves committed to free grace theology and traditional dispensationalism, and they feel that kingdom exclusionism is both inconsistent with those systems and an inaccurate interpretation of the germane biblical texts. They argue that no Christians will ever be cast from Christ's presence into a realm

of outer darkness, nor will they suffer punitive damages at the bema.

The book is divided into two parts. Part 1 offers a brief introduction to kingdom exclusion theology and examines the outer darkness passages (Matt 8:5–13; 22:1–14; 25:14–30). After framing the issue and laying out the pertinent questions to be raised and answered, the chapters in this section discuss the doctrinal, contextual, exegetical, and lexical problems plaguing the exclusionist interpretation of the outer darkness passages. A final application chapter explores the psychological effects of kingdom exclusion theology on the believer and argues that kingdom exclusionism tends to cultivate a legalistic approach to the Christian life.

Part 2 focuses primarily on the bema seat and other key issues involved in the kingdom exclusion debate. Here, the authors provide a brief introduction to the doctrine of the judgment seat of Christ; labor to demonstrate that believers will never experience God's wrath; and distinguish salvation from rewards, God's punishment from his discipline, and the fear of punishment from perfect love. Finally, refutations are offered to the typical exclusionist understandings of inheriting vs. entering the kingdom and overcoming vs. non-overcoming Christians. The authors argue that all believers are overcomers and that they will all both enter and inherit the millennial kingdom.

The appendices offer touching personal testimonies from two former adherents to kingdom exclusion theology. They claim that their lives were characterized by harsh legalism when they held to the exclusionist view, and that abandoning it has given them a profound new appreciation for the grace of God.

On the whole, *Should Christians Fear Outer Darkness?* is an excellent book. Rokser, Stegall, and Witzig have obviously read quite widely in the writings of kingdom exclusionists and have considered their point of view carefully. The theological and exegetical refutations they offer are well-researched, clearly articulated, and cogent. The argumentation is at its strongest when it is exposing the doctrinal inconsistencies between free grace theology and dispensationalism on the one hand and kingdom exclusion theology on the other, and when highlighting the all-too-common linkage between kingdom exclusionism and

harsh legalism. (Of course, in fairness, it should be pointed out that this linkage is present in quite a few other approaches to Christian living, too!) That the authors are themselves committed dispensationalists and free grace adherents lends them a great deal of credibility to speak out on this topic. This book should also be commended for the charitable, gracious tone it employs throughout. Rokser, Stegall, and Witzig have taken their opponents' views seriously and represented them fairly, even when expressing passionate disagreement with them. The pastoral concern for individual Christians who struggle with assurance of their salvation and anxiety over their performance is also present throughout this book, and it is laudable.

Of course, as with any book of this nature, there are a few things to criticize. Some will find the title, though striking, a little misleading: a far greater proportion of the book is dedicated to the question of punitive damages at the bema than to the outer darkness. The omission of a subject index is a weakness, particularly for a book that addresses such a wide range of topics. In a few places, although I substantially agreed with the authors' conclusions, I found their exegetical argumentation to be either unconvincing or overreaching. For instance, whereas kingdom exclusionists typically regard the wedding garment in the parable of the wedding feast (Matt 22:1–14) as signifying *personal* righteousness, this book argues that it signifies the *imputed* righteousness of Christ (108–12). But why must it signify either? Does not this hermeneutical approach verge on allegorical interpretation, or hyper-typologizing at the very least? Sometimes a tent peg is just a tent peg, and sometimes a wedding garment is just a wedding garment. Importing extra doctrinal data into parabolic details is generally ill-advised. Another example of exegetical overreach may be found in the use of the first-class conditional as an evidence that all the addressees of the epistle to the Galatians were regenerate (414–16). Although there is a case to be made here, probably less weight should be put on the first-class conditional construction itself and more weight on other contextual factors in the passage.

A few other examples could also be multiplied, given additional space. But all of these are minor nitpicks and do not detract materially from the very high quality of the book. *Should*

Christians Fear Outer Darkness? is heartily recommended to all Christians who are grappling with issues of assurance, performance, and obedience, and to those who minister to them. It is written in a non-technical style so as to be accessible to both pastors and laypeople. Although the subject under discussion can be weighty indeed, this is not a difficult book to read. Those who take the time to read it carefully will be richly repaid for their efforts.

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Resurrecting the Trinity: A Plea to Recover the Wonder and Meaning of the Triune God. By M. James Sawyer. Wooster, OH: Weaver Book Company, 2017. 192 pp. \$14.99.

M. James Sawyer (PhD, Dallas Theological Seminary) is dean and professor of theological studies at Pacific Islands Theological Seminary and director of Sacred Saga Ministries. Sawyer's purpose in writing is to urge the church to rediscover the meaning of the Trinity. He claims "for all practical purposes we have lost its meaning, and in the process have lost the biblical picture of Jesus Christ as Lord of creation as well" (16). Sawyer's aim in writing the book is to move beyond a simply doctrinal understanding of the Trinity to a practical and comprehensive one with Jesus as the focus, noting that "While we Christians in the West continue to assert that God is Trinity, we in fact live our lives as believers in a unitarian God" (17). This has led Western Christians to lose the biblical picture of Jesus Christ over creation (16) and has been a major contributing factor to the fractured nature of contemporary Christianity (16).

Sawyer goes on to argue that we generally put God into boxes that are far too unitary when it comes to his character (chapter two). He contends that doctrine and personal revelation from Jesus is the way into understanding the Trinity, rather than doctrine alone (chapter three). In chapter four he writes that to properly understand the Trinity, we must also understand God as three in one, especially noting the personal relationship through

love between the three persons of the Trinity: “The deepest truth of the divine being is the dynamic relationship of the love of the Father, Son, and Spirit” (86). Chapter five describes the work of Christ. Sawyer argues that the penal substitution view of the atonement can be reductionistic because it misses the larger purpose of adoption (124). Speaking of penal substitution, Sawyer states, “Ultimately, it arises out of a conceptual matrix of law and justice that has its roots in Roman jurisprudence rather than in Scripture” (124). He also writes, “The image of adoption moves the focus from our legal courtroom status to our status as beloved children within the family” (125). The incarnation, while involving wrath, “must be viewed as an act of love” (137). His last chapter urges the reader to understand the Holy Spirit in terms of “unpredictable activity, creativity, and change” (151) as it is described in the Bible.

In the conclusion Sawyer urges the reader to be willing to abandon preconceived notions of the Trinity and be open to adjusting to his idea of the Trinity, one that he states is “profoundly existential and life-transforming as we grasp that reality of which it speaks” (178).

The book ends with an appendix on the gender of the Holy Spirit. Sawyer’s conclusion is that the Holy Spirit can be referred to as “he” or “she” based on the premise the Greek necessitates no gender. According to Sawyer, female imagery is implicit in the NT with the phrase “born of the Spirit,” and the Eastern acceptance of some feminine references to the Holy Spirit.

Many aspects of Sawyer’s book are attractive. He appeals to a wide range of readers by including many helpful illustrations, stories and personal anecdotes to help explain his points and quotes from a wide range of academic sources. Sawyer’s survey of the church fathers is also very interesting, and he weaves all of this together to present a book that is enjoyable and easy to read—even while touching on some complex doctrinal issues. For this, he is certainly to be commended.

