

## Book Reviews

**John Piper. *Think: The Life of the Mind and the Love of God* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010). 224 pp. Hardback. ISBN: 978-1-4335-2071-6. \$19.99. Hardback.**

John Piper's *Think: The Life of the Mind and the Love of God* rolled off the press at the same time as Alister McGrath's *The Passionate Intellect: Christian Faith and the Discipleship of the Mind*, Bradley Green's *The Gospel and the Mind: Recovering and Shaping the Intellectual Life*, and several other books were being published on the life of the mind. In spite of a glut in the "life of the mind" market, however, Piper manages to write a uniquely helpful little book.

The book is composed of thirteen chapters which fall under eight major headings. Piper begins by clarifying his aim in writing the book. In the Introduction, he makes clear that the book is intended to challenge God's people to embrace serious thinking as a way of knowing and loving God, and loving his people. In the first chapter, Piper tells a bit of his own intellectual pilgrimage as an entry into the subject matter, and as an encouragement to the reader. In the second chapter, he shows how Jonathan Edwards grounded the task of thinking in the Trinitarian nature of God and declared that the aim of thinking is to awaken the affections by means of comprehending truth.

In the third chapter, Piper clarifies the meaning of thinking by arguing that God has declared himself in the Bible, that we know God through the Bible, and that the Bible enables us to expand outwardly, thinking about any and all dimensions of life. The fourth and fifth chapters argue that thinking is vital to the process of coming to faith in Christ, while the sixth chapter explores the role of thinking in loving God. Piper avers that to love God is to treasure him, and to treasure him with the mind means to comprehend his truth, his infinite worth, and his all-encompassing beauty. For Christians, therefore, "our thinking should be wholly engaged to do all it can to awaken and express the heartfelt fullness of treasuring God above all things" (83).

Over the course of the next six chapters, Piper targets relativism and anti-intellectualism. In the seventh and eighth chapters, he argues that relativism fails

intellectually and morally. In particular, relativism commits treason against God, creates intellectual duplicity, conceals doctrinal defection, cloaks greed with flattery, cloaks pride with the guise of humility, enslaves people, puts them in bondage, and eventually leads to totalitarianism. In the ninth through eleventh chapters, Piper takes aim at the anti-intellectualism that characterizes vast swathes of American evangelicalism, doing so by debunking anti-intellectual arguments often made from Luke 10:21 and 1 Corinthians 1:20.

The final two chapters are Piper's encouragement for Christians to find a *humble* way of knowing. In the twelfth chapter, he focuses on Romans 10:1-4 and 1 Corinthians 8:1-3, arguing that intellectual pursuit is vain unless it is consciously, carefully, and consistently undertaken in light of God's profound work of grace in our hearts. In the thirteenth chapter, Piper argues that all learning exists for the ultimate purpose of knowing and loving God, and consequently loving humanity through Christ Jesus. Piper's concluding chapter encourages both thinkers and non-thinkers to pursue the life of the mind for the glory of God. The book also includes two appendixes. The first is "The Earth is the Lord's: The Supremacy of Christ in Christian Learning (Biblical Foundations for Bethlehem College and Seminary)," which is a message Piper delivered at Bethlehem Baptist Church in November 2008 to mark out the creation of Bethlehem College and Seminary. The second is "The Student, the Fish, and the Agassiz," which is a brief narrative Piper first encountered at Fuller Seminary, which Piper uses to teach students to think carefully.

Perhaps the greatest strength of Piper's book is his argument that Christian thinking should be God-centered and Word-centered. It should be God-centered because God is the author of our twin foci of study (the canon of Scripture and entirety of the created order), because he is the one who created us in his image and likeness and enabled us to study those foci (by endowing us with spiritual, moral, rational, creative, relational, and volitional capacities), and because He repeatedly tells us in Scripture that we are to do all that we do for His name's sake, for His renown, and for His glory. Further, Christian thinking should be Word-Centered because the written Word is inspired by God and indeed points us to the incarnate Word, who Himself holds all things together (Col 1:17). Anything a Christian would study is created by Christ and sustained by Christ, and is inherently worthy of attention.

If Piper were to provide a revised and expanded edition of *Think*, one would like to see him (1) treat the broad sweep of redemptive history, from creation through to new creation, with an eye toward the life of the mind, and (2) treat the importance of Christian intellectual presence in the various dimensions of human culture, such as the arts, the sciences, and the public square. Until then, however, the reader is thankful for this compact, stimulating, and biblically faithful treatment of the life of the mind.

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**William A. Dembski.** *The End of Christianity: Finding a Good God in an Evil World.* Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2009. xviii + 238 pp. Hardback. ISBN: 978-0-8054-2743-1. \$22.99. Hardback.

Regardless if one is familiar with the debates surrounding the Intelligent Design movement, William A. Dembski has emerged as one of North America's finest Evangelical scholars. Like his earlier publications, Dembski takes on some of the most intellectually divisive issues in the culture wars in *The End of Christianity: Finding a Good God in an Evil World*. Though one might think Dembski is addressing the phenomenon of de-christianization, he is more concerned with the problem of natural evil in light of the Fall. "The end of Christianity" therefore refers to the final triumph of good over evil.

According to Dembski, it is evident that natural evil (i.e., destructive hurricanes, diseases, premature death, famines, etc.) preceded the first human beings. Not only does the consensus of scientists support the existence of an old earth (i.e., one that is billions of years old), they also contend that natural evils can be traced back to the beginning of time itself. On the other hand, Christians have traditionally held that natural evil (and its correlate, existential suffering) is linked to the sin of Adam and Eve. Thus the question must be pressed: How could there be death and suffering before the original sin?

Dembski responds to this perplexing dilemma by noting that just as the Redemption won by Christ has both proactive and retroactive effects, so also does original sin (169). The effects of the Fall can literally precede their temporal cause in human history: "just as the death and Resurrection of Christ is responsible for the salvation of repentant people throughout all time, so the Fall of humanity in the Garden of Eden is responsible for every natural evil throughout all time (future, present, past, and distant past preceding the Fall)" (110; cf. 112). In support of this contention, Dembski appeals to the New Testament word for time which has two distinct meanings: *chronos* denotes temporal duration, and *kairos* refers to divine purposes. Time, then, operates in two different ways. *Kairos* is certainly not constrained by *chronos* (124–26; see also 131–37), but works in and though the latter in ways that remain incomprehensible to finite, limited minds. Dembski also utilizes philosophy and chaos theory to illustrate his point (127–30, 138–41).

