

S O U T H E A S T E R N

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Book Reviews¹

Hans Madueme and Michael Reeves, eds. *Adam, the Fall, and Original Sin: Theological, Biblical, and Scientific Perspectives*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014. xii + 339 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-0801039928. \$26.99 (Paperback).

Every so often one comes across a wide-ranging and probing inter-disciplinary collection of essays that sheds thoughtful theological light across scripture and the tradition. This is not such a volume. With one striking exception, this is a collection of essays that set their sights doggedly on the far shore of urging a historical Adam as a non-negotiable element of a historical fall without which all Christian things fall apart, and the biblical-theological center cannot hold. There is much excellent material along the way, but it is wrapped in this gloomily unpromising framework to such an inextricable degree that time and again the basic hermeneutical issues are obscured.

Perhaps I should confess that I am a British reviewer, though also a theologian and a church-minister for whom the doctrine of original sin is indeed a fundamental pillar of both my theological understanding and my ministry. I found myself quite startled by what seems at times to be a window into a peculiarly American world where people lose their jobs because of their hermeneutical approach to Genesis, or where Barth can be called a liberal (as indeed is Pannenberg, of all people), or where C.S. Lewis (that quintessential Oxbridge professor) can be quoted as if he were affirming a belief in an historical purpose to the Genesis 2–3 story. I frequently had to put my cup of tea back on its china saucer and proclaim “I say old chap, that’s just not how we do things here.” In the interests of providing some illumination to the reader of this review, I will attempt to intersperse some hermeneutical ruminations into an outline of the details of the book.

¹ *Book Review Editor’s Note:* It is trusted that the following selection will interest and benefit STR readers. However, one must appreciate that reviewers are responsible for their own content. Editorial endorsement of any position taken by a reviewer is thus not automatically implied.

There are fifteen essays in four sections, framed by an editorial introduction and postscript that are worth studying first. They reveal a surprising homogeneity of purpose to the various contributions: they are all (or so the editors aver) demonstrating that “a historical Adam and original sin are essential, irremovable, relevant, and credible elements of the Christian faith.” (p. 323) The three essays of Part 1 explore “Adam in the Bible and Science:” an OT exploration, a NT piece, and a view from a paleontologist, who apparently had to write under a pseudonym because of the explosive nature of his comments. I fear that the explosion would strike those in my British context as rather tame. The OT piece (by C. John Collins) is entirely an exercise in “slippery slope” argument, even avowedly so: if Adam is not historical then neither is anything else in Genesis 1–11ff., which as a seamless garment would then propel us to seeing it all as unhistorical. The role of “mistaken reader who must be opposed” is played by Peter Enns. In fact, Enns gets to play this role so often that I wonder if he should receive royalties?

Part 2 offers five essays on “Original Sin in History,” which are careful and helpful readings in theological traditions. I think more could have been made of the point, often noted quickly in getting underway, that the writers in question simply assumed a historical Adam. Whether we can then draw any conclusions from them about a historical Adam seems rather less obvious. An oddity in this section is Carl Trueman’s reading of “Modern Theology,” in which we find the linking of “liberal” with Barth and Pannenberg. This must be a use of “liberal” with which British and German theologians are unfamiliar.

Part 3 is “Original Sin in Theology,” with four essays including the best and worst of the collection. The positive accolade goes to Daniel Doriani’s piece on “Original Sin in Pastoral Theology.” I would like all my students to read this, for he is right that this doctrine is most needful in Christian ministry if we are to operate with realistic hope. But I wonder whether the editors noticed that this chapter makes no claims at all on what does or does not need to be historical in Genesis. I will not name the worst contribution, but suffice it to say that it concludes with a chunky citation of Erich Auerbach on the absolute claim to historical truth of biblical narratives, in a manner that makes it obvious that the writer has either not read or not understood Auerbach. For Auerbach provides precisely the hermeneutical resources this book lacks for distinguishing

between what is true and real (mimetic, in Auerbach's words) and what is historically referential in the text. None of the contributors seem aware of this, and without it this is a debate hamstrung by hermeneutical conceptualities that equate "literal" to "factual" and eclipse the possibilities of "literal" being simply "what the text says (i.e. 'literarily,' without reference to what did or did not happen)." Admit that possibility, of course, and one can affirm the supreme significance of this doctrine (as I would) without ending anywhere near the perspective of this book.

Part 4 offers three essays on "Adam and the Fall in Dispute." They include an attentive reading of Romans 5 by Thomas Schreiner, who is vexed by Henri Blocher's approach, and two pieces that are very clear on what they think but will not persuade anyone who does not already think it.

So there you have it. I wonder whether the subtitle might more accurately have referred to a (single) perspective. It is good to have that view propounded at length in one place, and kudos to Baker Academic for publishing it, where it may appear on bookshelves and conference tables alongside their 2012 title *The Evolution of Adam* by Peter Enns. Read them both and draw your own conclusions. Despite the rhetoric of the book under review, I doubt the (theological) world will fall apart while you ponder the issues. Though if it does, you could always move to the UK.

Richard S. Briggs
Durham, United Kingdom

Robert L. Plummer and Matthew D. Haste. *Held in Honor: Wisdom for Your Marriage from Voices of the Past*. Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2015. 132 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-1781916438. \$14.99 (Paperback).

Robert L. Plummer serves as Professor of New Testament Interpretation at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. His *40 Questions about Interpreting the Bible* is one of his more well-known and widely used texts. Matthew D. Haste completed a Ph.D. in Biblical Spirituality at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary studying under Michael A. G. Haykin. Haste's dissertation is entitled "Marriage in the Life and Theology of John Gill, Samuel Stennett and Andrew Fuller."

Held in Honor: Wisdom for Your Marriage from Voices of the Past is a collection of fifty writings on marriage from selected Christian the-

ologians, pastors and authors, followed by Plummer and Haste's devotional reflections on key themes from those writings. The devotional reflections themselves may be described as God-centred, biblical, realistic, penetrating and practical. Following a brief conclusion the work contains an appendix with Scriptures on marriage for memorization and meditation.

As the title suggests, Plummer and Haste's primary aim is to provide wisdom from the past on marriage to believers in the present. The book is based on three fundamental convictions: marriage is an experience common to all people throughout history, God has provided wisdom for his church in teachers, and God created marriage and thus he alone (in his Word) serves as the final authority on the institution (p. 12). Plummer and Haste's use of sources demonstrates a concern to affirm and pass along only those ideas that accord with Scripture's teaching. For instance, they reject Ambrosiaster's exaltation of celibacy over marriage (p. 34) and Hugh of St. Victor's support for Mary's perpetual virginity (p. 42). The authors thus recognize that not everything in the works they examine should serve as wisdom to be applied to one's marriage today.

Dividing church history into five major periods (Patristic, Celtic and Medieval, Reformation and Puritan, Evangelical, and Modern), the authors review marriage-related writings from some of the more well-known figures (e.g., Augustine, Aquinas, Spurgeon, Barth), lesser known individuals (e.g., Paulinus of Nola, Venn), women (e.g., Goodhue, Bradstreet, Elliot) and writings whose author is unclear (e.g., *The Shepherd of Hermas*, *The Clementine Homilies*). Recurring themes found in the writings include the need for a husband to be gentle and loving toward his wife and for a wife to respect her husband, as well as the joys and difficulties that accompany marriage. Readers will find Plummer and Haste's attention to the common experiences of those who marry (regardless of when and where they lived) fascinating. In addition, the authors' balanced, Christ-centred perspective will also be appreciated. One excerpt that illustrates their outlook comes from their devotional reflections: "People who enter marriage with unrealistic expectations often live in disillusionment and regret. Married persons must embrace this truth: All marriages have challenges and sorrows. But if such challenges are met with faith in God and a commitment to one's spouse, a beautiful picture of Christ's unwavering love for the church becomes visible (Eph. 5:22–33)" (p. 99) The authors do not

gloss over the challenges of marriage. They are realistic. At the same time, they point readers to Christ.

Held in Honor: Wisdom for Your Marriage from Voices of the Past is a delight to read. Those who value church history will appreciate the profound reflections on marriage from some of the most well-known and also lesser-known Christian minds from the past. Those who seek to understand Scripture's teaching on marriage will be rewarded in their reading of Plummer and Haste's devotional reflections. Finally, those who wish to be challenged to show greater love and devotion toward God and their spouses will find many practical insights.

This is a helpful book for pastors and theologically-minded lay-people. Husbands and wives will also benefit from reading it together. I highly recommend this book to those who desire to honor the Lord in their marriage.

Michael L. Bryant
Charleston, South Carolina

Mikeal C. Parsons. *Luke: Storyteller, Interpreter, Evangelist*. Waco: Baylor University Press, 2014. xxii + 257 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-1481300681. \$34.95 (Paperback).

