

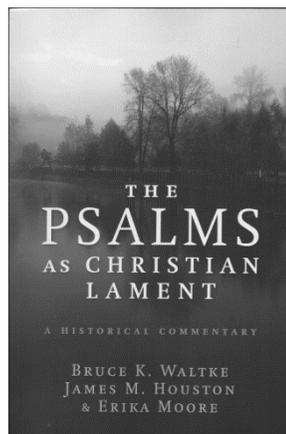
## Book Reviews

The *Journal* uses the standard abbreviation ‘hc’ to denote hard cover. The International Standard Book Number (ISBN) has been included with all books when available. We begin this section with “**Book Reviews**”, organized according to the four divisions of theology.

### Biblical Theology

***The Psalms as Christian Lament: A Historical Commentary.* Bruce K. Waltke, James M. Houston, and Erika Moore. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014, 328 pp., paper. ISBN 978-0-8028-6809-1**

*The Psalms as Christian Lament: A Historical Commentary* is a new follow-up to the 2010 title *The Psalms as Christian Worship: A Historical Commentary* by the same authors.<sup>1</sup> Old Testament scholar Bruce Waltke brings to the table over six decades of Hebrew exegetical expertise. Combined with James Houston’s specialties of spiritual and historical theology, this distinctive commentary provides the best of current exegesis with the often-ignored voices of the Church’s ancient heritage. Erika Moore contributed the exegetical content of one chapter and also did overall editing. Whereas the first volume treats the Psalms as they are used in Christian tradition generally, this latest companion (half the length of the former) concentrates on that particular genre in the Psalter that outnumbers the rest: Psalms of lament, “which reflect upon the limitations, sufferings, fears, protestations, aspirations, as well as confession and penitence of the worshiper before God” (p. 7).



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<sup>1</sup> For *The Psalms as Christian Worship: A Historical Commentary*, see Jack Whytock’s review, *Haddington House Journal* 15 (2013): 39-41.

For years, much of evangelical worship has notably lacked the element of lament, confession, or penitence in its public liturgies. Compare this to ecclesiastical traditions in which formal confession and lament – albeit scripted – are fundamental features of corporate and private worship. Could it be that many Protestants, in reaction to what they consider the vain repetitions of empty ritual, have swung the pendulum the other way and now neglect this vital expression of communing with God? Churches who take a more cavalier approach to worship, or who strive for a more seeker-sensitive or “positive thinking” attitude in their services, would find public lament to be awkward at best, and offensive at worst. Yes, it is true that “Joy is the last word” for the Christian, “but lament may fill much of a Christian’s earthly sufferings” (p. 5).

Complaining to God, especially when driven by honest emotion, has been generally considered inappropriate by those who hold to a high view of the sovereignty of God over circumstances. Yet authors Waltke, Houston, and Moore attempt to disabuse readers of the notion that this genre of prayer was only suitable for the biblical psalmists, and they do so by laboring to develop a “theology of lament” (p. xv).

The book is structured with an introductory chapter followed by ten chapters of commentary on Psalms 5, 6, 7, 32, 38, 39, 44, 102, 130, and 143 respectively. Chapter 1 orients the reader to the nature of biblical lament and discusses its decline in Western society and its distortions in the modern era. The authors outline the Old Testament context for lament by offering a helpful summary of the psalmists’ worldview, and argue that the mere volume of lament in Scripture (one-third of the Psalter) tells us that the struggles and confusion that a believer suffers are not peripheral or abnormal in the life of faith, but central (p. 1). I feel this crucial point is what makes the book so relevant. *Psalms as Christian Lament* serves as a wake-up call to comfortable Christians, especially Westerners, who are becoming more and more aware of Christian suffering around the world due to innovations in media: displacements, kidnappings, or beheadings of brothers and sisters by Islamic terrorists and fascist regimes. Add to that the steady decline of religious freedoms they once enjoyed in Judeo-Christian societies and believers struggle to process the overwhelming challenges of our day. But of course even non-Christians also experience deep distress, and so because “depression is becoming a pandemic condition, which along with stress-related diseases is promoting much lament,” then “it is time we began to make more use of lament as a renewed focus for hope” (p. 2). A key theological distinction is made, however, between cultural causes that may give rise to lament and the primary causes of biblical lament:

Lament is a corollary of right-relatedness, since “to lament” is to express impaired or disrupted relationships. Its intensity is greatest when it is “before” and “about” God. In this sense a secular culture cannot “lament,” for when truth is relative, contingent, meaning-

less, and “anything goes,” then there is no basis for “biblical lament.” Rather righteousness/order and lament are set antithetically, as are light and darkness. (p. 5)

Rather than overlooking Psalms of lament as useful in devotional life, the Christian ought to have a robust theology of lament. After all, our Lord Jesus Himself cried out prayers and supplications to God in the school of suffering (Heb. 5:7ff), and we know He was well versed in these psalms (p. 14).

The ten chapters of commentary follow the same structure of four distinct parts. Part I is the “Voice of the Church”, which surveys the history of the particular psalm’s interpretation through one or more theologians of the past and how the text related to the personal context of the saint in question. This feature of the commentary is what makes it a unique volume. The authors tie the personal context of the historic figure into his study and literary output on the psalm to show the devotional, pastoral, and/or practical influence of the psalm. There are well-known and lesser-known characters in play, including Origen, Ambrose, Jerome, Gregory of Nyssa, Chrysostom, Augustine, Charlemagne, Alfred the Great, Erasmus, Aquinas, Luther, Calvin, Spurgeon, and others.

Part II, the “Voice of the Psalmist: Translation”, presents a fresh translation of the psalm together with comprehensive footnotes dealing with technical text critical, grammatical, and syntactical issues. Part III is the authors’ commentary on the psalm, thoroughly treating all facets: literary context, form and rhetorical criticism, structure, exegesis, and message. Part IV, the conclusion, neatly wraps up the psalm’s overarching theological theme and is always Christ-centred, demonstrating how the message and petitions of the psalm are ultimately fulfilled by the glories of the gospel.

Regarding the audience, some of the analytic prose is dense and awkward, and much of the technical comments are for those with an academic background. The text-critical and grammatical discussions (not to mention the untransliterated Hebrew terms) are helpful only to those with intermediate training in Hebrew exegesis. Of course, any faithful expositor would be careful to pay attention to these matters while preparing to preach the text. Lay teachers would certainly benefit from this volume, although much of the material would be challenging to navigate through. Other commentaries on Psalms would be more accessible to a broader audience. Serious expositors should consider adding *The Psalms as Christian Lament* to their collection, as it embodies the most up-to-date biblical scholarship by world-class specialists from an evangelical, devotional perspective. The quality of the binding is sturdy and the typeface is very legible.

*Reviewed by Andrew Belli, the assistant pastor at Redeemer Fellowship Church in Metro Boston. Andrew is a graduate of Crandall University and Gordon-Conwell Seminary.*



***A Commentary on the Psalms: Volume 2 (42-89)*. Allen P. Ross. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2013, 841 pp., hc. ISBN 978-0-8254-2563-9**

Allan P. Ross is professor of divinity at Beeson Divinity School. He is author of *Introducing Biblical Hebrew* and has authored other commentaries on the Old Testament including *Creation and Blessing: A Study and Exposition of Genesis* and *A Commentary on the Psalms, Volume 1*, in which he covers Psalms 1-41. The first volume was reviewed for this journal in 2013 and for a fuller review you can refer to that issue, pages 44-47.

This second volume is characterised by the same attention to scholarly exposition, Christ-centred discovery, and practical application. According to Ross, “My purpose in writing this commentary was to focus on the chief aim of exegesis, the exposition of the text” (p. 11). Ross claims, and rightly so, that too often lines are taken out of a psalm’s greater context. He wants readers to see that each line, each verse is to be seen in relation to the entire psalm and to the body of all of Psalms.

Ross divides his commentary along the following lines for each psalm:

– **Text and Textual Variants.** The author supplies his own translation of the text, explores other possible translations and the textual variants that have also been a part of the history of the psalm’s interpretation.

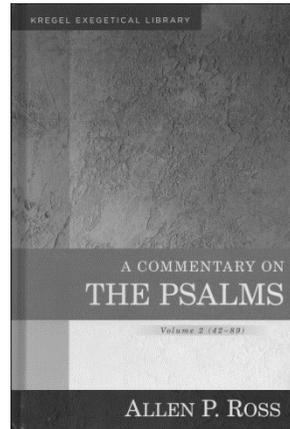
– **Composition and Context.** This is a very helpful section. Here Ross draws our attention to the possible authors and tries (based on the evidence of the heading, internal evidence, or how the psalm is quoted elsewhere) to determine the historical context of the psalm.

– **Exegetical Analysis.** Here he outlines the psalm into main headings and sub-headings as he sees them emerge in order to give preachers a better framework for delivering the psalm.

– **Commentary in Expository Form.** In this section Ross draws attention to words or phrases that enable us to bring out the meaning of the passage more clearly.

– **Message and Application.** The author focuses here on the main point of the psalm, how it applies in the life of the believer, and any Christological applications that can be drawn in order that believers can be called to put their trust in the One to whom all Scripture points.

Ross has a helpful reminder in the section on Message and Application: a one sentence summary of the psalm (or psalm segment) is useful for maintaining the focus of your message and points can be extracted to serve that main, summary statement. For example, one possible summary given for Psalm 45 and the application to Christ and His church is, “Because the royal



bridegroom is majestic, powerful and righteous, the bride must take every care to please Him so that their union will be glorious” (p. 79).

Students of the Psalms will notice the many references to Jerusalem or Zion as the dwelling place of God. Ross does not bring any unhelpful divisions between the church and Israel; rather he is content to draw on the timeless principle that the people of God is His dwelling place. This allows Ross to make application with the Psalms that take us from the tabernacle to the New Jerusalem in the book of Revelation.

This is another of its great strengths. It is unashamedly Christo-centric. Each psalm under the heading “Message and Application” draws the reader’s attention to the ultimate meaning of the Scriptures – that being God’s redemptive work through Christ, whom the Psalms clearly set forth as prophet, priest, and king. In commenting on Psalm 45, which highlights the messianic King and His bride, Ross writes, “John clearly asserts that the bride was instructed to clothe herself with white linens, which are the righteous acts of the saints. The mention of the royal bridegroom draws on biblical imagery begun in Psalm 45” (p. 80).

As with the previous volume, this commentary is just technical enough without being over whelming. Allen Ross has heavily footnoted his work, which is a further witness to his competency and years of working with this book of the Bible.

It is encouraging to see this second step toward completing this set on the Psalms. When a commentary makes you eager to get into a book and start to preach it, it has accomplished a good work. Ross has done a service in providing students of Psalms a rich entrance into a book so heavily laden with gospel truth. I believe the price of the book will be repaid back in manifold ways.

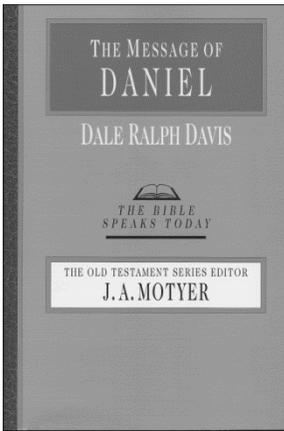
*Reviewed by Kent I. Compton, the minister of the Western Charge of the Free Church of Scotland, Prince Edward Island and a trustee of Haddington House.*



***The Message of Daniel.* Dale Ralph Davis. *The Bible Speaks Today*, gen. ed. J. A. Motyer. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2013, 169 pp., paper. ISBN 978-0-8308-2438-0**

Dale Ralph Davis is known to many of us as one who has proved an invaluable guide through the historical world of the Old Testament including a study of Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel [*1 Samuel: Looking on the Heart* and *2 Samuel: Out of Every Adversity* – Focus on the Bible], and 1 and 2 Kings [*1 Kings: The Wisdom and the Folly* and *2 Kings: The Power and the Fury* – Focus on the Bible] His refreshing approach, solid grasp of the biblical text, and his Christ-centred applications have made him an indispensable compan-

ion in that genre. Davis is former pastor of Woodland Presbyterian Church in Hattiesburg, Mississippi and Professor of Old Testament at Reformed Theological Seminary in Jackson.



Though a very different genre, the prophetic literature of Daniel is also a place where Davis feels comfortable while retaining many of the characteristics which made his other works so appealing.

This work is the latest offering in the much loved *The Bible Speaks Today* series of commentaries from IVP. According to the general preface in the commentary, the purpose of the series is threefold: to expound the biblical text with accuracy, to relate it to contemporary life, and to be readable (p. 7).

Textual and dating issues which have proved such an area of controversy in Daniel are dealt with adequately, hitting on all the traditional centres of debate. Davis defends an early dating of Daniel in part because of the Aramaic used in the latter half of the prophesy, to which liberal scholars point to prove a late date. He says that “nine-tenths of the Aramaic vocabulary used in Daniel is attested in the other texts of the fifth century and before” (p. 16). Furthermore, suggests Davis, “...the Aramaic of Daniel...is simply part of an Imperial Aramaic that could fall anywhere from the 600-330 B.C. range” (p. 17).

Davis in his introductory essay helpfully breaks the book up into three major divisions. The first he entitles “The Place Where Faithfulness is Lived”, consisting of chapter 1. Chapters 2-7 he entitles “The God to Whom the Kingdom Belongs”. Lastly, chapters 8-12 “The People to Whom the Kingdom is Given”. For preachers, it is this sort of content arrangement that provides a helpful starting point as we swoop down into the finer details.

One cannot review Davis without mentioning how he intersperses his humour to drive home his points. He compares the Spirit-given resolve of Daniel in the midst of an otherwise overpowering regime with the kings whose foundations seem to be crumbling around him. While Daniel and his friends were enabled by God’s grace to exercise great self-control and faithfulness, Nebuchadnezzar, ruler of the mightiest empire of the day, when disturbed by a dream from God responds otherwise. “He’s king of Babylon and he’s shaking as he unbuttons his PJs in the morning” (p. 39). Who else could get away with prefacing his remarks on the seventy weeks with a reference to a Peanuts cartoon. Yet, he makes it work!

You won’t find Davis using a heavy hand on the finer points of the prophesy. There is no question that Davis, despite his assurances of not being a prophetic scholar, has done his homework – from the broad discussions on eschatological view points to the finer linguistic nuances that could sway a passage either this way or that in your interpretation. However, he asserts

that while he has his opinions, yet he reserves his strongest assertions for the broader principles that arise out of Daniel, especially the apocalyptic sections (chapters 7-12). To me, this is not a cop-out but simply acknowledging that faithful scholars have differed widely on the details of Daniel's prophesy, but broader agreement and application can be realized in the clearer principles which present themselves more readily.

Daniel 7, says Davis, "provides us with a kind of overview of history" (p. 94). For example, Davis in explaining the fourth beast in Daniel 7 can say that the Roman Empire is the most natural identification, yet more broadly it speaks of the last great human expression of human evil and rebellion (pp. 95-96). From there he highlights some of the more vicious expressions of human evil down through the ages, concluding that Daniel's "vision is telling us that history is beastly; it is scary. He wants us to hold a clear realism about life in this world" (p. 97).

Davis says, "Seeing this secret behind history may not keep God's people from pain but should keep them from panic: we may still be fearful but should not be frantic" (p. 101).

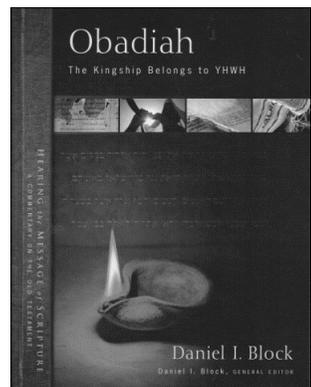
This is a commentary that serves both the laity and preachers. Davis doesn't load the text with too many technical points but allows for a good flow for reading. He retains the technical elements but keeps them in the footnotes. It definitely serves as a wonderful entry point into the book of Daniel.

*Reviewed by Kent I. Compton*

***Obadiah: The Kingship Belongs to YHWH.* Daniel I. Block. *Hearing the Message of Scripture*, gen. ed. Daniel I. Block. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013, 128 pp., hc. ISBN 978-0-310-94240-5**

*Obadiah* is the first commentary in the series *Hearing the Message of Scripture*. Daniel Block, a trusted name in evangelical scholarship, is Gunther H. Knoedler Professor of Old Testament at Wheaton College and also serves as the series general editor. His other commentaries include *Judges*, *Deuteronomy*, and *Ezekiel*.

Block says that the series is driven by the reality of the divine inspiration of the Bible and therefore the need to provide commentaries that draw attention to the "rhetorical agendas of the authors". He further states: "The commentators in this series recognize that too little attention has been paid to biblical authors as rhetoricians, to their larger rhetorical and theological agendas" (p. 9). This rhetorical accent is due to the fact, he says, that few Hebrews had access



to the physical text. The message would then have been written in such a way as to be heard; and if heard, then the message was constructed to maximize rhetorical effect upon the hearers (p. 9).

Block summarises the intent of the series in the following ways. Attention is drawn principally to 1) The main points the writers are making, 2) How they makes these points, and 3) How the text fits within the book and whole of scripture (p. 10).

The six mains areas covered in each chapter are as follows:

- 1) **The Main Idea of the Passage.** This involves a summary of one or two sentences.
- 2) **Literary Context.** Here the text is seen in context of the book and Bible as whole.
- 3) **Translation and Exegetical Outline.** The author provides a fresh translation and outline of the book.
- 4) **Structure and Literary Form.** An introductory section to the passage is provided to highlight the rhetorical style of the author in communicating the message.
- 5) **Explanation of the Text.** This section includes a more comprehensive look at the text, the message involved, and the various tools used by the author to communicate his message. Here the emphasis is on the Hebrew in an attempt to draw out the various rhetorical nuances used by the original author in an effort to communicate more effectively.
- 6) **Canonical and Practical Significance.** Here the author draws attention to how the message is applicable to us, how it is seen in the broader context of biblical theology, especially as these themes are applied by the New Testament writers.

In this commentary in particular, Block proposes six dating theories regarding its composition and discusses each at length. He seems to favour the mid-6<sup>th</sup> century theory, the time when it seems that Obadiah ministered in Jerusalem at the time of its demise. (p. 23)

The thrust of the prophesy he states is as follows:

First, divine justice will prevail with respect to Israel's kinsmen the Edomites, who had gloated over Judah's fall. Second, divine fidelity will prevail with respect to the descendants of Jacob themselves, presently dispersed among the nations and divorced from their homeland. (p. 35)

Block guides students into identifying a rhetorical structure to the prophets. He (and presumably those that follow in this series) draws readers' attention to word choices that more sharply define the tone of the text. "Perhaps we do best to classify its style as a heightened form of rhetoric-impassioned speech that attempts to transform the minds and hearts of the audience, replacing cynicism and doubt with confidence and hope" (p. 37). For example: "Obadiah's preference for the name Esau reflects his rhetorical style...to him

Edom is a person, the brother of Jacob, who shares a common ancestry in the first two patriarchs, Abraham and Isaac, but whose history of violence against his brother will finally be answered.” (p.51-52) Along with this, Block emphasises the rhetorical tools of repetition by Obadiah to drive home his point. In verses 12-14 he speaks of “the day of his misfortune...the day of their ruin...the day of distress... the day of their doom” (p. 74). Block emphasises the intentionality of the author in these devices; this is something hopefully any good commentator would identify.

How does one apply in a contemporary context a book which seems to be frozen in an historical context? Here again Block does a lot of footwork for us. He shows how Obadiah drew heavily upon the other prophets such as Amos, Jeremiah, and Isaiah, that Edom is representative of all nations, and that how God deals with Edom is similar to how He deals with other nations. Block states, “As in Isaiah, to Obadiah Edom represents all who stand in opposition to YHWH and who abuse His people and the picture he paints of Edom’s demise is paradigmatic of YHWH’s ultimate vindication of his people and triumph over all those who oppose him” (p. 108).

Block includes many sidebar comparisons between Obadiah and the other prophets, demonstrating how heavily he leaned upon them, but also underscoring the significant continuity with the prophets as a whole. This allows readers to develop a line of thinking in areas which Obadiah doesn’t explicitly state but is clearly elucidated in other books, books which continue to extend those lines forward to Christ.

In concluding the commentary, Block writes,

In Christ, not only the prophesy of Obadiah, but all of God’s promises to Israel are fulfilled. In Christ, Gentile believers are grafted into the vine and made heirs of those promises (Rom 11:17-24). In Christ the high and mighty are cast down and the humble are exalted. In Christ God vanquishes the kingdom of darkness and all who stand in opposition to him and his people (Col 2:15). In Christ those who like Israel deserve judgement for their rebellion are reconciled to God (2 Cor 5:19). The dominion belongs to YHWH in Jesus Christ. (p. 116)

Block’s broader and more detailed outlines of the book provide wonderful access points for approaching and preaching this neglected prophet. For the shortest book of the Bible, containing no more than twenty-one verses, this is in my view a very substantial and exhaustive work on Obadiah. Combining technical proficiency, biblical theology, and practical Christ-centred application, this commentary on Obadiah ought to be a confident resource for any student of Scripture.

*Reviewed by Kent I. Compton*

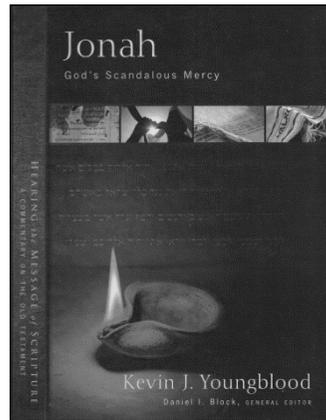
***Jonah: God's Scandalous Mercy.* Kevin J. Youngblood. Hearing the Message of Scripture, gen. ed. Daniel I. Block. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013, 186 pp., hc. ISBN 978-0-310-28299-0**

*Jonah: God's Scandalous Mercy* is one of two new commentaries in the Hearing the Message of Scripture series published by Zondervan. Kevin Youngblood, its author, is associate professor of Biblical Studies at Harding University. (For a more developed treatment of some of the distinctive of this commentary series see the review on Obadiah, p. 51.)

Youngblood states that the book explores various questions, but chief among them (in his words) are: “1) How do divine mercy and divine justice interact without cancelling each other out? 2) How do God’s universal sovereignty and particular covenant with Israel interact without cancelling each other out?” (pp. 28-29).

Because the series is called Hearing the Message of Scripture, Youngblood looks at five elements Jonah uses to accentuate the word not simply as read but heard. First, there is the use of parallelism. Here we can think of the two parallel passages where God calls Jonah in 1:1 and 3:1. Second, there is the use of alternating scenes. Youngblood points out how the scenes in Jonah alternate between Jonah’s interaction with God and then with people. Third, Youngblood points out a symbolic use of geography and climate, drawing attention to the symbolic significance of the dry land and tempestuous sea – long seen as a place of judgment. Fourth, there is the use of intertextuality, which is simply a fancy word to draw out attention to allusions Jonah makes to other parts of the Bible which the author is aware of and draws upon. Finally, there is the use of textual information gaps whereby the inspired author withholds information that is explained later, such as the reason for Jonah fleeing in the first place (pp. 38-42). These five elements contribute to Youngblood’s overall purpose of showing the rhetorical value in the book, and he does so persuasively. In fact, this is perhaps the greatest distinctive of this series.

Concerning Christology, Youngblood underscores the strong thematic elements that, as he says, mirror “all of the elements crucial to the mission Jesus came to launch: a journey from death to back to life, an acknowledgment of the potential offensiveness of divine mercy and a focus on YHWH’s concern for the nation”. Youngblood further expands those themes by tracing them throughout the New Testament to Paul’s mission to the Gentiles, which was ultimately used to stir up the Jews. These are very helpful jumping off



points in showing the book of Jonah's broader application and how such a relatively short book "punches above its weight" among the prophets.

One stumbling block for many concerning the book of Jonah has obviously been the plausibility of a man surviving in the belly of a great fish for so long and living to tell the tale. Yet Youngblood gives no attention to it. Dale Ralph Davis spends a great deal of time on the dating of Daniel in his commentary because as he says "others have made such a big deal of it". (*The Message of Daniel*, p. 15) One has to wonder why Youngblood has not addressed this question, even in some small measure.

This is a substantial commentary in every way. It can compete at a technical level with the best scholarly commentaries, and yet it richly communicates in a plain style the redemptive message culminating in Christ. The technical and explanatory sections are clearly marked off for those who choose this commentary for one or the other category, which helps you to identify the section you want quite easily. It is attractively laid out with informative sidebars comparing the book with other books along with helpful outlines.

If however you are dissatisfied with Youngblood's take on Jonah, he does provide quite an extensive bibliography at the beginning of the commentary.

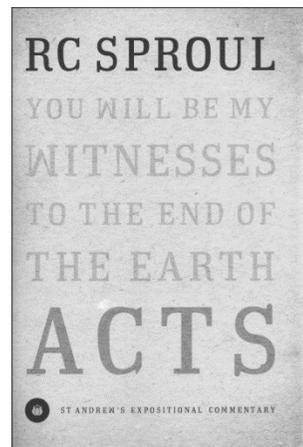
I warmly recommend this commentary and new series.

*Reviewed by Kent I. Compton*

***Acts: You Will Be My Witnesses to the End of the Earth.* R. C. Sproul. St. Andrew's Expository Commentary. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010, 440 pp., hc. ISBN 978-1-4335-2273-4**

This volume was my first to read in the St. Andrew's Expository Commentary series, and I do not think it will be the last. I have found it to reflect a maturity in Sproul's writing, and it appears to have had good editing and care taken over its production.