Though Dembski provides defensible arguments in response to these problems, I am not convinced that he makes all that significant of a contribution to the wider academic community of theologians. The alternatives in this debate cannot be reduced to young earth creationism and pan-en-theistic scientist-theologians (and a few other theologians who, in Dembski's words, "don't take the Fall seriously"). In response to young earth creationists, for example, Dembski rightly points out that "Although the truth of Scripture is inviolable, our interpretations of it are not. The history of biblical interpretation simply does not support that a well-established interpretation of Scripture should always trump alternative interpretations" (75). Dembski should apply this observation to his own argument with more consistency. Why cannot the opening chapters of Genesis be read as

an etiology? I maintain that all of Sacred Scripture is true, and only some of it happened. To read Genesis in this way is to take Scripture seriously. It respects the texts enough to take their literary forms into more serious consideration than simply falling back on literalistic understandings which all too often fuel the fire of critics who oppose our faith.

In the etiological view, one can retain the doctrine of original sin and all of modern science, not just some of it. Hence, I depart from Dembski when insists that “creationists” will hold that God created persons in the image of God when they *entered* the Garden of Eden—a *place that was somehow immune from the outside world and natural evil* (158–61)! I consider myself a creationist, but I am also an evolutionist. So there is no good reason to drive yet another wedge in between these two camps. Although Dembski is at pains to defend a “traditional view of the Fall,” which is ambiguous in and of itself, his incredulous contention about the isolated location of the Garden of Eden eventually backs him into a corner in light of his concern to defend the Fall in lieu of our current “mental environment.” Dembski shows little interest in the broader debates about exegesis and the history of biblical interpretation, and instead assumes that one must defend his understanding of the Fall in order for one to be in continuity with Church Tradition.

This book brings to light many deep seated problems that are too often put on the believer’s backburner. I obviously found myself disagreeing with Dembski at times, but he still does an excellent job of covering all of the major issues in short, digestible chapters that are clearly, crisply, and courageously written. I would not use this book as a course text in my classes, but it can provide professors and other intelligent laymen with a skeletal outline of all the issues that need to be addressed in any adequate response to the challenge of reconciling modern science, natural evil, and original sin.

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**Xun, Chen.** *Theological Exegesis in the Canonical Context. Brevard Springs Childs’s Methodology of Biblical Theology. Studies in Biblical Literature 137.* New York: Peter Lang, 2010. xiv + 307 pp. Hardback. ISBN: 978-1-4331-0955-3. \$83.95. Hardback.

Chen Xun offers a dense reading of multiple aspects of the work of Brevard Childs (1923–2007) in this published PhD thesis originally completed under the supervision of Miikka Ruokanen in Helsinki. All the hallmarks of a thesis remain, and indeed this is probably the work’s greatest strength: there is copious citation of primary and secondary literature and quite extraordinarily extensive listings of who has said what in the wide world of Childs scholarship. I almost wished Xun had in fact written a handbook to the work of Brevard Childs, since he effectively offers a convenient way of tracking down quotes and opinions on the vastly contested oeuvre of surely one of the modern era’s most significant

biblical scholars. There is, though, a problem with how he does it, to which I shall return below.

As to the actual thesis of the work, this is handicapped by the decision to let “methodology” be the key lens through which Childs’ work is read. After a brief introduction, chapter 2 offers a sketch of Childs’ academic biography, entitled “the three stages of Childs’ academic development.” These Xun characterizes as a period of dissatisfaction with historical criticism in the 1950s and 1960s; the turn to a canonical approach with *Biblical Theology in Crisis* in 1970; and then “canonical theological exegesis” from the 1990s onwards. This seemed a fairly unpersuasive mapping of Childs’ work, and highlights from the outset a recurrent tendency to evaluate Childs through a largely unexamined grid of “historical criticism,” seen here as a singular method with various manifestations in form criticism, redaction criticism, and so forth. Given that Childs was largely occupied with trying to redraw the map of what counts as responsibly critical reading of scripture, such repeated comparisons between his work and “historical criticism” turn out, unsurprisingly, to find that Childs only partially measures up to this standard.

The preoccupation with method recurs in the three substantive chapters which follow. One looks at “the canonical approach,” considering the implications of canon, the *regula fidei*, and what is at stake in setting canon as a context for biblical theology. Xun concludes an exhaustive survey with: “Childs’ understanding of the canon can be described as one possibility among others.” Of course this is true phenomenologically, as it were (and it is not far from the views of Brett and Barton before him), but substantively it is effectively the judgment that Childs’ whole program was misconceived, although Xun does not write in a way which suggests that he sees this. The next chapter considers “the inadequacies of historical criticism,” which, allowing for the singularity of “criticism” noted above, is a thorough survey of Childs’ complex relationship with the practices of modern approaches. A chapter on “theological exegesis” follows, though here the traditional ways of construing systematics (or dogmatics) are taken as read, and the conclusion is reached that Childs offers an “idealized scenario” for theological exegesis which falls short of exemplifying his approach in practice.

There is finally a lengthy chapter of evaluation, which rightly draws attention to the influence of Barth, and the importance of not reducing theology to sociology or philosophy. But other aspects inspire less confidence: pursuing the question of whether Childs is conservative or liberal, for example, is a clear case of measuring by an unhelpful yardstick.

Overall, this is a thesis which dissects Childs’ wide-ranging corpus into a series of topics which are then evaluated through the criteria which that corpus wanted to challenge. The result is an impressive sequence of detailed reviews of specific points at issue in Childs’ work, but with little feel for the point or purpose of them. One consequence of this, which is the caveat to my opening comments about the “handbook” nature of this project, is that one occasionally finds scholars ranged together for their views on specific points when in fact one knows that they have very little in common in their overall understandings. To see Childs and Barr, for

example, described as “not too far from each other” on any topic tells the reader little of value about what is at stake. The thesis as a whole suffers from this kind of “over-realized irenicism.” It is instructive to compare it with Daniel Driver’s *Brevard Childs, Biblical Theologian*, published almost simultaneously by Mohr Siebeck, which offers an account which grapples precisely with how Childs’ attempted to redraw the map, and how he has been received by scholars who are—sometimes aggressively—unconvinced.

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**Robert B. Stewart and Gary R. Habermas (eds.)** *Memories of Jesus: A Critical Appraisal of James D. G. Dunn’s Jesus Remembered*. Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2010. vii-xviii + 352 pp. Paperback. ISBN: 978-0-8054-4840-5. \$29.99. Paperback.

The present book is an anthology of thirteen essays in dialogue with James D. G. Dunn’s *Jesus Remembered*. The first of a multivolumed *The Making of Early Christianity* (the second volume *Beginning from Jerusalem* came out in 2008) *Jesus Remembered* tackles the topic of the Historical Jesus as recorded in the gospels.

Dunn’s thesis is that the historical Jesus cannot be retrieved. This is true of any figure of history that left no direct writing. Instead, what we have are the memories of Jesus from his earliest followers, reperformed over a couple of generations resulting in the Gospels. Thus, what we have is Jesus remembered. Dunn’s thesis is a corrective to the “simple” cut-and-paste literary thesis that has dominated theories of synoptic origins for 200 plus years. It is not a total repudiation of the standard two-source theory but an elaboration that includes a large portion of oral tradition rather than a simple literary solution (especially regarding Q). While there is much evangelicals would find as negative results, positively, the gospels arise from an encounter with Jesus. Thus, the *Jesus Remembered* is an accessible Jesus to some degree.