This collection of previously published essays is organized around the three rubrics of Luke as Greco-Roman storyteller, interpreter of tradition, and evangelist to Gentiles. Yet, the three together show a deeper unity in the coalescence of message and medium.

To begin, an introductory chapter addresses authorship, treating traditional and contemporary views in tandem. While there is much agreement on a common author for Luke and Acts, Parsons summarizes questions about the "we" passages, Luke as Gentile and physician, and what the prologue reveals about its author.

Moving to the first part, on Luke as storyteller, Parsons argues that Luke employs the *progymnasmata*, preliminary rhetorical techniques in handbooks for students who have mastered grammar. Narrative criticism anachronistically imposes later literary conventions on first-century texts but the *progymnasmata* are part of Luke-Acts' historical context. Some techniques identified include *chreia* ("a brief assertion or action revealing shrewdness") (p. 20), "fable," and "narrative" (*diegesis*). Good *diegesis* is persuasive due to concision, clarity, and plausibility. For example, Luke's preface (Luke

1:1–4) viewed diagetically evidences identification with earlier evangelists but also the judgment that they were not “complete” and “well-ordered” narratives.

The second part begins by showing how Luke interprets Greco-Roman customs and values, specifically friendship and physiognomy. More than any New Testament author Luke uses the classical value of friendship. He depicts God as displaying loyalty and reciprocity, and thus impresses upon his audience their social and moral obligations to one another and society. For instance, Luke’s audience would have viewed the “Parable of the Friend at Midnight” (Luke 11:1–13) through the “enthymemic network” (p. 58) of God as friend, God as patron, and patron as friend. Also, as physiognomy associated outer characteristics with inner qualities, Peter’s healing of the lame man (Acts 3:1–4:22) simultaneously uses physiognomy to draw readers in and to challenge this “physiognomic consciousness.” The lame man’s healing manifests his moral transformation, which is paradigmatic of Israel’s restoration (p. 72).

Luke likewise reinterprets Jewish traditions. Rather than depict Jerusalem as center of the world, Luke locates Jerusalem at the end of Jesus’ story and the beginning of the Church’s story. Here Parsons rejects both Conzelmann’s thesis that Jerusalem forms the geographical center of Luke’s narrative and Davies’ opposite view that Luke marginalizes Jerusalem. Then, using Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8:26–40) as an example, Parsons investigates Luke’s use of the “Suffering Servant” in Isaiah 53. Engaging Morna Hooker’s analysis of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch, Parsons contends, contra Hooker and others, that Luke did not merely use Isaiah 53:7–8 as a proof-text and intentionally omit references to vicarious atonement. Instead, Luke uses the passage for a theological exposition of the necessity of Christ’s suffering.

Further, Parsons treats Luke’s appropriation of incipient Christian traditions. In the uniquely Lucan parables, Luke modified an existing parable collection to meet his authorial agenda, emphasizing themes like journeying, great “reversals,” “insiders becoming outsiders” and “outsiders becoming insiders.” Parsons addresses the differences between “Luke’s Paul” and Paul in the undisputed epistles by maintaining that Luke’s audience would have heard an expansion and condensing of the Paul of the letters.

In the final part, “Luke the Evangelist,” Parsons examines Luke as a “proclaimer of the good news” in the story of Peter and Cornelius (Acts 10:1–11:18). In a detailed section-by-section exegesis

he argues that Luke presents the Abrahamic covenant as the scriptural basis for the inclusion of Gentiles in the reconstituted people of God. Not only Cornelius is converted. Peter is converted too, to seeing that salvation has no human boundaries and that “God shows no partiality.” The conversion of Cornelius’ household thus symbolizes the shift from Temple to household worship. Warning against anachronistically viewing “Judaism” and “Christianity” as separate “religions” in Acts, Parsons urges that Luke tried to present the Christian movement as one viable Jewish sect among others.

This book has many strengths. It provides an abundance of insights into details of Luke-Acts and numerous illuminating facts about Luke’s Greco-Roman and Second Temple Jewish contexts. Some of these will be new to any reader. One walks away with an even greater sense of Luke-Acts’ literary richness and theological complexity. Luke wastes no words, every detail matters, and nothing is superfluous. Additionally, Parsons’s rehearsals of commonplaces in the scholarship will be informative to new students and refreshers for experts.

To be sure, Parsons does not always concur with the scholarly consensus but he substantiates his demurrals well. The scholarly rigor is exemplary. Parsons avoids tendentious crafting of justifications for already foregone conclusions. Confluences of evidence and cogent lines of reasoning may very well lead some to reconsider majority positions. Parsons’s command of the scholarship can be breathtaking at times.

It is difficult to fault Parsons’s work. He does take debatable assertions by other scholars at face value in places, and some arguments may seem a bit stretched. Sometimes one wishes Parsons would have raised and addressed more objections to his own position. These instances are few, however.

Although certainly advanced, the book’s frequent summaries of propaedeutics afford accessibility to advanced undergraduates and educated laypersons as well as academics, graduate students, and theologically-trained pastors.

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Michael B. Shepherd. *The Text in the Middle*. Studies in Biblical Literature 162. New York: Peter Lang, 2014. 193 pp. Hardback. ISBN 978-1433128325. \$82.95 (Hardback).

For several years, Michael Shepherd has been publishing works that highlight the compositional features of biblical literature. In *The Twelve Prophets in the New Testament* (New York: Peter Lang, 2010), he argued that the New Testament writers used and understood the twelve Minor Prophets within the literary context of the Book of the Twelve. In *The Textual World of the Bible* (New York: Peter Lang, 2013), he examined the way biblical authors summarize and interpret previous narratives as they recount the history of redemption and compose their own texts. In *The Text in the Middle*, Shepherd furthers this broader project by examining a network of inter-textual connections that span the biblical canon.

Shepherd begins with the assumption that “the Hebrew Bible is a text composed of other texts” and that “those ‘other texts’ are within the Bible itself” (p. 1). He argues that those who helped shape the Hebrew Bible into a coherent collection gave the texts a specific perspective by their compiling and editorial work. The Hebrew Bible “was thus built to interpret itself” and later biblical readers including the authors of the New Testament “understood this phenomenon and were greatly influenced by it” (p. 1).

In this study of inner-biblical exegesis, Shepherd focuses on what he terms “bridge texts” or “texts in the middle” (p. 2). Shepherd explains, “This is where a citation of a text occurs, but the way in which the text is cited has already been anticipated in a previous citation of the original text, thus involving at least three texts (primary, secondary, and tertiary)” (p. 2). Recognizing the difficulty of identifying the “direction of dependence” in cases of inner-biblical exegesis, Shepherd looks for “clues as to how those who gave these texts their final shape wanted readers to understand inter-textual links” (p. 3).

The book itself consists of a long series of case studies that involve multiple texts (approx. 90 groupings!). The four chapters cover citations from the Pentateuch (chapters 1–2), the Prophets (chapter 3), and the Writings (chapter 4). Each chapter consists of main headings that list the passages that the following subsection will examine. This organization gives the volume a technical feel, but it also means that the groupings unfold organically and that a specific textual example is relatively easy to locate.

Shepherd's analysis shines when he examines a genuine "bridge" text. In these cases, the explanatory power of his approach is evident. For instance, Shepherd shows how the writer of Hebrews draws on Psalm 8 in order to illustrate the incarnation of Jesus (pp. 7–9). This particular psalm, though, is *already* an interpretive reflection on the creation narratives of Gen 1–2. Further, the "exegetical warrant" for connecting the general comments about mankind in Psalm 8 to Jesus is the connection that already exists in the Psalter between this psalm and Psalm 110 which speaks of a messianic priest-king. In fact, these texts appear in close proximity in the opening argument of Hebrews (i.e., Heb 1:3, 13). Accordingly, Shepherd argues, "the writer's exegesis of Psalm 8 is based upon a holistic reading of the book of Psalms" (p. 9). Similarly, Shepherd shows that when Hebrews speaks of entering God's rest in Heb 4:1–11, the writer not only draws on the conclusion to the creation narrative in Gen 1–2, but also on the notion of Sabbath rest in Ex 20:11 and the promise of entering the land in Josh 13:1 and Judg 1:27–33 (pp. 11–13).