The series title is clear, as is the series preface (pp. 13-14), that this is not a technical commentary – though built upon this foundation – but is an edited transcription of Sproul's expositions at St. Andrew's Chapel, Florida. His approach is to focus "on the key themes and ideas that comprised the 'big picture' of each passage" (p. 14). The book contains sixty-two chapters, an average of about two chapters per each chapter from Acts. Each chapter begins with the text for that particular study from *The New King James Version*. The



chapter titles are generally descriptive of the text rather than “punchie” sermon titles, so one can quickly see what the passage’s content is about. The page layout includes Scripture text in bold in the expositional section and bold sub-headings. There are no endnotes, footnotes, or bibliography, so it makes for a very clean text. I think some suggestions might have been made somewhere as to works for further study for the serious reader wanting more. This could have been limited to one page at the end before the index of names. In this regard I prefer the apparatus at the end of R. Kent Hughes’ *Acts*<sup>1</sup> in the Preaching the Word series with a very helpful set of notes, Scripture index, general index, and index of sermon illustrations. Also, I personally like seeing a map or maps when I am studying through Acts. I think one or more should have been included in the commentary. However, that being said, it is the main text of the book which is still the most important. Sproul does very well here and is a great blessing to the reader. He is not verbose. Acts offers many challenges, and the author generally deals with these head-on but in a clear and gracious manner – for example on Pentecostalism, neo-Pentecostalism, or the Charismatic movement.

This book would be a fine resource for teachers in Bible classes or Bible study groups. It would also be an excellent personal devotional series to follow daily over two months. I heartily recommend it and look forward to more in this series.

*Reviewed by Jack C. Whytock*

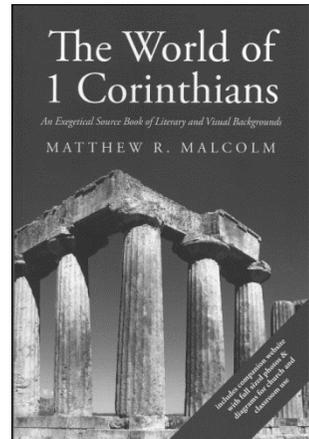
***The World of 1 Corinthians: An Exegetical Source Book of Literary and Visual Backgrounds.* Matthew R. Malcolm. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2013, 169 pp., paper. ISBN 978-1-62032-983-2**

This commentary by Dr. Malcolm, lecturer in New Testament at Trinity Theological College, Perth, Australia, is to my knowledge, the first of its kind. It is not intended to be a stand-alone exegetical commentary, but instead is intended to enhance standard commentaries by focusing on the ancient literary and visual backgrounds of 1 Corinthians. In fact, its value as such extends beyond that of 1 Corinthians, because the insights gained from the ancient literature of the period have application to most New Testament writings. The book is well organized and easy to read, though it does not flow like a conventional commentary where the focus on interpretation rather than on gathering relevant information moves the reader forward.

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<sup>1</sup> R. Kent Hughes, *Acts: The Church Aflame*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1996). See also Gordon J. Keddie, *You Are My Witnesses: The Message of the Acts of the Apostles*, Welwyn Commentary Series (Darlington, UK: Evangelical Press, 1993).

The introduction includes extensive annotated lists of the locations, artifacts, literary and rhetorical features, customs and rituals, and concepts and beliefs that occur in 1 Corinthians so that the identification and discussion of any of these features may easily be located within the body of the commentary. Dr. Malcolm also helpfully reviews the recent history of scholarly debate concerning the overall arrangement of 1 Corinthians and concludes that it is unified by the theological pattern of the cross versus human wisdom (chapters 1-4), the cross applied to individual morality of bodies (5-7), the cross applied to relations within the body of Christ (8-14), and finally, the reversal of the cross in resurrection (15). In another preliminary chapter, the author adds significant value to this resource by supplying brief annotated biographies of each of more than sixty ancient authors whose works are featured in the commentary.



The main commentary section is consistently arranged to follow the text of 1 Corinthians according to the detailed structure presented at the end of the introduction. For each thought unit the author includes his own translation of the text, highlights notable words or phrases, and then comments on the Old Testament and ancient literary backgrounds with relevant citations. He also frequently inserts photographs and illuminates their significance for understanding the passages. Over three hundred footnotes add brief explanations of the contexts from which each quotation of the ancient literature has been extracted.

All of the above make this a valuable book for any minister, theological student, or serious Bible teacher. However, to my mind, the most stimulating and insightful sections of the entire book are the excursions on the Jewish motif of reversal (chapters 1-4 and chapter 15) and on the flow of Pauline ethics (chapters 5-14). Firstly, Dr. Malcolm provides convincing evidence that “the dual motif of the condemned boaster and the vindicated sufferer ... is well attested in the Old Testament and Jewish literature, and essential for early Christian reception of Jesus” (p. 6). Thus, Dr. Malcolm suggests that “the whole of 1 Corinthians is intentionally structured by this common pattern of reversal, in order to summon the Corinthians to trustingly follow the path of the presently-scorned but ultimately-vindicated Messiah, rather than the values of the presently-powerful but ultimately-condemned Roman elite” (p. 132). Secondly, Dr. Malcolm provides evidence that 1 Corinthians follows a general pattern of Pauline ethics, moving from issues of sexual immorality, greed, and impurity of bodies to interactional issues of rights and freedoms within the body of Christ (cf. pp. xxiii, 47) which is consistent with the broad ethical arrangement found in ancient Jewish and other relevant works

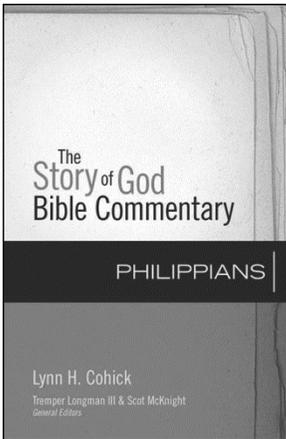
of the Hellenistic-Roman period (cf. pp. 47, 60).

Thus, I commend this book as a worthy read and a worthy addition to the Bible scholar's library.

*Reviewed by Dr. Greg Phillips, a Zimbabwean who is lecturer in Bible and Theology at Dumisani Theological Institute, King William's Town, Eastern Cape, South Africa.*



***Philippians*. Lynn H. Cohick. The Story of God Bible Commentary, gen. eds. Tremper Longman III and Scot McKnight. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013, 283 pp., hc. ISBN 978-0-310-32724-0.**



This commentary by Lynn Cohick, Professor of New Testament at Wheaton College and Graduate School, is one of the first volumes in the new “The Story of God Bible Commentary Series” from Zondervan. As more and more commentary series appear, the question always arises as to the distinct benefits of another series. Cohick is one of the associate New Testament editors of the series, and so her contribution should give a good indication of the editorial intention of the series.

The contributors to the series (who are listed in in the front material) generally belong to a new generation of evangelical scholarship, although a few senior scholars such as Tremper Longman III and Scot McKnight also contribute. Contributors represent a number of ecclesiastical traditions and confessional positions, as is typical in most recent evangelical commentary series. The NT series editor, Scot McKnight, states,

We wanted the authors to be exceptional scholars, faithful Christians, committed evangelicals, and theologically diverse, and we wanted this series to represent the changing face of both American and world evangelicalism: ethnic and gender diversity. I believe this series has a wider diversity of authors than any commentary series in evangelical history. (p. xiii)

McKnight also explains the title and intention of the series:

We want to explain each passage of the Bible's grand Story. ... In brief, we see the narrative built around the following biblical themes: creation and fall, covenant and redemption, law and prophets, and especially God's charge to humans as his image-bearers to rule under God. The theme of God as King and God's kingdom

guides us to see the importance of Israel's kings as they come to fulfilment in Jesus, Lord and King over all, and the direction of history toward the new heavens and new earth, where God will be all in all. (p. xiii)

This emphasis on biblical theology is a commendable goal and should have benefits for preaching and teaching ministries.

To give a good flavour of the commentary, I will focus on chapter 7 on Philippians 2:6-11. The format of this chapter reflects that found throughout the book. The chapter begins with a section entitled "Listen to the Story", which reproduces the text of the passage from the NIV (2011) edition. In this case, the translation incorporates the widely accepted translation of the Greek term *harpagmos* in verse 6, namely, "Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage". This is one of a number of notable instances where the new edition of the NIV makes a real step forward in a translation decision. In addition to the *pericope*, there is a selection of references to other texts listed below with the description, "Listening to the text in the Story". These readings (some quite lengthy, such as Genesis 1-3 and Isaiah 40-55) are intended to place the specific passage in the wider canonical context of God's purposes as revealed. A few brief comments summarise the significance of the passage.

The next section is entitled, "Explain the Story". Here Cohick sets the interpretation of the passage in the context of wider theological questions and emphasises the importance of "union with Christ" for understanding the text. Cohick also draws in the question of whether the text reflects rhetorical opposition to the empire. There then follows a more traditional exegetical section which is well-informed and engages with important literature helpfully in coming to conclusions. Some of the discussion is quite detailed (for example, the discussion of the appropriate translation of *harpagmos*) and suggests that it is expected that most readers will have some grounding in academic theological discussion. However, all references to the biblical languages are transliterated so competence in Greek and Hebrew is not essential in order to be able to use the commentary effectively. Cohick helpfully outlines various interpretive options before explaining her view. There is also a helpful emphasis on the relevance of OT texts. This section closes with some brief comments of the implications of the passage for today.

The next section is "Live the Story". This is not really an "application" section. Rather it attempts to address some bigger issues surrounding the reading of the text, which may include, but is not limited to, application. In this case, Cohick discusses the relationship between exegesis and doctrine in the interpretation of Philippians 2:6-11, the relevance of "Lady Wisdom" (Proverbs 8) for understanding the passage in Philippians, and also what Christian humility/humiliation means in modern life. On this latter point, Cohick comments,

Christ's lesson to us, demonstrated in the hymn, is that no job is below our pay grade, no task is 'beneath us,' and no service is so outstanding that it is worthy of God's special praise. ... The point is that cleaning up after a baby or an elderly parent is exactly who we are in Christ, even if we also run a company or are senior pastor of a church. (p. 130)

This commentary is well presented and written in readable prose throughout. There are numerous references to life experience and illustrations which help to keep the reader's interest and demonstrate the relevance of the biblical text to modern Christians, while the discussion of the text and wider theological questions is done carefully and effectively without sacrificing readability. It could easily be read from cover to cover as well as used as a reference work.

This commentary is a promising start to this new series. It bears some comparison with the NIV Application Commentary series and shares many of the strengths of that series. Pastors and preachers should find this volume and the series particularly useful, although general readers will also benefit from it.

*Reviewed by Dr. Alistair I. Wilson, principal of Dumisani Theological Institute, King William's Town, and extraordinary professor of NT at North-West University, South Africa.*



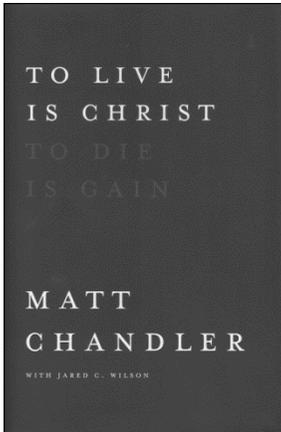
***To Live Is Christ, To Die Is Gain.* Matt Chandler and Jared C. Wilson. Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2013, 222 pp., hc. ISBN 978-1-4347-0685-0**

*To Live Is Christ, To Die is Gain* appears to be a collection of sermons on Philippians from Matt Chandler that have been edited and condensed with the help of Jared Wilson. It is a very accessible and easy read for anyone who wishes to better understand the short letter from Paul to the church in Philippi, though the author's intended audience seems to be the casual or nominal Christian (i.e. someone who considers Christianity to be merely about conversion rather than discipleship). Considering that this is a collection of edited sermons, the most prudent way to proceed in reviewing a book like this will be to consider the three elements of what makes a good sermon: illustration, exposition, and application.

When it comes to the first element of a good sermon, Chandler is a master-illustrator. This is demonstrated before the reader gets past the introduction, as the author begins by reflecting on the growth of one his daughters. His point, which he argues is the primary purpose of the book, is that as a father wants his children to grow, so too "God wants us to grow from being infants in Christ to being mature in Christ" (p. 11). He uses several other il-

illustrations, primarily from his own life-experience (e.g. growing up in Texas and his first interactions with church as a teenager) but also from the life-experiences of others (e.g. members of his church who are living for Christ). As usual, Chandler's illustrations are exciting and enjoyable to read, but more importantly they are timely and help the reader understand and apply the biblical text.

Concerning exposition, due to the length of this very short book, many will consider this area lacking. That being the case, it is definitely evident



that Chandler wants to assist his reader in interacting well with the text of Philippians. The emphasis of some chapters is more on what he understands to be the theme verse of a given pericope rather than a more balanced approach to the whole section of biblical text. This means that he sometimes spends a fair bit of space (i.e. several pages) treating one verse but then simply glosses over several verses with only a sentence or two of explanation. Chandler does labour well though to provide helpful context, brief word-studies, and additional Bible verses and passages which relate to the text at hand.

On the matter of application, as with illustration, Chandler does a good job. It would be difficult to set down this book without having done some serious reflection on one's own walk with Christ. While there is application all throughout the book, it seemed to get stronger nearer to the end. Whether that was intentional or just a result of one chapter building upon another is uncertain. Regardless, it is clear that the author's hope for his reader is that he or she will not arrive at the end of the book unchanged, made most clear in his closing comments: "If the gospel can transform the world and hold in its powerful reach the promise of eternal life, certainly it can transform you this very day" (p. 219).

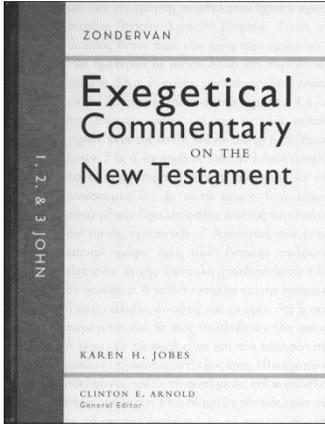
In conclusion, though the exposition could be more robust and balanced, and though it seems to be marketed and written more towards a person not growing in his or her faith, *To Live is Christ, To Die Is Gain* would be a welcomed addition to any Christian's library. With the lack of theological books coupled with the abundance of fluffy Christian living books lining Christian bookstore shelves today, a short, readable collection of expositions is a worthy and valuable addition to the market. With Chandler's unique ability to illustrate and apply the text, this will no doubt be a book which helps to strengthen and expand the kingdom of God.

*Reviewed by Sean Crowe, a native of Vancouver, B.C. presently serving as Senior Pastor of Gospel Light Baptist Church in Halifax, Nova Scotia.*



**1, 2, & 3 John.** Karen H. Jobes. Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, gen. ed. Clinton E. Arnold. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014. 358 pp., hc. ISBN 978-0-310-24416-5

The Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (ZECNT) is certainly proving to be a valuable commentary series for pastors and also as a text for college work, partly because the layout of each work in the series is uniform, highly readable, and useful. The strengths of the layout are as



follows: introductions of reasonable length; consistency of form for each exegeted pericope, meaning it starts with literary context, moves to the main idea (and does not ramble!), followed by the author's translation, then structure comment, next an exegetical outline, then the extended explanation of the text (verse-by-verse comment), an in-depth boxed section, concluding with theology in application. The double columned text with footnotes is easy to read and very clean. The footnotes are not intrusive or overwhelming but very helpful and kept to a minimum. Generally speaking, (for

those that I have seen) the bibliographies are sufficient and well divided into appropriate sections. The standard Scripture indexes are good, but the addition of an author index is even better. This index is very helpful and also highly informative at a glance for making research conclusions. All of this is general to the series; yet when applied to this specific commentary by Karen Jobes, one can quickly gain a grasp on the nature of this work and its contribution and place as a commentary for the Johannine epistles. There are no surprises from the series here in terms of the structure.

Jobes holds a Ph.D. from Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia in Septuagint studies of Esther and presently is a professor at Wheaton College and Graduate School, Illinois and author of several books including a fine commentary on 1 Peter in the Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament series<sup>1</sup>. The author clearly knows her subject and writes with clarity and without ambiguity. Her skill in hermeneutics and the Greek text are obvious and not arrogant in any manner. Thus her exegetical comment is well informed and very careful. See, for example, her discussion on *anomia* and *hamartia* in 1 John 3:4 and verse 9. Her conclusions here are the same as Colin Kruse in his Pillar commentary, *The Letters of John*<sup>2</sup>. Thus every sin is

<sup>1</sup> Karen H. Jobes, *1 Peter*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005).

<sup>2</sup> Colin G. Kruse, *The Letters of John*. The Pillar New Testament Commentary. (Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans/ APOLLOS, 2000).

not anomia, and there is a clear distinction in the text of 1 John with the believer who “may sin, but if they are truly of God, they will agree with him that their sin is sin, will confess it, and turn from it” (p.148). This is good exegesis, and I would be very confident in using this as a course text at the appropriate level for teaching.

If your students know Greek, this commentary will be helpful. However, I also think that even if your students do not know Greek, they will definitely benefit from the way the commentary is written. In each explanation section the verse is given in the author’s English translation followed by the Greek. The English translation is in bold type and the Greek text is in italic. Then when the comment continues, the Greek words of reference are usually in the Greek text but also sometimes in a transliterated form. This inclusive manner makes it acceptable in a variety of class settings.

Concerning key hermeneutical issues about the epistles of John, the author presents her convictions at the beginning. I must say I really admired this and appreciated knowing where she stood on some of these critical aspects in approaching the letters of John. The author states her position that the epistles of John need to be viewed with reference to the Gospel of John. She writes: “I hold to the thesis that, while the letters must be allowed their own voice, they cannot be properly understood without reference to John’s gospel as the interpretive framework for the metaphors, images, and theology common to both” (p.14). Thus the helpful chart on pages 25-27, “Some Similarities between John’s Gospel and the Epistles of John”, will be of interest and help to readers of this commentary as well as for the classroom. Jobes likewise rejects any popular 20<sup>th</sup>-century scholarship which asserts the idea that the author of the epistles could not have been the apostle John.

I will highlight two sections that I found most helpful. One was the “In Depth” box in 3 John verses 9-11 entitled “In Depth: What was the Problem with Diotrephes?” (pp.316-319). Here Jobes carefully deals with the popular theories “concerning the reason for Diotrephes’s accusations about the elder and his associates and his refusal to extend hospitality to them” (p.316). Putting this into a shaded box makes for easier reading. This is a current trend in layout which should be followed. That said, the more fundamental question is does the author explain these theories with adequacy? I believe so. The theoretical explanations, taken together with her exegetical comment and the theology in application sections, make for a strong presentation on these four verses yet without verbosity.

The other valuable aspect of her commentary which I appreciated was her concluding short summation chapter, “The Theology of John’s Letters” (pp. 339-345). It is not an essay with footnotes but serves more as a concluding summation. Her sub-points here are: spiritual authority, eternal life, sin and atonement, remaining in Christ, and love for God and love for others. These five themes are essential to grasping what John’s epistles are about.

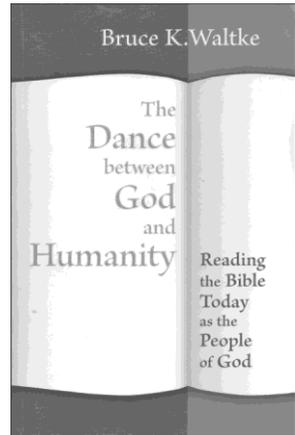
Jobes’ commentary will be of service to new or seasoned evangelical

preachers alike and to students and lecturers in Christian evangelical theological colleges or seminaries.

*Reviewed by Jack C. Whytock*

***The Dance between God and Humanity: Reading the Bible Today as the People of God.* Bruce K. Waltke. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013, 528 pp., paper. ISBN 978-0-8028-6736-0**

Here is testimony of God's faithfulness to a man committed to the task of welding together careful exegesis of Scripture and true spirituality for the purpose of knowing God. Bruce Waltke has doctorates from Dallas Theological Seminary and Harvard University; he has served as professor of Old Testament at Dallas, Westminster, and Reformed Theological Seminaries and Regent College; and he is currently Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Old Testament at Knox Theological Seminary and Professor Emeritus of Biblical Studies at Regent College. This volume provides current biblical scholars, primarily seminary graduates, with a rich, accessible collection of over thirty of Waltke's best



articles produced during his fifty-year plus career and covers such diverse subjects as textual criticism, Psalms, Proverbs, creation, atonement, biblical authority, evangelical spirituality, hermeneutics, biblical Hebrew, human reproduction, retirement, the role of women, and land. The majority of the articles were written in the 1980s and 90s, but five are from earlier and four were written in the 2000s. In fact, it is remarkable that in his seventies Professor Waltke has written several books, notably *A Commentary on Micah* (Eerdmans, 2007), *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach* (Zondervan, 2006), and two NICOT volumes on *The Book of Proverbs* (Eerdmans, 2004, 2005).

Space allows for only a sample of the articles to be reviewed. The foundational introduction, entitled "My Philosophy of Christian Education", is a brilliant exposé of the insufficient attention given by evangelicals generally, in practice and in textbooks, to the exegete's dependence upon the Holy Spirit if he or she is to arrive at a valid interpretation of Scripture. In particular, the grammatico-historical method "is appropriate for understanding the text, but inappropriate for the principle aim of Christian understanding of Scripture, the knowledge of God" (p. 9-10).

The article "The Aims of Old Testament Textual Criticism" shows that it is naïve to assume that all text critics work with the aim of restoring the original composition "that left the author's hand" (p. 23). Some aim at restoring

the final edited text, others the earliest attested form of the text. Some canonical critics aim only to isolate a number of accepted texts “belonging to varying communities of faith” (p. 29), and still other textual critics seek to reconstruct the final literary variants that are each seen as valid within the canon.

The articles “The First Seven Days: What Is the Creation Account Trying to Tell Us?” and “Myth or History? The Literary Genre of Genesis Chapter 1” form a complementary pair. In particular, “The First Seven Days” is a very succinct and surprisingly current (first published in 1988) presentation of the interpretive options for understanding the biblical creation account. Waltke distinguishes between the concordists, who attempt to harmonize science and Scripture, and the non-concordists, who recognize that Genesis 1:1-2:3 is not intended to be either straightforward history or science, but is best understood as an artistic-literary-theological account of creation (more fully argued in “Myth or History?”).

The essay “Evangelical Spirituality: A Biblical Scholar’s Perspective” sounds a clear call for evangelicals to aim for an authentic biblical spirituality defined as love of God and love of man. Most helpfully, against the background of “the death of God” philosophy of modern secular culture, Waltke presents the God-centred life as founded upon faith in God, fear of God, and repentance before God (p. 264).

In summary, this collection demonstrates that careful exegesis and a concern for true spirituality have enduring value. I am very pleased, therefore, to give this volume high recommendation as one that will refresh and stimulate many a biblical scholar.

*Reviewed by Greg Phillips*

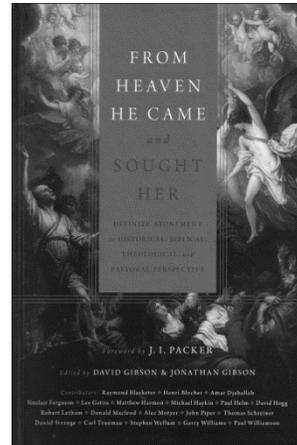
## Systematic Theology

***From Heaven He Came and Sought Her: Definite Atonement in Historical, Biblical, Theological, and Pastoral Perspective.* Eds., David Gibson and Jonathan Gibson. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013, 703 pp., hc. ISBN 978-1-4335-1276-6**

This volume provides a comprehensive treatment of one of the most controversial doctrines in Christian theology, namely, definite atonement. There are several reasons why it is noteworthy.

First, it is careful about terminology. As many readers will know, the familiar way to refer to this doctrine is “limited atonement” (the “L” in the famous TULIP acronym), but neither J. I. Packer in his foreword (pp. 15-16) nor the editors in their introduction are content to use the familiar term because they believe it to be misleading. While this may appear to be a cosmetic issue, words may carry significant linguistic and historical connotations, and I believe that it is helpful that the editors have highlighted the importance of getting their terminology correct from the very outset. Likewise they avoid the popular characterisation of the debate as being “Calvinism versus Arminianism” because, among other reasons, it does not take account of the long history of various aspects of the debate and so, in a memorable phrase, “simply lobotomizes history” (p. 42).

Second, it is both multi- and inter-disciplinary in its approach. It is multi-disciplinary in the sense that, as the sub-title indicates, it addresses the topic from the perspective of historical, biblical, theological, and pastoral studies. That in itself is useful in a single volume. But more than this, it is inter-disciplinary in the sense that the editors consciously seek to allow the various disciplines to inform each other. The editors describe definite atonement as a “biblico-systematic doctrine” (p. 38) and use two images for their endeavour: a web and a map. Regarding the first image, they state, “In much the same way that each strand of a spider’s web is one thing when taken on its own, but another when viewed in its relation to other strands, so the different aspects of the doctrine of the atonement can be integrated to display powerful



coherence” (p. 39). Likewise, with respect to the second image, “by showing the relation of historical, exegetical, theological, and pastoral issues to each other, this volume is a map to and through the doctrine of definite atonement” (p. 39).