Yet, we should not usher Dunn into the halls of conservative evangelical scholarship. Most, notably to me, and unmentioned in the present book, the witness of John is disregarded because it was “imagined” by the evangelist. And furthermore, much of what he says of Jesus fails to affirm major contours of Christian conviction (the deity of Christ, virgin birth, resurrection, ascension).

The work under review, is not Dunn’s but a response to Dunn. In such a work it is axiomatic that some essays are more effective than others (insert the word “uneven” here). Let me recommend the reader approach the book in the way that I eventually read it. Read each essay and then go to the end of the book to read Dunn’s response to each essay. (Dunn is to be commended for commenting on each essay more or less substantively.) This helps us to keep track of the nuanced criticisms and gauge Dunn’s response. The following essays left a positive impression on me.

The book begins with a review of the quests of the historical Jesus by Robert Stewart, it is a nice rehearsal, however it does not include the impact the Tübingen school's impact on the quest. The First Quest employed source criticism to find the earliest source (and then apply historical criticism to it). C. H. Weisse seized upon Markan priority to attack the source theory of the Tübingen school (Griesbach). Otherwise, it is a fine overview and fairly places Dunn in the tradition. He is neither postmodern or modern in his hermeneutic but more postmodern in his expectations (i.e., a bit pessimistic about getting back to the historical Jesus—at least less so than Wright).

Marcus Bockmuehl's (#2) essay is a must read to discuss the main thesis of the book and five questions regarding it. The best is the third. Dunn refers to remembering and apostolic custodians but does not really address who they were. "What such early Christian preference for the apostolicity of individual memory might mean, however, is perhaps insufficiently explored in this book" (40).

Next, essay #4 by Samuel Byrskog is a must-read. Dunn's view is that an oral tradition is behind the synoptic gospels. It, however, is an orality that is a living tradition, performed and re-performed. The eye-witness testimony is only the beginning of it. Byrskog takes us through a long list of questions regarding a theory of oral tradition that helps us set the stage for questions regarding Dunn's view.

The next must-read essay is essay #9 by Charles Quarles. Quarles takes Dunn to task on his slight treatment and estimation of the virgin birth. Dunn's response to Dr. Quarles is interesting in that he replies first, space doesn't allow a full response (read "ouch"). Second, he rejects that he rejects the birth narratives but remains agnostic about their historical worth (sounds like rejection to me), Third, Luke is not accurate (the problem of the Census and Quirinius). This assumes there is no plausible answer to the question and, again, sounds like rejection. He also notes that he did not have access to Charles' *Midrash Criticism*. (I have a copy, are you telling me the vast resources at Durham does not?). Finally, he argues that to take the narratives as primarily historical pays less respect to the spirit of Matthew and Luke. It is unlikely that we are faced with an either/or situation. The stories had to be a fabrication to relay spiritual truth? Certainly not.

Ben Witherington's essay (#10) Oral History or Eyewitness Testimony is the best of the collection, in my opinion. He hits to the two most important questions in my mind. First, for oral traditions to be repeatedly performed beyond the control of the eyewitnesses, it takes time beyond the life of the eyewitnesses. We simply do not have this time. Second, related question, whose remembrances are we dealing with in the NT? Witherington calls forth Byrskog via Bauckham in the debate to suggest it is eyewitness testimony. Witherington has a fair treatment of Dunn's work, and an equally fair critique. If you can read one essay in this book, this is it.

Finally, Gary Habermas' essay (#12) on Dunn and the Resurrection is both a rehearsal of Dunn's view and a defense of the traditional view that Jesus was resurrected in a physical body. In response, Dunn does not deny the belief of the apostles that Jesus rose from the dead, but that is an interpretation of the facts. Dunn, as a historian, respects the belief of the eyewitnesses, and that Christians

need no qualms about affirming their faith in the risen Christ. But the historian's conclusion is that it is a second order fact, an interpretation of an interpretation.

In general, the book is an informative and helpful digest, critique, and interaction with Dunn's *Jesus Remembered*. That it comes eight years after the publication of the book should attest to Dunn's affect on scholarship. I highly recommend it for all who wish to do serious study into Dunn's thesis.

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**Bradley G. Green.** *The Gospel and the Mind: Recovering and Shaping the Intellectual Life.* Wheaton: Crossway, 2010. 192 pp. Paperback. ISBN: 978-1-4335-1442-5. \$16.99. Paperback.

Bradley Green's *The Gospel and the Mind* is a deeply theological treatment of the intellectual life, a treatment which suggests that the life of the mind must be grounded in a Christian vision of things, which in turn is grounded in Christ and the cross. The book is made up of an Introduction, six chapters, and an Epilogue.

The first chapter, "Creation and the Importance of the Past," argues that the intellectual life must be rooted in a proper appreciation of creation and history. The doctrine of creation is particularly important in that it gives us reason to speak of "reality" and seek epistemic access to reality. The world is both real and ordered; therefore, it can be studied. The notion of history is also central to the intellectual life. The Christian Scriptures set forth the gospel embedded in a historical narrative. The gospel is at the heart of reality and shapes all of reality. In a profound manner, the past matters for the present.

The second chapter, "The Centrality of a Telos to All Things," argues that pre-modern world, in particular as it was shaped by Christianity, held forth a telos which structured and animated all reality and history, which served as the context for the intellectual life, and which endowed all of life with meaning and purpose. The modern world, however, has mostly given up on such a telos and therefore is confused and tends toward nihilism. Even those contemporary secular scholars who seek to retain teleology do so without sufficient reason and in an insufficiently robust manner, precisely because they do not acknowledge the Triune God as telos. Roger Scruton, for example, follows Confucius and asks us to live "as if" we lived in a created and sacred world. Allan Bloom, likewise, gives religion a nod by acknowledging it as a precondition for a well-developed cultural and intellectual life.

The third chapter, "Understanding the Cross," argues that the intellectual life must be cruciform. The cross is vital to the intellectual life precisely because sin has infected, distorted, and degraded the intellectual life. The human mind is not cordoned off from the effects of sin, and therefore the human life must be re-connected to God through the cross. We must take all thoughts captive to Christ. The human mind is like a drunkard which cannot find its way home (Boethius), is deleteriously affected by inordinate love (Augustine), is an idol factory (Calvin),

and must be brought under the lordship of Christ (Kuyper). In a sentence, our minds are to be transformed by the gospel.