This type of study broadens the scope of investigation to include not only the way that the New Testament authors draw on the Old Testament, but also the inter-textual activity already at work within the Hebrew Bible. For instance, Shepherd notes that "theologians sometimes cite Rom 9:13 in support of the view that Paul is talking about corporate election rather than individual election" (p. 45). This seems to be the case when Paul quotes Mal 1:2–3, which speaks of the nations of Israel and Edom rather than individuals like Jacob and Esau. However, Paul also quotes Gen 25:23, "a text that announces both the birth of two individuals and the birth of two nations" (p. 45). In this case, "the Malachi text is an exegesis of the Genesis text" and "Paul's text is thus an exegesis of an exegesis" (p. 45). Because the Malachi text connects the "story of two sons" with the "history of two nations," Paul can "move fairly freely between the election of individual and that of corporate entities" (p. 45). For Shepherd, recognizing that the author of Malachi is interpreting the Genesis narrative is critical when interpreting Paul's understanding of the Malachi text.

Though there are many "text in the middle" examples, perhaps a more accurate general description of the nature of most of the textual case studies comes much later in the volume: "the phenomenon of inner-biblical exegesis involving three or more texts" (p. 108). In most groupings, Shepherd coordinates and considers a

“constellation of texts” (p. 43). For instance, Shepherd discusses the various ways that subsequent biblical authors understand and utilize the account of the Lord’s covenant with David in 2 Sam 7:1–17 (pp. 122–29). Prophetic texts like Zech 6:12–13 and poetic texts like Psalm 89 and 132 allude to different features of the Davidic covenant in their messages of future deliverance. The author of Chronicles and the New Testament writers also understand Jesus’ messianic role through the lens of the Davidic covenant (1 Chron 17:1–15; Luke 1:32–33; Acts 2:30; Heb 1:5). Though in many cases like this one there is no true bridge text *in the middle* (as he defines it), through these examples Shepherd clearly demonstrates how frequently inter-textual connections appear in all parts of the biblical canon.

This fuller inter-textual awareness will enhance the study of all of the texts under review and enable readers to appreciate the inter-textual nature of biblical literature. Some of Shepherd’s treatments are strikingly brief and would require further development to persuade most readers (sometimes only a few sentences for a large number of texts; the final chapter on the Writings is also only six pages). Shepherd’s discussion of methodological issues is also surprisingly condensed (pp. 1–4, 107–09). Because his work covers so many texts, a little more reflection on the method he uses to make exegetical decisions would benefit the reader trying to keep track. Nevertheless, virtually every page brims with grammatical, syntactical, and text-critical insight. Because of Shepherd’s deep grasp of the Hebrew Scriptures and the biblical languages, his work here is an important supplement to similar works from the field of New Testament studies.

A critical reader of this volume could rightly conclude that in many cases Shepherd *makes* but does not *demonstrate* and/or explain the connection between two or more texts. While generally acknowledging this conclusion, a sympathetic reader will also recognize that Shepherd has located hundreds of inter-textual goldmines and provided guidance for how they might be gainfully excavated by students, scholars, and pastors. Perhaps the most valuable aspect of this work, then, is that it forces the reader to consider the textual logic of a large swath of biblical literature and offers a compelling model of close reading.

Ched Spellman
Cedarville, Ohio

Courtney Reissig. *The Accidental Feminist: Restoring Our Delight in God's Good Design*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015. 161 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-1433545481. \$14.99 (Paperback).

The Accidental Feminist is Courtney Reissig's personal testimony of her walk through the ambient feminist ideas of modern American culture in an attempt to reconcile those ideas with her view of biblical womanhood. By addressing women who think that "feminism and Christianity aren't mutually exclusive" and promising that "this is not your grandmother's feminism," Reissig implies that there might be a common ground between feminism and biblical womanhood. However, apart from a handful of political gains, such as voting and property ownership, Reissig sees no common ground between modern feminist ideas and her view of biblical womanhood.

Reissig's discussion of the failings of feminism compared to biblical womanhood spans seven chapters. Each chapter ends with an application for the single woman and the married woman followed by a set of study questions. Reissig begins with God's good design in creating men and women with equal value but different functions. She examines the problems with feminist ideas that see gender equality as sameness on every level, focusing specifically on God's design for marriage, female beauty and modesty, the importance of hospitality, and the appropriate roles for women in the church. Reissig closes with a chapter that exhorts women to understand their position in relation to the redemptive work of Christ and to understand that their identity must not be wrapped up in human relationships, like wife or mother, or in professional status, like executive. Instead a woman's identity should be built on her relationship with God.

Whether readers agree with all of Reissig's claims or not, this book offers some noteworthy insights. For example, Reissig argues against the extreme views that womanhood can be reduced to a set of tasks. The feminist cannot require a woman to be a wife, mother, and CEO any more than the church can require a woman to check off all of the attributes of the Proverbs 31 wife. Instead a woman should seek to understand her Creator and how He guides her to live. Reissig encourages women to seek God, not their own timetable or society's timetable, for life decisions about work, marriage, and children. A married woman should follow Jesus's example of submission to God in order to submit to her husband. She needs

to understand that submission does not mean becoming a doormat, and it does not indicate unequal worth. Jesus was able to submit to God the Father because he fully trusted God's sovereignty and love; a woman who submits to her husband demonstrates her own faith and trust in the sovereign God. Jesus is also exalted as the role model for grace. As Reissig explains that men are imperfect sinners who will hurt and disappoint the women in their lives, she urges women to react to men with grace. She reminds women that when they mess up, all they get from Jesus is grace, not the silent treatment or a hateful outburst. As image-bearers women must demonstrate God's grace to others.

While this book brings up some insightful points about women as image-bearers, it also falls short in a few areas. For example, Reissig's discussion of feminism is limited to the history of feminism in America. She states that feminist Christian women do not like the writings of the apostle Paul, but she does not unpack this statement or discuss issues of feminism or misogyny in the cultures discussed in the early church of the New Testament. When discussing the roles of women in the church, Reissig presents scripture references that limit the role of pastors and elders to men, and she stands against feminist movements within the church. However, she does not discuss any of the women who were active in the early church as role models for today's women. Although she defines feminism as "equality equals sameness," there is a need for repeating this definition and explaining nuanced meanings of feminism throughout the book. For example, when Reissig states that "the seeds of feminism are actually an affront to the gospel," it would be helpful to explain that she is referring to the seeds of first wave feminism in America and not to more general seeds of feminism that include not treating women as second-class citizens.

Because of these shortcomings, *The Accidental Feminist* is best suited for Christian complementarians who believe that God created men and women equal but with differences that complement one another. God created women to be different from men, and those differences should be embraced and used to bring God glory. Trying to erase those differences is a symptom of not trusting God's good design. Reissig's informal and conversational style is easy to read, and her convictions are sincere. She exhorts women

to find their value in God and relish their position as the image-bearers He created them to be.

Adrienne Miles
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Mark Wilson. *Victory through the Lamb: A Guide to Revelation in Plain Language*. Wooster, OH: Weaver, 2014. 223 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-1941337011. \$15.99 (Paperback).

Mark Wilson's popular level guide to the book of Revelation helpfully summarizes the message of John's vision with a focus on its meaning for the church. Wilson has established himself as a credible scholar on Revelation with several well-received books and articles, but what distinguishes him from others is his research while residing in Turkey/Asia Minor for over a decade. As the founder and director of the Asia Minor Research Center in Antalya, Turkey, he is an expert on the cities, history, and archaeology of the seven churches of Revelation. This affords him perspectives and insights for reading Revelation in a way that is tethered to history, but with a pastoral emphasis, applying it to the modern church.

Revelation, according to Wilson, is not "a kind of biblical crystal ball" for reading current events in the media, but "it was to help Christians get through the daily struggles of life that they were facing" (p. 11). The language and imagery of Revelation is rooted in the Old Testament and one should read Revelation on its own literary, cultural, and historical terms. He believes the rapture will occur after the tribulation (post-tribulation). The thousand years of Revelation 20 is a future event (premillennial), but the millennium is merely a symbolic way to describe eternity in the new heaven and earth (p. 13). We should expect tribulation because ever since "Jesus' ascension, the devil, through his earthy representatives, has been bringing tribulation against the people of God" (p. 14). As such, the message of Revelation speaks to every generation of believers with a message of future hope through the victory of the Lamb.

Wilson primarily focuses on the theme of victory throughout the book of Revelation. He recounts the recent martyrdom of two Turkish Christians in 2007 as what moved him to show how Revelation addresses the church with a message of victory through the Lamb. His guiding premise is, "Christians have and always will suffer tribulation until Jesus returns at his second coming" (p. 10).

This premise, then, converges well with the central message of Revelation: “believers can overcome the tribulations of life, even persecution and martyrdom, because of the victory won by the Lamb of God” (p. 11). Wilson thus highlights the importance of the victor sayings (Rev. 2:11, 26; 3:5, 12, 21) to the seven churches with their promised rewards of a “future *provision* in a renewed *place* with the *person* of Jesus” (p. 42). How they will have victory is found in Rev. 5:5–6 where John discovers that the Lion of the Tribe of Judah who “overcame” (*nikaō*) is the slain yet standing Lamb. He writes, “[t]he victory promised to all believers can only occur because Jesus the Lamb of God has already triumphed over death, the devil, and hell” (p. 55). This victory was achieved only through the sacrifice and suffering of Christ, which is the pattern a believer must follow in order to have victory.