Third, it is explicitly intended to be a work of irenic theology (see page 18). This is helpful in discussing a doctrine which has stirred some to use rather strong words (some historical examples are mentioned in passing on page 35). The general tone of the essays is serious/ academic and that probably helps to keep the use of language moderate, but it is good to see the editors make explicit the desire to treat firmly but with respect the views of fellow Christians who disagree with the position of the book.

The idea for this large project was conceived by the editors – two brothers who grew up in a missionary family where Christ was honoured but Reformed theology was not the framework in which their Christian faith was understood. The breadth of the discussion in the various essays and the calibre of the authors whom they recruited is a testimony to their industry and also to their conviction that this doctrine matters greatly to the wellbeing of the Christian Church. (For the first part of an interview with the Gibson brothers, and a link to the second part, see <http://booksataglance.com/author-interviews/david-and-jonathan-gibson-editors-of-from-heaven-he-came-and-sought-her>.) The book is composed of twenty-three essays (including the editors’ introduction). There are seven essays in the historical perspective section (which is deliberately placed first to recognise that all our engagement with the biblical text necessarily comes in historical context); six essays in the biblical perspective section; six essays in the theological perspective section; and three essays in the pastoral perspective section. Many of the contributors will be well known to those familiar with theological literature, while a few will be less so. All, however, are well-qualified to tackle their subjects.

It is impossible to review each essay and the volume is so wide-ranging that individual readers will inevitably find some essays with which they disagree at points. However, the authors provide support for their views in terms of citations from both original sources and secondary literature, so even where the reader disagrees with a position taken, they should still benefit from the presentation of evidence, the arguments gathered, and the references to relevant bibliography.

The essays in this volume are serious works of scholarship and so demand a significant degree of theological understanding. While they are generally clearly written, they are not easy reading. Several essays include regular reference to the Hebrew and Greek language of the biblical texts and the original script of these languages is used in such cases. The Hebrew and Greek are not transliterated, but an English translation is usually provided (at least for the first reference to a term).

It is highly unlikely that everyone who reads this volume will be persuad-

ed either of the overall validity of the general position on particular redemption which is presented in this book or of the validity of each exegetical, historical, theological, and pastoral argument which is found in the various essays. But this volume now provides the serious reader, whether currently convinced or unconvinced of the truth of particular redemption, with a thorough, careful, and irenic analysis of the major issues at stake.

This volume should be of particular interest and help to pastors, lecturers, and theological students. Any future writing on this topic must take the contents of this book into account.

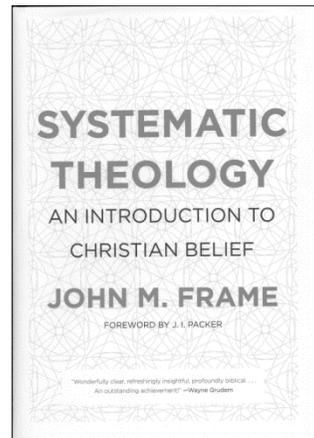
I pray that many will read this book and be persuaded, for the sake of their own faith and for the proclamation of the gospel, that “all those for whom Christ died will come to faith, and will never be plucked from his or his Father’s hand, being kept by the power (or Spirit) of God for salvation on the last day. Blessed assurance indeed – and a true cure for souls” (Sinclair B. Ferguson, p. 631).

*Reviewed by Alistair I. Wilson*

***Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief.* John M. Frame. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2013, 1219 pp., hc. ISBN 978-1-59638-217-6<sup>1</sup>**

John Frame has managed to write a systematic theology (1219 pages). This is an extraordinary achievement when one considers that he has already written several significant volumes on certain theological *loci*. Those familiar with Frame's writings know that he has specialized in prolegomena and theology proper, with previous books on the doctrine of God (864 pages) and on the word of God (684 pages). He has also written extensively on the Christian life (1104 pages). Based on these works, and others, Frame has a significant reputation in broadly Reformed circles. This might explain the plethora of commendations (seventy – how biblical!), covering an astonishing twenty pages. With such a glowing list of theologians, the work marks a significant landmark in systematic theology. Does the work live up to the praise offered by the *septuaginta*?

The book itself is made up of twelve parts, each covering one of the major *loci* in systematic theology. There are appendices at the end, one on Frame's



<sup>1</sup> Reprinted with permission by the author. Accessed July 29, 2014 from: <http://www.reformation21.org/shelf-life/systematic-theology-an-introduction.php>.

“triads”, and a helpful glossary of theological terms. There are many positives in this book (see below), but I do have certain methodological questions that need to be raised.

Up to page 767 Frame covers his areas of expertise: prolegomena and theology proper. These five parts constitute almost 70% of the book (767 out of 1124 pages). Frame candidly admits that “in many places some text has been cut and pasted from those past books” (preface). But he also claims to have done more than summarize the big books. He has also tried to be more “biblical, clear, and cogent” (preface). Clarity and cogency have always been a hallmark of his writings; and his *Systematic Theology* is certainly biblical, perhaps even to the point of biblicism in some places. Unfortunately, the current work fails to improve in the areas he has already addressed in previous books (the footnotes in chapter two, for example, bring attention to his previous work on the topics addressed). We could more heartily welcome this approach if he made some further contributions to the other *loci* on which he has not already published. But those other *loci* do not receive the attention worthy of a thinker of Frame’s caliber. Another issue warrants discussion: Frame acknowledges that his *Systematic Theology* is less historical than other similar volumes. This method, I think, hurts Frame’s analysis of key doctrines in several places. I understand his desire not to be slavish in his dependence on others, but the great minds of the church would have been a help to Frame in key areas.

His lack of historical-theological interaction leads to a number of queries from my perspective. For example, I appreciate that he holds to the eternal covenant of redemption (pp. 58-60), but his discussion of this covenant differs slightly from the classical Reformed treatments of the topic. Consulting previous works on this covenant may have helped his discussion immensely, and perhaps Frame may have then been able to give some scriptural justification for what has been a thorny problem for Reformed theologians: “the faithful obedience of the...Spirit” (p. 60) in this eternal covenant. In addition, there are places where Frame does not simply modify classical Reformed views, but in fact goes against them. Surprisingly, he holds to the eternal subordination of the Son and the Spirit (pp. 500-502). I wonder whether over-zealous complementarians are responsible for this theological anomaly. Whatever the reason, such language needs to be jettisoned. Moreover, Frame also rejects the historic Reformed view of God’s impassibility (pp. 412-18). His reasons were not compelling, and I think his specific Christological argument to help his position is tenuous (p. 416). Denial of divine impassibility is a fairly serious error, as I see it, and others such as Bruce Ware and Rob Lister have also advanced this aberrant view in recent years. I raise these two issues in order to show that when Frame departs on significant doctrines from the theological tradition he belongs to, he should have interacted with the best from his tradition. On page 413 Frame critiques theologians who understand God’s emotions as anthropomorphisms, but we are not told who

these theologians are. Frame approvingly cites Don Carson's critique of Anselm's idea that God is "passionless". This "Greek metaphysical thought" (p.413) is not biblical, according to Frame. But one should note that the Westminster Confession likewise denies that God has passions (WCF 2.1; see also R.A. Muller, *PRRD* 3:309-11; 551ff.). The Westminster divines held to this because they held to God's immutability; and when you strike at one attribute you simply strike at them all.

It almost appears as though the "Bible-alone" approach handicaps Frame in places where he needs the Reformed tradition most. John Murray was radically biblical, but he was also vigorously exegetical and did not simply engage in proof-texting. Frame is radically biblical, but not (in this volume, at least) vigorously exegetical – something he needs to be if he is not going to engage in serious historical-theological analysis where he departs from his own tradition on important doctrines.

Where Frame does rely on previous scholarship, such as the work of Meredith Kline, he affirms that the Mosaic covenant resembles the form of a suzerain treaty (pp. 18-19). Here Frame shares much in common with Michael Horton (!) insofar as both make use of the work of Kline, who himself relied on the work of George Mendenhall. But Ancient Near Eastern scholarship has developed quite significantly since Mendenhall, and I happen to think theologians today need to show more care in their appropriation of ANE treaties and how these treaties relate to biblical covenants. Incidentally, Frame does not appear to follow through the conclusions of Suzerain treaties as Kline did (see pp. 24-25).

The other issue I raise concerns the lack of substance in his chapters on theological *loci* that move beyond prolegomena and theology proper. For example, in the area of Christology, Frame spends twenty pages on the person of Christ. Again, he does not really interact with the best from our tradition on key topics, such as the relation between the two natures (pp. 889-92). As a consequence, his thinking is a little muddled on the communication of attributes. He argues – correctly, I might add – that, "We should never say that 'Jesus' human nature did this or that'... Jesus himself was the actor" (p. 891). But on the very next page he makes the error he warned against in a few places, such as the following: "We may say, certainly, that Jesus' human nature constantly pleased God..." (p. 892). Jesus pleased God; his human nature did not please God. There are a host of other Christological issues that remain unsolved in this volume, including Frame's idea that Christ's miracles are "presumably...proper to his divine nature" (p. 891). The Scriptures are quite clear that Christ performed miracles in the power of the Spirit (Matt. 12:28). The whole point of the Reformed *communicatio*, as understood by John Owen (see *Works*, 3:160ff), for example, was to explain how the Holy Spirit could have any meaningful role in the life of the God-man. I'm not sure how Frame could explain the pervasive role of the Spirit in the life of Christ based on his understanding of the relationship between the two natures.

Only nineteen pages are devoted to the work of Christ – half a page to Christ’s intercession (p. 907). And his treatment of Christ’s offices is too basic (see pp. 900-10). His handling of the states of Christ simply contains lengthy quotations from the Westminster Larger Catechism (pp. 910-13). Furthermore, chapter 39 on the Holy Spirit is a mere ten pages (pp. 923-32).

There are some notable high points in the book, especially his treatments of God’s Word and epistemology. I deeply appreciated his discussion of whether believers are totally depraved (pp. 865-71). His triadic structures are occasionally helpful (p. 58), but often perplexing and strained (see p. 233). Nonetheless, he has a remarkable gift for clarity. He makes theology practical from beginning to end, with a final chapter on how Christians ought to live. No one can ever accuse Frame of not loving his Bible and making it pre-eminent in his theological discourse. For that I am grateful. No wonder his writings have been hugely beneficial to the Reformed, evangelical world. This work has, as its crown jewel, much of Frame’s thought in one volume. Students new to theology will find this to be one of the very best systematic theologies ever written for accessible Reformed theology, and they need not be intimidated by its size.

However, for the more experienced theologian, Frame’s *Systematic Theology* is too uneven. There are sections that do not do justice to the stature and brilliance of Frame’s thinking. Could Frame revise and substantiate this otherwise good volume? I think so. Indeed, I would like to think that is a possibility.

*Reviewed by Dr. Mark Jones, Pastor at Faith Presbyterian Church, Vancouver, British Columbia and Research Associate at the University of the Free State (Bloemfontein).*



***Antinomianism: Reformed Theology’s Unwelcome Guest.* Mark Jones. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2013, 145 pp., paper. ISBN 978-1-59638-815-4**

Mark Jones has provided an analysis of the 17<sup>th</sup>-century antinomian debate because the gospel proclaiming a freer free grace as the true antidote to moralism and legalism has resurfaced in present-day Reformed circles. He writes, “I have been dismayed at some of the theology that passes as Reformed, when in fact it has corollaries to seventeenth-century antinomianism” (p. xv). In recounting the history of the debate, he is primarily concerned to provide a biblical evaluation of the issues debated that will not only alert readers, particularly pastors, to antinomian tenets and tendencies in the contemporary scene, but also to provide a framework for a biblical response.

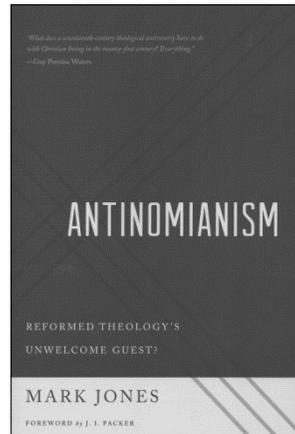
Jones begins with an overview of antinomian debates in the Reformation (Luther and Lutherans), Puritan England (1630s to 1650s), New England (1630s), NonConforming England (1690s) and Scotland (the Marrow Controversy, early 1700s). He entitles his survey “Lessons from History”, concluding that antinomianism is subtle and complex involving more than just a negative assessment of the law. Coming to an accurate understanding of the tenets of antinomianism requires asking the right questions. It is not only a matter of what is denied but often what is neglected.

For Jones, the history of antinomianism also reveals that it flows out of a faulty Christology, and he is concerned to make that point as he addresses the various issues that the antinomian debate raises. Antinomianism is fundamentally a Christological problem not only in terms of the work of Christ but also the person of Christ. He writes, “A Reformed view of Christ’s person is as important as a Reformed view of his work in this whole issue” (p. 17). Jones will conclude his book by helpfully demonstrating that “the solution to antinomianism must be to understand and love the person and work of Christ” (p. 128).

Drawing from such antinomians as John Eaton, Robert Towne, John Saltmarsh, Tobias Crisp, and from a wide range of orthodox Reformed scholars including the usual stalwarts John Owen, Thomas Goodwin, Samuel Rutherford, Anthony Burgess, Jones analyzes and evaluates six issues that characterized the 17<sup>th</sup>-century antinomian debate. He not only assesses the theology of the debate, but also spends a chapter reflecting on the rhetoric of the debate and the light it sheds on contemporary gospel preaching and teaching. He demonstrates the subtlety and complexity of the way in which antinomian teaching was presented and argued, making it difficult to pinpoint antinomian errors or someone as an antinomian. He goes on to argue the same difficulty continues in assessing some contemporary Reformed preaching and teaching.

Jones summarizes his analysis and evaluation of the antinomian debate by outlining the characteristics of antinomian theology in contrast to orthodox Reformed theology. Antinomianism tended to blur the distinction between justification and sanctification and much of the dispute focused on matters related to the believer’s sanctification. He outlines the following six characteristics of antinomian theology.

Antinomians “tended not only to ridicule the idea that we must attempt to conform our lives to the pattern of Christ, but also to suggest that any work we perform is not our work but Christ’s” (p. 125). Orthodox Reformed divines considered imitating Christ an essential aspect of the believer’s life,



and argued that the believer's obedience is both Spirit empowered and truly his own.

Antinomians, as the name suggests, allowed no role for the law in the believer's sanctification, whereas orthodox Reformed divines taught "the law accompanied by the Spirit is a true means of sanctification" (p. 125).

Antinomians and orthodox Reformed theologians crossed swords over the nature of the gospel and its relation to the law as they function in the life of the believer. Antinomians argued for a sharp distinction between law and gospel, rejecting the orthodox Reformed formulation that they "sweetly comply", i.e., work together as friends. Antinomians limited the gospel to promising, rejecting their opponents understanding of the gospel as also including threatenings and commands to obedience.

Antinomians rejected the Reformed insistence that good works done by faith and empowered by the Spirit are necessary for salvation, and that such works, although imperfect, are genuinely good. They also rejected any appeal to rewards as a motivation for good works, considering such an appeal as leading to a servile and unfitting obedience.

Antinomians rejected the Reformed distinction between God's benevolent love and His love of complacency. In the antinomian scheme of things "God does not love us any more or any less on the basis of our obedience or lack thereof" (p. 127). Where Reformed divines argued "God and Christ really are pleased and displeased with Christians" (p.127), Antinomians declared God sees no sin in the believer, and thus God does not get angry with His people.

Antinomians rejected the Reformed teaching that the evidence of sanctification is a ground of assurance. For antinomian theologians there is only one ground of assurance, i.e., faith in Christ.

Jones' "aim is to help readers, particularly pastors, understand certain tenets of antinomianism, which will allow them to connect the dots, so to speak, in the contemporary scene" (p. xv). He refrains from naming names, but he makes an exception when he pinpoints one example of contemporary antinomian theology, namely, Tullian Tchividjian's *Jesus + Nothing = Everything*. He describes this book as "one lengthy antinomian diatribe, and it bears a striking resemblance to the content and rhetoric of various 17<sup>th</sup>-century antinomian writings" (p. 91).

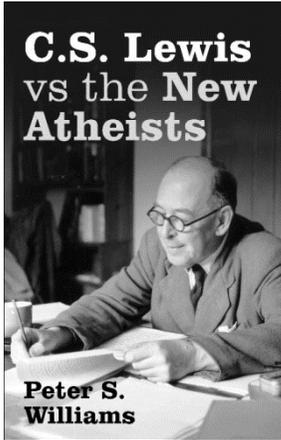
As a scholar who has focused on post-Reformation theology, Jones is well-equipped for the task he has undertaken. He makes a complex debate accessible and relevant.

Mark Jones' *Antinomianism* is essential reading for anyone concerned for faithful gospel ministry.

*Reviewed by Howard M. McPhee, the former pastor of the Springdale Christian Reformed Church, Bradford, Ontario, where he served for seventeen years.*



**C. S. Lewis vs the New Atheists. Peter S. Williams. Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2013, 276 pp., paper. ISBN 978-1-84227-770-6**



Shortly after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on New York's World Trade Center, a group of self-proclaimed intellectuals abandoned their passive efforts for global acceptance of atheism and turned toward an aggressive campaign of public relations to rid the world of, as they claimed, the destructive influences of religion. This new aggressive movement was championed by four prominent scientists and writers (Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens, Daniel Dennett, and Sam Harris), who came to be known as the four horsemen of new atheism. While the tone of the writings emanating from these four are filled with previously unseen ridicule and vitriol towards

religion, and Christianity in particular, their arguments are essentially replays of ideas from the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, dressed up in new clothes.

*C.S. Lewis vs the New Atheists* is the latest work written by philosopher and apologist Peter S. Williams, Assistant Professor in Communication and Worldviews at Gimlekollen School of Journalism and Communication in Norway, to counter the new atheist movement. In this work, Williams asks how C.S. Lewis, the greatest Christian apologist of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, might respond to 21<sup>st</sup>-century atheism. Williams explores how Lewis' journey from unbelief to Christianity illuminates and undercuts the objections of the new atheists. Through this excellent contribution to the field of apologetics, Williams assembles arguments made by C.S. Lewis more than fifty years ago to show that there is nothing new in new atheism.

In the opening chapter, entitled "Old-Time Atheism", Williams sets the stage for his work. He presents quotes from the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, like those of philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche and the *Economist Magazine*, and 21<sup>st</sup>-century new atheists all claiming "God is dead." In the midst of this, Williams introduces C.S. Lewis' actual words and arranges them as if Lewis were in an actual face-to-face debate. Having established the framework of his work, Williams goes on to present five objections C.S. Lewis' had with atheism.

In the first objection, Williams shows that Lewis is critical of "scientism," which is the raising of science to the level of a philosophy with the claim that science can explain all questions, and anything it can't explain is meaningless. Lewis points out that the scientism of the four horsemen of new atheism claims too much for science and intentionally misrepresents religion by using the worst cases it can find.

For the second objection, Williams demonstrates that Lewis' book *Surprised by Joy* proves that the human mind longs for meaning, something the natural world cannot offer. At the core, Lewis argues that people feel life is meaningless without God, something contemporary atheists ignore.

The third objection is the most philosophical in Williams' book. He presents Lewis' argument that if natural processes alone are responsible for the human mind, and evolution favors genes that increase survival and reproduction, then how can we have any confidence that mere thoughts are true?

For the fourth objection, Williams outlines Lewis' view that the new atheists' worldview has no basis for establishing moral judgments because moral judgments cannot be scientifically verified.

The final argument Lewis had against atheism is his well-known discourse that when Jesus claimed to be the Son of God, He was either a deceiver, or deceived, or truly divine. Lewis demonstrates that there is no middle ground to faith; believing Jesus was a great moral teacher but not the Son of God is impossible, as the reliability of Scripture leaves one with no other conclusion than that Jesus is the Messiah.

All told, Williams' work would be a fine addition to any apologetic library. Having taught apologetics myself, I can attest to the fact that the questions C.S. Lewis addressed in his life remain relevant today. Additionally, pastors and teachers will find that Williams' book presents a readable, yet detailed treatment of the apologetic answers to questions that people often ask regarding Christianity and faith. This reason and the outstanding assemblage of how C.S. Lewis would combat new atheism make this book a valuable resource for all Christians, providing ammunition for addressing old attacks dressed up in new clothes.

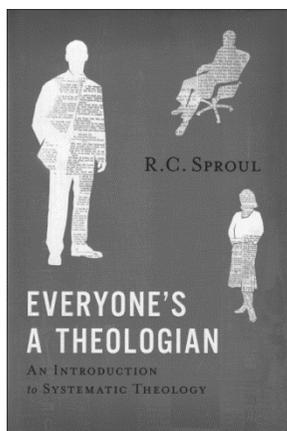
*Reviewed by Steve Adamson, the Executive Director for the Association of Reformed Theological Seminaries Commission on Accreditation. His Ph.D. is in historical apologetics.*



***Everyone's A Theologian: An Introduction to Systematic Theology.* R. C. Sproul. Orlando, FL: Reformation Trust, 2014, 357 pp., hc. ISBN 978-1-56769-365-2**

There have been several new texts written in systematic theology in recent years, with R. C. Sproul's *Everyone's A Theologian: An Introduction to Systematic Theology* being but one of these. Just in this volume of the *Haddington House Journal* alone we are reviewing three such new texts. I recall that in past years we had no such reviews, so the publishing of these has certainly undergone some kind of a renaissance. Thus, with all these new publications, comparisons will be made and also the suitability of these for various teaching levels will be concluded.

*Everyone's A Theologian* has a good main title. The point is well made, and Sproul rightly goes on in his first chapter to make the point about this (p. 12). This main title would also endeavor to popularize the reading of systematic theology and does tell us that this is not going to be the definitive tome on systematic theology but "an introduction to the Bible's major teachings" (jacket).



The book is arranged into eight parts – all quite classical and familiar – introduction (theology, revelation), theology proper (God), anthropology and creation, Christology, pneumatology, soteriology, ecclesiology, and eschatology. Then each part is subdivided into short chapters averaging five pages each for a total of sixty chapters. The book is virtually free of any footnotes – there are only seventeen, and eleven of these are references to other Sproul books. There is no bibliography,

but the three ecumenical creeds (Apostles', Nicene, and Calcedon) conclude the book, followed by subject and Scripture indices. So the book has been stripped down to be as plain and non-academic as possible in its overall presentation, which will no doubt broaden its appeal and overall usefulness. In saying this, it does not mean though that this book lacks solid and substantive doctrinal meat – no, that is all most definitely there.

As I read *Everyone's A Theologian*, I went back to look at Sproul's 1992 book *Essential Truths of the Christian Faith*.<sup>1</sup> There are many similarities in terms of content and approach. *Everyone's A Theologian* certainly has a better style about the writing, but one feature I liked about *Essentials* was its side-bar in every chapter with a list of "Biblical passages for reflection". As a teaching tool this was most helpful. Again, *Everyone's A Theologian* builds upon Sproul's three volume "guide"/commentary on the Westminster Con-

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<sup>1</sup> R. C. Sproul, *Essential Truths of the Christian Faith* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1992).

fession of Faith.<sup>2</sup> I say “builds” because many of the same *loci* of theology are commented upon in both *Truths We Confess* and *Everyone’s A Theologian*, and taken as a whole the author has been busy over decades studying, writing, and teaching these truths. Thus we come now to his more formal and mature form. I found *Everyone’s A Theologian* much more concise than *Truths We Confess*, which in sections was very verbose, and I have heard this from students repeatedly. So I do believe in *Everyone’s a Theologian* we see Sproul as a mature teacher and writer who has endeavoured for years to take theology to the people and not just to a college or seminary lecture hall, although he has done both.

Many will then ask about how *Everyone’s A Theologian* compares with the works of other conservative theologians. I believe its closest rival is J. I. Packer’s *Concise Theology*,<sup>3</sup> though with acknowledged differences. There has been a great tradition of such basic, overview, introductory texts in systematic theology being well-used for years. Some of the best in this tradition have been Louis Berkhof’s *Summary of Christian Doctrine* (1938),<sup>4</sup> T. C. Hammond’s *In Understanding Be Men: A Handbook on Christian Doctrine for Non-Theological Students* (orig. 1936, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. 1951),<sup>5</sup> Bruce Milne’s *Know the Truth: A Handbook of Christian Belief* (1982),<sup>6</sup> John Frame’s *Salvation Belongs to the Lord: An Introduction to Systematic Theology* (2006),<sup>7</sup> and the shorter versions of the respective systematic theologies of Wayne Grudem<sup>8</sup> and Michael Horton<sup>9</sup>. (“Short” here may still not be short!) There is clearly a need for these shorter works, and they have great usefulness for laity, for Bible college instruction, and for adult classes and study groups. Each lecturer will have to decide amongst these weighing their strengths and evaluating their own context for reading levels, background of students, and course goals/outcomes. A helpful exercise is to select a particular doctrine in

<sup>2</sup> R. C. Sproul, *Truths We Confess: A Layman’s Guide to the Westminster Confession of Faith*, 3 vols. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2006).

<sup>3</sup> J. I. Packer, *Concise Theology: A Guide to Historic Christian Beliefs* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1993).

<sup>4</sup> Louis Berkhof, *Summary of Christian Doctrine: For Senior Classes* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1938).