The fourth chapter, "Words, Language, and Modern Culture," argues that "there is an inextricable link between the Christian gospel and attentiveness to words" (103). Indeed, when language finds itself in an environment of transcendent realities and goals, it is glorious, but when it is robbed of transcendence, it breaks down and loses its glory. Deconstruction serves to illustrate. Deconstruction is rooted in nihilism, Green argues, rendering meaning indeterminate and language meaningless. In response to Derrida and the deconstructionists, Green suggests that we take language back to church, which is the community of eternal and meaningful linguistic discourse.

The fifth chapter, "Toward a Christian Understanding of Words," argues that Christian theology provides a coherent and compelling account of language. Indeed the Word stands at the center of all reality. God is a "talking" God. God created by means of the Word and he redeems by means of the Word. All human words ultimately find their end in God, who is himself the transcendental signified. Green argues that the Incarnation matters by helping us to understand the way language works, that Christ is the Pedagogue who teaches by way of illumination, and that Christianity offers the supreme "logocentrism," a logocentrism much more coherent than the one targeted by Derrida.

The sixth chapter, "The Moral Nature of Knowledge and the Human Heart," is a sustained argument for the deep connection between knowing and loving God, between knowledge and practice. True knowledge always entails a proper response, and if our response is not correct, our vision is obstructed. Furthermore, Green argues, there is the deepest of connections between knowledge and grace. We can only know God if he graciously enables us to know him. Even when we deny God's existence, we use the brains and vocal chords with which he graciously endowed us.

The greatest strength of *The Gospel and the Mind* is its theological depth. In the midst of a multitude of books on the life of the mind, Green's book stands out for its willingness to deal with the entire sweep of the biblical narrative, from creation and fall to redemption and consummation, rather than relying exclusively or primarily upon proof-texts and verses from the wisdom passages. A further strength is Green's interaction with a broad variety of sources from Augustine, Aquinas, and Calvin to Derrida, Eco, and Scruton. A final strength is the author's ability to write with clarity, which renders it useful even for undergraduate courses. Perhaps the only exception to this is his treatment of language (chs. 4–5) which is less lucid due to the complex and obtuse nature of the subjects with which he deals. One further note for the reader: Green is a robustly Augustinian thinker, and those of a more Aristotelian bent will obviously take exception to some aspects of Green's approach. *The Gospel and the Mind* is recommended as a stimulating and distinctively Christian treatment of the intellectual life, written in such a manner that it will likely benefit both undergraduate and graduate level courses.

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Miroslav Volf. *Captive to the Word of God: Engaging the Scriptures for Contemporary Theological Reflection*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010. viii + 180 pp. Paperback. ISBN: 978-0-8028-6590-8. \$18.00 Paperback.

Representing the culmination of many years of engagement with the biblical texts this book is fronted by a wide ranging opening essay, setting out the principles with which Volf engages the Bible as Scripture. Theology and the church itself, Volf insists, is nourished by its attention to the Bible and starved of life if it turns away from the text. The Bible's status as a historical text is not in competition with its living voice for today—precisely as a sacred text '[t]he Bible is about all of us' (21). This non-competitive understanding of Scripture as text is played out in Volf's insistence that the Bible 'tells a single basic story' (23) through its diversity. Precisely because of the Bible's various contexts we should not expect anything less than a polyphonic witness to its overarching truth—Jesus Christ. Volf proceeds to resist carefully the idea that the text is a plaything in the hands of its readers. Talk of the text's meaning is located within a relationship that properly inheres between the author of the text and the reader—a relationship that imposes upon us readers the obligation to seek out what 'the writer wanted to say' (32). There then follow 5 self-contained essays.

In the second essay Volf considers the relationship between belief and practices, in an attempt to meet the argument that systematic theology deals in abstractions removed from 'real' life and faith. In Christianity beliefs and practices shape one another—to speak about God is to implicate ourselves in a way of life and appropriate response. If beliefs and practices inform one another clarifying what we believe (the task of theology) is for the sake of those who embody Christian practices.

In the third essay of this volume Volf explores the relationship between the church and its social context as imagined by the text of 1 Peter. What are the implications of Christian belief for how the church relates to its surrounding culture? Keen to rescue 1 Peter from a reading which supposes that it is a text that is oppositionally *against* its culture, Volf understands the text as representing a *soft* difference. The community is distinguished less by what it deprecates and more by its hope. This is a difference from within; a difference lived out by a people whose new life is lived out in the space of the old order. What emerges is a complex way of engaging the world that moves beyond 'stark polarities' (88). The third essay engages in a nuanced way with what Volf terms the 'peculiar' politics of the Fourth Gospel. As with 1 Peter, in Volf's reading what emerges is a text that is complexly political—that is it cannot be glibly dismissed as world-denying. Rather, the radical love that drives the mission of Jesus is the love of a God who dies for his enemies. The kind of love that God is is elegantly brought out in the next essay which is an extended reflection on 1 John 4.7–12. That God *is* love is a triune claim. Love is the very being of the triune God who loves the world *first*, that is love is the cause of the world. The priority of God's love also reminds us that God's love is not earned or generated by what we do. This love makes possible the love we are called—commanded—to share with one another. Or as Volf articulates all this,

'Love of neighbour is not the condition of God's presence in us: God's presence in us is the condition of love of neighbour' (149). A final essay speaks to the insatiable drive of consumerism with the help of Ecclesiastes. Deftly moving between those who would co-opt God in pursuit of capital and those who would allow God to be displaced Volf demonstrates how a theo-centric imagination restores the dignity of work.

Some readers will recognize most of the essays here from previous publications—those who don't will enjoy the way that Volf consistently allows the biblical text to speak to contemporary challenges and contexts. All this is done with a refreshing lack of hermeneutical anxiety. The introductory essay may emphasize the role of the author but what emerges more strongly in the way that Volf actually engages with the Bible is his invitation to imagine the world through the texts. Overall, a very welcome addition to the literature on Scripture's theological interpretation. Pastors and ministers will find much to nourish their ministry in this book.

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**Steven E. Runge.** *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament: A Practical Introduction for Teaching and Exegesis.* Lexham Bible Reference Series. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010. xx + 404 pp. Hardback. ISBN: 978-1-59856-583-6. \$49.95. Hardback.

Steven E. Runge (D. Litt in biblical languages at University of Stellenbosch-SA) is a scholar-in-residence at Logos Bible Software in Seattle, Washington. At Logos he has developed the Lexham Discourse Greek New Testament and the English Lexham High Definition New Testament (unfortunately both are only available through Logos as digital editions). His present book (hereafter DGGNT) introduces discourse concepts to Greek Grammar.