The book consists of twelve chapters guiding readers through Revelation’s parts. Each chapter features an aspect of the victory theme in a section of Revelation: (1) Victory in the Seven Churches (1:1–3:22); (2) Victory and the Lamb (4:1–5:14); (3) Victory of the Large Multitude (6:1–9:21); (4) Victory of the Two Witnesses (10:1–11:19); (5) Victory of the Male Child, the Woman, and Her Offspring (12:1–17); (6) Victory over the Beasts (13:1–18); (7) Victory of the 144,000 and the Harvest of the Victors (14:1–20); (8) Victory in the Song of Moses and of the Lamb (15:1–16:21); (9) Victory over Mystery Babylon (17:1–19:10); (10) Victory over the Lamb’s Enemies (19:11–20:15); (11) Victory in the New Heaven and New Earth (21:1–2:5); (12) Victory at Jesus’ Second Coming (22:6–21). He begins each chapter with a “martyr account” taken from ancient texts and a fresh translation of the Greek text of Revelation. The martyr accounts, many of which occur in Asia Minor, frame the theme of tribulation and victory within the context of church history. Wilson’s fresh translation of Revelation is also remarkably engaging. While there is nothing ground-breaking, he wedds interpretation and translation together beautifully. The bulk of each chapter summarizes the contents of Revelation succinctly. Throughout the summary he elaborates on key words and passages related to the theme of victory.

Wilson’s book is a well-written, insightful, and inspiring guide to Revelation. Although he often skims the surface of the text and only provides sporadic footnotes, Wilson clearly demonstrates a commanding grasp of the latest scholarship on the recent research of Revelation. One could quibble with his early dating of Revela-

tion or specific interpretations of some passages, but overall his interpretation is extremely judicious, faithful, and theologically solid. I am often asked what book would I recommend for an average Christian on the message of Revelation—I will gladly recommend *Victory through the Lamb*.

Alan S. Bandy
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Bryan C. Babcock. *Sacred Ritual: A Study of the West Semitic Ritual Calendars in Leviticus 23 and the Akkadian Text Emar 446*. Bulletin for Biblical Research Supplement 9. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2014. xiv + 271 pp. Hardback. ISBN 978-1575068268. \$59.50 (Hardback).

Archaeological endeavors in the Levant have undeniably enriched Biblical studies. The epigraphic and textual material uncovered has provided the catalyst for numerous comparative studies which in turn have served to elucidate the cultural milieu of the biblical texts. In this revision of his 2011 dissertation completed under Richard Hess and Gordon Wenham, Bryan C. Babcock adds to a growing compendium by examining parallels between Leviticus 23 and an Akkadian text, Emar 446. The goal of Babcock's study is twofold: to establish whether Leviticus 23 preserves an early West Semitic multi-month festival calendar tradition and, if found to do so, to challenge a late dating of the Levitical text founded on parallels with the first millennium Akītu festival (p. 2).

In the book's opening chapter Babcock outlines his proposed approach. The need for a carefully articulated *modus operandi* for comparative studies is well highlighted by the "parallelomania" so memorably bemoaned by Samuel Sandmel ("Parallelomania," *JBL* 81 [1962], pp. 1–13). Babcock's method is satisfyingly comprehensive and, drawing on insights derived from the approaches of William Hallo, Meir Malul, Kenton Sparks and, in particular, Gerald Klingbeil, clearly articulates the broad range of factors that must be considered to establish a credible link between ancient texts. In doing so, Babcock aims to advance comparative scholarship by attempting "to move beyond the mere listing of superficial similarities and differences to a deeper understanding of the compared rituals" (p. 18).

Chapter 2 presents an overview of ancient Near Eastern ritual calendars from the third through to the first millennium B.C. In

addition, Babcock surveys scholarship related to the OT festival calendar texts (Exod 23; 34; Lev 23; Num 28–29; Deut 16; Ezek 45) with a particular eye to their relative dating. Unsurprisingly, he finds little consensus on this score. Also included in chapter 2 is an extended critique of Jan Wagenaar's thesis that Leviticus 23 is dependent upon the first millennium Babylonian Akītu festival and therefore reflects an exilic/post-exilic provenience (pp. 54–78). Babcock's criticism of Wagenaar ably demonstrates the potential of his proposed methodology to expose the weaknesses of alternative approaches as well as their corresponding conclusions.

Chapters 3 and 4 examine Leviticus 23 and Emar 446 respectively. For both, Babcock offers a new translation (including transliteration and normalization of the Akkadian script). Discussion of each text's structure and literary features follows. The treatment is detailed, including verbal analysis, identification of implied audience, and exploration of literary devices (e.g., chiasmic structures). Babcock then discusses specific ritual elements, collating these under a number of headings—sacred time, sacred space, sacred objects, ritual participants, and ritual sound and smell. The result of this close analysis is a “thick” description of both texts, suggesting in turn potential points of similarity and dissimilarity.

Babcock's penultimate chapter capitalizes on the analysis proffered in the previous two by directly comparing Leviticus 23 with Emar 446. Following Malul and Soggin, Babcock argues that in assessing a potential connection between texts, it is points of unanticipated similarity that are especially significant (p. 238). Of consequence, therefore, are nine unexpected parallels identified as being present between the texts in question (pp. 238–239). These points of contact, Babcock contends, suggest a genuine link, one best defined as “awareness of another society's cultural practices” (p. 239). Common tradition is deemed the most likely type of connection. A short concluding chapter summarizes the main points of the study and suggests avenues for further research.

While Babcock's assessment of Leviticus 23 and Emar 446 is comprehensive, a major point of difference remains unaddressed: Emar 446 exists as a standalone text, Leviticus 23 does not. Thus a form-critical isolation of the latter from its wider context is problematic. At a minimum, chapter 23 forms part of the so-called Holiness Code (Lev 17–26); arguably, it also needs to be read as an integral part of the wider book and even of the Pentateuch *in toto*. The resulting implications regarding the purpose and rhetorical

force of Leviticus 23 (aspects evaluated by Babcock) are not really addressed.

Nevertheless, *Sacred Ritual* presents a model of methodological clarity in which the posited approach is fastidiously followed throughout. The result is a clear articulation of the central thesis and a persuasive demonstration of the common heritage that connects Leviticus 23 and Emar 446. It is this methodological thoroughness that perhaps represents one of the more significant implications of Babcock's work for the wider field. In light of the approach exemplified, it is not hard to think of posited connections between the OT and other Near Eastern texts and rituals which seem somewhat unsubstantiated by comparison. Babcock's approach will thus doubtless prove conducive as a means of (re)evaluating these studies.

Sacred Ritual is a lucid and thoroughly persuasive monograph. With it, Babcock has set a high standard for other comparative studies to follow.

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Gailyn Van Rheezen, with Anthony Parker. *Missions: Biblical Foundations and Contemporary Strategies*. 2d. ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014. 512 pp. Hardback. ISBN 978-0310252375. \$27.76 (Hardback).

Following nearly two decades as a missionary practitioner in both North American and African contexts, Gailyn Van Rheezen has served as graduate professor of Missions at Abilene Christian University since 1986. A renowned missiologist, Van Rheezen is also author of *Communicating Christ in Animistic Contexts* (William Carey Library, 1991) and founder of www.missiology.org. Anthony Parker serves as adjunct professor of Intercultural Studies at Johnson University as well as a training coach for Pioneer Bible Translators. Parker has 14 years of experience as a field missionary in West Africa.

The first edition of *Missions* was published in 1996 and has been used widely as a textbook for basic missions courses in varying contexts. The second edition builds upon the initial 11 chapters in the first edition, most of which have gone through some revision. One example is how the current edition reframes the biblical and theological foundations for missions using the popular language of

“story” and the framework of the grand meta-narrative of Scripture. In addition, there is a significant expansion of 8 additional chapters that address the many changes and challenges in 21st century missions practice and missiological thinking. New chapters have been added related to spiritual awakenings, the role of the local church in missions, types of missionaries, missions history, and the proper use of both money and short-term missions in a long term strategy. There is also a chapter expanding upon one of Van Rheeën’s signature contributions to the field of missiology, the “Missional Helix.”