<sup>5</sup> T. C. Hammond, *In Understanding Be Men: A Handbook on Christian Doctrine for Non-Theological Students*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 1982).

<sup>6</sup> Bruce Milne, *Know the Truth: A Handbook of Christian Belief* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1982).

<sup>7</sup> John Frame, *Salvation Belongs to the Lord: An Introduction to Systematic Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2006).

<sup>8</sup> Two different works here: Wayne Grudem, *Bible Doctrine: Essential Teachings of the Christian Faith* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999) and Wayne Grudem, *Christian Beliefs: Twenty Basics Every Christian Should Know*, ed. Elliot Grudem (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005).

<sup>9</sup> Michael Horton, *Pilgrim Theology: Core Doctrines for Christian Disciples* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013).

theology, such as sanctification, and read it through in Sproul, Packer, Milne, Frame, etc. and evaluate it in light of your context to see which will work best.

*Everyone's A Theologian* fits into a very familiar classical presentation of the material. I personally wish more Scripture references had been given in each chapter. The length of each chapter is excellent – just right for most readers. The page typeset has been done well, which is a real consideration as dense typeset is difficult for many. I hear complaints about the systematic theology overview at the back of the *ESV Study Bible*, many finding it hard-reading.<sup>10</sup> The language in Sproul's book can at times be stretching – some will wish there were fewer Latin terms. The work also does not always enter into the realities of the global church today, unlike a much larger introductory work like Gerald Bray's *God Is Love*.<sup>11</sup>

*Everyone's A Theologian* should be seen as a solid, meaty, primer on classical evangelical and Reformed systematic theology. It is an excellent place to begin, and one can branch out from there once the basics have been covered well. My perception is that this book would appeal to an interdenominational college context as well. It does not say the last word on each point, but it was not meant to be such a tome – that would be more of a one thousand plus page work. Take it as a meaty primer for systematic theology coming in the line of Sproul's earlier works and being added to a growing list of such introductory texts now available that are reliable, trustworthy, and engaging.

*Reviewed by Jack C. Whytock*

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<sup>10</sup> See Wayne Grudem, "Biblical Doctrine: An Overview", in *ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 2505-2534.

<sup>11</sup> Gerald Bray, *God Is Love: A Biblical and Systematic Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012).

## Historical Theology

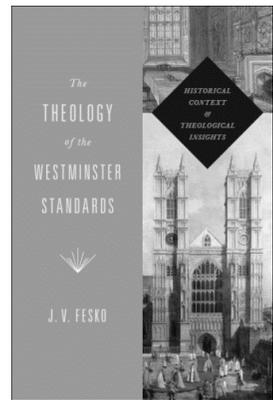
***The Theology of the Westminster Standards: Historical Context and Theological Insights.* J. V. Fesko. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014, paper, 441 pp. ISBN (trade paperback) 978-1-4335-3311-2**

As we draw close to the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation (1517-2017), we can expect many new works to appear related to the Reformation and the theological children of the Reformation. Thus, it was not a surprise to see on the back cover of this book the logo for Refo500 next to Crossway's logo. Herman Selderhuis, the director of Refo500, is also one of the book endorsers, stating on the back cover, "This book is a sourcebook par excellence."

That descriptive word by Selderhuis, "sourcebook", is most helpful because this is not a commentary on one or more documents of the Westminster Assembly. The author, John Fesko, makes this very clear at the outset and tells us he will explore "key subjects of the standards in an illustrative fashion" but starting first "with an overview of the historical, religious, and political context in which the Westminster Standards originated" (p. 30). So if you are looking for an exhaustive commentary on the Westminster Confession of Faith, this is not the book to purchase. However, if you want to learn about aspects of the context of the Westminster Assembly documents and some key *loci* of theology through related primary works, then this is the book for you. However, be aware it is not always an easy go – more on that later.

Fesko selects ten *loci* to focus upon (some of these are combined, double topics) and organises the work around ten chapters as an introductory study in historical theology of Westminster, namely: the doctrine of scripture, God and the decree, covenant and creation, the doctrine of Christ, justification, sanctification, the law of God and the Christian life, the church, worship, and eschatology.

Before he looks at these ten points, Fesko provides a helpful chapter entitled, "The Historical and Theological Context" (pp. 33-63). Here he deals with the sub-points of "Politics and Religion", "Wars and Rumors of Wars", "Encroaching Threats and the Formation of the Assembly", "Theological



Chaos”, and “The Work and Influences of the Assembly”. This chapter is a good overview and well organised. The chart of names cited in the assembly’s minutes is most helpful to explore the discussion of influences. A chart on the kings and queens from Henry VIII to Charles I with a brief descriptor of relevance would have been helpful as a tool for many readers whose British history may not be very clear.

One omission in this chapter which I found odd was there was virtually no discussion about the diversity of the members of the Assembly by their “parties” to develop the context more fully by briefly explaining labels such as “English Presbyterian” or “Independent”. The author had stated earlier some readers will be disappointed that matters of polity as a *locus* were omitted, but he hoped others would do such. However, in an historical-context chapter, I do not believe this can be omitted as it looms very large not just at the Assembly but also for the context and understanding of Puritanism. Also, somewhat curiously, the word “Puritan” appears to be muted as to its usage. I am still pondering this and wondering why. The author speaks of “early Modern Reformed” many times, but I am curious about the infrequent use of the terminology “Puritan” or “Puritanism”. It makes me think the author was deliberately trying to avoid the term in his work as much as possible except in source titles in the footnotes.

Fesko writes to challenge caricature thinking and to show nuances of the theological positions and arguments associated with the Westminster divines and the complexity of the historical context. He states, “History is messy, and the times are often complex. The more I study the historical context of the Westminster Standards, the more I am struck by the complexity and messiness of it all” (p.13). Fesko may unsettle some readers by certain of his assertions. For example, on some of the vagueness of the language in the Westminster documents: “At many points the Confession is very specific in terms of what it rejects or teaches, but at others points it is brilliantly ambiguous or vague, thus allowing various theologians to assent to the document even though it might not advocate each theologian’s precise view on a particular subject” (p.28). Likewise, Fesko asserts that the Westminster divines were “Reformed Catholics”:

In our own day many Reformed theologians would never positively cite Patristic, medieval, Lutheran, or pagan sources, but this is precisely what numerous early modern Reformed theologians did...Unlike our own day, when Reformed theologians are content to labour for their entire ministries in theologically sectarian-like settings where orthodoxy is measured by a very narrow set of criteria, the Westminster divines had a very different index by which they measured orthodoxy.... (p. 29)

Of the ten *loci* chapters, the three I enjoyed most were the chapters on the doctrine of scripture, sanctification, and the law of God and the Christian life. The chapter on scripture was superbly written with excellent analysis of key

points in chapter one of the Westminster Confession of Faith and comparisons to many primary sources to properly expose historical continuities and contemporary influences, developments, and consistencies or inconsistencies of stress and nuance. I believe this chapter would be very helpful in senior-level courses. I cannot say the same about the chapters on God and the decree and covenant and creation. These chapters seem to over-contextualise the historical theology without making the subjects clear and concise. The discussion on “contingency” needed to be condensed and I believe would be a “hard-go” for many readers. No doubt many will relish it, but I suspect these will be professors, not the average theology student.

North American readers who are up-to-date on the two kingdom issue will find this topic surfacing at several different junctures in the book by way of background development. Whether all will be convinced of the author’s viewpoint, I am not certain. Also, it is doubtful this will be relevant outside North America as some theological skirmishes are regional. Further, I did wonder if the concept of the establishment principle was really adequately considered whereby nations are called upon to advance the Kingdom of the Lord.

I appreciated the discussion on baptism in the chapter on the church. It was good to see the author’s analysis of the matter of baptismal regeneration and whether Westminster did teach such, as David Wright not that long ago argued. Fesko is very helpful here.

Obviously Fesko usually focuses on the theology of the Westminster Confession of Faith, but he also appropriately draws upon the two catechisms and the Directory for Public Worship. The latter is highlighted, rightly-so, in the chapter on worship.

The work ends with a very helpful select annotated bibliography – much more helpful than an exhaustive non-annotated one. Fesko’s comments here are good and guide the reader wisely. There are three indices: a general index, a scripture index, and an index of the Westminster Standards. The last is unique and also allows the reader to find something quickly in the text from within the Confession, the Larger Catechism, or the Shorter Catechism.

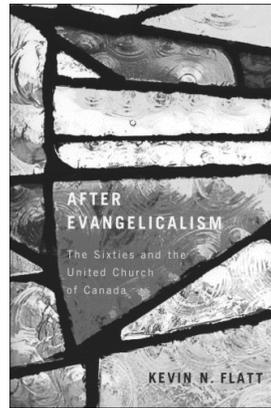
*The Theology of the Westminster Standards: Historical Context and Theological Insights* is a good “sourcebook”, to quote Selderhuis again. It certainly opens up an incredible gold-mine of historical theological material through related primary source material and helps the reader to gain many new insights into the world of the theology of the Westminster Standards. It will be a good resource for all who teach on these Standards and should be in many theological libraries. Teachers will need to discern the level they are teaching before making it a textbook. A few typographical errors are in the text but these are not factual and maybe they are not in the paper-trade edition; I was provided an electronic copy to review. It is certainly an exciting time to be studying and teaching the Westminster Standards as there is a whole new world of materials flowering in the field. John Fesko is to be

commended, and through this new book he well represents Westminster Theological Seminary, Escondido, the institution where he teaches and serves as academic dean.

*Reviewed by Jack C. Whytock*

***After Evangelicalism: The Sixties and the United Church of Canada.* Kevin N. Flatt. Kingston and Montreal, ON: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2013. 349 pp., paper. ISBN 978-0-7735-4124-5**

Next year marks the ninetieth anniversary of the establishment of what was intended to be Canada's national Protestant church. As so-called "continuing" Presbyterians we have always had an ambivalent attitude toward our cousin as unwanted step-children, spoilers as it were, of that grand experiment in national redemption. The United Church of Canada was intended to have a national, Christianizing effect on a Dominion, destined to be God's dominion from shore to shore, *A Mari Usque Ad Mare*. Canada's national motto, adopted four years before church union, came from Psalm 72.



Now McGill-Queens University Press has published in its Studies in the History of Religion series an examination of how that vision developed. Kevin Flatt, a professor at Redeemer University College in Ancaster, Ontario, has provided a well-researched analysis of Canada's national Protestant church, which at its peak in 1965 had over a million members, more than five per cent of the total population of the country. The subject is of wider interest than for academics: it helps to explain the present-day plight of the mainline churches in contemporary Canada and why the mid-sixties was the high-water mark of establishment Protestantism and what led to its decline, and, some would say, its present parlous state and uncertain future.

As Flatt points out, in spite of its inadequacies and its theological contradictions, the Basis of Union of 1925 was primarily an evangelical document. The strands of Methodist praxis and Presbyterian piety (which owed much to its roots in the Free Church of Scotland) could be traced. The United Church in the 1930s emphasized teetotalism, the need for "conversion" (often unspecified), and evangelism. It was in the early 1940s that a new breed of leadership in Toronto developed, without experience in either of the founding denominations. Flatt calls this a "quiet modernism" that mouthed the old vocabulary but subtly changed the meaning.

As with the rest of Canadian mainline Protestantism, the 1950s was its finest hour. But soon the suburban captivity of the church was to be challenged by the introduction in United Church Sunday Schools across Canada of the 1964 New Curriculum. A firestorm of reaction and opposition emerged, usually dismissed cavalierly by the establishment. In Flatt's analysis the New Curriculum, as it was developed over the previous decade and longer, simply made the "quiet modernism", already espoused by leadership, public, visible, and explicit. The impressive "Christian Education facilities" of the 1950s were soon emptied. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Harvey Cox, John A. T. Robinson, and Pierre Berton exercised a profound influence with their critique of the church, further inflamed by a 1968 United Church publication *Why the Sea Is Boiling Hot*.

There were other straws in the wind. Flatt traces the framing of a new creed for the United Church through its various stages and revisions, the conflicted reaction to the 1964 Billy Graham crusades, and particularly the 1963 departure on retirement of J. R. Mutchmor, with his Methodist social agenda, and his replacement by J. R. Hord ("the only thing we have in common are our initials," Mutchmor sniffed). By 1971 the old United Church Board of Evangelism and Social Service that both J.R.'s had headed was no more.

Flatt's book is a welcome contribution to our understanding of the development of mainline Protestantism at a crucial point in its life. While one may disagree with some of his generalizations, particularly the use of the words "evangelical" and "modernist" which seem too all-inclusive and, in the case of modernism somewhat wrongly dated, the book sheds light on what has happened to Canada's Christian heritage. It provides a useful and instructive antidote to purely cultural and sociological explanations of the 1960s. That decade was indeed a time of cataclysmic change: the tragedy, as Flatt makes abundantly clear, is that instead of trying to steady the ship through the shoals and storms, there was a jettisoning of the cargo. This only made the church more vulnerable and directly contributed to what we see on every main street in Canada: empty hulking edifices that speak of a bygone age. If you want to know why, this is the book to read.

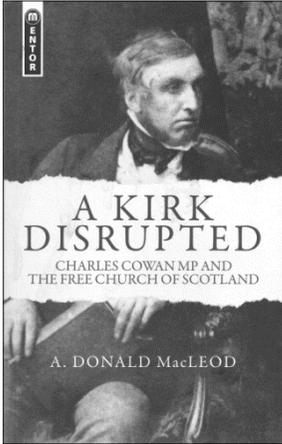
*Reviewed by Dr. A. Donald MacLeod, research professor of Church History at Tyndale Seminary, Toronto. He is a widely published writer and biographer.*



***A Kirk Disrupted: Charles Cowan MP and the Free Church of Scotland.* A. Donald MacLeod. Fearn, Ross-shire, UK: Mentor, 2013, 363 pp., paper. ISBN: 978-1-78191-269-0**

Amongst the many key dates that have shaped Scottish church history, the disruption of 1843 certainly stands as one of them. On May 18, 1843, 474

ministers out of 1,203 clergy walked away from the rights and privileges of the established national church so as to preserve the spiritual independence of the church from state affairs. The result of this event was the formation of a new denomination, which eventually came to be known as the Free Church of Scotland.



Several books have been written on this time period. More recently, Sandy Finlayson's *Unity & Diversity* has provided a biographical sketch of the life and ministry of several of the key figures in the formation of the denomination. MacLeod's book, however, is unique in that it provides a thoroughly researched account of the life of a lesser-known figure by the name of Charles Cowan.

Although unknown to many today, Cowan was an influential figure in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. As a paper-manufacturer, he was a successful businessman. As a Scottish Member of Parliament, Cowan spoke for the rising Scottish middle class in the House of Commons. As an elder and commissioner

in the Free Church of Scotland for forty years, Cowan was a loyal supporter of the Sustenance Fund (pp. 17, 243).<sup>1</sup>

As with other biography books, there is much that can be appreciated in reflecting on someone else's life. The book gives equal attention to Cowan as a businessman, parliamentarian, and elder in the church. The net result is that the reader gets to see how the Christian faith relates to every aspect of life. The book also seeks to be faithful in its presentation of the man. It highlights Cowan's exemplary usage of the wealth that the Lord had entrusted to him (pp. 253-54, 260, 263). But it also highlights that Cowan was a real person who wrestled with real issues.

The book shows how, like the church in Ephesus, Cowan's life seems to reflect a man who lost his first love. Early in life, Cowan was characterized by a deep piety. He would spend four hours each day reading his Bible and was meticulous in writing in his diary the text of every sermon he heard in the 1830s (pp. 102, 311). But his experience in politics and the climate of intellectual pride sweeping through the Free Church would have its effect on Cowan (pp. 158, 199, 252). Although strongly influenced by Thomas Chalmers (p. 254), Cowan would abandon the establishment principle<sup>2</sup> held

<sup>1</sup> The Sustenance Fund was a new principle of clergy compensation in which all inducted ministers received the same amount from a common pool.

<sup>2</sup> Donald Macleod writes, "Historically, the Establishment Principle has meant (1) official state recognition of Christianity as the national religion (2) endowment of the church by the state and (3) civil government having a clearly defined responsibility with regard to religious matters. This responsibility extended to promoting the peace and unity of the church, ensuring the due observance of gospel ordinances and even

by Chalmers and the rest of the Free Church of Scotland and become open to the Voluntaryist<sup>3</sup> position (pp. 152, 249, 252).

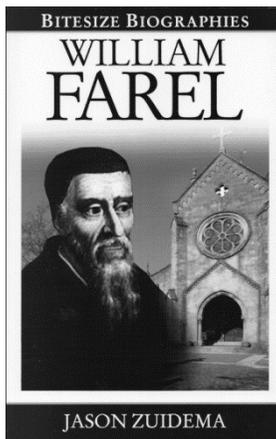
His intellectual curiosity would also cause him to side with and ultimately seek to defend Professor William Robertson Smith, who was a professor at the Aberdeen College of the Free Church. Professor Smith had embraced the teachings of German higher criticism and had written articles undermining the historicity and credibility of the Scriptures (p. 309).

The book is thoroughly researched but probably could have been abbreviated in some of the details in order to appeal to a wider audience. The reader will also notice a few typos throughout the book (pp. 93, 113, 159, 239). Nevertheless, this would be an ideal book for anyone who enjoys reading biographies and especially those interested in Scottish history. A. Donald MacLeod of Brighton, Ontario has written other noteworthy biographies on W. Stanford Reid, George Murray, and C. Stacey Woods.

*Peter K. Aiken serves as an elder in the Birchwood Church in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island. He is married to Michelle and they have four children.*



**William Farel. Jason Zuidema. Bitesize Biographies, gen. ed. Michael Haykin. Darlington, England: EP Books, 2014, 126 pp., paper. ISBN 978-085234-954-0**



Jason Zuidema's biography of William Farel is part of an ever-growing series of "Bitesize Biographies" edited by Dr. Michael Haykin. Like the others I have seen in the series, *William Farel* is both a brief (126 pages) and insightful look at Farel's life, thought, and significance to the French Reformation.

The first seven chapters of the book are given to the chronological story of Farel's life, from his birth in 1489 in Gap, France to his death in 1565 in Neuchatel, Switzerland. The last chapter is an analysis of Farel's thought and his legacy.

Farel grew up in a pious Catholic home. While studying under Lefevre in his early twenties, he gradually became disenchanted with medieval piety and came to faith in

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the suppression of blasphemy and heresy". Donald Macleod, "The Establishment Principle Today", <http://www.donaldmacleod.org/?p=398> [accessed June 21, 2014].

<sup>3</sup> The Voluntaryist position holds that the church should be separate and independent of the state and supported by voluntary contributions.

Christ alone. He tells us, “Little by little the papacy fell from my heart.” He became a passionate preacher of reform, but experienced much early rejection and failure. That his preaching was fierce in its condemnation of Catholic abuses is evident from Basel Reformer Oecolampadius’ counsel to tone down his “lion-like” style and be a “doctor, not an executioner”. Not surprisingly, his passion for reform often provoked passionate reactions in others, whether positive or negative.

I found it especially interesting to read of Farel’s relationships with other French-speaking Reformers such as Capito, Bucer, Oecolampadius, Viret, and Calvin. Farel was a significant part of a larger network. Perhaps simplistically, I have always thought of Farel in relation to Calvin. Calvin’s own account of how Farel recruited him to work in Geneva is well-known: “... William Farel detained me at Geneva, not so much by counsel and exhortation, as by a dreadful imprecation, which I felt to be as if God had from heaven laid his mighty hand upon me to arrest me.” Farel’s fiery personality as a Reformer is also often contrasted with Calvin’s, with Farel seen as a “destroyer” and Calvin as a “builder”. Zuidema gives a broader view, placing Farel in context of all the French-speaking Reformers and other elements involved in the French Reformation. The author reminds us that Farel had an important role in building the church by calling many leading French Reformers to their posts in Switzerland in the 1520s and 1530s. He also was one of the first Reformers to see the need for Reformation literature in French. He himself wrote not only several books, but Scripture-based liturgies for the French-speaking church.

“For better or for worse, Farel’s whole career was characterized by the continual, verbal, passionate, personal call to put faith in Jesus Christ’s merits and no other, as taught clearly in Scripture” (p. 116). I appreciate Zuidema’s desire to clarify who Farel really was: a human being, with human failings, and yet extraordinarily used by God in the Reformation. I highly recommend this book, not only as an introduction to William Farel himself, but as an introduction to the wider picture of the French Reformation.

*Reviewed by Nelleke Plouffe. Nelleke and her husband, Stephen, are the parents of three young sons. They live in Donagh, Prince Edward Island.*



***Calvin on the Christian Life: Glorifying and Enjoying God Forever.* Michael Horton. Theologians on the Christian Life, eds. Stephen J. Nichols, Justin Taylor. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014, 272 pp., paper. ISBN 978-1-4335-3956-5.**

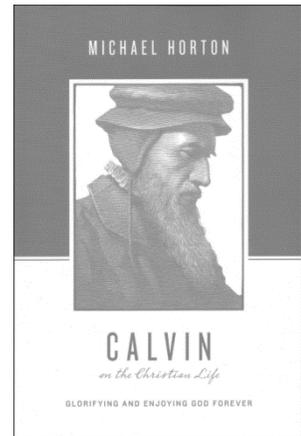
This is the fifth book in the Crossway series, *Theologians on the Christian Life*. In the preface the editors indicate that the purpose of the series is to listen to the voices of Christian leaders from the past to encourage Christians today in their daily walk with Christ.

This account by Michael Horton is an excellent presentation of Calvin's view of piety [*pietas*], his term for Christian faith and practice. Although many in the Reformed tradition read Calvin's *Institutes* and his other theological works primarily for theological insight and his commentaries for exegetical insight, Calvin, the pastor and teacher, always viewed doctrine, and biblical knowledge, as the basis and servant for Christian living. Horton notes that there is no division between theology and discipleship in Calvin's thought.

Horton's account allows Calvin to speak for himself by drawing extensively on Calvin's own writings: the *Institutes* and theological treatises, his commentaries, and his letters. He also makes use of many secondary sources – older and more contemporary – to unfold the key themes in Calvin, relating them to his context and indicating their impact on his theological heirs. The outline in the book presents two chapters of introductory material on Calvin's thought and historical context. This is followed by four main sections, in which Horton draws together various features of the Christian life for Calvin under the headings: Living before God, Living in God, Living in the Body, and Living in the World.

The introductory chapters give an account of Calvin, the reluctant reformer and pastor, who dedicated his life to the Word of God and the glory of God. Horton dismisses the usual caricature of Calvin as the Genevan dictator by explaining his actual ministry as the servant-pastor of Geneva, cooperating with other pastors for the salvation and spiritual life of the city. He was committed to the catholicity of the church, the centrality of biblical doctrine, the certainty of the gospel, and the biblical and church-centred nature of piety.

In Part 1, "Living before God", Horton deals with two themes: our knowledge of God and ourselves, and the divine drama of salvation in which believers are called to participate. In the former, Calvin's focus is on *covenantal* knowledge, that is, knowledge of God in terms of His acts in history –



not His essence – and how this should move us to a wholistic relational devotion to Him. Christ is central to both themes, for Calvin notes that “God is comprehended in Christ alone” (p. 54). Our knowledge of the divine drama of salvation is known only through Scripture with the gospel of Christ as its focus. The Spirit is tied to Scripture, both as the Author of the inspired books and as the One who opens humans’ hearts to accept, understand, and apply the gospel to all of life. Only if Christians embrace the reality of sin, the wonder of grace, and the fruit of faith and love can they take part in God’s redemptive drama in history.

In Part 2, “Living in God”, Horton expands upon the centrality of Christ for the Christian life. While the object of faith is the triune God, He is revealed in Christ. For Calvin, “A saving union with God occurs only through union with Christ, who is God *with us* and also *us with God*” (p. 84). Horton unfolds Calvin’s understanding of the person and work of Christ in terms of His threefold office of prophet, priest and king. Horton maintains that Calvin is guided in this exposition by the Chalcedonian maxim, “distinction without separation”, a theme which is found throughout Calvin’s theology. Only a proper – Chalcedonian – understanding of Christ ensures salvation for those who are united to Him through faith. This is followed in chapter 6 by an exposition of the “Gifts of Union with Christ”, which is essentially a discussion of the main themes in Calvin’s *ordo salutis*. (We note that Horton presents union with Christ as the basis of justification for Calvin, not vice versa.) This includes a careful exposition of the biblical teaching on justification and sanctification, again following the maxim of distinction without separation. Horton also gives a concise exposition of Calvin’s location of election *in* Christ. For Calvin election is properly recognized as a pastoral matter for the comfort and assurance of believers.

Part 3, “Living in the Body”, deals with Calvin’s understanding of the work of the Spirit in applying to us the benefits of Christ. The Spirit not only unites us to Christ by working faith in us, but He also unites us to the church as the body of Christ. This is because the Spirit works through the faithful practices of the church – particularly through the means of grace – to draw people to Christ and to conform them progressively to His image. In this section Horton presents an extensive exposition of the three means of grace: the preaching of the word of God, the biblical administration of the sacraments of baptism, and the Lord’s Supper as signs and seals of the gospel (where Calvin’s view is contrasted with those of the medieval church and the Anabaptists), and prayer (“the chief exercise of faith”). There are also chapters explaining Calvin’s views on proper public worship as a “celestial theatre” of God’s grace, law (especially the third use), liberty in the Christian life, and the nature of the church as the new community in Christ. Horton notes Calvin’s views on the biblical roles of pastors, elders, and deacons offices established for the church to enable her to accomplish effectively her mission.