Most Greek grammars avoid discourse analysis concepts in favor of pure syntax. Such a syntax-only approach creates a series of problems regarding exegesis. First, it cannot completely describe the information flow the biblical author presents (it is limited to clause/sentence-level relationships between words). The second problem is that it only describes the possible uses of a word and usually doesn't attempt to answer *why* a writer would express himself as he did. Third, highlighting, prominence, and coherence are almost completely ignored. Certainly these are important to exegesis. Thus, a gap exists in traditional grammars that hinders a well-rounded exegesis. In DGGNT Runge's seeks to lay a conceptual foundation for understanding the information structure of koine Greek that can bridge this gap. His book is largely successful at this goal and is arranged in four major sections.

Part One: Foundations contains two chapters. Chapter one lays out Runge's purpose and philosophy. He states "The purpose of this book is to introduce a function-based approach to language using discourse grammar." (3) In doing so,

he intends not to replace formal syntactical approaches, but to complement them (5). Runge's approach is similar to the Wycliff Bible Translators (SIL). Still, the work is eclectic incorporating other discourse analysis methodologies. As Runge executes his project he notably will have a section in each chapter on conventional explanation followed by a "discourse explanation." These occasionally will overturn conventional wisdom but more often than not are complementary, giving a more complete picture.

His philosophy is essentially functional approach to understanding language. He describes his core principles thus: (1) Choice implies meaning. (2) Semantic or inherent meaning should be differentiated from pragmatic effect and (3) Default patterns of usage should be distinguished from marked ones. Chapter 2 completes part 1 by discussing Greek connectives. Runge notes that Greek connectives are more diverse than simply conjunctions. Other elements also connect sentences and clauses. He describes *why* a writer would choose his connectives. Runge's chapter answers this question identifying the individual constraints a conjunction brings on its context.

At Part 2, Runge takes up the subject of "forward pointing devices," defined as "conventions used to attract attention to something significant in the discourse, something that would not have garnered the same attention" otherwise (59). The first are forward pointing reference and target sets. Here several elements are grouped together because of their ability to highlight a forward targeted constituent when normally they are back-referencing, thus creating prominence. Another set of forward pointing devices are point/counterpoint sets that are the subject of chapter 4. Metacomments (authorial comments about what is to be said) form the substance of chapter 5. In chapter 6 Runge defends the proposition that the historic present is a highlighting function often used at discourse boundaries to highlight the speech that follows. Redundant quotative frames (unnecessary instances of "And he said . . ." or the like) also highlight in a variety of ways that which follows. Finally, tail-head linkage (narrowly defined) slows down and transitions to the next section.

Part 3 contains Runge's discussion of information structuring devices in six chapters (one wonders why chapter 2 [connectives] was not included here?) The chapter on Information Structure describes word order in koine Greek as a prominence marking device. The next two chapters Framing Devices 1 & 2 contain a description of clauses that provide a frame of reference for what follows whether it be topical, temporal, conditional, spatial, etc.). Chapter 12, Circumstantial Frames is Runge's chapter on adverbial participles as backgrounding information (when placed before the finite verb clause) or elaborate the action of the main verb (when placed after the finite verb). Chapter 13, Emphasis is not about highlighting or prominence, but is used in a technical sense. Finally, Runge handles Left-Dislocations (a preverbal element that is used with a resumptive pronoun to highlight a readily accessible entity).

Part 4: Thematic Highlighting Devices concludes the major portion of the book. Runge discusses a series of devices that guide the readers thinking about

something or someone. The chapters include Overspecification and Right-Dislocation (elaborating redundant material); Thematic Addition (traditionally the ascensive or adverbial use of conjunctions); Changed Reference and Thematic Address (identifying referents through renaming or identifying). And finally, Near/Far Distinction (the use of *ekeinos* and *outos* used for thematic purposes).

Finally a summary is included that lists the discourse features enumerated and notes which genre it is associated with, among other things. Runge ends with a far too short section (three short paragraphs) noting the importance of genre, on exegesis.

DGGNT is not a handbook for discourse analysis. It seems to be intended as a companion to traditional Greek grammars. As such there is no major discussion about elements above the clause/sentence level. However, the exclusion of markers in higher level discourse could have been easily included. This is especially true regarding the discussion of connectives/conjunctions. There is no major discussion of the use of *de* in higher level discourse, prepositional connectives like *meta tauta*, or standardized verbal forms like *egeneto* + infinitive and the like. There is also little discussion of boundary features (i.e., what marks a new paragraph, section, unit, etc.?). The book also suffers from no discussion of genre. I was disappointed these were not included in the book, although admittedly, the book is already 404 pages long!

There are a number of places that I disagree with Dr. Runge in his analysis of specific texts (see, for example, Ephesians 5; Galatians 5:13–14). And occasionally there is more to information that could be included. For example, there is almost no attention given to an individual writer's idiolect—Matthew's use of *tote*, John's use of intersentence conjunctions and far demonstrative pronouns (John's unusual usage goes unstated in the chapter on near and far demonstratives!). But, these issues aside, overall the book does what it was designed to do, complement a traditional grammar, and if provides a much needed corrective to our approach to koine Greek.

I heartily recommend the book in spite of my nit-picking observations. The question is where would I employ it in the pedagogical series of NT Greek? Dr. Runge is confident that first year students can understand the concepts. I disagree unless these students have high IQs, no other classes, no spouses, no children, and no cable TV. Perhaps it could be used in intermediate Greek in consultation with a traditional grammar, but it looks best suited for students already exposed to the complete battery of syntax and grammar. Wherever we fit it in, we should do so.

Dr. Steven Runge is to be congratulated for producing a fine textbook and a valuable resource for all future study of the Greek NT. While we await for his more detailed analysis of the Greek NT (the Lexham discourse GNT) to be released to a larger audience (in print or otherwise), Runge's DGGNT should sit on every Greek students shelf of resources.

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**Richard S. Briggs.** *The Virtuous Reader: Old Testament Narrative and Interpretive Virtue.* Studies in Theological Interpretation. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010. 270 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-0-8010-3843-3. \$26.99. Paperback.

Richard Briggs has a well-established reputation as a careful and informed thinker in the field of hermeneutics. In particular, he has shown his awareness of the importance of philosophy for interpreting the Bible in his earlier studies on speech act theory and biblical interpretation, though even his more popular works (such as *Reading the Bible Wisely*) have had this underpinning even if it wasn't paraded before us. This new study fits somewhere between his highly technical *Words in Action* and his popular works, showing an awareness of philosophical matters, and in particular the nature of virtue, whilst showing the payoff this brings for how we read narrative texts in the Old Testament. While many studies in hermeneutics are concerned with the process of reading the text, Briggs here seeks to bring a fresh approach to the table by reflecting on the sort of person we are meant to be if we are to read the Bible well. This cannot mean, however, that we set aside all questions associated with the nature of the text because there are always issues which any text generates but it does refocus the question somewhat. If, with Ricoeur, meaning is generated in the conversation between text and reader, then Briggs' voice is an important one, because the issue of who can read the Bible well is an important one. What emerges here is that there is a process by which readers are shaped by the text even as they bring their questions and issues to it.