Missions has several strengths that make it a truly helpful resource as a potential primary or supplementary textbook. First, the authors have done a splendid job of grounding the task of the missionary squarely in sound biblical theology (chapters 1 and 3). Second, they have introduced the reader to how the task of missions has developed over the centuries (chapter 8) as well as the stages for on-going development in the current context (chapter 2). Third, they have captured what many have missed in other texts, the centrality of the Church in the task of missions (chapter 4). By addressing the role of the Church as “God’s Embodiment of Mission,” the authors ground the missionary calling (chapter 5–6), preparation, sending and nurturing of missionaries (chapter 7) within the context of Biblical community. Perhaps the most helpful parts of the book are those chapters that deal with the missionary task (chapters 9–14), though it is unfortunate that the application chapters (15–16) are limited in their context to North America and Tribal Africa. In fact, there is not a full discussion of the concept of Unreached Peoples until the final chapter of the book!

For all of *Missions’* strengths, two additional weaknesses were apparent that made the book’s flow a bit less than ideal. The first is related to the organization of content. Though each of the 19 chapters contains helpful material to any student of missions, the authors would have been wise to further divide the book into sections arranging the chapters under the headings as follows: Biblical and Theological Foundations (chapters 1, 3, 4 and 5), Historical Development (chapters 2 and 8), The Missionary Calling (chapters 6–7, and 19), Missionary Practice (chapters 9–16), and Missionary Stewardship (chapters 17–18). A second potential distraction is the authors attempt to personalize the subject by weaving the characters of “Jim and Julie” throughout the content. Though well-meaning, the use of this narrative often comes across as forced and

contrived in order to drive home the point that “You are Jim and Julie!” (p. 480). I would agree that every Christ-follower should understand his or her missionary identity, but the addition of fictional characters to a textbook is unnecessary.

There seems to be no shortage of new missions textbooks that have been published over the past several years: Moreau, Corwin and McGee (2015), Terry (2015), Pratt and Sills (2014), Goheen (2014), Tippett (2013), Tennent (2010), and Winter and Hawthorne (2009). Van Rheenen and Parker’s new edition falls within this flurry of new publications attempting to inform Christians of their vital role in God’s mission. While all of the aforementioned authors are evangelical, by virtue of their respective missions experience and context, each (including Van Rheenen and Parker) brings to the table a helpfully nuanced understanding of our place in God’s redemptive story. Though the weaknesses mentioned above have prevented me from adopting *Missions* as a textbook for my own courses, I am gleaning very helpful material from it and would recommend it as one of several resources to bring about a fuller understanding of a vitally important subject.

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Allen P. Ross. *A Commentary on the Psalms: Volume 2 (42–89)*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2013. 841 pp. Hardback. ISBN 978-0825425639. \$44.95 (Hardback).

This is the second of three volumes. Volume 1 appeared in 2012; Volume 3 is forthcoming. Allen Ross serves as Professor of Divinity at Beeson Divinity School and in his 40 years of teaching has also been at Dallas Theological Seminary and Trinity Episcopal School for Ministry.

In each discussion of a psalm Ross gives an original translation, textual notes, compositional and contextual observations, exegetical analysis, expositional commentary, and the overall message and application.

Ross’s translation is footnoted with abundant textual and grammatical notes. The textual notes focus on the MT and LXX, but also on other translations where needed. The grammatical notes are technical but significant for interpretation. They are user-friendly; words are translated first with the original after. Those without benefit of the languages will still find good profit here.

(Ross also uses the English numbering system that is easier for English only readers.) Compositional and contextual notes give the psalm's type (e.g., national lament [Ps 44]; individual lament [Ps 51]; royal psalm [Ps 72]), and anything that can be known of the context of the psalm, revealed primarily in the superscription. Here Ross will at times include what other OT scholars have suggested about the psalm or make reference to the psalm's use in Israel's worship. But Ross avoids the excesses of critical scholarship, tying his observations to the wording of the psalm.

The exegetical analysis (really a brief outline) is a rendering down of the text in the words of the text. From the exegesis of the text, Ross gives a complete yet concise summary of each verse(s), section, and finally the entire psalm. For example, for Ps 48:4–8 Ross gives, “The psalmist describes how the LORD of armies defeated the enemies of his holy city to establish it forever.” What follows this is a similar summary of the verse(s), contributing to the overall sectional summary. When these are combined they yield a summary for the entire psalm. This overall summary might seem wordy and repetitive, but it grows organically from the exegetical observations of the verses. One might expect the exegetical commentary to be in this unit but Ross places it in the following section.

The commentary in expository terms combines the exegetical observations with an outline that is more generalized, suggestive of possible teaching points. So in the example above for Ps 48:4–8, Ross gives the expositional summary, “God is to be praised because of his mighty victories in defending his dwelling-place.” In this discussion Ross provides careful observations about the meaning of the text, drawing on grammar, lexicon, and larger literary structures. He displays what I regard to be the correct method for interpreting a text: attention to the meaning of a word (lexicon), the relationship of that word to those surrounding it (syntax); and the literary setting of the passage (for the Psalms the literary motif of the verse[s]).

Regarding word meaning, Ross frequently provides in footnotes word studies of theological and interpretive import. These are referenced across the volumes so that, for example, the discussion of “loyal love” in Ps 51:1 references his word study in Ps. 23:6. One can only hope that the final volume will have complete and intuitive indexes for these notes. Regarding syntax, Ross follows in the tradition of Waltke/O'Connor's *Hebrew Syntax*, but again in a way that makes the interpretive options plain for a more general audi-

ence. Regarding structure, Ross employs a modified form criticism (i.e. the proper recognition of literary genres in the outline of a psalm, such as in an individual lament, where one might expect the lament proper, the petition, a statement of confidence, and sometimes a vow to praise after deliverance) without the excesses of that method (e.g. tracing a supposed *Sitz im Leben* for the origin or use of a literary type, quite apart from any direct textual evidence). In this section Ross will also frequently discuss the NT use of the psalm. Absent from Ross's discussion is interpretive material based on observations from contiguous psalms or exegetical information based on the position of the psalm derived from a reconstruction of an editorial process.

A concluding brief message and application section provides guidelines for teaching the psalm and possible NT counterparts to the material. These suggestions grow out of the exegesis and provide guard rails for the use of the Psalms in preaching.

In my opinion, Ross' three volume work should be a model for commentary writing and will be the most helpful complete commentary for the study of the book of Psalms. Kregel Publications is to be commended for its willingness to allow a commentary of this heft. Misspellings or technical errors are rare; however, the Hebrew furtive *patach* should be offset in future works they publish.

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Haddon W. Robinson and Patricia Batten, eds. *Models for Biblical Preaching: Expository Sermons from the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014. viii + 189 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-0801049378. \$19.99 (Paperback).

Models for Biblical Preaching is designed to be a companion text to Haddon Robinson's classic homiletics book *Biblical Preaching*. After a short introduction by the editors, the book contains eleven sermons from Robinson's former students. Ten of the eleven sermons are based upon particular Old Testament texts. One topical sermon is included, which explores the apparent tension between the love and justice of God. Considering the subtitle of the book, "Expository Sermons from the Old Testament," the intentional inclusion of a topical sermon seems to be an odd decision. In any event, the styles of the various sermons are diverse. For example, some of the

sermons follow the text closely while others have a more storytelling, bigger picture approach to the passage.

Though displaying different styles, all the preachers model how to effectively weave illustrations and application into their expositions. In addition, each of the sermon manuscripts is followed by a series of questions answered by the author of the particular sermon. These questions vary depending on the chapter, but they tend to be questions related to describing the sermon preparation process, the use of notes (or lack thereof) while preaching, and advice for particular kinds of preachers (e.g., young preachers, mature preachers, and women preachers).

In a time when many preachers are neglecting expositional sermons from the Old Testament, Robinson and Batten have nobly offered examples of how it can be done. And for those who buy in to the notion that good preaching is more often caught than taught, this volume will be filling a void that is sometimes lacking in homiletics textbooks.

One of the major weaknesses of a book of modern sermons, which seeks to teach by example is that it is, well, a book. The editors seem to acknowledge the limitation of studying sermons in print: "These printed sermons resemble cadavers. Cadavers are lifeless bodies that medical students dissect to discover how muscle, sinew, and nerve are put together. While printed sermons fall far short of being living sermons with breath and fire and spirit, it is profitable to study them and see what the preachers intended to do and how they planned for the sermon to have life and coherence" (p. viii). This raises some questions. Why would a preaching professor attempting to get his students to catch on to good preaching or a preacher looking to improve on his trade turn to a written compilation of sermons rather than to recordings of sermons? In a technological age where video and audio of sermons can be accessed easily from the websites of even modest size churches from around the world, why use manuscripts? Or to use their analogy, why settle for cadavers? Perhaps a better tool would be a list of online sermon links provided on a website, which also includes post sermon interviews conducted with the preachers. The manuscripts of both the sermons and the interviews could also be made available in print form on the website (or in a book) as a supplement to the recordings.