Part 4 presents Calvin’s views on “Living in the World”. Horton unfolds the relation of church and state, vocation, and living by hope in the future

glory. Church and state are guided by Calvin's maxim, "distinction without separation", with special revelation guiding the church and general revelation guiding the state. Neither one is to meddle in the affairs of the other. The chapter on vocation unfolds Calvin's views on all callings as stations where God has placed Christians to serve God and their neighbours. No matter what our impact on the areas in which we labour, we are called to "faithful presence" in our worldly callings. Horton notes that Calvin himself shaped a (Reformed) tradition which had a great impact, not only on the doctrine, liturgy, preaching, and pastoral care in the church, but also on the social, cultural, educational, political, economic, and artistic spheres of life.

Horton's commitment to the (Westminster Seminary West) "Two Kingdoms" perspective is evident in his comments on Calvin's views in Part 4. This leads Horton to make some peculiar claims. First, he rejects the claim that Calvin exhorted believers to transform the world. Yet, Horton observes that wherever Calvin's notions of vocation are embodied by believers they have a transforming effect on their society and culture. This is precisely what the Kuyperian emphasis entails. Second, Horton rejects any notion in Calvin of "working for God" in our vocations. Rather, Horton argues that Calvin's emphasis is on loving service to our neighbours for their good (p. 228). Not only does this ignore biblical themes of serving Christ in our callings (see Calvin's commentaries on 1 Cor. 10:31 and Eph. 5:22-6:9), but it gives a very secular character to Calvin's notion of vocational calling. A better reading of Calvin is to note that he views all callings to be done in service to, and for the glory of, God.

The final chapter in this section, and in the book, notes the importance of the theme, "meditation on the future life" in Calvin's thought. Living with the hope of the return of Christ, and the renewal of all things – including the full redemption of believers – at the end of this age, should encourage Christians to persevere in this age with faith and love. This should not lead to triumphalism but to a life of self-denial and bearing the cross. Our union with Christ enables us to give ourselves to our efforts in this world even as we long for our resurrection and glorification, and the restoration of the world. Horton shows how Calvin's own life and death is a true, albeit imperfect, illustration of living with this hope.

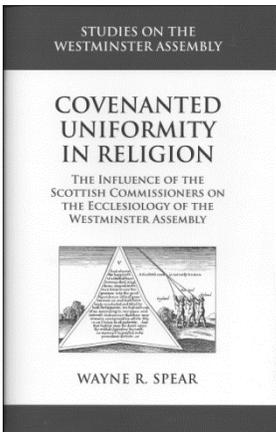
The value of this book is found in the thorough exposition by Horton of the various biblical themes in Calvin's doctrine of the Christian life that have been, and continue to be, important emphases for faithful Christian living. Throughout the book Horton indicates how Calvin's views chart a reliable course that steers clear of distorted and unbalanced presentations of Christian living. He himself saw clearly enough to break with many of the medieval themes – later confirmed as required Roman Catholic doctrine by the Council of Trent – that had deformed the biblical teaching on the Christian life. Calvin also resisted the over-reactions characteristic of the teachings of his contemporary Anabaptist theologians. Furthermore, because of Calvin's thor-

oughly biblical perspective, his teachings also provide guidance for Christians today to resist Christian teachings that are either influenced by modern (secular) notions of human nature and human flourishing, or that simply (over-)react to them. Calvin shows us what it means to live with obedience and faithfulness to God's revelation in the midst of influences and pressures that would lead us astray. For these reasons, I heartily recommend this book to all who are interested in learning from a (Reformed) forefather of the faith what it means to live a Christian life deeply shaped by God's word and missionally effective in the context in which God has placed us.



*Reviewed by Dr. Guenther ("Gene") H. Haas, Professor of Religion and Theology, Redeemer University College, Ancaster, Ontario.*

***Covenanted Uniformity in Religion: The Influence of the Scottish Commissioners on the Ecclesiology of the Westminster Assembly.* Wayne R. Spear. Studies on the Westminster Assembly. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2013, 236 pp., hc. ISBN 978-1-60178-244-1**



Up until last year, access to Wayne Spear's 1976 Ph.D. thesis was limited to bound photocopies of the typed dissertation. Now, thirty-seven years after it was submitted and eight years after his retirement from the Chair of Systematic Theology at the Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Spear's research is at last in print and might have the audience which it deserves.

The subtitle, *The Influence of the Scottish Commissioners on the Ecclesiology of the Westminster Assembly*, describes what the book is about. After the preface and introduction, there is

the first part of the book which has three chapters. Chapter one sets out the historical background of the Westminster Assembly. Chapter two describes the way that the Assembly conducted business, with an emphasis on the structure of the committees. Chapter three deals with the Scottish Commissioners and their work.

The second part has four chapters which treat the church and its officers, the local church, governmental assemblies, and ordination. The pattern followed by Spear is to state the final formulation at which the Assembly arrived; to describe how, through the work of the committees, the formulation was developed; and to pick up on issues which were of particular interest to

the Scots by describing the existing Scottish practice and noting the extent to which the Scottish Commissioners were able to either persuade the English Divines to adopt the Scottish way or to safeguard its continuation in the Church of Scotland. While doing this, Spear also notes the differences between the Scots and the English over which elements of church government were considered to be mandated by the Word or which were agreeable to the Word.

Drawing from his research, Wayne Spear concludes by describing what use was made of the *Form of Presbyterial Church Government* composed by the Westminster Assembly in England and Scotland, reviewing the aims of the Scots at the Assembly, and analysing the degree of Scottish success.

Perhaps the first question to ask is: Why publish a dissertation completed in 1976 now? The answer is that until Chad Van Dixhoorn's edition of the minutes of the Westminster Assembly arrived in 2012, access to this primary source of material was rather limited. Now, with this increased access comes increased interest in, and opportunity to interact with, studies which have relied on this source. Spear's work is one such study.

A second question might be: Where does *Covenanted Uniformity in Religion* fit in the historiography of the *Form of Presbyterial Church Government*?

In 1969, J. R. De Witt's *Jus Divinum* was published which in many ways supported the 19<sup>th</sup>-century consensus that the majority of the Westminster Divines were *jus divinum* Presbyterians who were debating with an Independent minority over the form of government which the Assembly would advise the English Parliament to institute in the Church of England. Robert S. Paul, writing in 1985, countered that the majority of the Westminster Divines were pragmatic Presbyterians who would have preferred something along the lines of Ussher's Primitive Episcopacy. In a 1993 essay, De Witt conceded that his original description of the Presbyterian party at the Assembly required nuance. Two years later, in the introduction to a reprint of one of the most important written works to come out of the debates, *Jus Divinum Regiminis Ecclesiastici*, David W. Hall states that that 1646 book reflects the original intent of the majority of the Westminster Divines on the subject of church government.

Spear's study shows that R. S. Paul is more or less correct; that De Witt was wise to revise his thesis; and that all that the existence of *Jus Divinum Regiminis Ecclesiastici* proves is that there were English Presbyterians who were in close agreement with the Scots and who fared as well or as badly as the Scots in the Assembly's debates and final formulations.

Of the *Form of Presbyterial Church Government*, Spear concludes that if instituted, it would have established a Presbyterian government in England based on general biblical principles, while allowing the Scots to continue as they were. The Scottish Commissioners were unable to get essential parts of their system established on the basis of divine institution, but were able to

stop any of those essential parts being excluded from the final formulations. He also concludes that if *jus divinum* is an essential part of the definition of Presbyterianism, then the *Form of Presbyterial Church Government* is sub-Presbyterian.

A third question might be: Do I need this book? If you have an interest in Presbyterianism, whether as an academic study or as the form of government to which you adhere, then the answer is yes. This book is an introduction to, summary of, and bibliography for historic Scottish Presbyterian Principles. A grasp of these principles is required to understand the background and context of all subsequent discussions. You have to know your Gillespie before you can interact meaningfully with Thornwell and Hodge.

*Reviewed by D. Douglas Gebbie, who is the minister at the Presbyterian Reformed Church, Chesley, Ontario, and a regular reviewer for this journal.*



## Applied Theology

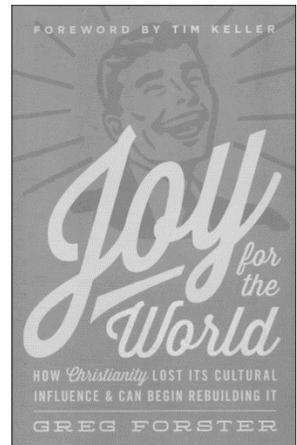
***Joy for the World: How Christianity Lost Its Cultural Influence & Can Begin Rebuilding It.* Greg Forster. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014, 313 pp., paper. ISBN 978-1-4335-3800-1**

*Joy for the World* is a joy to read. Encouraging, visionary, imaginative, and God-centred are words that describe Forster's book.

First, it is a joy to read because of its main thesis. Forster lucidly describes how Christianity has lost its cultural influence and then gives the answer as to how Christians can begin to influence culture for the Lord again. His answer is the joy of God. Forster maintains that real Spirit-given Christian joy is the essential tool by which to engage culture and bring change to culture. By the joy of God Forster means, "The state of flourishing in mind, heart, and life that Christians experience by the Holy Spirit" (p. 23). It is this joy that will influence and transform our society to and for God.

Secondly, it is a joy to read because of Forster's presupposition. His presupposition is that he believes in the renewing grace of the gospel and the transformative power of the Spirit. He rightly asserts that God the Spirit will actually use God's people to bring godly change to our world. His assertion does not flow out of an over-realized eschatology; Forster is too realistic for that. Rather, he simply believes the biblical doctrine of ongoing transformation. If Christians are changed and being changed by the Spirit's power, they can bring change. This is the presupposition. Very refreshing.

Thirdly, it is a joy to read because of Forster's large vision. His concern is not merely the individual Christian's "heart", or church, or family. Forster maintains Christians can bring the joy of God into civilization and influence it for Jesus. He writes, "I can bring the joy of God with me into American civilization – because I bring the Holy Spirit with me, who creates the joy of God in me" (p. 77). He goes on, "The Spirit changes me, therefore, he changes how I engage in relationships. So the relationships themselves



change. That means the institutions of civilization change, too” (p. 78). Thus a family, a factory, a business, and so on, all experience the joy of God. Forster is thinking of individual Christians and society. His desire is to connect the two so that the transformational power of the gospel and the Spirit will be tasted in society.

Fourthly, it is a joy to read because it actually gives us tools to help us bring the joy of God back into society. The three-part structure of the book lends itself to this. Forster first describes why the Christian influence in America is obstructed. He rightly asserts that in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century Enlightenment Modernism combatted with Christian orthodoxy to destroy it. This rocked the evangelical church to its core. The response, however, was fragmented and narrow. Different evangelical camps used various strategies, “levers” as Forster calls them, to win the church and American society back to evangelical orthodoxy. These strategies, however, were divisive and counterproductive; so much so that Christianity lost its influence. Forster says today’s church should learn from this. He maintains the church has to give up “cultural lever-pulling” (p. 61) and instead live the joy of God in culture so culture will see, taste, and experience this joy. Forster then encourages believers to do this in the remaining freedom of religion Christians still have.

Then in chapters 2 through 5 Forster describes how organizational Christianity is essential to individual believers, both in being disciplined in the joy of God and also in bringing that joy to society. Because the church is the body of Christ on earth, she is to incarnate the prophetic, priestly, and kingly offices of Christ. This means the organizational church is to teach and preach Christ’s doctrines. His chapter on preaching and teaching is very helpful. It also means the church is to be a place of worship corresponding to the priestly work of Christ. Lastly, it means the church must teach people faithful stewardship to live out the cultural mandate and great commission. Forster maintains that as the church gets the doctrine, worship, and stewardship right, she nurtures God’s people with God’s joy, thus enabling them to live God’s joy in the world.

Lastly, from chapters 6 through 8 the book deals with organic Christianity. By organic Forster means the social interplay of all the ways Christian’s relate to one another and the world around them. Forster superbly connects individual believers to their social surroundings. He tackles the human relationships of sex and family, work and the economy, and citizenship and community, and connects them to Christianity. He gives us four principles to help Christians bring Spirit-filled joy and dignity into these relationships and consequently into society. Principle one: affirm the good in society. Principle two: have the joy of God personally. Principle three: be entrepreneurial and imaginative in how you can bring God’s love and truth into relationships. Principle four: be faithful in church life. Worship and receive God’s joyful ministry every week. Worship maintains the believer’s focus.

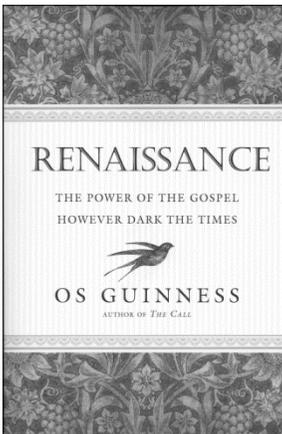
I do think this is an important book. Forster could have been stronger in asserting the present ascension and reign of Christ. A discussion on the

Kingdom of God and the New Covenant promises in regards to renewal would have strengthened his argument biblically. Despite these weaknesses, this book is a strong help to the church.

*Reviewed by Henry Bartsch, minister of Trinity Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church in Chatham Ontario. Henry is married to Tammy and they have five children.*



***Renaissance: The Power of the Gospel However Dark the Times.* Os Guinness. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2014, , 187 pp., paper. ISBN 978-0-8308-3671-0**



Former American Federal Bank Chairman Alan Greenspan entitled his 2007 memoir *The Age of Turbulence*; and while Greenspan's book focused on the economic uncertainties and turmoil of our time, the title equally applies in a social, political, and religious context. We live in a period of world history defined by turbulence and ferment; but put another way, we live in a time of great transition. Os Guinness, in his latest book, *Renaissance: The Power of the Gospel However Dark the Times*, assesses the current position and role of the church in the context of this great historical transition.

Guinness begins by declaring that Western Christianity is once again facing an "Augustinian moment". He explains that just like the great church father St. Augustine, who witnessed the collapse of the Roman Empire and the ensuing uncertainties and terrors that followed, Christianity today is experiencing the effects of Western decline. In his own words, "[W]e are living in the twilight of five hundred years of western dominance of the world" (p. 22). This "twilight" of Western dominance is intimately connected to the decline of the Western church as a result of the church's cultural captivity. A somewhat ironic situation, points out Guinness: "The Western church was the single strongest source of ideas that shaped the rise of the modern world"; it has now become "culturally captive to the world to which it gave rise" (p. 37). While Guinness could have concluded his analysis here, as many have, he proceeds to suggest a series of tasks that the global church must undertake. This global focus is important and reminds us that the church is much bigger than the West and rather a single part of the wider body. The problems of the Western church are the problems of the global church, and not just because we are to act as a unified body. With the forces of globalization unleashed, many of the challenges facing the West will soon be problems for the developing world and the Global South. There-

fore, the global church faces three major tasks in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: prepare the Global South, win back the Western world, and contribute to the human future.

An integral component in following out these tasks is understanding the relationship between the church and culture. How does the church engage with and influence culture while remaining set apart? The church has struggled with finding the balance of being “in the world” but “not of the world” and has often oscillated between the two extremes. When the church does strike the balance though, it is here that it finds its culture-shaping power. In Guinness’s words, “For the intellectual and social tension of being ‘in’ but ‘not of’ the world provides the engagement-with-critical-distance that is the source of the church’s culture-shaping power” (p. 84). But how does this look and work in practice for the church? Guinness makes three recommendations. First, the church is called to engage as the Lord commanded. Secondly, the church is called to be culturally and spiritually discerning. And thirdly, the church is called to refuse anything that does not comply or conform with Christ’s kingdom.

Lest the reader begin to think that it is the church alone that will revive itself and transform culture, Guinness proceeds to focus next on the relationship between human agency and God’s will. Guinness is very clear that the decisive power in history is always God’s, through His Word and Spirit.

In his concluding chapter, Guinness introduces the historical paradox that the church always goes forward best by going back first. To be clear, Guinness is not calling for a return to the past, nor is he nostalgic for the Christian West’s former power and glory. “We are talking about a return to God, not an era. We are talking of going back to a person and not a period, to God and not a golden age” (p. 134).

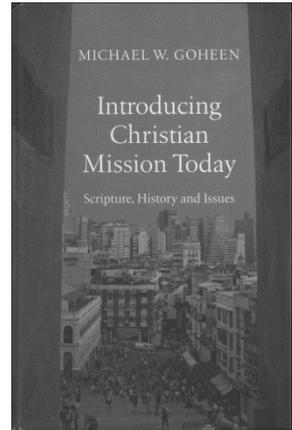
In conclusion, Guinness has written an eminently readable book with nuanced criticism and observations on the times that we are living in and how we as a church can best work as a body in living out our Christian mandate of being salt of the earth and light of the world. Recognizing the corporate nature of this mandate, Guinness has thoughtfully concluded each chapter with thought-provoking and engaging questions for those who take up the book in a group study.

*Reviewed by Ian A. Whytock, who recently completed his M.A. thesis in political history at the University of Stellenbosch, S.A. and now lives in Halifax, Nova Scotia.*



***Introducing Christian Mission Today: Scripture, History and Issues.* Michael W. Goheen. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2014, 444 pp., hc. ISBN 978-0-8308-4047-2**

Michael Goheen's book will be added to my list of recommended books. Part one gives a biblical and theological reflection on mission. Part two hands the reader a historical and contemporary reflection on mission. Part three tackles current issues on mission today. These chapters are more than mere reflections; they also contain gospel-centred recommendations to move the worldwide church forward. Goheen is too ecumenical to only deal with the church in the West. To be sure, he deals with the challenges facing the church and mission in the West, but his focus is global.



The author helps the church of Christ specifically in four areas. First, he opens the church's eyes to the global realities facing the church in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In the introduction and in chapters 3-5 the author honestly and insightfully tells the church the nine global realities that affect its mission today. The collapse of colonialism, globalization, urbanization, economic and social problems, a soaring population, the resurgence of religion, religious pluralism, Pentecostalism, and massive culture shifts in the West are realities facing Christ's church. Can the church do mission in this situation? Goheen answers yes because of God's purpose of redemption. This book is a road map to help the church keep doing mission in the face of the above realities.

Secondly, Goheen teaches the church God's mission. For the church to be faithful in the current global situation, she must return to the Bible to get her bearings. She must read the Bible in a way that takes seriously a "missional hermeneutic" (p. 37). The missional hermeneutic understands missions as God's mission. *God's mission is to restore the whole world and God's people through Jesus.* "Thus, the Bible tells us the story of God's long historical journey to liberate his world from the destructive power of sin" (p. 39). With a clear handle on Old and New Testament biblical theology, Goheen lucidly summarizes the history of redemption, showing that God's work in history was and is to bring God's good news to this broken world. Biblically speaking, God's redemptive work is missional. He then asserts and shows how this missional theology should be applied to all *loci* of theology. Goheen's biblical presupposition is that "mission is first of all the work of God; it is *God's mission*" (p. 82).

Goheen helps the church, thirdly, as he tells the account of mission in the church's past so today's church can be even more faithful to God's mission. He does this in chapters 3, 4, and 5. He first describes the mission paradigms

of the past with a view to show the need for a gospel-centred paradigm today. The gospel of the Lord has not changed, but the global realities have; so the church must contextualize to present the gospel to sinners. Secondly, Goheen recounts how the church began to realize this about the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As a consequence new ecumenical mission paradigms emerged. Chapter 4 describes these movements in detail. He particularly explains the paradigm set out by the Lausanne Movement begun in 1974. Its catch phrase is, “The whole church taking the whole gospel to the whole world” (p. 169). Goheen is ecumenical so he describes the current mission focuses and strategies of the Roman Catholic Church and Eastern Orthodoxy; both explanations are helpful. Pentecostalism as a movement with a mission paradigm is also described. Actually, Goheen throughout his entire book helps the church come to grips with the phenomenal worldwide growth of Pentecostalism. Thirdly, Goheen describes the current situation of the global church, particularly noting the great size of Pentecostalism in the South American, African, and Asian continents. He also reminds the reader of the dearth of Christianity in the West.

All of these descriptions point out weaknesses, strengths, and errors of certain movements. Goheen clearly makes biblical authority the benchmark, so if a movement has strayed from Scripture he explains the changes that need to occur. As noted above, Goheen’s intent in giving this historical information is that the present church might know the issues she faces and recognize where change is needed.

Last of all, Goheen helps the church by giving answers to the current issues facing mission today. In chapter 2, he defined God’s mission, but he also went on to explain the nature of the church. The church does not just “do” mission; it “is” missional. In her worship and ministries she is commissioned to worship God and send God out as God sends Himself out to bring salvation (p.78). Thus, when the church is being the church, she will firstly seek to engage in and give out the whole gospel. Goheen’s solutions to the tension between word and deed are excellent. Secondly, he pleads that churches practice faithful contextualization and gives five key principles to do so. Thirdly, the West and its decline are dealt with. Pulling no punches he declares the church in the West has to come back to the biblical gospel and recognize she will be a minority “contrast” community. Fourthly, he gives practical support in helping the church face world religions. This chapter alone is worth the cost of the book. His explanation of the foundations of non-Christian religions and his critique of religious pluralism help the church understand today’s people. Lastly, his chapter on urban mission, although not as rounded as Tim Keller’s work, is helpful, particularly in describing the various characteristics of city churches.

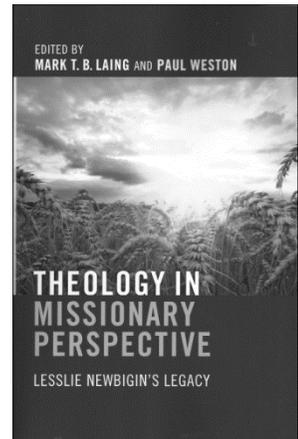
In *Introducing Christian Mission Today* readers are encouraged in God’s mission mandate, instructed in the challenges and successes of the churches missionary work in history, and given wise instruction in how to persevere in God’s calling in the challenging milieu of the world today. Goheen aptly

shows, “The day of missions is not over” (p. 434). This book gives the church guidance and hope to continually be involved in God’s mission.

*Reviewed by Henry Bartsch*

***Theology in Missionary Perspective: Lesslie Newbigin’s Legacy.* Eds., Mark T. B. Laing and Paul Weston. Eugene OR: Pickwick Publications, 2012, 320 pp., paper. ISBN 978-1-61097-574-2**

Editors Mark Laing and Paul Weston have presented a wonderful collection of essays concerning the life and work of Lesslie Newbigin, a significant missionary, missiologist, ecumenist, and theologian of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. A man referred to by Andrew Walls as “a Christian giant”. For example, Paul Weston’s chapter on “His Writings in Context” provides the reader with the biographical detail needed to better understand concerning Lesslie Newbigin’s (1926-1998) legacy. For instance, at the age of fifty-two, Newbigin became the first director of the World Council of Churches’ division of World Mission and Evangelism and simultaneously became an assistant general secretary of the WCC itself. This shows the calibre of the man as leader and also the complexity for many as Newbigin is not easy to categorise. The essays contain numerous other accolades and goals which Newbigin achieved.



The book, dedicated to the memory of David Kettle (1947-2011), is divided into three main sections: A Way of Doing Theology, Theology in Western Context, and Theology in Global Context. The first section reveals Newbigin’s approach to theology, and the writers of these essays make reference to Lesslie Newbigin’s experience as a missionary in India, having gone there in 1936 with his wife Helen as Church of Scotland missionaries. His experience in the field largely shaped his theology, particularly in the areas of ecclesiology and eschatology. More is mentioned below. The second section of the book deals mainly with his concern over modernity and how it has influenced the theology of the West. Murray Rae presents Newbigin’s view that “the church in the West had become assimilated to a culture that was no longer Christian” (p.189). The third and final section contains essays which centre on religious pluralism and how to present the gospel on the global stage.

Four notable features of this essay collection by Laing and Weston increase the value of it. First, they provide an introduction of each contributing writer. Further than that, the presentation is made more effective by the fact

Four notable features of this essay collection by Laing and Weston increase the value of it. First, they provide an introduction of each contributing writer. Further than that, the presentation is made more effective by the fact

that the contributors have worked closely with Newbigin and his work or that they knew him on a more personal level. Second, a brief explanation of what the reader can expect is given in each of the three sections. Third, numerous footnotes are supplied as explanation, and supporting material is listed in a bibliography at the end of each essay. With this in mind and given the variety of contributors – sixteen in total – the reader is assured of a fairly accurate and objective portrayal of Newbigin’s legacy. Fourth, many of the writers of these essays encourage the reader to read on, beyond what is contained in this volume. Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, for example, subtitles the final paragraph of his essay: “In Lieu of Conclusion: Seed-thoughts for Further Reflection”. In the same vein, Kenneth Gordon urges readers to search the Newbigin website (<http://www.newbigin.net>) for more.

In all the essays the concurrence between the writers is clearly tangible, and numerous quotations and references from Newbigin paint the same picture of his theology in missionary perspective. Furthermore, it is clear from his life and work that Lesslie Newbigin also placed a great deal of emphasis on Jesus Christ as the reality to understanding the world and its existence – Jürgen Schuster’s chapter on “The Clue to History” and Ian Barns’ “Re-imagining the Gospel as Public Truth” certainly portray this – he emphasized what John Flett calls “his trinitarian framing for mission”, and Newbigin’s view that the church is the hermeneutic of the gospel also received much attention. These themes also reflect Lesslie Newbigin’s theology in missionary perspective.