The key methodological issues are laid out in the first chapter which goes in pursuit of the virtues of the implied reader of the Old Testament. There is much grist for the interpretive mill here as Briggs builds on the work of Kevin Vanhoozer in applying the concept of virtue to hermeneutics. Briggs engages with some key discussion partners (e.g., MacIntyre), though in his preface he candidly admits he would have liked to draw more on classical sources, especially Aristotle and through him Aquinas, before deciding that their inclusion would not significantly impact his argument. From this general reflection on virtue he seeks to build up a picture of the type of person who is implied as a reader of the Old Testament. There is a degree of circularity here as the text shapes readers towards certain interpretive virtues and so summons them to express those virtues in interpretation, but as Briggs notes this is a problem faced by all theorists who draw on the theory of virtue. From this, Briggs notes the virtues of humility, wisdom, trust, love and receptivity as the keys to reading the Old Testament.

In a sense, the rest of the book then works this out, asking what each virtue means in specifically Old Testament terms. This is important if one is to avoid the problem of imposing a grid of meaning for them from outside, though of course we can only ever do this imperfectly. Briggs method is to identify an Old Testament narrative where the particular virtue is central and then to explore how this informs our understanding of that virtue. This starts with Moses in Numbers 12:3 to explore humility, then Solomon in 1 Kings 3 for wisdom, Hezekiah in 2 Kings 18 for trust, Ruth in Ruth 1 and Elijah in 2 Kings 5 for love, and finally Isaiah for receptivity in

Isaiah 6. On the whole, these are successful readings of these texts, informed by a literary sensitivity as well as theological acumen. However, in highlighting a specific virtue within each narrative there is also a great deal that is passed over. What Briggs succeeds in doing here is to show the place of the virtue within the text so that it in turn models to the reader something of what this virtue is like. A closing chapter then considers how we move from the implied reader of the text to real readers.

This is a bold proposal in hermeneutical theory, though with boldness inevitably come points of disagreement or at least uncertainty. Although the idea that the text is shaping us with the result that we become better and more sensitive readers seems a helpful starting point, I remain uncomfortable with the language of virtue. Are we indeed virtuous to read in a certain way, or are we speaking of the character of a sensitive reader, so that as readers we read with the grain of the text? More importantly, even if we decide that a difference between virtue and character here is a dispute about semantics, why do we choose these particular aspects as most important? I accept that they are crucial, but there are others too. For example, although we read the Old Testament from a perspective of faith, might doubt not also be important? It is certainly evident in the psalms, but is arguably present in narratives as well. What of courage? The list could go on, but it is not clear why these particular themes emerge as most important. But perhaps this is to quibble, because although I come away from this book with questions, it seems to me that this is entirely healthy, and a focus on the nature of the reader is an important step in reflecting on hermeneutics.

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**Charles Talbert. *Matthew. Paideia Commentaries on the New Testament.* Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010. xxiii + 376. Paperback. ISBN: 978-0-8010-3192-2. \$29.99. Paperback.**

This commentary begins with brief introductory comments that tell us more about Talbert's perspective than the state of scholarship, for instance, that the gospels are not "occasional documents" to a local community so much as "foundational documents" written to provide the basic values upon which many readers' lives would be based and by which their lives would be evaluated. He spends a great deal of time coordinating Matthean soteriology in the introduction, but only in personal terms. (Redemptive historical aspects such as the importance of Davidic sonship for salvation are addressed later in the text.) He carefully coordinates the indicative and imperative in Matthew, rejecting any notion that Matthew is about works righteousness.

In the commentary proper one finds three features that address each text unit: brief discussion of "introductory matters," usually addressing the outline and the major themes and rhetorical objectives of the passage in question; "tracing the narrative flow," a section-by-section explanation of the text (in these sections

Talbert never bogs down nor loses the thrust of the textual forest by focusing on the trees); and a concluding “theological reflections” passage that is sometimes helpful but less consistent.

Talbert’s attention to the literary flow is almost always very good. He is perhaps more interested in determining tight literary divisions than Matthew himself, (arguably) overly fond of chiasmic structure. My argument for chapters 23–25 as the extent of Jesus’ fifth discourse in Matthew (*JBL* in 2009) did not appear in time to sway him.

Linguistically, he addresses some important problems (Matt 16 and theological perspectives on “rock”; “hoi de” in Matt 28:17) but otherwise does not feature a great deal of Greek. For instance, he discusses the significance of being a “carpenter” in antiquity, but not the range of meaning for *tehton*.

His use of background text becomes particularly helpful after the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount, from which point Jesus’ teachings and actions are helpfully set in context by parallels and discussion of rhetorical strategies, exegetical practices, and other literary tendencies. A massive number of Jewish and Mediterranean texts are mined, with insights helpfully—even attractively—presented in a variety of ways: during exegetical explanation, in sidebars, narrative asides, summaries, etc. Many examples have no direct exegetical relevance but rather function as samples of “local flavor” for those of us visiting the ancient world with Talbert as our tour guide. To cite but one example, Talbert includes sample illustrations of Jewish and Greco-Roman miracle stories as well as illustrations of similar miracles—hardly a floodlight, but perhaps nice backlighting as one considers the landscape of Jesus’ and Matthew’s audiences. If Talbert can affirm uniqueness, he can also undercut the notion that so often floats in one’s head as a student of the NT, that the sorts of things taught, said, or done by Jesus were always *sui generis*.

Talbert’s approach often results in a much more useful resource than one gets via (say) the lumps of texts heaped in Keener’s footnotes. This work often contains more useful, focused commentary than (say) Luz and Nolland. Students will probably need to be warned about the difficulty of dating rabbinic material and the problem of parallelomania. Talbert himself is almost never guilty of error in this regard, but those with lesser skills seem inevitably to head in that direction with this sort of material. In sum, students will gain a great deal of appreciation for Jesus and Matthew in their historical setting.

The beneficial, broad focus on culture, texts, and rhetoric may be distracting for readers more interested in OT and biblical theological dimensions of the “background” of Matthew; but there is value in reconnoitering the cultural setting. Some of the literary and theological asides are not always located in the most obvious place: the good discussion on rejection of prophets and judgment in Jewish tradition and in Matthew (212–13) could go many places, as could his summary of Pennington’s thesis on the difference between heaven and heavens (297—and we see not the bulk of Pennington’s thesis, but a minor point!).

In his introduction Talbert insists that he does not want to bog down in debates on historicity. He would seem to have little time for (say) the resurrection proof

project undertaken by N. T. Wright. He insists that revelation can occur even if passages like Matt 1–2 are best understood as haggadah (“edifying narrative”), emphasizing God’s grace rather than human initiative. For Talbert, revelation does not guarantee historicity given the use of various genres as a vehicle for truth in a variety of ways. The theological section on chapter one is by my count far longer than the average such section, with lengthy discussions of the implications of divine begetting in the ancient world that will at least help orient students to the impressions that might have been made by Matthew’s presentation of Jesus’ birth. In other words, he brackets historicity here and elsewhere in favor of a focus on other matters. Many will question whether history and historicity are as neatly separable from theology as this position seems to indicate.