A few other issues seem relevant for potential readers. The book includes two sermons from female preachers. Surely some

will wonder, on one hand, why there is not more of an equal distribution between women and men. On the other hand, some will object based on their understanding of the New Testament that the inclusion of two sermons by women was two too many. Evaluating this issue falls well outside the confines of the review. Nonetheless, it will likely be an elephant in the room for some, so it bears mentioning.

Curiously, the preachers selected are found in a limited geographic region (five sermons from preachers in the Northeast United States, three from Colorado, two from the Midwest, and one from southern California). All of these preachers delivered their sermons within the United States, yet representation from the Bible Belt was completely omitted. This might be due to the limitation of these sermons being selected from Haddon Robinson's past students. However, since most instructors will stress the importance of relating appropriately to different contexts, offering a rather monolithic selection of geographic contexts seems to be a serious limitation for a collection of sermons to be used for a course.

In conclusion, *Models for Biblical Preaching* includes high quality expositions and could be a useful supplement for sharpening future or current preachers. However, the shortcomings of the medium and the lack of geographical diversity of the contexts for the sermons might lead preaching professors to make use of technology to accomplish what this volume rightly intended to achieve.

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Gary M. Burge. *Jesus and the Jewish Festivals*. Ancient Context, Ancient Faith. Vol. 4. Ed. Gary M. Burge, Lynn Cohick and Gene Green. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012. 139 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-0310280477. \$14.99 (Paperback).

Jesus and the Jewish Festivals is Gary Burge's fourth volume in the six-volume series, Ancient Context, Ancient Faith by Zondervan Press. The series partners Burge with two other distinguished scholars to present a "cultural anthropology" of ancient Israel (p. 12). The volumes address physical geography, the role of religious symbols and storytelling, and ritual and festival customs.

In this volume Burge demonstrates the way that the symbols and cultural codes of the Jewish festivals shaped the theological

presentation of Jesus in the New Testament. His focused study on festivals maintains a constant awareness of the wider issues discussed in the other volumes in this series.

The book progresses naturally through seven chapters: The Festivals of Judaism, Jesus and the Sabbath, Jesus and the Passover, Jesus and Tabernacles, Jesus and Hanukkah, Jesus and his Final Passover, and The Early Christians and the Jewish Passover.

Chapter 1 provides a cultural and historical overview of the ancient festivals with a particular focus on Israel's religious and agricultural calendars. The diagrams and discussion in this chapter do an excellent job of helping the modern reader appreciate how farmers, shepherds, and ranchers naturally integrated their story of faith into their daily lives, finding meaning and purpose in everything they saw and did.

Chapters 2–6 take the reader through the major festivals that figure significantly in the books of the New Testament. In chapter 2, Burge rightly identifies the Sabbath as the core and foundation of Israel's intuitive ritual-consciousness: through daily and weekly rhythms of sun and moon and work and rest, Israel's cultural memory grounded her constantly in her story of creation and salvation. Chapters 3 and 4 cover Passover and Tabernacles, the first and last of the three annual pilgrimage festivals. I will comment below on Burge's conspicuous choice to leave the second festival, Pentecost, out of this arrangement. That lacuna aside, Burge ably describes the grounding features of Israel's festival life: "[historical] recitation and a liturgical meal anchored Israel annually in the great story of salvation" (p. 63). Burge moves from this conclusion to include us in the spirit of the liturgies that are evident in the New Testament and the early centuries of the church. The church calendar from Advent and Christmas, through Lent, Easter and Pentecost, continually grounds Christians in meals, storytelling, and practices that remind us of our story of salvation in Jesus.

As Burge advances through Jesus' final Passover (chapter 6) and the festivals of the New Testament church (chapter 7), he shows convincingly that our life and faith as Christians are intricately grounded in the festival life of ancient Israel.

Burge's style is lucid and clear, which allows him to unpack technical scholarly issues in ways even a novice reader can understand. This, combined with the book's handsome photos and diagrams, make it an exceptionally attractive and readable book. But one wonders if the book tries too hard to be visually catchy. Sever-

al of the photos provide little added value (e.g. the Roman god Janus on p. 71 or the model of beer-makers on p. 69) while others raise interpretive issues that confuse the reader. The mosaic on p. 130, for example, supposedly supports Burge's point about the end of the sacrificial law, but the truncated caption does little to help us understand how this is so. The unusual layout of the book (approximately 5" x 9") seemed awkward to this reader, and somewhat difficult to handle.

Furthermore, while the content is generally thorough and clear, Burge clearly reads back into the Old Testament through the lenses of New Testament history and culture, not to mention an explicit hermeneutic of covenantal discontinuity (law versus gospel). One would like to see a complementary move forward from Old to New with more openness or transparency on hermeneutical commitments.

Burge's view of the Sabbath, for example, is conspicuously reduced to a command for weekly rest. However, taken together, the two formulations of the law in the Old Testament teach Israel that the rhythms laid down in creation (Exodus) undergird the larger humanitarian and agrarian aims of Sabbath-keeping (Deuteronomy). These two versions of the Sabbath law, in turn, inform the one-, three-, seven-, and forty-nine year cycles of tithing, resting the land, cancelling debts, and releasing slaves (Exodus 23, Leviticus 25, and Deuteronomy 15). The description of the laws in Deuteronomy 15, meanwhile, has been carefully grouped together with the triennial pilgrimage festivals in chapter 16, with their explicit interest in the marginalized in society being provided for in the celebrations. Lacking this more robust theology of the Old Testament Sabbath, Burge's discussion of Jesus and the Sabbath (pp. 43–48) fails to capture these connections between ritual meals, rest, and compassion, and thus the humanitarian momentum implicit in the Jewish law.

In the same way, the failure to root Pentecost in the theology of the Sabbath leaves Burge unequipped to explore the prominent role of the Pentecost celebrations in Acts 2 and 4 where Luke creatively depicts a Spirit-led-life out of the legal vision in Deuteronomy 15 and 16, and Leviticus 23–25.

Burge's hermeneutical leaning toward covenantal discontinuity leads him to be selective in his interpretation at a few other minor points, yet it is a weakness that arises from his laudable effort to tackle biblical texts with a fully theological and interdisciplinary

approach. More of this is surely needed today and Burge is to be congratulated for his efforts here. His book will benefit teachers, pastors, and students at every level.

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Mark Dever and Jonathan Leeman, eds. *Baptist Foundations: Church Government for an Anti-Institutional Age*. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2015. vii + 397 pp. Hardback. ISBN 978-1433681042. \$31.99 (Hardback).

Commitment to and trust in the church has seemingly been on the decline in Western culture for some time. Even in doctrinal study, ecclesiology can receive short shrift in relation to other topics of theology. Thankfully, however, a number of ministries are currently dedicated to bringing our attention back to the church, both in a theological and practical sense. On the forefront of this ecclesiological renaissance, Mark Dever and Jonathan Leeman—who have labored on a number of works regarding this topic—have helped produce a work dedicated to the right ordering of the church, such that churches can truly understand and experience biblical renewal and re-establish trust and commitment in our present age.

Baptist Foundations: Church Government for an Anti-Institutional Age focuses on the idea of church polity or governance. In the introduction Leeman lays out what becomes a central argument of the book: “The difference between a local church and a group of Christians is nothing more or less than church polity. To argue for polity is to argue for the existence of the local church” (p. 1). Leeman lays the groundwork in this introductory chapter to help the reader understand that every church has some way of constituting itself, maintaining criteria for membership, and making decisions. However, one must be careful to study Scripture in order to rightly know who possesses authority, what leadership offices are in the church, and how one determines who is either within or outside the bounds of the gospel (p. 2). The authors of this work labor to demonstrate from Scripture (and tradition) that an elder-led, deacon-served, congregationally-governed church is what comprises a biblical polity.

After the introductory chapter this work is divided into five distinct parts. First, two chapters are spent dealing with the historical

roots and biblical/theological case for congregationalism as a proper approach to church governance. The authors aver that “under the lordship of Christ and under the authority of divinely given elders who lead, the last and final court of appeal in matters related to the local church is the congregation itself” (p. 49). Specifically, in a biblical/theological sense, congregationalism is argued for in that the redemptive developments of the new covenant and an already/not yet eschatology necessitate this new leadership paradigm.

Part two spends five chapters outlining the biblical and historical realities of the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Emphasis is placed numerous times on the fact that the ordinances are a visible manifestation of the gospel, and as such are of great importance. Part three deals with the closely related issues of church membership and church discipline. These two serve as the identifying markers of the church, since “a church does not so much have members as it is its members” (p. 165). Membership and discipline must be properly understood if one is to grasp both the nature of the church and the means by which we can ensure health within the church. Part four, the lengthiest section of the book, delineates the realities of how elders and deacons should function in the church. Here, both historically and biblically, an elder-led, deacon-served structure is argued for, where elders are committed to the service of the Word and deacons enact a service dedicated to practical matters. In the final section of the book Leeman addresses a congregational approach to unity, holiness, apostolicity, and catholicity.