If one has a heart for the gospel and a passion for God’s mission, then this collection of essays is worth reading. In this regard, Paul Weston, in his chapter that focuses on Lesslie Newbigin’s understanding of the missionary church, quotes Newbigin’s classic statement that “the church lives in the midst of history as a sign, instrument, and foretaste of the reign of God” (p.79). Newbigin undoubtedly had a close walk with the Master, and even through his writings lives were changed. Jenny Taylor writes: “I came to a new intellectually credible faith after reading Newbigin and found a reason to live” (p.204). Taylor, a journalist and one who spent much time with Newbigin, even being at his bedside until his death, brings the story to life. Her essay entitled “Confessions of a Journalist” will certainly inspire many a reader.

Seemingly many have not taken full cognizance of Newbigin’s contribution to theology and, in David Kettle’s words, he has always been “a marginal figure”. We need to read more of this great legend. To get a taste of this, the editors include in an appendix a list of no less than twelve leading scholars and thinkers from around the world who wrote tributes to Lesslie Newbigin’s great legacy. After reading these essays, I am certainly challenged to read Newbigin’s *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission* and *The Household of God: Lectures on the Nature of the Church*, to name but two.

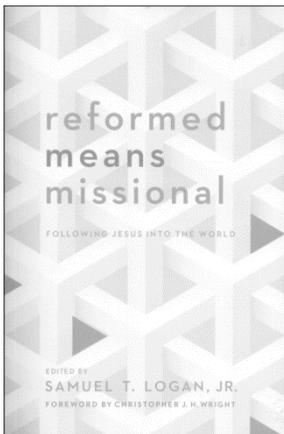
I would not hesitate to encourage pastors, theologians, missiologists, and similar scholars to read the works contained in this collection. Lesslie Newbigin's life and work are still making an impact today especially in missional discussions. Read some of his works and then you will be the judge. No doubt a book review only begins to scratch the surface of any work and much more can be said. Therefore, like these essay writers, I also encourage you to read further, because, in the words of Geoffrey Wainwright:

Lesslie Newbigin was a towering figure in twentieth-century ecumenism, active and influential in his own time, and who had moreover a prophetic gift of anticipating the future which not only proved itself while he was yet alive but also stretched beyond in ways relevant to succeeding generations. (p. 207)

*Reviewed by Wayne Grätz, marketing and recruitment manager and junior lecturer at Dumisani Theological Institute, King William's Town, Eastern Cape, South Africa.*



***Reformed Means Missional: Following Jesus into the World.*** Ed., Samuel T. Logan, Jr. Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2013, 274 pp., paper. ISBN 978-1-938267-75-8



The origins of this book began with the World Reformed Fellowship's (WRF) General Assembly in Edinburgh, Scotland in 2010, where the theme was "Continuing the Reformation: A Missional Theology for the 21<sup>st</sup>-Century Global Church". From this, several of the addresses at that Assembly have now made their way into this book, and hence the thematic continuity is evident. Also from that Edinburgh Assembly emerged the WRF Statement of Faith, an effort "to provide an outward perspective within historic Reformed orthodoxy" and also to reflect the reality that "the world has changed since those documents [the historic Reformed Confessions and Catechisms] were written" (p. 6). Hence *Reformed Means Missional* very much reflects this outward looking perspective within the evangelical Reformed community and certainly is relevant to today's global realities confronting the Christian community. This is not a book which simply restates 16<sup>th</sup>-century church debates.

The book's foreword, by missiologist Chris Wright, consists of a very brief discussion entitled "What Do We Mean by 'Missional'?" (pp. ix-xiii).

This bridges us to Lausanne III in Cape Town in 2010. The introduction is by Sam Logan, the international director of WRF. Here he builds upon Wright's quoting of The Cape Town Commitment, which says, "All our mission must therefore reflect the integration of evangelism and committed engagement in the world, both being ordered and driven by the whole biblical revelation of the gospel of God" (p. xiii), to form part of the working definition of being missional. Thus holism is stressed in the book as a guiding missiological principle. The book assumes this and does not enter into the debates and nuances of this subject. If readers want such a critique or an understanding of the differences, they will need to look elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> Thus this book should be regarded more as the practitioner's guide than the theoretician's text.

Hence, section 1, "Laying the Foundation", is quite small (three chapters) in comparison to section 2, "The Church Reaches the World" (ten chapters). The first of the three chapters in section 1 is Martin Allen's very clear and straightforward presentation describing a missional church, basically his answer to the question, "What are the marks of a truly *missional* Christian church?" (p. 11). The second chapter by Samuel Logan uses Jonathan Edwards to tackle the subject of orthodox belief and moral behaviour, or orthodoxy and "living out" theology (p. 23), which in former generations was the antinomian controversy. This chapter highlights the relevance of historical theology for today. The final chapter of the section is by Thomas Schirrmacher based on the book of Romans showing how theology and mission go together. This surely would warrant a good class lesson and discussion.

Then comes the majority of the book developing specific applications, generally with singular holistic themes. Flip Buys from South Africa leads these off with the subject of responding to poverty and social injustice. This is a subject that is very rarely tackled in conservative Reformed circles. In fact, the same could be said about many of the chapters in section 2: Diane Langberg's chapter on a missional response to global violence against women, Basyale Tchividjian's response to child sexual abuse, and John Freeman's chapter on a missional response to "homosexual strugglers". All of these are challenging, thought provoking, and demanding of careful reflection. Another "applicatory" chapter is Timothy Keller's on global urban missions, for which Keller is well-known. A related chapter to Keller's by Susan Post follows on the health of the city – perhaps a helpful discussion to copy and give to one's Christian friends in nursing. There is always a danger in choosing certain themes and missing others. The "city theme" is very extensive in mission at present. However, what about the "rural theme"? Should this also be developed? The remaining thematic chapters cover the subjects of migrant churches, secularity in Europe, and the challenge of Islam and hidden believers – all very relevant and stimulating chapters.

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<sup>1</sup> The range of literature on these two subjects is vast. A recent, extensive, three-part review article critiques this missiological perspective of Chris Wright. See A. J. de Visser, "The Mission of God by C. J. H. Wright" (1, 2, 3), *Lux Mundi* (32:3; 32:4; 33:1), 2013-2014, 82-83; 88-89; 8-10.

The book ends with a conclusion by Andrew McGowan on “Crafting an Evangelical, Reformed, and Missional Theology for the Twenty-First Century” and an afterword by Frank A. James, III entitled “Missional Is Mission Critical”. McGowan’s essay is a great introduction to the WRF Statement of Faith, not so much as a text to introduce that Statement’s content but more to provide a brilliant introduction to how to proceed in “doing” our theology. This chapter is strongly recommended to be read by many.

Finally, readers should be aware that the paperback version of this book, which is the basis of this review, is 274 pages. However, there is also an e-book version which runs to 465 pages and has eight additional chapters. These eight chapters constitute section 3, “Building the Church”. This is perhaps reflective of an emerging trend in publishing where the hard text is not identical to the e-book. This is now the second book I have reviewed in the last year which was like this. I cannot make comment on these eight additional chapters.

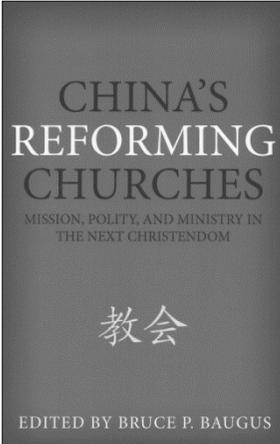
Overall this is a helpful collection. It could serve well in senior missiology courses in colleges or seminaries. It would give teachers and students an opportunity to engage very widely and generally in a very trusted and helpful way. It will not be the place to turn if one wants some of the philosophical debate – for that one would need to look elsewhere. This could also be a very helpful work to provide for select missionary candidates in certain ministries. Like most collections or anthologies, not everything is covered, but it certainly has merit and value. WRF needs to be commended for making this work available to a wide readership.

*Reviewed by Jack C. Whytock*

***China’s Reforming Churches: Mission, Polity, and Ministry in the Next Christendom.* Ed., Bruce P. Baugus. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2014, 336 pp., paper. ISBN 978-1-60178-317-2**

Many readers of a certain generation have had their thoughts about the Church in China coloured by stories of martyrdom like that of John and Betty Stam or the horrific persecutions of the Cultural Revolution. Names like Watchman Nee and Wang Ming-Dao are the reference points for our thinking about Chinese Christianity. This book is a helpful challenge to outdated thinking about China and shows how in the forty-or-so years since Mao’s failed Cultural Revolution the churches of China have matured and been faced with perhaps more difficult challenges.

The compilation of conference presentations<sup>1</sup> into book form often leaves the reader with the “you had to be there” feeling, but this book’s thoughtful organization and careful editing enable it to avoid that snare. There is some new material included in the book which did not form part of the original conference. A helpful preface and introduction set the stage and whet the appetite for the articles that follow.



The essays are grouped into four parts: 1. The History of Presbyterianism in China, 2. Presbyterianism in China Today, 3. Challenges and Opportunities for Presbyterianism in China, and 4. Appropriating a Tradition. Each section prepares the reader for the chapters to come, and often the reader will find himself flipping back a section to re-read a paragraph that contains information that will clarify something another author assumes some knowledge of. There are also a couple of helpful appendices which contain historical documents which also give further insight into the subject matter at hand. One of these is the translated document of Robert Morrison’s 1811 Catechism.

In total, eleven different contributors have prepared the chapters of this book: Bruce Baugus, G. Wright Doyle, Brent Fulton, Luke Lu, Michael M., A. Donald MacLeod, Sung-Il Park, Phil Remmers, David VanDrunen, Guy Prentiss Waters, and Paul Wang. It would appear that not all of the original presenters at the conference have included their material in this book.

As the titles of the four sections indicate, the book is unapologetically Presbyterian in its approach to the subject matter both in the historical review and in prescribing a pattern for the best approach to the spread and the nurture of the Church in China. As the first three chapters point out, no doubt one reason for this is that much of the early Protestant mission to China was Presbyterian and Reformed. Scots, Dutch Reformed, American, and Korean Presbyterians made up a significant portion of the early missionary labourers in China, and their work in areas such as linguistics and education bore fruit well after Western missionaries were expelled from China in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.

The chapters dealing with the current challenges in China are also very helpful to the Western Christian because they help to explain the very complex political and social situation within which Chinese Christianity functions. Christians in the West have tended to see the Three-Self Patriotic Movement churches as only a tool of the Communist Party and the House church movement as the true church, and this understanding is shown to be simplistic and at times harmful to forward movement.

<sup>1</sup> The conference was entitled “China’s Reforming Churches” and was held in January 2013 at Wallace Presbyterian Church, Maryland and was a “closed-door” conference

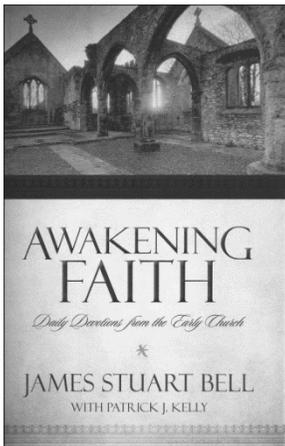
The Church in China has had to deal with many of the same issues and cultural struggles as the Western Church; the difference is that they have had to do so in a highly compressed time frame. Challenges of training for pastors and elders, opportunities for legal Christian publishing, and the indigenization of biblical and Presbyterian orthodoxy are all addressed in the final chapters.

I commend this book to those who are interested in what has always been a major mission field for the Western Church. Scholars, pastors, and laymen will find that it will challenge stereotypes and enable far more intelligent prayer for our Chinese Presbyterian brothers and sisters. Dr. Albert Mohler in a recent radio interview said, “The Lord has told us that He will always have a Church on the earth; what we need to realize is that it might not be centred here in the West.” One suspects that Baugus and his co-contributors would utter a hearty “Amen” to that sentiment.

*Reviewed by Jeff Kingswood, pastor at Grace Presbyterian, Woodstock, Ontario and past moderator of the General Synod of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church.*



***Awakening Faith: Daily Devotions from the Early Church.* James Stuart Bell with Patrick J. Kelly. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013, 400 pp., hc. ISBN 978-0-310-51487-9**



*Awakening Faith: Daily Devotions from the Early Church* contains 366 daily devotional readings from the early Church Fathers. There have been several such devotionals in recent years selecting daily readings for meditation from a variety of historical Christian figures, whether it be Calvin, the Puritans, or hymn writers. The value of such is that it is a user-friendly approach to making some readings more popular, digestible, and with small bites to engage a greater range of readers. Also, in most of these the language has been modernized or updated, so *Awakening Faith* very much fits this mold. As I have said with some of these others, there is not always a direct

link between the Scripture at the top of each page and the “quotation” on the rest of the page. One must not necessarily see each of these in *Awakening Faith* thus as “commentary” or “exposition”, as one will then often be disappointed – they are not contextual analysis or exposition of that text. So with this clear caveat in view, one can approach this collection as with many other similar ones and still be edified and simply see this as an edited collection.

There are several attractive features of this work: the lovely bookmarker, the attractive book jacket with colouration very appropriate for the subject, hardback for durability, for all 366 days, and a good updating of the language (“gently updated” to quote the inside jacket). Also, the biographical sketches at the end of the book are well done to tell the reader concisely a few facts about the sixty plus entrants in the book. One will quickly see that the top contributors are Ambrose, Augustine, Cyprian of Carthage, Gregory the Great, and John Chrysostom – which were not surprises. Many of the other entries are by much less known contributors such as Gregory Thaumaturgus, and these “lesser knowns” often only have an entry for one or two days. The value of this is clearly that it does help us to learn about other “church fathers”, using the term broadly.

This is a warmly written work with a non-technical introduction. It will help one to think more about many of the church’s leaders from centuries past. This will demand a meditative spirit to gain most from these readings. It is a helpful way of entering into the Church Fathers. I suspect some will be disappointed because it is very generalist, non-controversial, that is, really not dealing with some of the polemical matters, for example on the sacraments. The inside front jacket cover said it well – “a collection of warm-hearted exhortations” – that is what has generally been selected. The book could be used personally or perhaps even by some lecturers as a devotional exercise to start a church history class. It will not likely be a book for family devotions, and that was probably not its intended readership. Its niche market will be more for individuals interested in the early church in an introductory manner.

*Reviewed by Jack C. Whytock*

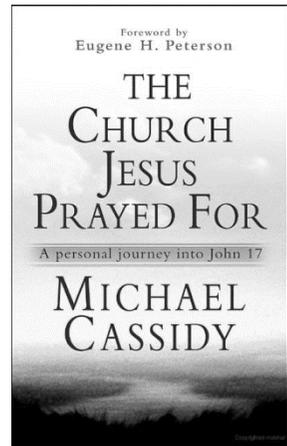
***The Church Jesus Prayed For: A Personal Journey into John 17.* Michael Cassidy. Oxford/Grand Rapids: Monarch Books, 2013, 415 pp., paper. ISBN 978-0-85721-330-3, e-ISBN 978-0-85721-380-8**

Cassidy’s book came into my hands as I was re-entering pastoral ministry after an eleven year hiatus of study and teaching in a Bible Institute. As I began to pray for my new congregation, the thought came that I should pray according to what Jesus had prayed in His prayer of John 17. Therefore, to receive a copy of Michael Cassidy’s book by that very title was most encouraging. Prior to his exposition the author gives some suggestions how his book could be used with benefit in small groups (pp. 21-22), and in his postlude (pp. 395-96) how one can best absorb what his journey through Christ’s Prayer reveals. I think his ideas contain good advice. This reviewer used this book as part of his spiritual disciplines and benefited by it.

Cassidy's approach to Jesus' prayer is straightforward. He begins by briefly sharing his personal journey – how he began to interact with, and be interacted upon, by Christ's prayer. He gives a clear exegetical outline of the flow, main ideas, and context of the prayer. This was very helpful in giving his readers an overview of its contents. His two chapters on Jesus's world-view distracted me initially because I thought it was too philosophical. However, as Cassidy points out, grasping our Lord's worldview is critical because if he is right in the way he sees things, then we imperil ourselves if we do not embrace Christ's view of reality. We will not be able to keep in step with His understanding of what is truth in our postmodern times (p. 74). The bulk of Cassidy's book is an unpacking of qualities that he identified as the "Ten Marks of the Church Jesus Prayed For". The ten marks that Jesus wants present in His Church at this critical time are Truth, Holiness, Joy, Protection, Mission, Prayer, Unity, Love, Power, and Glory (p. 104). Cassidy's exposition of each mark is rich biblically in that he dealt with each theme within its immediate context but also within the full range of the canon. He poured Scripture into each exposition so the reader was confronted with the truth from all of God's Word. He generally dealt with each mark in one chapter, but his explorations of Mission, Unity, and Glory merited two chapters each.

Cassidy's writing style is clear and direct; he is easy to follow. His expositions have a sermonic feel to them with many helpful illustrations from his reading and ministry experiences among ecumenical and evangelical circles within the context of Africa, especially South Africa. That was helpful in both understanding the truth and feeling its application to our lives individually as well as congregationally. His style at times irked me as it seemed too casual or personal, but then I saw again the book's subtitle, *A Personal Journey into John 17*, and realized he was reflecting his personal passion for more local churches to manifest the ten qualities for which Jesus prayed just prior to His crucifixion. I was struck by the urgency of what Cassidy was saying about pursuing these ten marks, yet I was also greatly encouraged by the vision he was casting of the possibility that through prayer, the Word, and personal devotion we could see these ten marks, in some measure, at work within our local congregations at such a time as this. If Jesus prayed passionately for His church (and not the world) that we would manifest these ten marks, then surely they should be the focus of our passion in prayer and ministry within our churches. Cassidy concluded his study with this observation:

Our Lord has prayed for His church. In doing so He uttered the most extraordinary, earth-shattering, and universe-jolting words our



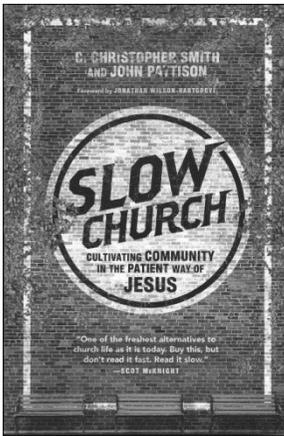
planet and cosmos have ever heard . . . He prayed that His church would be marked by truth, holiness, joy, protection, mission prayerfulness, unity, love and power – with glory as the crowning mark . . . so that the radiant character and moral beauty of God shine through. (p. 393)

Cassidy calls us to follow him as he follows Christ in praying and working for the beauty of these ten marks to be manifest in our lives so the world will know that God has sent Jesus into the world and believe our message about him. To do so is to seek the revival of God’s people.

*Reviewed by Warren Charlton, pastor of Two Hills Fellowship Chapel, Two Hills, Alberta and formerly chair of the Pastoral Studies Department at Peace River Bible Institute.*



***Slow Church: Cultivating Community in the Patient Way of Jesus.* C. Christopher Smith and John Pattison. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2014, 246 pp., paper. ISBN 978-0-8308-4114-1**



The reading and reviewing of books is a subjective endeavor. When it comes to treatises about the church, some books are real page turners and meet you right where you are, and you can’t devour them fast enough. C. John Miller’s *Outgrowing the Ingrown Church* was like that to me. It really scratched where I itched. Harry Reeder’s *From Embers to a Flame* was almost like that. The seminal book that gave me inspiration for pastoral leadership, however, was Bill Hull’s *The Disciple Making Pastor*. I was given vision, inspiration, and the desire to come to Canada as a mission developer after reading it. I even came up with the motto of our church from that book, “Making Disciples That Make a Difference.”

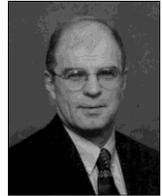
*Slow Church*, though, is not like that. It’s a slow read, plodding almost, and the name is a bit of a misnomer. Yes, it’s slow, but to say that it’s a book about the church is a stretch. The authors, who are not pastors but professional writers and editors, unpack their world view and then peripherally show how the church integrates into that. Slowness has its origin in the patience of God, which bears fruit in a people who are patient in worship and evangelism. (The Church Growth movement is really taken to task here.) The book is structured like a formal dinner: the first course being Ethics, the second course Ecology, and the third course Economy. If the books I mentioned at the beginning are inspiration and a call to immediate action, this book is

more like ruminating, savoring, coming back to taste again, and slowly, very slowly making changes in areas in which you assumed you knew all the answers.

What I did appreciate about the various subjects that the authors explore is the interdependent nature of the disciplines. For example, in the section on Ethics we are encouraged to put down deep roots in our geographical location, our community, and in the lives of people. This thread is woven into the section on Ecology as we contemplate Wholeness, Work, and Sabbath. A person sacrifices wholeness when he constantly uproots himself and when his work is not meaningful. (E.g., when Henry Ford introduced the assembly line in 1913, the company had to hire 963 people for every 100 empty positions. Why? Workers just walked out. The work was meaningless, and so people did not put down roots.) The Sabbath also is a time to put down deep roots into community and family as we slow down and learn to trust God for our provision and our pleasure.

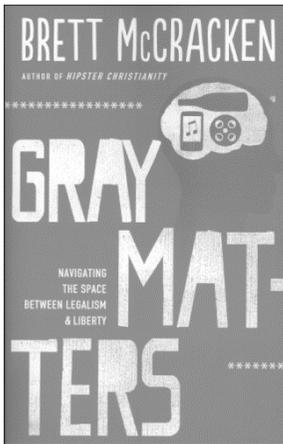
It took me a while to work through *Slow Church*. That is, I suppose, as the authors intended. I would read for a few moments and then put the book down to think about what they were saying; maybe disagree at first and write in the margins, but then come back and begin to see things differently. But I'm glad I read it. Change is slow, and we need to read books like this if we want God to continue to change us.

*Reviewed by Rick Barnes, pastor of Grace Fellowship Church, Sydney Mines, Nova Scotia. Rick is married to Sharon and they have six children.*



***Gray Matters: Navigating the Space Between Legalism and Liberty.* Brett McCracken. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2013, 269 pp., paper. ISBN 978-0-8010-1474-1**

Brett McCracken has followed up his initial book on culture (*Hipster Christianity*) with this reflection on four hot topic issues within the Christian sphere. In his book, *Gray Matters*, McCracken seeks to give direction on how God's people should respond to and "consume" the culture. McCracken focusses on four issues: food, music, movies, and alcoholic drinks. He focuses on these four because there is a wide diversity of responses to these among Christians today. The extremes of rejection or complete acceptance are what he seeks to battle against (p. 69). In this book, McCracken argues for a more mature way of "consuming" culture by engaging and discerning what may be good in it.



McCracken writes in a provocative way. Throughout the book, he introduces a subject and then seems to throw the door wide open. After initially presenting the idea that Christians should see and do almost everything, he slowly steps back to a more moderate position. Just how are we to engage culture in the world today? Being in the world but not of it, of course, necessitates some contact with the world's culture. For example, almost everyone listens to some music and dines out from time to time. He asserts that what you listen to and where you eat will be a reflection of your stance on culture. When it comes to our use and participation in these areas, are we dealing with

“gray matters” or are there standards of right and wrong that need to be considered?

There are parts of this book that I found helpful. Throughout the book you will find short essays that address a host of related issues that Christians might face. One specific item I appreciated in this book was his focus on history. For each of the four subjects, McCracken begins by outlining how Christians have viewed the specific subject in the past. McCracken rightly states that we need to understand culture (p. 21). But does understanding equal participating in and embracing? McCracken also outlines various principles to help Christians discern how to participate in culture. These principles are a useful guide. But does McCracken consistently apply these principles to the four specific areas he has chosen to address? One of the principles McCracken calls for is discernment (p. 22). Discernment means knowing the good from the bad or having a proper judgment. Does McCracken consistently show the reader how to discern the good from the bad in culture?

Although there is some to appreciate in this book, I found it difficult to accept how McCracken applied his stated principles. Not only does he seem to be targeting conservative evangelicals, he also pushes a more inclusive and tolerant view of culture and society. On page 100, McCracken briefly discusses what I believe is the central issue in our relationship to the society and culture in which we live. Understanding the relationship between common grace and the antithesis is crucial. McCracken says, “In the midst of this upsurge in appreciating common grace, there is a real danger that we’ll get too carried away in finding God in places where he just isn’t there” (p. 100). This point hits on my main disagreement with his conclusions. In our world today, Christians are far more likely to embrace everything that society dishes out than to be critical and discerning. I understand the fact that McCracken is trying to encourage critical thinking when it comes to consuming culture, but he misses the mark when it comes to Christian discernment. When we take into account that his target audience is likely those who are college age, he ends up encouraging license without restraint. My objection to his argu-

ment boils down to this – do we need to consume rotten food in order to know that it is bad? Should we sin boldly because there might be some good in it, or should we err on the side of caution? Did Adam and Eve need to eat the forbidden fruit to know that it was bad for them? There are many things in culture and society that are detrimental and harmful for Christians. McCracken is seeking to encourage consumption where Christian discernment will lead to a rejection of what our culture embraces.