Unlike many a-historical enterprises that become naked literary engagement, Talbert is elsewhere loaded with historical insight into theological questions. When viewed in a Jewish and Mediterranean setting, the Sermon on the Mount is more about broad task of character formation than the strict tasks of law and command. (One would have to read the whole presentation, however, to avoid the impression that law is pitted against character formation.) That is why Jesus addresses perceptions, dispositions, intentions, motives, and matters of piety (i.e., prayer), rather than strictly on ethics. Of course, character formation has to result in action. Talbert puts Snodgrass’s dictum for parables to good use (they rely on correspondence between two processes). Chapters 19–20 address the common ancient concern for the four aspects of household responsibility; Talbert sees Jesus subverting cultural norms and responsibilities here and elsewhere. Matthew 24 is informed by two questions, and the people of God are not involved in final judgment in 25:31–46.

In sum, this text is very useful in meeting the aims of the series and contains many enlightening and interesting observations, but does not fulfill every desideratum. Readers who want insights on theology, redemptive history, and historicity will want to supplement Talbert’s work with other resources. Talbert’s focus on ancient texts, culture and rhetoric fills an important niche.

When he wrote this text, I am not sure that Talbert was really “arriving at what seemed to be a ‘fresh’ approach in nearly every section of the gospel,” as he suggests in his introduction. But he certainly engages Matthew’s “cultural, literary and theological setting” with “lucid brevity.”

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David L. Allen and Steve W. Lemke (editors), *Whosoever Will: A Biblical-Theological Critique of Five-Point Calvinism {Reflections from the John 3:16 Conference}*. Nashville, TN: B & H Academic, 2010. 298 pp. Paperback. ISBN: 978-0-8054-6416-0. \$24.99. Paperback.

*Whosoever Will* is the product of the November 2008 John 3:16 conference held in Woodstock, GA. The book constitutes a response to the resurgence of Calvinism

within the Southern Baptist Convention. The first chapter is a rousing sermon on John 3:16 by Jerry Vines, followed by informative responses to five-point Calvinism by leading scholars in the SBC. Paige Patterson examines total depravity—perhaps the one point of Calvinism where Calvinists and non-Calvinists are the closest. Although Patterson agrees that humans are totally depraved and unable to save themselves, he does note that, with God's prevenient grace, one can and must freely respond to the salvation that Christ offers to sinners.

Richard Land rejects the view that election is grounded in divine decree and offers an alternative to unconditional election which he calls "Congruent Election." If successful, this model would avoid strict monergism while preserving a strong view of divine foreknowledge regarding the elect. Land's model, moreover, appears to have the conceptual resources to avoid traditional grounding objections regarding truth-values for counterfactuals of creaturely freedom. A worry about this view, however, is that it seems to commit one to a genuinely perplexing perdurantist view of time and diachronic persistence.

One of the true gems of this book is David Allen's critique of limited atonement. Allen provides important clarity concerning the relevant notions involved in analyzing the extent of the atonement. He then marshals an impressive array of historical, exegetical, logical, theological, and practical arguments to undermine the credibility of views which affirm limited imputation of sin to Christ. Allen's historical case is especially impressive. It reveals the relative historical novelty of limited atonement in church history. His chapter exemplifies deep historical and theological expertise. The historical case, while impressive, is certainly not sufficient to settle the matter of the extent of the atonement. Yet its conjunction with the detailed exegetical, theological, and logical arguments constitute a compelling assault on the limited view.

Steve Lemke provides an extensive biblical critique of irresistible grace. The passages to which he refers highlight the relentless biblical demand for human response in order to benefit from God's grace. Marshalling the biblical data is a valuable contribution in its own right, but Lemke also provides an extensive theological critique. Many of his criticisms are well known and well taken by opponents of irresistible grace.

Lemke's critique of compatibilist agency, however, is more controversial. Compatibilists will undoubtedly object to Lemke apparently equating the lack of alternative possibilities with coercion (151–52). Neither is it clear that his own brand of soft libertarianism secures the freedom-level control that libertarians really want. Indeed, most, if not all, contemporary theories of libertarian freedom have been subject to intense criticisms. Despite my own sympathies with libertarianism, it should be noted that although a variety of highly sophisticated libertarian accounts have been developed in recent years, no contemporary account has garnered widespread acceptance among advocates of libertarianism. Libertarians still have much work to do in terms of formulating and defending their accounts of human freedom.

Kenneth Keathly's offers a provocative treatment of Calvinist construals of perseverance and assurance. He notes important deficiencies on the Calvinist view while developing a biblically and theologically robust model of assurance based on justification rather than sanctification.

While subsequent chapters on Calvin's Calvinism, the potential impact of Calvinism in the local churches, and the significance of Calvinism for the public invitation all make important contributions to issues concerning Southern Baptist theology and praxis, a good deal of the material in these chapters recapitulates ground covered in earlier chapters.

Jeremy Evans and Bruce Little contribute important chapters critiquing compatibilist views of divine and human agency and the significance of strong sovereignty in connection with the problem of evil. These chapters offer penetrating insights, but especially significant is how these authors highlight the differences in the dialectical structure. Compatibilists and libertarians both have skeletons in their closets—one must pick one's poison, as it were. But compatibilist views of human and divine agency promptly appeal to mystery where the logic of their views appears to implicate the character of God, whereas libertarian appeals to mystery typically concern the mechanisms of God.

Though *Whosoever Will* is characterized by thorough scholarship and theological rigor, one of its limitations is the lack of biblical argumentation for the oft-deployed notion of prevenient grace. Several of the contributors rely heavily on this doctrine, but provide only minimal biblical support. Future editions would profit from critical examination of this crucial doctrine for non-Calvinists. One of the strengths of this book is its consistent clarion call to charity and tolerance concerning intramural debates between Calvinists and non-Calvinists. Despite the limitations inherent in a volume that must briefly treat issues that command numerous volumes, I urgently recommend this book to all interested leaders and laypersons, both Calvinist and non-Calvinists within the SBC and beyond. Those who ignore this important work do so to their own theological detriment.