Sawyer seems to be cautiously attempting to build a bridge between estranged theological positions. His focus on the Nicene Creed (which he explicitly notes is accepted by most theological traditions), and his quotation of a wide range of scholars (from Clark Pinnock to Leon Morris and Jonathan Edwards), show his

attempt to try to find some unity in the church through the doctrine of the Trinity.

Furthermore, one of Sawyer's larger goals seems to be to urge people to have a more comprehensive view of God, and this is noble. If we are focusing on God's wrath to the exclusion of His love (or vice versa), we are in error.

As for negative aspects, Sawyer is somewhat ambiguous regarding serious doctrinal issues throughout the book. For example, he describes penal substitution as being "mostly true" (124), but fails to elaborate on what aspects are false, also noting that the doctrine is based on history rather than Scripture (124).

Sawyer also approvingly quotes from the best-selling book *The Shack* without addressing dangerous doctrines such as universalism that are taught in the book. At the minimum, Sawyer should include a disclaimer about the book if he does not believe everything it teaches. To the contrary, he states, "Those who have made the loudest complaints are those who have read it as a theology (which it is not) rather than a novel" (56).

Lastly, there are several typographical errors. The beginning of the third chapter describes a summary which he notes is "at the end of the previous chapter" (59), when in fact the chapter he refers to was the first chapter. Also, on page 132 he writes "nd" when possibly meaning "read"?

I would recommend the book to discerning readers looking to ensure that their understanding of the Trinity is biblical. Although, Sawyer's ambiguity makes it somewhat difficult to always understand his point, Christians can be edified by his encouragement to understand the Trinity more completely.

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Christianity: The Biography, 2000 Years of Global History. By Ian J. Shaw. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016. 279 pp. \$16.99.

Ian Shaw is a historian who serves as director of the Langham Partnership Scholars Ministry, an organization founded by John Stott dedicated to training scholars to work in evangelical

seminaries in the majority world. He previously served as Lecturer in Church History at International Christian College, Glasgow. Before this, Shaw served as pastor of an Independent Evangelical Church in an area of urban deprivation in Manchester. He completed a Ph.D. in Church History at Manchester University.

The book displays an attractive structure and unique titles for its chapters. Shaw investigates Christianity using the metaphor of a person's lifetime from the cradle to maturity, a technique that maintains the reader's interest throughout the book. By using a biographical structure, Shaw's divisions of his book concentrate on periods of time instead of dates and critical events. The cradle period refers to the early years of Christianity, infancy characterizes the time of significant growth, and the medieval era suggests Christianity's youth. Full adulthood comprises the "period from around 1650 to the twentieth century" (6), which has crises, changes, and consolidation as its primary characteristics. The period after full adulthood shows signs of decline, although perpetuation by children and grandchildren is present. Shaw displays brilliant insight which gives this saturated topic new breath.

The lack of a bibliography and charts demonstrate Shaw's consistency in writing a biography. Although not a weakness by itself, readers need to be aware of this. However, one can find helpful overviews of the history of Christianity from different angles and time periods (global, regional, early church period, medieval period and Reformation, modern period) in the "Further Reading" section at the end of the book (270-72).

Shaw is not concerned with making distinctions between orthodoxy and heterodoxy. On the contrary, he intentionally avoids those categories, while recognizing the value and importance of theology for the life of Christianity. Wherever the reader finds himself within these categorizations, it needs to be clear that the term "Christianity" is used in opposition with all the other religions in the world and has the fundamental belief in Jesus as its founder 2000 years ago. Thus, the reader needs to bear in mind that this is a biography of Christianity, not of orthodoxy.

All these characteristics corroborate to make the *Biography* an “introductory orientation ... of the Christian tradition and its heritage around the world” (1), and this leads to another noteworthy feature of Shaw's book, the scope of its task. Shaw must be commended for, as the book's subtitle anticipates, his presenting Christianity as a global movement from the first century to the present. He does not perceive the breadth of Christianity as a demonstration of the triumph of Western culture over the world, but voices the story of the advance of Christianity as a global movement, from Jerusalem to the world, albeit many areas still need to be reached. It might be refreshing for one from a non-Western background to read about Asian, South American, and African forms of Christianity that predate modern missions. In fact, in the closing paragraph, Shaw states that “by 2010 Christianity was again a faith of people from many cultural and linguistic backgrounds, with no common centre or single theological language” because, it has “returned to what it originally was—a global faith” (268).

Being aware of these different formats of Christianity can prevent errors in taking a cultural aspect as an integral part of the Christian message, which has been a recurrent pitfall in the modern mission movement since the ninth century. If the *Biography* has the pedagogical goal of answering the question of “how can Christians today avoid making such a mess of things again?” (3); describing Christianity as a global movement is a thought-provoking concept. Shaw demonstrates how Christianity took root in diverse cultures, telling the same story but in a broad way. As a missionary from Brazil, this reviewer applauds Ian Shaw for his striving to present the supra-cultural essence of Christianity, rather than blending Christianity into the Western nations or even into North America, given the universal scope of Christianity.

Christianity: The Biography presents the ideal scope for a one-semester survey class in a seminary or university, but is not limited to this. It is probably too short for a two-semester survey course, which is common in evangelical seminaries, but it could perhaps work in some settings with a dose of meaningful supplemental readings. Lay readers will surely find benefit in its pages. Shaw's book is also recommended for use in a local

church setting, a reading-discussion group, or even as a textbook for Christian high school or homeschool students.

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Beginning with God: A Basic Introduction to the Christian Faith. Expanded edition. By James Sire. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2017. 176 pp. \$12.00.

First published in 1981 and expanded in 2017, *Beginning with God* provides a valuable introduction to the Christian faith compatible with today's postmodern mindset. Rather than beginning with doctrine, James Sire begins with questions. This philosophical approach is what readers would expect from Sire. His works have influenced a generation of Christians, including this reviewer, who recalls reading *The Universe Next Door* while a student at Bible college in the 1980s.

Beginning with God introduces the reader to essential Christian doctrines. "The chapters are organized around a simple scheme: creation, the fall, redemption, new life in Christ and glorification" (11). However, these themes are not presented in the traditional manner of systematic theology. Sire's explanation of God is woven around a strong individualistic focus. He starts from the reader's point of view rather than an explanation of abstract theological truths. This book is extremely accessible for someone's first encounter with Christian theology, whether a new believer or a non-Christian investigating the Christian faith.

Rather than beginning the dialogue about God with a discussion of his existence or written word, Sire first addresses the question of identity. From the opening pages, non-Christians are engaged to read further as the author probes universal questions about the human condition. Sire's style is direct, honest, and provoking. Though brief, the chapter on God's existence emphasizes that God is transcendent. Never using that theologically packed word, Sire provides simple illustrations to

demonstrate that the only reasonable understanding of the universe starts with God. Everything else (the creation) is subordinate to him. “Whatever is, is either one or the other” (32).

Sire demonstrates that humans yearn for relationship because they were created in God’s image. He explains that the ability to reflect God’s image is marred by sin and that God seeks to redeem humans through Christ. This approach helps the non-Christian as the author builds the case slowly and emotionally rather than through strongly supported historical or intellectual argument. This book is an emotional apologetic rather than a rapid-fire presentation of irrefutable facts. It is a valuable tool for a generation conditioned to feel rather than think.