To prove this point, I want to focus on how McCracken deals with the concept of movie watching. Throughout the chapter on movies, McCracken argues that Christians should view many different types of movies, including those which are filled with sex and cursing, because they may teach you something about goodness. He states that all truth is God’s truth; therefore if a movie has something truthful to say it must be good. I know this critique is overly simplistic, but my problem with his coverage of movies leaves the reader thinking they should watch more risqué movies because otherwise they might be missing something that McCracken would call beautiful. The list of movie titles he approves of and the examples he gives pushes the envelope to the extreme. He makes it sound like viewing naked images of people, listening to them swear and curse the Lord’s name is no big deal except for a few abnormal people who are very weak. The fact is, there are movies that Christians should not watch, no matter how “artistically beautiful” they may be.

It is very clear that culture is McCracken’s area of expertise. He reflects a standard, Kuyperian understanding of our responsibility to “redeem the culture”. However, under the guise of engaging culture many have been led astray and even shipwrecked their faith. I wish McCracken would have spent more time answering the question, “Is the world our friend or our enemy?” An underestimation of the evil one has led to great chaos and injury within the church. When God’s people spend too much time learning from the world and trying to redeem what is opposed to Christ, the church is thrown into chaos and cultural relevance is substituted for the truth of the Word. Although a few biblical passages are sprinkled here and there in this book, it is missing a real wrestling with what Scripture has to say concerning our engagement with culture. Because this book fails to provide a godly perspective and appropriate guidance in how Christians are to engage the world’s culture, I cannot recommend this book. There are much better books available on how Christians should relate to the culture, such as *Delighting in the Law of the Lord* by J. Barrs. (See review p. 112.)

*Reviewed by Nick Alons, originally from Iowa and a graduate of Dort College and Mid-America Seminary, is presently pastor of the United Reformed Church of Prince Edward Island.*

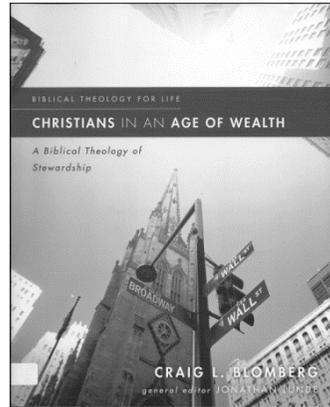


***Christians in an Age of Wealth: A Biblical Theology of Stewardship.* Craig L. Blomberg. Biblical Theology for Life, gen. ed. Jonathan Lunde. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013, 271 pp., paper. ISBN 978-0-310-31898-9**

The Biblical Theology for Life series attempts to ask the important questions about various biblical topics, such as, what does the Bible say about that and “so what”. Contributors are asked to draw out and describe the Bible’s teaching on a certain subject and then “contextualize” it to contemporary situations and issues. The primary goal is to figure out how to live biblically in today’s world.<sup>1</sup>

Craig Blomberg’s contribution to the series, *Christians in an Age of Wealth*, addresses the biblical theology of stewardship, which is a pretty vague topic when you think about it. As Blomberg states, “There is no single, dominate word in the Hebrew or Greek of the Bible for ‘stewardship’ or its cognates, as we tend to define them in English” (p. 33). Normally we think of stewardship as “the responsible management of something in our care” whether it be our money, our time, the environment, our joy, or, if you are a pastor or a parent, people. We often refer to how we are stewards of all these things. But the Bible speaks of stewardship in economic terms; therefore, to begin, *Christians in an Age of Wealth* needs to be understood as a book about money and material possessions (pp. 32, 33).

“No one can serve two masters”, Jesus said, “for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money” (Mt. 6:24).<sup>2</sup> So the real question becomes: Your money? Or your life? Can you do both God’s way?<sup>3</sup> The simple answer, and the one Jesus implied in the Sermon on the Mount, is, no, you can’t do both God’s way. Ultimately as Christ-followers it is our responsibility to use our wealth and money for God’s purposes (pp. 35, 244).<sup>4</sup> To quote Blomberg:



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<sup>1</sup> Jonathan Lunde, series preface, 15-16.

<sup>2</sup> Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version (ESV). *The ESV Study Bible, English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2001).

<sup>3</sup> Russell Corben with Brian Smith, *Your Money or Your Life: Can You Do Both God’s Way?* (Winnipeg: Word Alive Inc., 2007).

<sup>4</sup> Corben, *Your Money or Your Life*, pp. 118 ff; 141. Also see 2 Corinthians 9:6-13; cf. Matthew 6:19-21.

...believers have the resources to alleviate enormous amounts of human suffering apart from relying on the secular business world or the government. If the church had the will to do so, it could make a huge difference and make it clear to the world that its ministry was in Jesus' name. (pp. 26-27)

No doubt if we lived up to this one responsibility we would make a huge difference for the gospel's sake.

While money can facilitate a lot of good, it needs to be remembered that good can also be purchased without it. Blomberg is aware that "few topics elicit charges of 'motivation through guilt' more quickly than teaching about biblical stewardship" (a.k.a. giving and money) (p. 247). Therefore it is important to recognize that God calls each of us to a personal and unique financial situation. For some, responsible biblical money-stewardship might include having appropriate insurance and savings for retirement; for others these things might not be as important. The Bible says, "Each one must give as he has decided in his heart" (2 Cor. 9:7). Blomberg says, "There is no one-size-fits-all-stewardship" (p. 244). The important thing to remember, regardless of our financial circumstance, is that we need to be generous with our possessions. As North Americans we are far richer than we typically realize, and therefore we can do far more to fund the advancement of God's cause than we let ourselves to believe.

Anyone familiar with John White's book, *The Golden Cow*, will identify "idolatry of material goods" as one of the main pickles of the modern Church. They will also recognize John White's influence on Blomberg's *Christians in an Age of Wealth* whether real or imagined. Both authors share similar conclusions, especially with respect to how the Western Church overspends on personal goods and services, church buildings, fancy literature, and marketing campaigns while the mission field lacks proper resources and pastors fall short of a proper standard of living (pp. 176 ff; 181 ff).<sup>5</sup>

*The Golden Cow* might read like it was meant for a different generation but recall some of the headlines from 1979: Russia invades a foreign country, rising cost of fuel, high or rising interest rates, major conflict in the Middle East.<sup>6</sup> It sounds so familiar. Perhaps it is time we revisited the topic of materialism in the Western Church, and perhaps that is why Blomberg's *Christians in an Age of Wealth* is such a fitting book for us today.

The media and industry have pretty much forgotten about the financial crisis of 2008. Stock markets are back to pre-2008 levels or higher, however

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<sup>5</sup> John White, *The Golden Cow: Materialism in the Twentieth-Century Church* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity, 1979), 37-39, 84-90.

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0005252.html> [accessed Sept. 5, 2014]; [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1979\\_energy\\_crisis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1979_energy_crisis) [accessed Sept. 5, 2014]; <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1979> [accessed Sept. 5, 2014].

working families continue to struggle.<sup>7</sup> The effects of personal and government debt and the widening gap between the cost of living and income have yet to be fully realized. By extension many churches are struggling financially in today's marketplace as well. It is not hard to imagine that many churches do well to keep their doors open let alone maintain their buildings and make much needed investments in ministry.<sup>8</sup> The Church has a responsibility to teach and model proper biblical money-stewardship, not only for its own financial health and survival, but as a ministry to its congregation and an outreach to its wider community. And as always the best place to start with such an endeavour is with the Bible.

Blomberg's, *A Biblical Theology of Stewardship*, is a comprehensive investigation of what the Bible says about money matters. He takes various aspects of the subject – (i) the goodness of wealth, (ii) wealth as a seduction to sin, (iii) giving, (iv) tithes and taxes, and (v) what he calls “how much is at stake”, which could best be described as “lordship” – corresponds them to chapter titles, and then explores what the Bible says about each in a somewhat chronological order. He does so often looking at the Torah, the Historical Books, the Wisdom Literature, the Prophets, the Gospels, the Letters, et. al. Then by design he devotes the remaining third of the book to the subject's relevance. He designs insight for: (a) the individual as steward, (b) government and business as steward, and (c) the Church as steward. Two unique features Blomberg utilizes in the latter portion of the book to help “apply the theology” are “case studies” and “frequently asked questions”.

At best Blomberg is only able to offer a quick overview of what the Bible teaches on the subject. All the same, the reader should be able to identify the over-arching principles on the matter (p. 37). 1. It is neither best to have too much nor too little (p. 69). 2. Both extremes can lead to sin (p. 76). 3. Possessions, or the lack thereof, will either master us and make us slaves to them or we will master them and use them to glorify God (p. 85). 4. Transparency is important (pp. 88-92). 5. We must be generous and give and express Christian charity and love (see chapter 4). 6. We are not called to equal giving but to equal sacrifice (p. 108). 7. Proper biblical money-stewardship is foundational to broader Christian living (pp. 151-157).

If you are looking for a solid, biblically-based book on best money management practices – how can I best steward or care or manage wealth – in order to ease your own financial burden or to minister to families in financial need, this is not the book for you. It is highly unlikely you will ever find such a book. Don't get me wrong, there are books out there that use the Bible to

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<sup>7</sup> “Credit monitoring agency TransUnion has predicted the average consumer's total non-mortgage debt will hit an all-time high of \$28,853 by the end of 2014.” [www.ctvnews.ca](http://www.ctvnews.ca) [accessed Jan. 10, 2014].

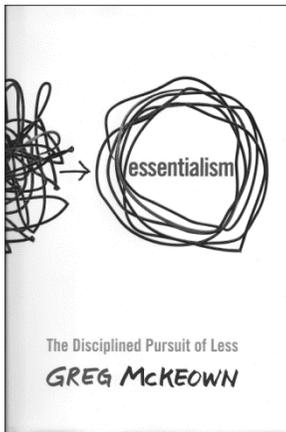
<sup>8</sup> Many church buildings in rural PEI are being re-purposed for secular use. For example Annie's Table in New London, Bite's Café in Hampton, Harmony House in Hunter River, and the Farmer's Market in Stanley Bridge are all former church buildings.

teach about best money management practices, even good ones, but the thing to remember about the Bible is: it is high on principles and low on the “how to”. Blomberg’s *Christians in an Age of Wealth* is an excellent resource for your library. It’s one of the most comprehensive books I’ve seen on describing and illustrating the principles of biblical money-stewardship. And once you’ve got the main principles down – mainly, contentment and generosity – you’ll have an excellent foundation for building your financial success God’s way regardless of the best money management vehicles and tools that are at your disposal.

*Reviewed by Darren Stretch, currently the Chair of the Board at Bedeque Baptist Church, PEI. He works part-time as a Representative for Primerica Financial Services.*



***Essentialism: The Disciplined Pursuit of Less.* Greg McKeown. New York: Crown Business, 2014, 260 pp., hc. ISBN 978-0-8041-3738-6**



Greg McKeown has offered significant insight for the Christian as well as the secular world in his recent book, *Essentialism: The Disciplined Pursuit of Less*. While not written from a Christian worldview or with the glory of God as the end in mind, many of the principles McKeown outlines and guidelines he gives for implementing them may prove helpful to the Christian if read with discernment. Thinking through what is of ultimate value and worth, devoting oneself to that, simplifying thought and life to enable meaningful contribution – all this and much more echoes biblical truth.

So what is “essentialism”? In three words, McKeown defines it as “less is better” (p. 5). Again he says, “Essentialism... is about making the wisest possible investment of your time and energy in order to operate at our highest point of contribution by doing only what is essential” (p. 5). It is not a time-management system or technique; it is a way of life. It is “a disciplined, systematic approach for determining where our highest point of contribution lies, then making the execution of those things almost effortless” (p. 7).

The author clearly outlines and orders his material by dividing it into four parts: Part I: Essence - What is the core mind-set of an Essentialist?; Part II: Explore – How can we discern the trivial many from the vital few?; Part III: Eliminate – How can we cut out the trivial many?; and Part IV: Execute –

How can we make doing the vital few things almost effortless? Each part then contains four or five chapters. He follows Part IV with a short appendix helpfully applying the principles of the essentialist to business leadership.

The author promises:

This book will show you how to live life true to yourself, not the life others expect from you. It will teach you a method for being more efficient, productive, and effective in both personal and professional realm. It will teach you a systematic way to discern what is important, eliminate what is not and make doing the essential as effortless as possible. (p. 19-20)

McKeown starts with the mind or thinking change required, similar to the Lord's admonition for change: "Be transformed by the renewing of your mind." He points to three required basic changes in thinking: from "I don't have a choice" to celebrating and exercising choice, from "It's all important; I just need to work harder" to realizing that very few things are exceptionally valuable or vital and distinguishing those, and from we can have it all/do it all to which problem do I want to solve/where can I make the most difference.

Having laid out the core thinking change required, the author then begins in Part II to delve into the application, the "how". The first step perhaps seems counter-intuitive; but since the goal is to pursue less, not more, it becomes incumbent upon the essentialist to explore more possibilities thoroughly before deciding which few to embrace. One must spend time exploring, debating, listening, questioning, and thinking (p. 61). He develops "Part II: Explore" in five chapters – Escape, Look, Play, Sleep, and Select. The essentialist gets away in order to have time to think and evaluate, to gain perspective in order to discern the essential few from the trivial many. Interestingly, one method he suggests for taking time to think and gain perspective is to spend the first twenty minutes of the day reading inspirational literature; and, yes, he lists the Bible as one option in a long list. I also found interesting his insistence on the importance of both play and sleep to liberate creativity, to improve the brain's ability to prioritize, delegate, and analyze, and to maximize productivity.

He goes on in "Part III – Eliminate" to discuss how clarity of purpose simplifies decision-making – clarity about what is essential fuels us with the strength to say no to the non-essential – and how liberating boundaries are. In this section, he also devotes a whole chapter to how to say "no" graciously – and without actually saying "no" – most helpful advice to the many who find this so difficult!

Finally, in "Part IV: Execute" he gives guidance for making essentialism one's way of life, almost effortless. A chapter each is devoted to: *creating buffer time* in scheduling rather than forcing execution to fulfill a best-case scenario, *removing obstacles* to increase productivity rather than pressing to do more, *starting small* and rewarding small wins to gain great progress, *es-*

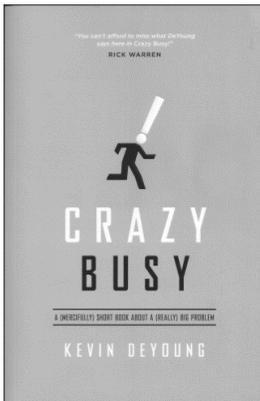
*tablishing routines* concentrating on the essential/making habit your friend, *focusing* on the present – on what is most essential now - and enjoying the moment, and finally *being* an essentialist. “The life of an Essentialist is a life of meaning. It is a life that really matters” (p. 236).

McKeown uses an engaging writing style with many illustrations, offering a book that would be found of value by a wide audience and truly helpful for people in many walks of life.

*Reviewed by Christina Lehmann. Christina serves as administrative assistant at Haddington House.*



***Crazy Busy: A (Mercifully) Short Book about a (Really) Big Problem.* Kevin DeYoung. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013, 124 pp., paper. ISBN 978-1-4335-3338-9**



Kevin DeYoung, senior pastor at University Reformed Church in East Lansing, Michigan, after successfully articulating and tackling a generational problem in *Just Do Something*<sup>1</sup>, turns his attention to a societal problem in his latest book *Crazy Busy: A (mercifully) Short Book about a (really) Big Problem*. It's a book in which DeYoung aims at a Western audience's obsession with time, though for better or worse it is a world that many cultures are heading towards. Almost all of us feel busy, many of us crazy busy. Does DeYoung's description of our time fit you?

We are here and there and everywhere. We are distracted. We are preoccupied. We can't focus on the task in front of us. We don't follow through. We don't keep our commitments. We are so busy with a million pursuits that we don't even notice the most important things slipping away. (p. 20)

Busyness is not new, but the modern world we live in has more opportunities and thus more complexities than any period in history. DeYoung's approach to tackling this massive problem is straightforward and simple. Chapter 2 examines the three dangers of busyness. Chapters 3-9 consider seven diagnoses of busyness, which makes up the bulk of the book. And chapter 10

<sup>1</sup> Kevin DeYoung, *Just Do Something: A Liberating Approach to Finding God's Will* (Chicago: Moody, 2009).

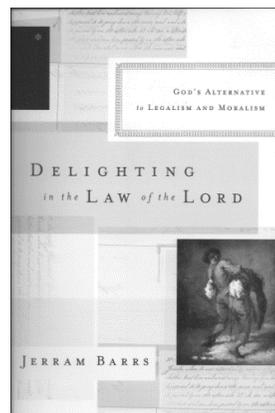
is on the one thing we must do. Diagnoses #5 in chapter 7, on the relationship between technology or the “screen” and our busyness, is particularly pointed and challenging. What separates this chapter from time management books which also identify the dangers of technology addiction is that DeYoung sees it not just as a time problem but as a potential spiritual impediment to growth. DeYoung offers practical suggestions for taking control of technology instead of it controlling us, but more powerfully he calls for us to bear our Christian theology on the dangers of the digital age saying, “Our deepest problems can be helped only with the deepest truths.”

Being busy isn’t always bad though. God created us to be busy here on earth; it’s just that too often we become busy with the wrong things. It’s not a new problem. DeYoung points out the story of Martha and Mary from Luke 10, where Martha became “distracted with much serving”. Serving is good, but it consumed Martha and distracted her from what was really important – learning at the feet of Jesus, like Mary. Until we recognize our chief calling as disciples of Christ, we will continue to succumb to the busyness of busyness. DeYoung keeps the focus on Christ in his conclusion saying, “We won’t say no to more craziness until we can say yes to more Jesus. We will keep choosing dinner rolls over the bread of life. We will choose the fanfare of the world over the feet of Jesus. We will choose busyness over blessings” (p. 118). At 118 pages, *Crazy Busy*, is easily digested and well worth the time for those seeking to serve out their Christian calling in a crazy busy world.

*Reviewed by Ian A. Whytock.*

***Delighting in the Law of the Lord: God’s Alternative to Legalism and Moralism.* Jerram Barrs. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013, 352 pp., paper. ISBN 978-1-4335-3713-4**

Having recently reviewed the book *Gray Matter* (see review p. 103), I have had the use of the Law on my mind of late. Throughout history, the use of the Laws of God have been accepted and viewed in various ways. In our current culture, we find an ever decreasing role of the Ten Commandments – they are removed from public buildings and washed from the minds of students in the public schools. Into this void, Barrs steps in with a most helpful treatise on the appropriate use of the Law. *Delighting in the Law of the Lord* is set before the reader as the God-given appropriate alternative to legalism and moralism. The book is divided into twenty-four chapters that are surprisingly diverse and broad in scope. When Barrs uses the term



“Law of God”, he is referring to all the laws recorded in Scripture. The intent of this book is not to discuss the various uses of the word “Law”. Rather, Barrs uses the word “Law” to refer to all of God’s commands regardless if they were recorded by Moses or spoken by Jesus.

Barrs begins chapter 1 with a helpful outline of our culture and how the world views morality. The point he makes is that our world is morally bankrupt. As Barrs states on page 23, “The overall result is an increasing skepticism about any kind of truth claim.” A world that seeks to establish a set of ethics apart from the norm of the Law will be eventually led into chaos. Without a set rule or standard, how can any society function? Barrs continues to build upon the concept of cultural chaos by exposing the lack of foundation for any truth claim if one rejects the Lord and His Law. By the end of chapter 2, Barrs has contrasted the Christian or traditional view with the postmodern or relativist view. He concludes by saying on page 40, “We all resonate with the idea that law restricts liberty and that everything should be a matter of personal choice. Yet at the same time, we all feel that much that is legal is an offense against common decency and good sense.” In response to this dilemma, Barrs uses the remaining chapters to build a biblical framework in which the Law has its proper function and place.

One particularly helpful chapter is the one on legalism (chapter 15). In the previous chapters, Barrs emphasized the tendency of humans to create their own laws. These laws can quickly morph into a works righteousness (legalism) which Jesus soundly condemned. In fact, Jesus reserved his harshest criticism for the Scribes and Pharisees, who had reduced obedience to external action. Barrs expresses great concern for what he says is pervasive among Christians today – the morality or Christianity that is content with “outward measures of inward obedience” (p. 204). I was convicted and challenged to identify my own false standards and pride. Barrs also critiqued the churches for imposing all sorts of unscriptural demands – making our human laws carry more weight than the Law of the Lord. Throughout this chapter, I kept asking myself if Barrs saw the need for the church and parents to have any rules beyond Scripture at all? Much to my relief, Barrs answers these questions in the next chapter (chapter 16). Basically, Barrs wants to preserve the weight and authority of the Law of God and guard against legalism found within the home and the church. A helpful device he uses is to ask us, the readers, if we would be more offended if our house rules were broken than if the Law of God was broken. An example he uses is the coloring of hair or body piercing. Would you as a parent be angrier if your child came home with a nose ring (house rule) or if your child was caught lying (God’s Law)? Barrs point is that parents need to ground their rules in the Law of the Lord. House rules can be adjusted and even removed by the parents without undermining the Law of the Lord. Children need to be taught to have an increasing understanding of the Lord’s Law with an eye towards applying that Law to their own hearts by the Spirit as they mature. Obedience to parents is

part of a child's obedience to the Lord.

Does Barrs succeed in his stated purpose? Indeed he does! Throughout the book, Barrs provides the reader with the necessary framework for interpreting and applying the Law to daily life. In addition, he gives helpful illustrations of how the Law can be applied directly. Barrs has a good grasp of the difficulties facing society, and he equips believers with a proper understanding of how the Law should function today. He has a convicting way of pointing to the pitfalls of legalism and moralism.

This book is a very helpful tool for equipping Christians to face the onslaught of relativism. One area that I thought could have been better was the ordering of the chapters. All of the chapters did not necessarily follow in a logical order. There was a sense of chaos when it came to the topic of a few chapters. Although I appreciated the scope of the book, I found the lack of structure distracting. For instance, chapter 12 on the healing that we can expect in this life when the Law is obeyed is followed by a chapter on how various traditions have understood the Law. In my opinion, chapter 13 on the various views of the Law should have been at the beginning of the book (perhaps in the position of chapter 3). I found it strange that Barrs would wait until page 180 to discuss the three uses of the Law. This would have been better towards the beginning of the book. This book makes good use of Scripture, showing how the Bible should be the foundation of all morality. Instead of simply proof-texting, Barrs shows a heart for and love of the Word.

Not only would this book be a helpful addition to a church library, it would also be a helpful tool for pastors. Each chapter concludes with a list of discussion questions that are, in the main, helpful. The questions enable the book to be used as a part of a congregational study, although the length of the book does take some serious commitment. I heartily recommend!

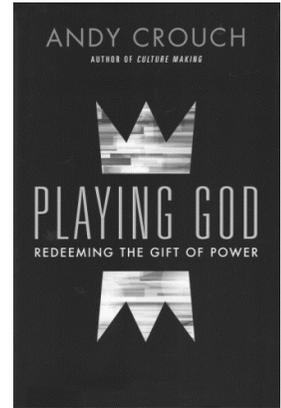
*Reviewed by Nick Alons.*

***Playing God: Redeeming the Gift of Power.* Andy Crouch. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2013, 288 pp., hc. ISBN 978-0-8308-3765-6**

Andy Crouch is a professor, author, and public speaker from the Midwestern region of the USA. He currently holds the position of executive editor for the magazine *Christianity Today*. His highly acclaimed book *Culture Making* takes aim at the Christian's biblical mandate to use unique creative gifts towards the creation of a redemptive culture in the world. In his most recent work, *Playing God*, he takes this thought in a new direction by focusing on the idea of power as a means of witness in the world rather than a corrupted vehicle.

If one stopped to survey the general attitude towards institutions which hold power and the individuals who operate them, it is likely that the majority of people would hold a similar opinion. Within us all there seems to be at least a slight mistrust of power coupled at the same time with a desire for it. We fear oppression and long for control simultaneously.

Travelling down the avenue of the humanities, which has historically harboured a wariness towards power structures in the likes of philosophers such as Michel Foucault, author Andy Crouch ventures into the mistrust of power that has infused itself somewhat ironically into the church – the body of believers following the omnipotent God. These fears are not to be dismissed, but it may be that they are misguided. His thesis is simple: power is a gift from our powerful God. Not only that, it is inescapable. This is not to be taken in the Foucaultian sense, whereby power is both normative and destructive, but rather with a redemptive view that sees power as existing in a normative state *with the potential* to be either good or evil.



His exposition pushes back against our reluctance to accept the possibility of great justice enacted by those in authority and the institutions which they guide. This fear of oppression, he says, stems from many tragic uses of power in human history which we have come to count as synonymous with power itself. Crouch realizes that while half the battle of his argument is to make his reader see that power is not necessarily bad, the uphill half of the battle is to display the inherent goodness of power as it comes from God. Many Christians would hesitate to say that it is precisely the power of a position which allows one to have an impact for the Kingdom, but this is exactly his point. Relying heavily on Paul's letters to the seven churches and his own experiences with Christians in places of power, Crouch sets out to provide a renewed vision of that which has been corrupted by household names like Stalin, Hitler, Nero, and many others as far back as Pharaoh. His goal is to uncover a biblical vision for human flourishing which will set Christians free to take up the cultural mandate in whatever locale they are found without feeling that there can be no true humility apart from impotent faith.