A particular strength of this work is the way in which the contributors have written a work on polity that is robust and far-reaching, reminiscent of the way in which church governance was once treated (see, for instance, Mark Dever’s *Polity* for some excellent historical examples of this). Each contributor has some tie to the Southern Baptist Convention, which may in some ways limit its readership. However, potential readers should understand that this work is an excellent contribution to the discussion on church governance that goes beyond pragmatic concerns, to guidance gained from biblical and theological realities. Admittedly, much of the content can be found in many other books on ecclesiology, but readers will find unique and helpful contributions from the chapters by Stephen and Kirk Wellum regarding how the new covenant and inaugurated eschatology affect the idea of priesthood and congregationalism, as well as all of the chapters by Jonathan Leeman.

The reality of the “keys of the kingdom” receives ample attention from Leeman, and readers will be readily helped by his penetrating insight on how this matter relates to polity.

Pastors, church leaders, and scholars alike will benefit from this book. The real challenge, however, is left to the members of ordinary churches. Thus, for both pastors and church members, it seems fitting to conclude with this point from James Leo Garrett: “The congregation is where the reform will be won or lost, and leadership is crucial” (p. xi).

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Kenneth A. Kitchen and Paul J. H. Lawrence. *Treaty, Law and Covenant in the Ancient Near East*. 3 vols. Wiesbaden, Germany: Harrassowitz, 2012. 1642 pp. Hardback. ISBN: 978-3447067263. € 298 (Hardback).

The three oversized (8.5 inches by 12 inches) and hefty (nearly 10 pounds) volumes of *Treaty, Law and Covenant in the Ancient Near East (TLC)* are a magisterial achievement in textual collocation and embody the quintessence of ancient Near East (ANE) literary genre comparison. *TLC* includes a total of 106 documents. These span three millennia and are written in ten languages from Anatolia to Arabia, the Nile to Mesopotamia. As the title suggests, the volumes focus on ANE law-collections, treaties between communities, and covenants between individuals and groups.

The purpose of the volumes is to gather and analyze the main textual witnesses of ancient Near Eastern treaties, laws, and covenants in one location. The authors extend Mendenhall’s proposal of comparing the biblical texts to 14th-13th century BC Hittite treaties to examine the entire ANE corpus “in its own right.” The volumes took Kitchen nearly sixty years to complete with Lawrence’s contribution finally finishing the project.

The first volume contains texts in transcription and translation that are arranged by date (oldest to youngest), region (East, West, North, South), and similar text type (law, covenant, etc.). The compendium is not meant to be a new text-edition of each document but an accessible anthology which the authors desire to be useful for comparative study. Most of the documents are presented with a transcription on the verso and an English translation on the recto. Arranging the lines in parallel on facing pages provides for easy

reference to the original text and comparison between the transcription and translation.

The second and third volumes—although not themselves diminutive at 268 and 288 pages—comprise only one-third of the total length of the project. The second volume contains textual notes on each document, multiple indexes, and a collection of maps and charts (so-called chromograms). The third volume includes a meta-historical survey of these texts along with a chronological assessment of the changing cultural realization of treaties, laws, and covenants in the ANE.

The audience of this journal is likely to be particularly interested in the covenants contained within the biblical corpus. *TLC* situates the reported treaties in the book of Genesis using the traditional dates within the 19th-18th centuries BC. The documented treaties are between Abraham and Abimelek at Beersheba (Gen 21:22–24; 21:25–33), Abimelek and Isaac at Gerar (Gen 26:26–31), and Laban and Jacob at Gal'ed (Gen 31:44–54). The pre-19th century BC personal covenants are included as reported in the biblical corpus between YHWH and Noah (Gen 9:8–17) and YHWH and Abraham (Gen 15:7–21). The 13th century BC covenant reports are divided roughly by biblical book. Exodus (20:1–25:9; 34:8–28; 35:1–19) and Leviticus (11–15; 18–20; 24–27) encompass the agreement between YHWH and Israel at Mt. Sinai. Numbers (5:11–31; 27:6–11; 36:5–9) records supplementary statutes from Sinai and Moab. Deuteronomy (1:1–32:47) is treated in its entirety. And Joshua (24:1–28) provides a compact report of the covenant at Shechem. The 1st millennium BC promises between Jonathan and David (1 Sam 18:3–4) and YHWH and David (2 Sam 7:1–17) are grouped together as reports of personal covenants in the book of Samuel.

Several critical remarks are in order. As the Assembler so eloquently retorts: Endless is the task of assembling books (Eccl 12:12). Because of this, no anthology is complete—even one as expansive and up-to-date as *TLC*. A case in point is that *TLC* does not include the 2009 discovery of a new tablet witnessing a version of Esarhaddon's Succession Treaty, that is, an Assyrian loyalty oath (*adê*), from Tell Tayinat (Timothy Harrison, "Temples, Tablets, and the Neo-Assyrian Provincial Capital of Kinalia," *Canadian Society for Mesopotamian Studies* 6 (2011), pp. 29–36; Jacob Lauinger, "Esarhad-

don's Succession Treaty at Tell Tayinat: Text and Commentary," *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 64 (2012), pp. 87–123).²

The composite text, "Covenant, YHWH & Israel, I (Moses at Mt. Sinai) Extensive Report" (vol. I, pp. 695–768), includes an amalgamation of various texts that *TLC* links together as a single continuous report. This reconstruction is not defended or even discussed. The narrative organization and traditional source divisions are jettisoned without explanation in favor of this newly discovered document. A similar concern may be expressed about the unified assemblage of the various passages from the book of Numbers as a single text without explanation.

Regarding the treaties, law codes, and covenants in the Hebrew Bible, the authors remind us rightly that "These brief texts are ... summary reports of such proceedings, as (e.g.) in the vast corpus of documents from Mari" (vol. II, p. 32). Even though the texts are ostensibly from a later time, the language of the texts is reconstructed to an earlier form of Hebrew (?), having been transcribed using an arcane system attempting to eliminate their "1st-millennium features." In practice, this means that the authors omit *plene* vowel-letters by placing non-consonantal *y*, *w*, and *h* in parentheses even with some historic diphthongs, e.g. *b(y)n* (elsewhere, at times, *r(')š* but not with *z't*) and the feminine-gender construct form *mšb(t)*. The definite direct object marker (*'t*) and the article (*h-*) are likewise excluded as first millennium irritants, but other innovative particles, like the relative particle *'šr*, are not designated in like fashion. Even if one excuses the difficulty of inconsistency, it is unclear as to why these conventions are continued with the 1st-millennium covenants from the book of Samuel.

The authors admit that these volumes are not intended to be new text editions. Nevertheless, the compilation of texts is a desideratum for the wider field of ANE studies and even a must for comparative studies. That said, the textual notes in the second volume present a befuddling picture. They are varied to the extreme. Philological, lexical, cultural, and (rarely) literary commentary provide little by way of explanation or consistent elaboration of the

² For a helpful comparison of these texts to the book of Deuteronomy, see the treatment in the recent Arnold and Hess volume (Samuel Greengus, "Covenant and Treaty in the Hebrew Bible and in the Ancient Near East," pp. 91-126, in Bill Arnold and Richard Hess's *Ancient Israel's History. An Introduction to Issues and Sources*, Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014).

interconnections between different texts or even of the documents themselves. This *mélange* makes finding relevant discussion concerning the collection or important genre features nearly impossible. Rather, the commentary looks to be a collection of fifty years of sundry notations and unmeaning cavils. The indexes and (color!) comparative charts of vol. II, on the other hand, are a veritable gold mine for the comparatist.

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Steven B. Cowan and Terry L. Wilder, eds. *In Defense of the Bible: A Comprehensive Apologetic for the Authority of Scripture*. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2013. xvi + 490 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-1433676789. \$34.99 (Paperback).

As its subtitle indicates, *In Defense of the Bible* seeks to enter the fray as a valuable introduction to an apologetic for the authority of Scripture. The seventeen individual essays comprising the book are suitably divided into three topical sections, each doing its part in reflecting the characteristic progression of the apologetic task of moving from philosophical and methodological challenges (Part 1) to textual and historical challenges (Part 2), and finally to some of the contemporary exchanges in ethics, science and theology that have bearing on biblical authority and truthfulness (Part 3).