Beginning with God will find its best use for pre-evangelism or for a skeptic willing to investigate Christian beliefs. The book’s strength is its non-offensive and personal approach. It lacks the theological depth to be a sufficient theological introduction for a new believer, but that does not appear to be the author’s intent. It is a welcome resource for today’s postmodern thinker with limited knowledge of the Christian faith. As a book on Christian doctrine, *Beginning with God* is unique in its apologetic nature that tackles questions that reside deeply in the human soul. Sire demonstrates that these questions find their answer in God’s existence and redemptive plan.

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Biblical Authority after Babel: Retrieving the Solas in the Mere Protestant Christianity. By Kevin Vanhoozer. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2016. 288 pp. \$21.99.

Is it any secret that the Roman Catholic Church would have a negative assessment of the Reformation? Of course not! However, beyond the charge of divisiveness in the body of Christ, and the concern of competition for parishioners, what other indictment can the Roman Catholic Church make?

In Kevin Vanhoozer’s probing book, *Biblical Authority after Babel: Retrieving the Solas in the Spirit of Mere Protestant*

Christianity, Vanhoozer deals honestly, thoroughly, and confrontationally with the proposed case against the Reformation. Beyond the aforementioned charges, the most legitimate concern he grapples with is interpretive authority.

Vanhoozer cites a Roman Catholic who once told him, “The Roman Catholic Church has a head (Gk. *arche*), a figure of authority who directs the body and says what the Bible means. You Protestants lack such a figure: you are headless (Gk. *an + arche* = “without a head/ruler)—hence, anarchists” (ix). Is this true? You be the judge: “In 2010 there were four million congregations worldwide and thirty-eight thousand denominations” (1-2), all claiming validity based upon a meaning of the text derived from the private interpretation of Scripture.

Unfortunately, the proliferation of interpretation under the banner of *sola scriptura* unwittingly undercuts the entire concept of *sola scriptura*. The idea of interpretive anarchy is a stinging criticism that should be considered among Protestants and Evangelicals. This is the issue Vanhoozer addresses head-on, offering a paradigm to move forward and to “reclaim elements for a normative Protestantism from the ruins of present-day Protestantism by revisiting historical Protestantism” in the form of the five *solas* of the Reformation (xi).

The book especially excels at pointing out the problem(s) stemming from the decentralization of an interpretive authority. The oft-used phrase in the book “Protestantism’s dangerous idea” challenges the well-accepted and beloved evangelical cornerstone of “*sola scriptura*,” pressing the reader to evaluate his or her own veracity to the text in the context of his or her own denominational (interpretive) tradition. What is this “dangerous idea”? It is the notion that believers can “read and interpret the Bible for themselves” (4).

Most Evangelicals reading this book have never been challenged to consider the dangerous repercussions of this dearly held truth. Yet, Vanhoozer aptly points out the validity of Roman Catholic criticism of the interpretive “Babel” unleashed on the church by the Reformation. Thankfully, he does end with validation. His vision is for a conciliatory Protestantism that can learn to come together, bound by a deeply theological exegesis of the five *solas*.

What does this solution look like? Vanhoozer gives his vision clearly, saying, “The *solas* provide a pattern for reading Scripture theologically that enables protestant unanimity on theological essentials, and thus the possibility of genuine fellowship in spite of secondary and tertiary doctrinal differences” (28).

Vanhoozer illustrates this several times by likening Christianity to a neighborhood street called Evangel Way. At the end of the street is a high-rise apartment building (Roman Catholicism) that offers rich tradition, orderliness, and a uniform lifestyle for everyone. Further down the street are various independent houses (denominations), each responsible to maintain its own property as it sees fit. In Vanhoozer’s vision, the five *solas* provide the oversight akin to a homeowners’ association. Each house is governed independently, yet each house is bound together under certain agreed upon rules. The homes in the neighborhood make a practice of getting together for block parties, recognizing their similarities and discussing their differences in order to promote a healthier neighborhood.

How can the five *solas* provide the substance for this vision? Vanhoozer addresses this in the body of the book. After the introduction, there are five chapters: one for each of the *solas*. He finishes the book with a concluding chapter wherein he teases out this vision. He brilliantly discusses the five *solas*, showing how they must be taken together as a body of theology instead of as separate principles (28), while at the same time driving each of them to their practical implications for ecclesiology.

Vanhoozer begins with grace alone and challenges the reader to move beyond simply salvation by grace by extending the grace principle to the entire character of God. This provides the general calibration for consistent interpretation. The chapter on faith alone shatters the notion that the Reformation ignited skepticism by freeing the reader from tradition. Instead, it strengthens faith and encourages the study of epistemology. The chapter on scripture alone disabuses us from thinking that Scripture alone shapes our interpretation, and that Scripture interprets Scripture in a vacuum. No interpretation is completely devoid of some interpretive tradition. The chapter urges us to be honest about our interpretive traditions and to be willing to sharpen, challenge, and hone those traditions within the context of a collegial mere

Protestantism. In the next chapter, “In Christ Alone,” Vanhoozer makes a beeline to the royal priesthood of all believers, but locates it in the context of a firm ecclesiology instead of allowing it to be an excuse for lone-ranger Christians. He posits that the Reformation never intended for interpretation to be unlocked from a local church context. Finally, he finishes off with the glory of God, bravely asserting that the existence of numerous Protestant groups is ultimately glorifying to God.

In his concluding chapter, he ties up the loose ends and gives his final vision for this kind of Protestantism. This quotation is probably one of the best in the book: “Each Protestant church seeks to be faithful to the gospel, but no one form of Protestantism exhausts the gospel’s meaning. Rather, it takes the discussion between the many Protestant churches to appreciate fully the richness of the one gospel” (224).

The book moves with logical fluidity. It is written in a dense, theological style with just enough wit and humor to keep it interesting. It is a must-read for denominational or associational leaders as well as for those in Christian higher education institutions. The book’s weakness is a lack of fleshing-out the vision and showing in practical terms what it might look like in real life. However, given the complexity of the issues, I’m not sure of the feasibility of specific applications without stepping on dangerous landmines in the process. Lord willing, Vanhoozer’s work will push those of us who love the gospel to utilize the gifts and intellect of others who love the gospel in order to enhance the multifaceted and unsearchable glory of God.

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Reformation 500: How the Greatest Revival Since Pentecost Continues to Shape the World Today. Edited by Ray Van Neste and J. Michael Garrett. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2016. 272 pp. \$29.00.

With essays from an array of disciplines, this book explores the impact of the Reformation across a wide range of human

experience. Historical figures such as Augustine, Zwingli, Luther, Calvin, Barth, Bonhoeffer, Rembrandt, Bach, Bunyan, and Wycliffe all find their way into this amazing story. From Anglicans to Baptists, scientists to poets, *Reformation 500* weaves many historical threads into a modern-day tapestry.

The Medieval Period, Middle Ages, English Reformation, Renaissance Period, and Protestant Reformation all saw periods of dismissal of Scripture, idolatrous worship, and corruption. Much of this was brought on by both the laity and the clergy. In many instances, the laity attended the worship services only to be kept in silence while the minister or priest did all the work. There were many occasions in which no Scripture was read, idols were present, and the sacraments were abused. In some cases, laity became disgruntled and led reforms; in others, the clergy heard the people and they led the reforms. This protest became known as the Protestant Reformation. Luther was a noted leader, as well as other reformers such as Calvin.

Published on 500th anniversary of the Reformation, this collection of probing essays examines how the recovery of biblical truth and the gospel of grace impacted history, theology, politics, and culture. These essays are written by seventeen professors well regarded in their fields.