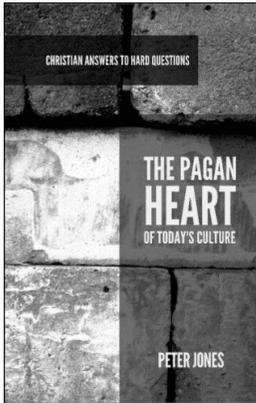
Crouch affirms the gospel truth that power is real but finite except for the absolute power of our God. As he says, "That is why we can face even our own death, and the death of those we love, with hope – because the creative power of God raised Jesus from the grave" (p. 274). Our God has overcome the world in the ultimate act of power. *Playing God* is certainly a healthy challenge to the spiritual-power paradigm by which many of us may be operating without even knowing it. For anyone interested in a firmly theological yet brilliantly practical discussion on our place as God's children on this earth, *Playing God* is most certainly a great place to begin. Any leader who

fears an inability to use their power well should pick up this book and take comfort from its stories.

*Reviewed by Andrew M. Whytock. Andrew has a B.A. in creative writing from Cornerstone University, Grand Rapids, Michigan.*



***The Pagan Heart of Today's Culture.* Peter Jones. Christian Answers to Hard Questions. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2014, 44 pp., paper. ISBN 978-1-62995-087-7**



When asked what's going on today, "a resurgence of ancient polytheism and gnosticism fueled by postmodernism" would probably not be the answer on most Christians' lips. However, this is the answer Peter Jones gives in *The Pagan Heart of Today's Culture*. The book frames contemporary Western intellectual and cultural trends in terms of these three seemingly disparate isms or worldviews. Together, they form the pagan worldview sometimes known as the New Spirituality (p. 5). Jones argues for the underlying interconnectedness of these three isms. Along the way, he contrasts them with the alternative

these worldviews seek to supplant: orthodox Christianity.

Jones starts by sketching how the epistemic certainty of the Enlightenment gave way to the skepticism and epistemic pluralities of postmodernism. While the Enlightenment sought to elevate reason and to close the door to irrational superstition (Christianity included), postmodernism re-opened the door to the spiritual. In a postmodern age, truth resides not in an authoritative text but in the subjective appropriation of the individual. And this appropriation includes the possibility of mystical and transcendent knowledge.

The door having been re-opened, polytheism, by which Jones means God and nature are essentially the same, and gnosticism, by which he means tapping into knowledge of the divine via personal mysticism, rush in. Together, these three isms share a common antipathy to the Christian worldview of an objective, transcendent God. As Jones puts it, Logos in our culture gives way to mythos (p. 9). Jones uses the terms Twoism (Christianity) and Oneism (beliefs rooted in polytheism) to contrast these competing worldviews (p. 26).

The first half of Jones' concise book (44 pages including end-notes) establishes the three isms while noting some overlapping themes. The second half seeks to show how they are becoming intertwined into an integrated system of thought (p. 25). He provides pop-culture references along the way. Jones even manages to show the compatibility of atheism and paganism: "...atheism and rationalistic humanism... like their spiritual cousins, make no

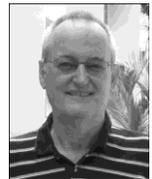
place for a transcendent, personal Creator, and so share at the deepest level the same view of reality as very spiritual but Oneist systems” (p. 28).

Jones concludes by declaring that Oneism’s pervasion into all areas of life – “philosophical, religious, political, and sexual” – will pose a “massive apologetic challenge” to the church in the days ahead (p. 34).

Even though the book is short, readers should plan on spending some time with it; it cannot be rushed. I offer three minor criticisms. First, it is not obvious that materialistic atheists, such as Richard Dawkins and Daniel Dennett, would agree they share the “same view of reality at the deepest level” as those who believe in a divine force accessible via mysticism. Is a shared antipathy to Christianity enough? Second, Jones suggests that current views on homosexuality and human sexuality in general are explained by this pagan resurgence (pp. 24-25, 30). One could argue they have as much or more to do with the acidic effects of materialistic darwinism, an ism held by moderns and postmoderns alike. (However, it could also be argued his treatment of atheism implicitly covers darwinism.) Finally, Jones juxtaposes Christianity (Twoism) against all other world religions (Oneism) (p. 26). Where do Judaism and Islam fit into this? Neither of them believes God is co-extensive with the created order. Jones appears to conflate theism with orthodox Christianity.

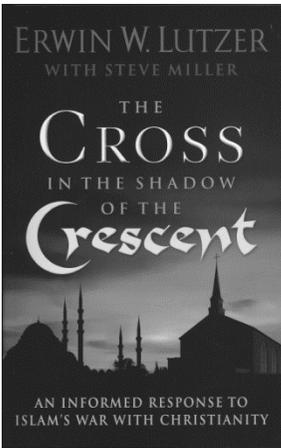
Jones’ book succeeds in that it helps us understand and articulate what is going on in our culture. It helps equip us in the apologetic task of defending the faith while offering to the world the bountiful reconciliation made available through Jesus Christ.

*Reviewed by Richard Ball of Toronto, Ontario and Charlottetown, PEI. Dr. Ball has taught apologetics for several years in Zambia and is also involved in the global IT world.*



***The Cross in the Shadow of the Crescent: An Informed Response to Islam’s War with Christianity.* Erwin W. Lutzer. Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2013, 253 pp., paper. ISBN: 978-0-7369-5132-6**

Unlike other Christian books that have been written on Islam, the purpose of this book is not primarily concerned with teaching Christians on how to reach Muslims with the gospel. Rather, as Lutzer himself explains, it is written to serve as a wake-up call to the American church concerning the agenda and strategies of militant Islam (pp. 37, 38). This wake-up call is supported by over three hundred endnotes, which include eighty-five dealing with what is happening in America now.



The bulk of the book considers seven lessons for today's churches. In this section, Lutzer draws from the letters written to the seven churches in Asia Minor in Revelation 2 and 3. He points out that a thousand years ago, Asia Minor, or modern day Turkey, had a strong Christian presence, but today 99% of Turkey claims Muslim loyalty (p. 53). Lutzer draws the following seven lessons: 1) the church in America cannot take her continued existence of the church for granted; 2) faithfulness to Christ requires an acceptance of persecution; 3) even when a church is in the Devil's hands, it is still in God's hands; 4) the crescent cannot destroy the cross; 5) compromise weakens the church; 6) the church must walk by faith and not by sight; and 7) the remnant will triumph.

The final section, though somewhat brief, focuses on a right response to these "attacks against Christianity and the American way of life" (p. 17). Lutzer warns that the greatest mistake the church can make is considering all Muslims the same (pp. 29-30, 176, 199). He argues there is a need to distinguish between Islamists and moderates. He defines an Islamist as someone who holds to an ideology of the world being ruled by Islam and therefore seeks to bring shariah law to the West. Moderate Muslims, on the other hand, are content living peacefully in Western society (pp. 30, 176). Lutzer is quick to add though that militant Islam remains a threat despite where the majority of American Muslims stand (p. 33).

One of the most helpful aspects of the book is its treatment of blasphemy laws and hate-speech.<sup>1</sup> The book highlights the problematic nature of hate-speech laws in that all that is needed to trigger an accusation under these laws is for a Muslim to claim that he was offended or hurt by something said, even if the statement was absolutely truthful (p. 74). The result is that many people are reluctant to speak out against Islam in any shape or form. But Lutzer advises that Christians must submit to God rather than to governmental pressures (Dan. 3:17-18; Acts 14:19-20; 5:29).

One of the main drawbacks of the book relates to the focus of the book, which feels somewhat incomplete. Although Lutzer does caution that his intention is not to stir up fear of Islam (pp. 19, 207, 218), it seems that there is not enough attention given to replacing this fear with compassion for Muslims. To be fair, Lutzer does mention the need for compassion, but even there it is not really developed at length (p. 217).

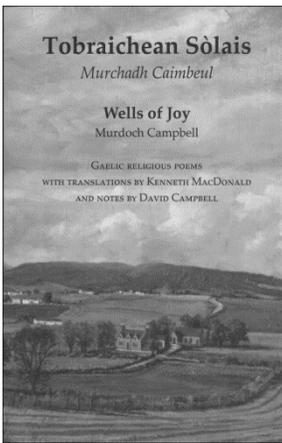
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<sup>1</sup> Blasphemy law is a law that limits the freedom of speech and expression with respect to religious beliefs.

This book would be useful for anyone who is unconvinced of the threat of shariah law to Western society. It would also be useful to Christian leaders as they prepare their flocks to stand for Christ without fear.

*Reviewed by Peter K. Aiken.*

***Tobraichean Sòlais (Wells of Joy): Gaelic Religious Poems with Translations.* Murdoch Campbell. Trans., Kenneth MacDonald. Kilkerran, Scotland: Covenanters Press, 2013, 103 pp., paper. ISBN 978-1-905022-32-8**



The Celtic peoples have always maintained a strong tradition of folklore through ballads and storytelling, presented most times in the rhythms of poetic metre. These poems function on a deeply spiritual paradigm but many of them are never translated into the English language. Often this is simply because there is no one to do the work, though in many cases it is believed that translated poetry loses something of its original power. While this is no doubt true, it is also true that translation yields some benefit to a work. It engenders the words with a whole new realm of interpretive possibilities for people of another tongue. Translation casts the poem in a new light, even if such a light gives readers only a shadow of something they would otherwise have been excluded from all together due to the language barrier.

The translation of Rev. Murdoch Campbell's (1901-1974) collection of poetry, "Wells of Joy", presents us with poems crafted in such a tradition. The difference is that, unlike the typical pagan spirituality of the ancient Celtic peoples, Campbell writes his poetry with a distinctively and intentionally Christian message. Channeling the cultural tradition of verse that he was surrounded by in his youth, Campbell proclaims his Saviour to the world and implores his God in much the same way the Psalmist pleads with the Lord for mercy.

The late Rev. Campbell's son David Campbell headed up the task of assembling these poems and editing them into one manuscript. To present both the English and Gaelic versions, he employed the skills of translator Kenneth MacDonald, a bi-lingual Scottish scholar who has also worked on large editing projects for several Gaelic dictionaries including *The Historical Dictionary of Scottish Gaelic*.

The late Reverend Campbell was a minister in the Free Church of Scotland for most of his life, but he always used poetry as an outlet for his praise.

Indeed, his absolute trust in the gospel is evident in the poems, which at times ponder the possibility of despair in this world but always turn back to the hope found in Jesus. As the preface to the book notes, Rev. Campbell published many poems, most of which were actually written in English, but he chose to return to his native Gaelic for this collection. The title “Wells of Joy” accurately sums up the theme of the poems, which reflect upon the unending comfort to be found in Christ.

For those in an ecclesial strain that harkens back to Scotland, Campbell’s work is of particular interest as he merges his spiritual and national heritage in an act of praise. For readers who should happen to know Gaelic, the book is complete with the originals, which are printed alongside their English counterparts. This is a work which displays the unique paring of citizenships within the human identity as the author reworks his national (earthly) milieu to frame his primary identity as a child of the kingdom “not of this world”. Like much good poetry, meaning is found in the place where those realms collide.

*Reviewed by Andrew M. Whytock.*

## Book Briefs

In this section we acknowledge new books we have received over the last year for which we have not provided full book reviews. We have organized these into topical categories to help readers become aware of new books in specific areas. Unsigned book briefs are by the editor.

### Biblical

***The Final Days of Jesus: The Most Important Week of the Most Important Person Who Ever Lived.* Andreas J. Köstenberger and Justin Taylor. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014, pp. 217, paper. ISBN 978-1-4335-3510-9**

Here is a sound work for anyone preparing services or meditations for the week from Palm Sunday through Easter Sunday. Knowing the popularity of such services in many of the Christian communities of the majority world, I think this book could prove very useful. It is not written with extensive scholarly footnotes – there are a few footnotes but usually to add further scriptural reference, citation, or clarification. Thus this is not meant as an academic text for New Testament scholars. It has a real ring of popularity about it, and there is a real need for this level of writing from a solid evangelical standpoint.

The chapters are simply entitled, Sunday through Sunday, following the days of the week, and each contains clear sub-headings, again something which could be very helpful as a lay-preaching resource. There is a chart (p. 156) on the Seven Last Sayings of Jesus, which is helpful, but then in the text there is no corresponding commentary. This was my one disappointment with the book; I believe this should have been included. The charts throughout the text are good as are the high-gloss, colour plates between pages 160 and 161. The book includes a graduated “Suggestions for Further Reading” and a most helpful “Glossary and Reference Guide”. A good book to buy and give away.

***Galatians for You.* Timothy Keller. God's Word for You. n.pl. [USA]: The Good Book Company, 2013, 199 pp., paper. ISBN 978-1909559776**

This is the first book in the new series, God's Word for You, by The Good Book Company and was published in conjunction with the Gospel Coalition International Outreach initiative. (This particular version is not for resale.) It is a most welcome resource and will be a real ministry tool and a means for much personal edification in the global church community. The book is very well divided into thirteen chapters, and each is internally well laid out with very clear, bold subheadings. Every chapter ends with thoughtful questions. Thus the book will prove a good resource for a pastor, a class leader, or Bible study group leader. A fine glossary is at the back of the book, making it helpful for many levels of readers. (I could see it being a great text for some junior certificate level teaching programmes.) The book of Galatians was a good choice for such a new resource series, as it presents the clarity of the gospel with such fervour. Readers can go to the four websites of The Good Book Company to learn more, or to the website of The Gospel Coalition in particular at: [www.thegospelcoalition.org/io](http://www.thegospelcoalition.org/io).

***The Messiah: The Texts Behind Handel's Masterpiece, 8 Studies for Individuals or Groups.* Douglas Connelly. A LifeGuide Bible Study. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2014, 63 pp., paper. ISBN 978-0-8308-3132-6**

A brilliant idea – to make eight Bible studies on biblical texts from George Frederick Handel's oratorio, *Messiah*! I was delighted to see this creative approach combining the well-known oratorio with small group or adult class Bible studies. In the past I have preached through Handel's *Messiah* using the biblical texts; now here is another way to incorporate Handel's outline. Even if folks are not familiar with Handel's work, this study guide could still be used as a class or group guide. The booklet "explore[s] some of the key passages in the Old Testament about the Messiah and their completion in the life and saving work of Jesus" (p. 5). The eight studies are: Messiah's character, birth, miracles, death, sacrifice, resurrection, exaltation, and return. This will prove to be an excellent resource for an eight-part study. Imagine coming to the study and hearing that section playing on the CD, and then you all listen to it. Well done, Douglas Connelly, who is a seasoned craftsman of Bible study guides.

## Spiritual Formation

***Holiness as a Liberal Art.* Ed., Daniel Castelo. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2012, 122 pp., paper. ISBN 978-1-60899-505-9**

I started this book thinking it was going to explore a Wesleyan understanding of holiness (sanctification) and its relationship to Christian higher education. Written by twelve of the faculty members at Seattle Pacific University, a large Christian Wesleyan university on the West Coast of the United States, some of the eleven chapters do this. However, I must confess that either I “misread” the title or failed to connect this to all the chapters. The first chapter by Daniel Castelo, “Cultivating a Sanctified Way of Life: Introducing Holiness as a Liberal Art” (pp. 1-11), is clearly foundational to this book. The chapters which follow then explore more the dimensions of holiness as a “way of life”, all commendable, but which I did not think kept the thread clear for me on higher education. There are occasional moments of something I want to quote for the future, but as a collection I will not likely use this as a whole for teaching. I was disappointed that a couple of the chapters appeared to be more “agenda driven” than anything else. Although the faculty who contributed to the volume are to be commended for discussing a needed topic today in much of higher education, my recommendation would be rather to read Kevin DeYoung’s *The Hole in Our Holiness* (reviewed in Book Briefs, *Haddington House Journal* vol. 16, 2014, pp. 115-116).

## Doctrine/Christian Life

***Now That I’m a Christian: What It Means to Follow Jesus.* C. Michael Patton. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014, 172 pp., paper. ISBN 978-1-4335-3804-9**

Here is a book which deserves serious consideration as a textbook in introductory Bible college or Bible institute training and teaching courses in the basics of the faith. It is divided into two main divisions – orthodoxy and orthopraxy – each with five chapters. The author clearly and realistically defines and explains these two terms in his introduction (pp. 11-14). Under orthodoxy he deals with Bible, Man, God, Christ, and Faith; and under orthopraxy he deals with Prayer, Study, Church, Suffering, and Mission. If students are carefully guided through Patton’s five topics on orthodoxy, they will receive solid doctrinal meat which is well explained and is presented in a very gracious manner. His writing style is not jarring in any way. Some of the topics under orthopraxy could fit well within a course on spiritual for-

mation while some belong more properly in a doctrine course.

This book is not Wayne Grudem's *Systematic Theology* or his summary of doctrine in the smaller volume. Rather, *Now That I'm a Christian* is an introductory primer, and as such it is a most valuable textbook or group study book. The author is involved with the Credo House of Theology in Oklahoma and well-qualified to author this book. I agree with Sam Storms, "This is a gem!"

***I Am a Church Member: Discovering the Attitude that Makes the Difference.* Thom S. Rainer. Nashville, TN: B&H, 2013, 79 pp., hc. ISBN 978-1-4336-7973-5**

This short work by Thom Rainer addresses just what the subtitle indicates – a biblical attitude to church membership. In the introduction, Rainer invites the reader: "Join me in this journey of discovering or rediscovering the privilege and the joy of church membership" (p. 6). Following a short introduction, Rainer addresses six aspects/attitudes/practices of godly church membership, clearly articulated in the six chapter titles: "I Will Be a Functioning Church Member", "I Will Be a Unifying Church Member", "I Will Not Let My Church Be about My Preferences and Desires", "I Will Pray for My Church Leaders", "I Will Lead My Family to Be Healthy Church Members", and "I Will Treasure Church Membership as a Gift". He grounds each point in the Scriptures and illustrates each well with examples and stories. At the end of each chapter, the reader is invited to take a pledge of commitment related to the material in the chapter and follows that with "Questions for Study". The author only deals very briefly with the question of why one should become a member of a local church at the very end of the little book. Warm, devotional, practical, this would be a great resource for personal growth in Christ-likeness or for use in a small group or membership class.

*Christina Lehmann*

## Biographical

***The Evangelistic Zeal of George Whitefield.* Steven J. Lawson. A Long Line of Godly Men Profiles. Orlando, FL: Reformation Trust, 2013, 154 pp., hc. ISBN 978-1-56769-363-8**

This book was well-timed for the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of George Whitefield's birth. It is both a popular biographical sketch and a short thematic study of George Whitefield's evangelistic work. It is divided into six chapters. Chapter 1 is a twenty-eight page overview of the life of Whitefield. It is quite well summarized, given the length, and generally quite accurate (one error on a year on page 19). Then chapters 2 to 6 explore thematically White-

field's spirituality: chapter 2 – "A Life of Singular Devotion"; chapter 3 – his theology, "A Theology of Sovereign Grace"; chapter 4 – "A Gospel Without Compromise"; chapter 5 – Whitefield's evangelistic zeal, "A Passion That Consumed"; and chapter 6 – an interpretive chapter on Whitefield's evangelistic mandate, "A Mandate from the Lord". This is not like Dallimore's two-volume biography for sure, nor Kidd's new biographical study. It is a fast-paced, easy-to-read book. The author does pepper quotations throughout the thematic chapters. This is not a book which addresses critical issues or defects in Whitefield; readers will need to go elsewhere for such. This is an inspiring book and very much motivates one to seek the Lord's face in prayer for the work of evangelism.

## Christian History

***Sermons by Jonathan Edwards on the Matthean Parables, Volume II: Divine Husbandman (On the Parable of the Sower and the Seed).* Eds., Kenneth P. Minkema and Adriaan C. Neele. Eugene, OR: Cascade/The Jonathan Edwards Center at Yale University, 2012, 130 pp., paper. ISBN 978-1-61097-715-9**

Here are six sermons, previously unpublished, which Jonathan Edwards preached from Matthew 13:3-7 in 1740 following the visit of George Whitefield to Northampton, Massachusetts. We read in the preface: "Not only does this series have a historical significance for its place in The Great Awakening, but it contains important pronouncements on the preacher's craft and the hearer's responsibilities" (p. ix). This small book contains a helpful essay, "Introduction: Edwards the Preacher" (pp. 1-13), adapted from a longer essay from 1990, "Jonathan Edwards' Art of Prophesying" by Wilson Kimmach. This is followed by an excellent essay by Minkema and Neele, the editors, "Introduction: Historical Context" (pp. 14-31). Then follows Edward's six sermons, pages 32-113. The book ends with an epilogue on Edwards and Whitefield and their exchanges, then a sermon by Whitefield (1739), "Directions How to Hear Sermons" (pp. 119-127). This is the perfect book to use as a textbook for teaching about The Great Awakening in theological colleges – it brings together the two preachers, Edwards and Whitefield, provides primary sources, and gives sufficient introductory secondary material to combine for a balanced textbook. Well done!

## Missiology

***Africa: Altered States, Ordinary Miracles.* Richard Dowden. New York: Public Affairs (Perseus Books Group), 2009, 576 pp., paper. ISBN 978-1-58648-753-9**

This is not last year's book but still very recent at 2009, nor is it specifically a Christian book from a Christian publisher. However, it is a most helpful collection of "essays" by Richard Dowden, the director of the Royal African Society; and anyone working in Christian mission in Africa will certainly benefit from this work. It is a wide-ranging overview of the continent of Africa, presenting the complexities which are there, often through personal narratives but always with perceptive analysis, which is the value of the book. Those considering work in Africa should read this book and discuss it with seasoned workers and African leaders. The author's prose style is totally engaging to read. The book does not have footnotes or endnotes, so do not expect the traditionally "academic essay" style. It is closer in style to a journalistic essay – narrative with analysis. The writer of the foreword, Chinua Achebe, is correct that Dowden "tackles Africa's problems without fear, sentimentality or condescension" (p. xiii).

***Brazilian Evangelical Missions in the Arab World: History, Culture, Practice, and Theology.* Edward L. Smither. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2012, 272 pp., paper. ISBN 978-1-61097-804-0**

This is a must read for anyone concerned or interested in current trends in mission sending evangelical churches. For too long Brazilian missionaries overseas have not been seen as part of the global-sending missional church. This statement by Mark Noll, "Today more Christian workers from Brazil are active in cross-cultural ministry outside their homelands than from Britain or Canada" (p. 62 in Smither), is an awakening call to understand missions work today.

Smither's first chapter, "From a Mission Field to a Mission-Sending Base", is worth the price of the book. He surveys evangelical missions to Brazil, establishing well the context, then introduces us to a quick survey of outgoing missions work. Then the author takes up a little-explored theme of Brazilian workers in Arab cultures. Smither, who was associate professor of intercultural studies and church history at Liberty University, Virginia when he wrote the book and is now at Columbia International University, is an excellent writer with fine organizational skills and clearly knows this field. Those teaching both the history and the practice of missions need to incorporate this book into their recommended reading lists. Highly commended!

***Korean Diaspora and Christian Mission.* Eds., S. Hun Kim and Won-suk Ma. Regnum Studies in Mission. Oxford: Regnum, 2011, 301 pp., hc. ISBN 978-1-870345-89-7**

This is definitely one of the best single volumes that I have seen on the whole topic of the Korean diaspora and Christian missions. The twenty-one contributors to this collection represent an invaluable work of research to help us understand the phenomena of the various contexts and ministries where Korean people live as a diaspora people. The words of dedication, “In honour of the many millions who have been scattered as strangers and yet live with a calling to the Kingdom” (p. iv), summarize well what this book is all about. If you want to grow in your understanding of diaspora missiology, evaluating Korean missionary work, and read some case studies here is the one book you need. Every theological college teaching missiology must have this book in their library, because it fills a real gap in missiology today concerning Korean diaspora Christian missions. I hesitate to single out any chapters, as they are all very important and contribute much to this neglected field of study and reflection, but I will say at the very least all must read Enoch Wan’s “Korean Disapora: From Hermit Kingdom to Kingdom Ministry”, Min-young Jung’s “Diaspora and Timely Hit: Towards a Diaspora Missiology”, and Steve Sang-cheol Moon’s “The Korean Diaspora Models of a Missional Church”, all three of which are in part one of the book, “Foundations”, of the three parts of this well-assembled collection.

***Short-Term Mission: An Ethnography of Christian Travel Narrative and Experience.* Brian M. Howell. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012, 256 pp., paper. ISBN 978-0-8308-3973-5**

The reality is that short-term mission (STM) is one of the most significant developments in missions in the last two generations. Thus it is good for all interested in mission or missiology to study the new books beginning to be written on STM from a variety of disciplines. This particular one is written by an associate professor in anthropology at Wheaton College in Wheaton, Illinois. Howell writes to specifically explore the “narrative” of STM, that is, how the STM participant speaks or writes about their experience in short-term mission. He deals with common themes in these narratives and also includes his own case study, having been heavily involved in a STM to the Dominican Republic and also with the sending congregation, to which he gives the pseudonym “Central Wheaton Church”. This last point is important because it centres much of the content in the North American context. The author is realistic to acknowledge the critiques and praises of STM, and he then attempts to explore more deeply just what are the impacts of STM

through the eyes of anthropology and ethnographic study – in other words, using the social sciences to offer us insights into STM. He offers his evaluations, which he hopes will improve STM. A helpful book for youth group and Christian college leaders of STM.