At stake in the opening sequence of essays (Part 1) is whether it is possible to give a rational defense of Scripture's divine inspiration, and by implication the infallibility and complete truthfulness of what it affirms. In the leadoff chapter, R. Douglas Geivett's fictional dialogue sets forth a line of thought for why it is reasonable to think that a benevolent Creator *can* and *would* speak to us (p. 13). Geivett's salient point is that God is a personal and self-conscious agent who, although incorporeal in his being, is able to speak in the physical world similar to the way we use our own minds to act in the physical world (pp. 26–27). Douglas K. Blount's defense of the rationality of inerrancy is based on an objective view of truth (the correspondence theory). Truth is an objective feature of the world that Scripture employs as the basis upon which all its assertions are factually correct. Truth also offers an intuitively recognized existential quality of "excellence" or "measuring up" for Scripture's nonassertive discourse (p. 54). In tackling the matter of higher criticism, Charles L. Quarles focuses on methodology and argues that

the antinatural assumptions employed by various scholars of the critical method are “not intrinsic to critical approaches” (p. 64). He concludes with some useful guidelines for navigating the calmer waters of higher criticism through the lens of a robust supernatural worldview (pp. 87–88). Finally, Richard R. Melick, Jr. proposes that Scripture contains a “self-correcting mechanism” that serves to safeguard the reader from erroneous conclusions (p. 90).

Part 2 unlocks a vast array of valuable insights designed to respond to challenges of textual corruption and allegations of deficient textual integrity or historical accuracy. Paul D. Wegner ably identifies the generally innocuous errors one encounters when correctly applying the rules of OT textual criticism (pp. 130–32) and agrees with much current scholarship that some 90 percent of the text is without error and trustworthy (p. 133). Daniel B. Wallace follows in a similar vein and responds specifically to the recent criticisms of Bart Ehrman (p. 141), making the case that the vast wealth of manuscript evidence for the NT text makes it the best-attested text of Greek or Latin in the classical world (p. 151). This gives us every reason to think that the NT text is wholly trustworthy, containing over 99 percent of the original wording (p. 160). Terry L. Wilder follows suit and argues that readers of antiquity, far from uncritically accepting forgeries into the biblical canon (p. 168), had clear procedures for detecting their presence and rejecting them (pp. 169–70). Similarly, Mary Jo Sharp offers a procedure for dismantling the so-called parallels between the story of Jesus and the ancient pagan myths (p. 185). In chapters nine and ten Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. and Paul W. Barnett consider the archaeological evidence and historical research and argue for the historical reliability of the OT and NT, respectively. The closing essay of Part 2 (chapter eleven) finds Douglas S. Huffman skilfully arguing that charges of contradictions are reasonably dispelled when one reflects on Scripture’s internal consistency and takes into account mistaken assumptions and misplaced expectations lying behind alleged inconsistencies (p. 269).

Part 3 opens with Matthew Flannagan and Paul Copan defending Scripture against the charge that it teaches ethnic cleansing and genocide. They argue that a loving and just God can have morally sufficient reasons for commanding killing in certain instances, including alleged cases of killing the innocent (p. 324). However, Scripture employs “hagiographic hyperbole” that speaks against excessive literalism, since, often for justifiable reasons, some

among the ethnic groups slated for destruction clearly survive the attempt (p. 310). James M. Hamilton then argues that if one looks through a biblical-theological lens (p. 336), it's not difficult to see that Scripture condones neither slavery nor sexism.

Of particular note is William A. Dembski's defense of a modified version of the *concordist* approach on the question of whether Scripture and science conflict. He argues that there is in fact conflict, but there is also overlap, and where there is overlap there is harmony between the two (pp. 349–50). Dembski clarifies that Scripture contains the information that theology explains. Similarly, science explains the information contained in nature (p. 370). Consequently, if there is any conflict, it would be between theology and science, not between science and Scripture.

Moving to the concluding essays of the section, Craig A. Blaising argues that once we get past the confusion brought on by historical-critical approaches to Scripture (pp. 381–83), we can see that Scripture presents a coherent and reliable theological message (p. 375). Paul D. Wegner, Terry L. Wilder, and Darrell L. Bock argue that we have good criteria for determining that the Protestant canon contains just those sixty-six books that are “well-justified” in light of those criteria. Finally, Steven Cowan argues for the inspiration of Scripture on the basis of a Christological approach (p. 436)

In closing, most will probably judge the merits of a volume on apologetics on its ability to offer a rational and engaging treatment of the issues. In that respect the book succeeds remarkably well. All the same, there may be some tensions on the perceived deliverances of the apologetic task. Blount, for example, thinks that the merits of his argument depend largely on a person's assumptions (p. 61), whereas Dembski argues that “apologetics needs to shake up the unbelief of the unbelieving” on both sides of the camp (p. 350). And finally, Mary Jo Sharp's essay, while offering quite good evidence, is nevertheless non-conclusive and may benefit from a sobriety that leaves open the possibility that others will find it less compelling (p. 200). Whatever these caveats are worth, the serious Christian apologist should find *In Defense of the Bible* a valuable tool to have in the marketplace of ideas.

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J. Richard Middleton. *A New Heaven and a New Earth: Reclaiming Biblical Eschatology*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014. 332 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-0801048685. \$26.99 (Paperback).

The subtitle of Richard Middleton's latest book is an appropriate descriptor. In *A New Heaven and a New Earth*, Middleton exerts three hundred pages of energy to show that the typical "pie in the sky" eschatology held by many Christians today is not supported biblically. Instead, Middleton argues, the Bible teaches that God's work of salvation in Christ is for this world, the cosmic order, of which humanity is the head but which includes all of creation. Thus popular notions of cosmic annihilationism, an immaterial heaven, and the like should be discarded and replaced with a properly biblical eschatology, one that is material, holistic, and robust.

Middleton's means of arguing this position is one familiar to those who read biblical theology regularly; after introducing the issue at hand on both a historical and theological level, the argument proceeds first by giving an overview of the biblical story, particularly focusing on the purpose of creation in Genesis 1 and 2 and the subsequent purposes of salvation post-fall (Part I, "From Creation to Eschaton"). Then, in Parts II and III, Middleton walks through each section of the Old and New Testaments, respectively, and demonstrates that salvation in every corpus of Scripture is presented as holistic, material, and for the entire creation. Part IV shifts to dealing with "Problem Texts for Holistic Eschatology;" verses like 2 Pet. 3:10–13 are placed under intense scrutiny here to see if any evidence of creation's obliteration or an immaterial afterlife can be found. They are each found wanting in that regard. Finally, Part V explores ethical implications of understanding salvation as material and holistic. The main focus here is on what it means for the kingdom of God to have arrived in Jesus but at the same time to await its consummation at his return. Cultural transformation and material manifestations of the kingdom (e.g. healing) are especially prominent in this exploration. The final chapter asks how Christianity moved from a material and holistic view of salvation, and particularly of the eternal state, to an immaterial view. Middleton points to Augustine and Neo-Platonism as the primary culprits.

A New Heaven and a New Earth is, on the one hand, somewhat of a rehash of conclusions that N.T. Wright, Al Wolters, Randy Alcorn, and others have made about biblical eschatology. The idea

that salvation is holistic, material, and cosmic is not new, although Middleton at times seems to think that he is publishing somewhat groundbreaking material. This might have been a truer sentiment if the book had been published nearer to when it was contracted almost a decade ago (p. 15), but due to a variety of circumstances Middleton had to delay the completion of the volume. The book certainly makes a contribution though, since in my opinion Middleton's work is much more accessible to an informed lay audience than previous works on the topic. While N.T. Wright's *Surprised by Hope* may be the exception, other works on holistic salvation and eschatology that come to mind are not as accessible as Middleton's for a variety of reasons (length, complexity of argument, etc.). So, Middleton does contribute to the field here, although it is probably more on the lay level, popularizing biblical eschatology, than it is on the academic level, correcting wrong notions within scholarship.

This is not to say that it is an unimportant or minor contribution; far from it! The eschatology one experiences "from the pews" is often immaterial, lacking in an understanding of its cosmic scope, and many times disconnected from ethics in this life (other than the basic foundation of all Christian ethics, to repent, and to do so before Christ comes). If Middleton's work can right the ship of popular level eschatology, then it will have done the church a great service.

As far as the book's content is concerned, in large part I am in agreement with the portrait that Middleton paints. Two main areas of disagreement remain though. First, Middleton's view of the afterlife in the Old Testament seems beholden to older notions of development in Israelite thought about the resurrection from the dead and the intermediate state. Second, Middleton lays much blame at the feet of Augustine (and later Aquinas) and the influence of Neo-Platonism. Neither of these arguments convinces, and on the latter, Hans Boersma has done much to combat the notion that early and mid-Medieval thought disconnected the "sacred and secular" realms via Neo-Platonic thought (see his *A Heavenly Tapestry*). Still, Middleton's overall argument that the Bible presents salvation for all of creation and therefore does not present an immaterial afterlife, is a convincing and needed one in today's pews.

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