These essays cover an array of disciplines such as literature, education, visual art, culture, politics, music, theology, church life, and Baptist history. Many of the essayists begin with a history of what was occurring years before the Reformation and what was happening at the time of the Reformation. They then shift the focus of their essays to the developments of progress in their fields since the Reformation. Their writing is readable and easy to understand.

Carl Trueman writes about Luther and the marks of the true church (55-70). The Reformation, started by Luther, changed the known world forever. Unfortunately, the world today has lost many of those changes. Therefore, the modern church needs a great revival again.

Henry Lee Poe writes that with the rise of monasteries, preaching faced abuses (93-104). Many pastors were hired by landowners where the church and/or monastery was located and received little pay. The pastor would often take a second job to

support himself and his family. This situation led to little time for sermon preparation. During the sixteenth century, many Puritans resisted this preaching. Although many remained in England, others left for various other countries. There was also a rise and fall of the Presbyterian movement, which fostered a protest about the lack of Scripture's centrality in preaching.

Taylor Worley writes about Dietrich Bonhoeffer who was influenced by the Reformation (233-49). Bonhoeffer was a student, minister, leader of an underground seminary, alleged spy who spent years in prison, and martyr during World War II. Bonhoeffer often studied the Reformation; in fact, Luther was his role model. He wrote papers about Luther and often quoted him in his sermons. As an underground seminary leader, Bonhoeffer often led the students in the spiritual practices of Luther. Having faced similar problems, Bonhoeffer was considered by many to be a modern-day Luther.

Overall, all the contributors to this volume successfully demonstrate the changes which have occurred over the past five hundred years since the Protestant Reformation. Additionally, they surface the need for a new revival or Reformation in the modern church.

Whether you are a pastor, lay leader, a lover of the arts, music, literature, modern science, education, or politics, this book is for you. It is both interesting and useful in understanding the historical background of the Reformation, as well as how this event continues to influence the modern world today.

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From Cairo to Christ: How One Muslim's Faith Journey Shows the Way for Others. By Abu Atallah and Kent A. Van Til. Downers Grove: IVP, 2017. 212 pp. \$16.00.

One of the travesties of Western Christianity has been its failure to understand Islamic culture and its implications to conversion and life. However, *From Cairo to Christ* offers those who desire to better understand Muslims a rare glimpse into this

culture, tracing the life of Abu Atallah from his Islamic upbringing to his Christian conversion and ministry.

In many ways, this book serves as the biographical testimony of Atallah and his coming to Christ. It is interwoven with his personal journey and ministry to Muslims throughout the world. Having been born in the late 1950s, Atallah's childhood was spent in a well-off home in Egypt (13-15). Atallah recounts numerous life events, such as his Islamic heritage, his family background, his father's death, and his brief stint in the Muslim Brotherhood (33-34).

Ultimately, Atallah came to Christ through a friend who was interested in Christian women because they would socialize with men (whereas Muslim women would not). Atallah's friend took him to a prayer meeting where they studied the Bible (36). The Christians prayed what seemed ridiculous prayers to Atallah, who had been taught memorized prayers (36-37). They addressed God as a friend and asked him to help them with things such as their homework (36-37). However, a few weeks later, Atallah found himself praying spontaneously, as they did. He prayed similarly when he lost control of a motorcycle he was racing (38). His friend Jansi, an atheist, came up to him and credited God with saving him (38). After this, Atallah began questioning what he had been taught about God and began reading the Bible (38).

His Christian friends were so consistent and kind; yet becoming a Christian would mean walking away from family, country, religion, and possibly even forfeiting his life (38-41). However, Atallah realized that although *sharia* could never make him perfect, he could claim Christ's perfection by accepting Christ (42-43). When Atallah read the *Four Spiritual Laws*, he prayed the "Believer's Prayer" (43). Atallah realized that it was not his good works that could save him, but only "what God in Christ has done for" him (190).

God miraculously protected Atallah from those who wanted to kill him because of his conversion, and provided a way for him to attend a Bible college in the United States (50-55). After attending seminary, Atallah ministered to the Muslim community in Dearborn, Michigan (65). Although he has maintained connections to his family, it has been at a distance.

As for the remainder of the book, Atallah provides numerous insights into the cultural background of Muslims. This section is quite valuable, as Atallah writes for Christians about key components necessary to understanding Islamic culture.

The chapter “Arabs and the West” insightfully addresses the tensions experienced by American Christians. It is a strong reminder that Christians should not approach Muslims as if they are all “of one mind” but should follow Christ’s admonition to love even our enemies (78). Atallah candidly discusses the tendency in Europe and the United States to be “politically correct” in not honestly questioning or critiquing Islam (80).

The chapter on “Israel and the Muslims” challenges many of Western Christian thoughts on Israel. Atallah argues that the contemporary state of Israel is not the same as the people of God (122). Indeed, he believes that the only answer for the conflict over Jerusalem may be the Christian view that “believers rather than places are holy” (122). Although this sounds compelling, literal interpreters of the Bible recognize that the Jews were promised a land (Gen 15:18-21). Atallah argues that insisting on a literal interpretation of these verses “ignores the nearly four thousand years of subsequent history” (124). Muslim Christians often struggle with how to mesh contemporary realities with God’s promises to the Jews.

Atallah shares many insights that will help Western Christians interface with and witness to Muslims. For instance, Allah is a lawgiver who does not possess the fatherly love attributed to the Christian God (172). Atallah argues that Islam itself creates “openings for Christian evangelism” (175). However, cultural conditioning dies slowly as illustrated by Atallah’s sharing how he instinctively got on his knees beside his bed to pray when he heard the call of the muezzin at five one morning—over twenty years after leaving Islam for Christ (180)! Although he realized that he had no reason to pray to Allah, he used this to emphasize that a tint of Islam “remains even years after a person has converted” (180).

Although some biblicists will struggle with Atallah’s non-literal interpretations and his journey to Christianity, he is clearly a brother in Christ. As such, Western Christians have much to gain from studying his perspectives. The Muslim world is ripe

for evangelism and Christians must not miss the opportunities to love Muslims in their neighborhoods. Perhaps Americans (as well as other Western nations) need to realize that God may have a greater plan than they realize with so many Muslims coming to America. After all, Christians are ultimately of the kingdom of God that will be replete with people from every tribe and nation.

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Power to Lead: Five Essentials for the Practice of Biblical Leadership. By Mike Ayers. Spring, TX: RBK Publishing Group, 2015. 238 pp. \$15.95.

Dr. Mike Ayers uses over thirty years of vocational ministry experience (including twenty-two years as the Senior Pastor of the vibrant and growing The Brook Church in Houston, TX) with over fifteen years as the lead faculty in leadership at the College of Biblical Studies in Houston, TX, to assist him in writing an exceptionally simple yet profound book on leadership. He combines practical experience with a thoroughly biblical understanding of leadership to produce a practical resource for everyone from lay leaders to seminary presidents. Of the countless books I have read on leadership, outside of the Bible, his is the most helpful in challenging me to lead better.

The format of the book sets it apart from many other leadership books. Whereas many other leadership books start with the author's philosophy of leadership, *Power to Lead* begins with a theology of leadership. Ayers discusses God as leader and then discusses leadership in the Bible. He begins with leadership before the fall and then addresses several biblical characters and tests that contribute to a biblical understanding of leadership.

In his second chapter, Ayers contrasts biblical leadership with contemporary theories of leadership. It is clear that Ayers is well read in a wide variety of leadership theories, and then he provides a biblical analysis of these theories. He then addresses what he calls "methodolatry" in which people trust and imitate methods more than God. He then concludes the chapter by

discussing the biblical distinctives of leadership that he addresses in the forthcoming chapters: character (chap. 3), calling (chap. 4), competence (chap. 5), community (chap. 6), and Christ as the source of power for the leader (chap. 7). This Christocentric focus of leadership is very helpful (especially when contrasted with the tendency towards methodolatry that Ayers had previously discussed). Ayers then takes those biblical distinctives to build the following definition of leadership: “A biblical leader is a person of *character* and *competence* who influences a *community* of people to achieve a God-honoring *calling* by means of the power of *Christ*” (40; emphasis original).

The greatest strength of the book is the focus on a biblical understanding of leadership. For instance, Ayers provides a helpful summary of the following biblical images Jesus used to describe leadership: the servant (the leader’s view of people), the steward (the leader’s view of power), and the shepherd (the leader’s view of position).

Not only is the book tremendously biblical, but it also is very practical. For instance, when discussing the importance of leadership, Ayers provides an example of a pastor who liked crowds but disliked people. While recognizing that this attitude is common among leaders who see crowds of people as a means to an end, Ayers contrasts this with Jesus who often was less focused on large crowds and more focused on individual people. Knowing that this tendency is a temptation for many people in ministry, Ayers concludes, “People are the primary outcome of biblical leadership—people who are influenced, impacted, and transformed.”

For the reasons listed above, I highly recommend *Power to Lead* for anyone from the business man who is trying to incorporate biblical leadership principles in his business to the seminary professor wanting to assign a leadership book for his class. The book is biblical enough to be trustworthy and practical enough to be relevant. This combination is hard to find.

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Single Gay Christian: A Personal Journey of Faith and Sexual Identity. By Gregory Coles. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2017. 120 pp. \$15.00.

Single Gay Christian chronicles a young man's journey of seeking to honor his Christian faith while dealing with persistent same-sex attraction. A similar work was written seven years ago by Wesley Hill (*Washed and Waiting*), who writes the foreword to this book. D. A. Carson is among several evangelicals who provide endorsements.

What is missing in Coles's story is the familiar assumption that something traumatic—sexual assault, an abusive father or a distant mother, etc.—must have been a part of his upbringing. Rather, according to Cole, he was raised in a loving Christian family, and he surrendered his life to Christ at the age of seven. However, as he came into puberty, his persistent attraction to males led him to believe that he was gay. Initially, he fiercely resisted this realization because being gay, he had been told, was “a choice, a lifestyle, a sin” (13). Yet, fervent pleas to God to make him “straight” went unheeded.

Struggles persisted as Coles became a Christian college student, and he became a consummate actor, pretending to be straight out of fear of rejection. During this time, he entered into several dating relationships in the hope they would “awaken” heterosexual desires. However, not only did these experiments fail, he felt both shame and Jesus' disapproval at having “used” these women. For a time, he became angry with God, even questioning the truth of Christianity. But after intensive study of the Bible's teachings on homosexuality, he became convinced that God was calling him to a celibate lifestyle.

However, what he lacks is a healthy experience of intimacy. As he puts it, “The decision to live as a celibate gay Christian is a weighty one in part because it means rejecting society's most obvious pathways to intimacy.... Living without sex is difficult. Living without intimacy is a death sentence” (79–80). The pain of his celibate journey is exacerbated, on the one hand, by the rejection of many in the Christian community who regard him as “unnatural, dangerous,” and, on the other hand, by the rejection

of those in the LGBTQ community, who regard his commitment to celibacy as “a tragic, archaic ritual of self-hatred” (6).

Besides his commitment to the authority of Scripture, I appreciate Cole’s testimony that throughout the most challenging days of his journey, God “kept pointing me back to the cross of Christ” (5). In this regard, his insights into the meaning of taking up one’s cross are penetrating and challenging, and he provides refreshing perspectives on biblical love and intimacy. He also rightly chastises the evangelical community for producing a plethora of books and church programs about masculinity and singleness that too often fall short of the Bible’s view of those issues.

Although exegetical and theological arguments for the evangelical perspective on homosexuality are rare in this book, Cole comes to some thought-provoking conclusions such as “maybe the calling to gay Christian celibacy stands in twenty-first-century America as a precious reminder of just how desperately, helplessly devoted we were meant to be to the cross of Christ. ... maybe the problem isn’t that faith costs some of us too much, but that it costs all of us too little” (39). And: “The calling of gay celibacy is a calling to longing. It’s an admission that our deepest sexual desires can wait for another world, for another life, for another kind of fulfillment” (98).

Of course, some believers will object to the juxtapositioning of the two adjectives “gay” and “Christian.” But Coles responds, “Is it too dangerous, too unorthodox, to believe that I am uniquely designed to reflect the glory of God? ... That my orientation, before the Fall, was meant to be a gift in appreciating the beauty of my own sex as I celebrated the friendship of the opposite sex?” (46–47). Yet, because Paul describes homosexuality as “against nature” (Romans 1:26), it is difficult to conceive it as having been part of a pre-Fall creation plan. In the same vein, Coles struggles to “believe that God could have possibly said over me, as he did over all creation, ‘It is good’” (6). Again, this is a pre-Fall assessment of creation.

At the end of the day Coles does not know why he is gay, and he is okay with that. He grants that his gay orientation is “broken,” but, he insists, so is every orientation, every human being, every facet of creation. Not surprisingly, because of his

failure and the statistical failure of many “ex-gays” to change their orientation, he regards such attempts with deep skepticism (63). On the other hand, he testifies, “There’s a kind of love I’ve foresworn, and it’s a real denial, a painful one. But I’ve received a hundred kinds of love in its place. It seems selfish for asking for pity when I’m so unspeakably rich” (89).

As already noted, there are a handful of places where I would question his handling of Scripture. He also seems to engage in some postmodern agnosticism towards the end of the book where he confesses that he’s not sure whether a “Christian” lesbian who marries another woman or a “Christian” heterosexual who lives a promiscuous lifestyle is more likely to be in heaven (109–10). Yet, Scripture is clear that neither lifestyle choice bodes well for eternity (1 Cor 6:9).

Despite these few negatives, I would recommend this book to every pastor, to every parent who has a child who has “come out” or is thinking about it, and to every believer in Christ who wishes to minister in a more loving and understanding manner to those in the LBGQTQ community.

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Visual Arts in the Worshiping Church. By Lisa J. DeBoer. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016. 310 pp. \$24.00.

Visual Arts in the Worshiping Church examines the use of visual arts in Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant churches from a sociological perspective. The author, Lisa DeBoer, focuses the study on painting, sculpture, ceramics, textiles, media, digital media, installations, and to some extent architecture. DeBoer’s primary sampling came from churches located in Michigan for her study.

DeBoer devotes the first part of the book to describing Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Protestant perspectives of art within their respective faith traditions. She provides a description and discusses practices, successes, and struggles of visual arts within the three primary streams of religion in America. The

author goes into detail with her description of the icons and history of the icons in the Orthodox church. She explains and describes the Roman Catholic integration of the liturgy and the use of the visual arts. Lastly, DeBoer describes how the Protestant landscape has been shaped in the last half century. She uses six churches from western Michigan as a template of how some Protestant churches are using the visual arts presently. The author uses a history of art education in the United States to describe how the Protestant faith has been shaped by visual arts.

DeBoer devotes the second part of the book to a comparison and contrast. She examines the three major streams against six concepts: Universal & Local, Story & Presence, Public and Private Devotion, Institutionalization & Professionalization, Naturalism & Abstraction, and Inculturation & Enculturation.

This section provides an interpretation of how each faith tradition views and applies the visual arts. It provides distinctions and contrasts between the three groups that prove to be useful for any reader. DeBoer uses this platform to provide some prescriptive insights to promote the visual arts as a tool for social and cultural advancement.

A major strength of this book was the comprehensive research provided for the three major religious traditions. She accomplished the goal of describing the practices and traditions of three major denominations using the visual arts. The author supported her work with specific examples from a variety of local churches. Reading how churches interact with the visual arts proved to be valuable to process the written information.

There were several weaknesses observed throughout the book. The title could lead people to believe that this book has a practical dimension. A reader would be hard pressed to find “how to’s” or “we did’s”. This book does not offer many practical tips on how to create an atmosphere for artistic pieces. It is written from a conceptual and philosophical context.

Her primary sampling was isolated to a specific area of the United States. Western Michigan does not reflect the broader cross-section of churches and personalities represented throughout the country. Western Michigan has a demographic of college educated, urban, and church saturated family units. It

would have been more effective to draw a sampling from different regions of the United States.

The author described the Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Protestant church as institutions with frameworks that have shaped each one. She fell short of accomplishing her goal in describing Protestants. Her evaluation was based primarily on six churches in the greater Grand Rapids area. These churches were heavily influenced by local institutions of higher learning. The information gathered from these ministries does not fairly represent the broad cross-section of Protestants throughout the country.

In the process of evaluating the practices of Protestants in using the visual arts, she missed some of the major visual tools that most Protestant churches use to visually remember their heritage: crosses, communion tables, steeples, baptismal pools, pictures, and media. DeBoer did not provide enough visual examples to support her findings. It would have been helpful to illustrate her findings through pictures.

This book will work well in a classroom setting where the focus is on the visual arts in both distant and recent church history. It would also work well in an introductory fine arts class or in a visual arts course. It would be especially helpful for Protestants who love art and are looking for ways that other denominations express beliefs and values through the visual arts.

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The Compelling Community: Where God's Power Makes a Church Attractive. By Mark Dever and Jamie Dunlop. Wheaton: Crossway, 2015. 224 pp. \$15.99.

This book seeks to raise the bar of what church leaders might envision about authentic church community. Although the authors appreciate small groups, they seek to go beyond and demonstrate that the fellowship and togetherness Christians

experience in genuine Bible-based, gospel-centered church community should transcend all natural bonds—whether generational, economic, or ethnic. Rather than grounding small groups on common interests or the latest church growth methodology, the authors contend that Christians must rely on the Holy Spirit and the supernatural power of the gospel to unite them. While not charismatics, the authors argue for a supernaturally created community that confounds the watching world and compellingly draws in seekers.

The authors, pastors at Capitol Hill Baptist Church in Washington, D.C., bring an evident love for the church to address this urgently needed topic. Primarily written by Dunlop, this book focuses on lessons learned and principles derived from senior pastor Mark Dever and the church the two authors lead. It is full of biblical principles and offers much practical counsel. Though raising the bar about how Christians envision church community, it aims to lower our ambition for what *we* can do to create community. It gently reminds readers that Scripture teaches that the community that matters is community built by God.

The first section lays out two contrasting visions of community often found in Bible-believing churches: one that is “gospel-plus” (where most relationships are “founded on the gospel *plus* something else”) and another that is “gospel-revealing” (where relationships “would not exist but for the truth and power of the gospel”). The authors argue that fellowship based merely on things like similar life experiences, similar identities, felt needs or similar social positions, miss the NT expectation of community grounded on commonality in Christ alone. Gospel-revealing community will manifest itself in two dimensions (as seen in Ephesians 2 & 3)—with *both breadth and depth*. One stated thesis of the book is that leaders often “get impatient, building gospel-plus community that undermines God’s purposes for the local church by compromising that same depth and breadth” (33).

Regarding the *depth* of authentic community, the authors contrast community built on comfort (resulting in treating Christians as consumers) versus community built on significant and formalized commitment to membership in a local church.

Regarding the *breadth* of biblical community, with all its diversity, the authors show that God's eternal purpose for every congregation is to "show off the power of the gospel" as he brings people together across natural boundaries of age, economics, politics, social ability, and cultural background (73-74). These kinds of intentionally multiethnic, multi-generational, and multi-economic churches speak volumes, they argue, to the divided cities of the United States.

After laying out this theological foundation, the middle two sections of the book cover the practical matters of how to foster and protect this type of countercultural corporate community. The authors deal with (1) the right preaching of God's word that equips God's people to do life together, (2) how to pray together corporately, (3) discipleship through building a corporate culture of loyal and loving relationships, (4) structural impediments to community, (5) the inevitable discontent/disunity that come in a growing church and how the apostles wrestled with these issues, and (6) how to proactively address sin in the church to preserve unity.

The final section of this book fleshes out "community at work." The authors contend effective evangelism must be *both* personal and corporate, ideally springing from a *deep culture and commitment to do outreach together* whenever possible. Rather than taking a programmatic or even organic approach to evangelism, they advocate a third way: "a regulated free-market approach" where leaders actively look to see where/how the Spirit of God is prompting members (195-96). Leaders must also see that genuine community is not an end in itself but a blessing to be shared with nearby communities through intentional church planting and/or church revitalization.

Besides its comprehensiveness, *The Compelling Community* has a number of other strengths. First is its *continued call to root community in the gospel*. This will challenge many churches today that are trying to generate man-made community when they see how far they fall short of God's design. Yet this constant gospel focus should also encourage church leaders that Christ can/will build his church as they entrust their ministries to his plan and power.

Second, the book *encourages leaders to remain faithful to God's Word* as they co-labor with him to build true community in the local church. It avoids, I believe, much of the quick-fix pragmatism and many of the straw man arguments and false dichotomies seen in many books dealing with community.

A third strength is its *solid baptistic ecclesiology*, one that I would describe as “pastor-elder led (as opposed to elder-rule), deacon-served congregationalism.” Like all 9Marks books, it seeks to build healthy (not just trendy) churches God's way—and not to imitate today's popular corporate structures but to function as the warm, caring living organism God designed the church to be.

Fourth, this book is one of the more helpful I've read *showing the biblical-theological basis for congregations to build unity in diversity*—and then it gives hope that it can be done. Capitol Baptist certainly models for others a very diverse congregation, one strikingly comprised of all generations and numerous ethnicities and nationalities.

Finally, I appreciated the book's *dual emphasis on both local evangelism and regional church multiplication*. Often churches adopt an either/or approach and rationalize that they are not ready for parenthood. Instead of program-based and individualistic approaches to outreach, Dever and Dunlop show how a truly neighborhood-oriented congregation can be “both context and apologetic for evangelism” (198). A gospel-revealing community that showcases the gospel opens the door for God's people to both (1) evangelize *as a community* and (2) to *start new communities* of faith by “hiving off.”

I heartily recommend this book to pastors who desire to lead their congregations toward a gospel community that attracts the lost, edifies his people, and glorifies God. Though drawn from the authors' experiences with their own congregation, the timeless Bible-based principles and practical wisdom of this book would prove profitable to any congregation.

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Encountering God through Expository Preaching: Connecting God's People to God's Presence through God's Word. By Jim Orrick, Brian Payne, and Ryan Fullerton. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2017. 224 pp. \$19.99.

Encountering God through Expository Preaching by Jim Orrick, Brian Payne, and Ryan Fullerton seeks to unpack this statement: "Preaching occurs when a holy man of God opens the Word of God and says to the people of God, 'Come and experience God with me in this text'" (xv). All three authors have extensive pastoral and preaching experience, and two of them (Orrick and Payne) are professors at Boyce College in Louisville, KY. The book is broken into three parts. The first section deals with the character of the preacher, the nature of expository and topical preaching, and the role of the Spirit in the preaching process. The second section addresses homiletics and hermeneutics. The last section outlines three different approaches to preaching: manuscript, outline, and preaching without notes.

The great strength of the book is the reminder that preaching is an event in which people encounter God through the Scripture. Preaching is more than explaining the facts of a passage; it is a call to behold and respond to God through the truth. As a result, three chapters are devoted to the role of the Spirit in preaching. This is a welcome emphasis in a sea of hermeneutics and homiletics books that pay only lip service to the Spirit's role. Not only do the authors emphasize the importance of the Spirit, they are careful to explain just what the Spirit does in preaching. The Spirit gives boldness to the preacher, proper appreciation of the truth for both preacher and hearer, sympathetic love that colors the preaching, and the very words that will affect change in the hearts of the hearers. Additionally, these incredible gifts are not given apart from the Scripture, but through deep reliance on the Spirit's word, the power of the gospel, and prayer.

This work is brief yet manages to cover a lot of ground. In an encouraging style, the authors call preachers to a careful study of the word, reliance on the Spirit, and awareness of the spiritual state of their people.

The brevity of the work is also one of its weaknesses. In just over 200 pages, the authors attempt to explain the character of the preacher, the nature of preaching, the place of the covenants, the relationship between Old and New Testaments, the role of the Spirit, how to examine a text, how to consider the audience, and how to deliver the message. Lengthy books are written on each of those crucial topics. There is little doubt the reader of this book will be left wanting more. The hermeneuticist will cry for more exegetical helps and precision. The homiletician will want more by way of preparing application and illustration. At the very least, a list of suggested resources for further study would be helpful.

The organization of the book is also somewhat odd. There seem to be two sections on exegesis. Chapters three and four address the various contexts of a passage (historical, literary, covenantal, canonical, and contemporary). This is followed by chapters on the role of the Spirit and importance of good delivery. Chapters twelve through fourteen then circle back around to exegesis by examining how the passage fits into the Bible, its unique contribution to the Bible, and even delving into particulars like genre, the development of the argument, and grammar. This meandering approach detracts from the book's central theme.

The work would have been better served if it dispensed with some of the procedural issues altogether and really developed the central thrust that preaching is an event where God is to be experienced and his people are to be changed. That thrust is what makes this book a unique and needed call to preachers today. *Encountering God through Expository Preaching* will surely convict and encourage even the most seasoned preacher. However, had the authors chosen the rifle instead of the shotgun, this book could have been required reading for anyone in pastoral ministry.

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Dynamics of Muslim Worlds: Regional, Theological, and Missiological Perspectives. Edited by Evelyne A. Reisacher. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2017. 256 pp. \$32.00.

Evelyne A. Reisacher is associate professor of Islamic studies and intercultural relations in the School of Intercultural Studies at Fuller Theological Seminary. Before coming to Fuller she worked in L'Ami, a Paris-based Christian organization, for twenty years, facilitating the relationship between churches and North African immigrants and developing alternative ways for sharing the gospel cross-culturally. Reisacher has been active in informing and writing about the Muslim world and Islam-Christian relations. She is the general editor of *Toward Respectful Understanding and Witness among Muslims: Festschrift in Honor of J. Dudley Woodberry* (2012) and the associate editor of *From the Straight Path to the Narrow Way: Journeys of Faith* (2006). Moreover, Reisacher has published chapters in the books *Peace-Building By, Between, and Beyond Muslims and Evangelical Christians* (2009) and *A Worldview Approach to Ministry Among Muslim Women* (2007). Reisacher brings these extensive qualifications to editing *Dynamics of Muslim Worlds*.

Dynamics brings together prominent missiologists, theologians, and historians from the 2016 Missiology Lectures at Fuller Theological Seminary's School of Intercultural Studies to present a prospect of contemporary Muslim societies around the world. The book is divided into three parts and ten chapters. The first part, called "Regional Perspective," addresses the issue of Muslim communities worldwide in areas such as Europe, West Africa, and South Asia. In turn, part two focuses on "thematic analyses" and discusses women's rights, punishment for blasphemy, and the challenge of pluralism. Finally, part three aims to offer a "missiological assessment" of present Muslim dynamics and some missiological implications of it. In light of the necessity for Christians to become more conversant about this increasingly important topic in the present global world, the goal of this volume is twofold: "to unfold as accurately and broadly as possible the dynamics of Islamic societies and to formulate Christian theological and missiological assessments in response"

(2). In other words, *Dynamics* attempts to provide a better understanding of the Muslim world and to point out how Christians may engage Muslims in a meaningful way.

The achievement of its first goal is probably the most significant contribution of this collection of articles, that is, to explore the changing dynamics of Islam today and how current religious and social climates shape Christian engagement with Muslims. In chapter one, Martin Accad challenges the monochromatic view of Islam, arguing for a colorful perception. The idea of inherent pluralism inside Islam is repeated numerous times throughout the book. That is, “the Muslim world is radically diverse and pluralistic” (213). There are Muslim secularists, modernists, traditionalists, fundamentalists, and terrorists. “Islam is as diverse as Christianity. It has a comparably broad range manifestation, a like diversity of beliefs, practices, and speculations.” (37)

One of the reasons for the editor’s insistence on presenting the internal Muslim variety is related to the discussions about Muslims in the media. The impression is often given that Islam is a single, uniform entity more prone to violence. The so-often misleading media reports and the disinterest in interreligious dialogue compels the majority of Western Christians to perceive Islam as being made up of continuously violent individuals. This reviewer does not agree that Islam could be detached entirely of every ounce of violence, but would agree that this viciousness is not a part of every Muslim practitioner.

Therefore, turning to the implications of this dynamic reality plus the calling of Jesus to love our neighbors and enemies, we must, as Rick Love states, “begin waging peace by loving God with our minds. We need to learn about Islam and actually meet Muslims. We get the facts. We practice the art of evaluation. We don’t believe everything that comes across our computer screens or fills our inboxes” (213). Also, a biblical evaluation of the Christian message needs to take place. Once again, the mixture of Jesus plus denominational distinctive and cultural features builds an obstacle and confusion about what is important and what is essential to the missionary task. Missionaries must strive “not to put unnecessary stumbling blocks in the way of those moving toward Jesus” (196).

The reader unfamiliar with topics related to the Muslim world such as ideas and vocabulary might have some difficulty in understanding some of the chapters, especially the ones addressing regional Islam. The article by David E. Singh, “Islam in South Asia,” presents the reality of the dynamics of Muslim in Hyderabad Deccan, a state of India where the Hindu majority was ruled by a Muslim for a long time (1967). Although Singh’s conclusions are easy to follow and important to ponder, the number of transliterated technical terms used to describe other transliterated terms might make this chapter too difficult for uniformed readers. Furthermore, though not related to his complex terminology, Singh’s conclusion “that debates resulted in people secretly believing without belonging” (108) is, in this reviewer’s opinion, not persuasive. Singh misses dealing with biblical texts where Jesus clearly demands an open and complete allegiance (Luke 14; Mark 10; Matt 5:11). Despite the consequences of public loyalty to Christ, one needs to thoughtfully consider if there is a biblical option for “secret-not-belonging believers” in light of Jesus’ words like “whoever, then, acknowledges me before people, I will acknowledge before my Father in heaven” (Matt 10:32 NET).

Dynamics of Muslim Worlds displays an actual, intriguing reality that Christian believers avoid while offering some innovative and challenging ways to interact, love, and reach Muslims for Jesus.

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A Compact Guide to the Whole Bible: Learning to Read Scripture’s Story. Edited by Robert W. Wall and David R. Nienhuis. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015. 176 pp. \$18.00.

It is easy to find introductory textbooks that overwhelm readers with information and theories about the Bible. Those textbooks complicate rather than open up the Bible to its readers.

The promise of this slim volume is its commitment to genuinely invite readers into the Bible by providing a keen sense of how each section of Scripture contributes to the whole and by identifying key landmarks for making sense of the biblical standards. This compact guide is an excellent resource for both undergraduate courses at Christian universities as well as for use in the church.

This text is an answer to those who have wanted a smaller commentary or guide to the Scripture. It leaves out heavy theological terms and overwhelming historical data. It is clear and theologically accurate and written with the student or reader in mind. The writers have brought their scholarly expertise and commitment to theological reading to bear on the whole Bible. The result is a collaborative work that is unified in its approach, uniformly accessible, and of great value to anyone who wants to better understand the message of the Bible.

Robert W. Wall states this book is about “Reading the Bible as Scripture,” for the Bible is the church’s book, a sacred text. He writes that Scripture is important and interpreting it is hard work. The nature of Scripture is that it is holy, it is catholic, and it is apostolic (11-18).

David R. Nienhuis writes that the Bible should be considered a story book. The Bible contains many short stories that are well known, but all of them point to one main thread that runs throughout the Bible—a biblical metanarrative. The one great point is that God will eventually send his Son to earth to live among mankind and to rescue them from their sins. Humans cannot live without the metanarrative. It is the big story of God at work (27-28).

Frank Anthony Spina writes in the chapter “Israel In and Out of the Land,” that the world in which God acts and Israel lives is a real world. There is no such thing as a secular realm. Every mundane reality has a sacred dimension. God is to be found in the ordinary world that Israel experiences on an everyday basis. In that sense, biblical religion is concrete, not abstract; not general: in the fray, not above the fray. The story of Israel insists that there is a living God and an actual people (62-63).

Eugene E. Lemcio writes “The Story’s Conclusion” about the last book in the Bible, Revelation. He states, “A closer reading

of the book of Revelation indicates that one of God's major strategies is to send a series of shock waves to get the attention of a deceived humanity—the enlisting of God's creation to cause earth dwellers to 'listen up.'" So, the elements of nature are God's tools, not the target of divine wrath (146-47).

I found myself in agreement with the authors of this book, both quoted and not. Their summaries are sound; their arguments come from their detailed study of the biblical books. Their style is simple and straightforward. The book itself is well-written and interesting. It is a book that can be returned to frequently.

The targeted audience would be both new believers with an interest in God's Word and students who have seldom opened a Bible before. The book is a helpful companion to the Bible and would go far in establishing a solid foundation of faith for the student or new believer. Overall, I would strongly suggest that pastors make this book available for those who desire to better grasp God's Word.

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Pastoral Ministry in the Real World: Loving, Teaching, and Leading God's People. By Jim L. Wilson. Wooster, OH: Weaver Book Company, 2015. 256 pp. \$13.50.

In a day when pastors are choosing to tap the business world and secular leaders for pastoral ministry paradigms, it is refreshing to read a book *for* pastors, *about* pastoral ministry, written *by* a veteran pastor. Fifty years ago, Jim L. Wilson's book *Pastoral Ministry in the Real World: Loving, Teaching, and Leading God's People* would have been just another practical ministry book in a crowded field of other how-to manuals. Today, however, most of those generalist books are old and outdated, instructing pastors on how to operate the mimeograph machine and encouraging three-piece suits in the office. Wilson's book is modeled after the generalist books of old while at the same time providing a compass for pastors trying to survive in rapidly changing times.

The subtitle—*Loving, Teaching, and Leading God's people*—clues the reader into the three main points of the book, which I believe is a helpful way to break down ministry. The book ranges widely in style and in content. It includes everything from detailed physiological explanations of conflict management to the rationale and wisdom of using breath mints during hospital visits. In other words, the reader moves from the simplistic and obvious to complicated, multi-stepped processes within a few pages. Wilson gives solid biblical exposition resulting in biblical applications, but also includes psychological hypotheses which he translates into best practices for leading a church. This could be interpreted as the book's greatest strength or its greatest weakness, depending on the viewpoint of the reader.

The book is organized into four sections: Introduction, Loving, Teaching, and Leading. In the introduction Wilson provides general definitions for the office of pastor and for the job of pastoral ministry. He skillfully directs the reader toward the people-focus of the ministry. This provides the springboard for the three main functions of people-saturated ministry: loving, teaching, and leading. Ultimately, he contends, this is what the sheep desire from their shepherds, and this is what Jesus modeled as the Chief Shepherd when he was on earth.

If I were to classify this book in terms of food, the second section of the book—loving people—is meat and potatoes. He addresses the nitty gritty of hospital calls, dealing with tragedy, and knowing what to say ... and what not to say in times of tragedy. He encourages ministry to hurting people and ministry to hurtful people. After loading the pages with practical advice, he ends the section with instructions on weddings, dealing with divorce, celebrating the birth of children in the church, and caring for one's own spiritual hygiene.

If the second section was meat and potatoes, the third section—teaching people—is dessert: sweet and delightful. The first chapter of the third section was worth the price of the book as it guided the reader to shape sermons which conform to the authorial intent of the passage. On page 101 Wilson states, "If preachers align their sermons with authorial intent, the majority—if not all—of their sermons will be Theo-centric." This chapter focuses on the pulpit, the next chapter on teaching

in disciple-making contexts, and the final chapter in the section focuses on teaching within conflict situations. It is a timely reminder to let the teaching of God's word permeate every context of the pastor's ministry.

Section four of the book—leading people—is akin to a buffet: a little bit of everything for everybody. There are four chapters in this section, and the first three are somewhat complex as they distill information from numerous leadership and psychology books. Considering that the book provided advice about breath mints, this section leaps from *simple* to *symposium*. These pages would need to be read several times while taking careful notes in order to implement the leadership principles he articulates. He strikes a decidedly “John Maxwellian” tone, and in fact uses an extended John Maxwell illustration to round out the end of the chapter. Some will find this section extremely helpful, while others will simply be lost. It all depends on the personality of the reader.

The book concludes with examples of “one-point” sermons; something he encourages in the teaching and preaching section of the book. Those examples provide a valuable follow-up to reinforce the principles Wilson proposes.

I applaud the author for resurrecting an evaporating genre of books. This book will certainly prove a valuable resource to pastoral theology classes in colleges and seminaries and will serve as a good refresher to the veteran pastor.

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