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**Ernst Käsemann, *On Being a Disciple of the Crucified Nazarene*. Edited by Rudolf Landau. With Wolfgang Kraus. Translated by Roy A. Harrisville. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010. 359 pp. Paperback. ISBN: 978-0-8028-6026-2. \$30.00. Paperback.**

Students of the history of Interpretation of the New Testament readily recognize the name of Ernst Käsemann. We know of his studies as one of Rudolph Bultmann's students. We know that he and a few other students of Bultmann started the second quest of the historical Jesus in post WWII Europe. We know the man who coined the twin criteria of dissimilarity and multiple attestation (in his famous

1954 essay). We know the man who thought John was a Docetic Gospel. We know of the thoroughly fascinating effect this man has had on the landscape of New Testament Studies. The passionate preacher presented in this book of previously unpublished sermons is less common fare.

Ernst Käsemann (1906–98) was described at his 1998 funeral as a lone wolf and a voice for radical living for Christ. He described himself as a partisan revolutionary and had battles with liberals and pietists alike. One may not always agree with the interpretations that Dr. Käsemann espoused, but he was always thought-provoking and a voice for “swimming against the stream.” And more than a voice, he had the scars to justify listening. The present book gives a picture of this part of the man.

The book is divided into two parts: “Biblical Essays” and “Church Conflicts.” In the first section, the sermons are more based on selected biblical texts. The sermons are not strictly exegetical but neither are they rambling flights of liberal theology. Dr. Käsemann’s style produces a very readable essay, so I would classify it as more of a literary production. In this sense, it reminds me of classical rhetoric (although not strictly so).

The first essay, *a Theological Review*, is a goldmine of biographical information. This alone was worth reading the book. Here we read of Käsemann’s unhappy childhood, his conversion under the leadership of a youth minister and his first trip through academia at Bonn. He was so enamored with the Catholic faculty there that he retreated to Bultmann’s historical criticism as “an antidote” (xv). His quest to reconcile his historical criticism with his pietist faith led him to Tübingen and Adolf Schlatter. He was disappointed because Schlatter loved to provoke, but not to public dispute. Yet he considered Schlatter his third teacher in New Testament (i.e., Barth, Schlatter, Bultmann). We also learn of his early support of Hitler that quickly turned to opposition, his embrace of the confessing church, and his imprisonment by the Gestapo. He was a bold and popular preacher that was a consistent presence in the confessing church. He would later state “. . . we must not forget that the truth is not an ecclesiastical product but the judge of all churchly proclamation and theology” (156).

I see three interesting, foundational topics to which Käsemann repeatedly turns: Christ (and discipleship), the Scriptures, and Salvation (although many other topics are addressed). First, the Scriptures. Throughout the series of sermons we see Käsemann’s view of the Word of God. He sees the Bible as a thoroughly human book that has the stamp of God’s inspiration on it. However, he (without saying the words often) has a canon within the canon. This is not surprising of one of Lutheran heritage. Clearly this is filtered through his historical criticism. The upshot is that the scholars become the priests deciding what is to be heard and what is to be demythologized, and what is to be rejected (see page 158 for a more telling description). Yet, he is adamant of its usefulness. He confesses a “scandalous thesis” . . . “none of us should give up on the Bible, that we cannot do without it if we would hear the voice of the true God” (173). And, “Plainly put, we should open the Bible daily and from it hear the voice of love

addressed personally to us. Grace makes use of the divine word to bring us out of earthly confusion before the face of the eternal lord, to set us in the kinship of the disciples and urge us to mutual love, which prays, 'Keep my heart to the one thing, that I fear your name.'" (218).

Salvation is described in reformation terms but focussed heavily on the relationship with Christ. Elsewhere Käsemann rejects Bultmann's (and Luther's) individualism for a more cosmic righteousness. Faith is not merely being pious, nor belonging to a church, instead it begins in the sovereign choice of God, or in a repeated idea, the sovereign voice of God. "God has willed us and called us by name" (217). And having learned to believe we are betrothed to Christ "as one in love is promised to another" (160). Christ, for us, became man, died, and rose again. We allow ourselves to be set under the lordship of Christ and not succumbing to the temptation to be quelled by neither powers nor suffering (225). "Christian faith is encountered in only one shape: 'This one was with Jesus of Nazareth'" (161).

Christ is consistently, "the Nazarene." Käsemann refers to Him as the crucified son of God. In Christ, the face of God is revealed to humanity. Christ is both the risen one and the crucified one and these cannot be separated. "The Risen One would have no face if it were not that of the Nazarene, and his lordship is unique only so long as it sets us beneath the cross of Golgotha" (265). The cross sets the course of discipleship not away from the world but toward it. In other words, Discipleship is not reflected in inner transformation where one retreats from the world (a shot at pietism?) but toward the world for transformation. Thus, "present day Christianity neither can correctly see itself now nor can correctly see its past or future except in the mirror of the Third and Fourth worlds" (268).

In a book like this there are a series of caveats I would suggest. First, let us not throw the baby out with the bathwater. There is much that I disagree in this volume, particularly his approach and evaluation of Scripture (among other things). But there is much from which to drink deeply and think deeply. Second, and opposite, let us do throw out the bathwater. Third, Käsemann often doesn't address the *tertium quid* when dealing with contrasts. Things are not always black/white; either/or. Sometimes there is a both/and dynamic. For example, in the discipleship question above, I would suggest that inner transformation is what leads to a redemptive mission to the world.

Finally, in my opinion, Käsemann's theology is complicated and nuanced (I am sure my brief representation of it here does not do it justice). We are constantly running the risk of importing our own ideas into his descriptions. Even though this is the case, there is much that I find surprisingly nourishing and confronts my own commitments to Christ in a beneficial way. N. T. Wright has said that if he had one NT interpreter to be stranded on a desert island it would be Ernst Käsemann. After reading this book, I think I would put him on the short list as well.

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**Michael E. W. Thompson.** *Where Is the God of Justice? The Old Testament and Suffering.* Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2011. ix-xiii + 221 pp. Paperback. ISBN: 978-1-61097-262-8. \$26.00. Paperback.

*Where is the God of Justice* fills an enormous gap in Old Testament theology. To this reviewer's knowledge, this is the first monograph length exploration of the theme of suffering in the Old Testament. Other monographs in the past have focused, of course, on theodicy and particular portions of the Old Testament. This is true especially for work in the wisdom literature in general and Job in particular. Other books have explored the theme of suffering in individual prophets like Isaiah or Jeremiah (or Habakkuk). And other volumes have explored in detail facets of suffering in terms of Old Testament literary genres (lament and complaint), prayer (Jeremiah's so-called "confessions"), or the suffering servant of Isaiah 53. Yet Thompson's monograph is unique in its scope: it aims to distil and present the major theodicies present in the corpus of the Old Testament. As such, it provides a "bird's eye" view on the question of suffering in the Old Testament while diving down to get closer looks at significant points of the terrain.

The structure of the book is as follows. Chapter 1 introduces the problem of suffering in the Old Testament as it is multivocal, with many rationales as to the sources of suffering and thereby potential solutions. Chapter 2 explores the teaching of Qoheleth as Thompson sees it. He suggests that suffering in Qoheleth is a result of the incomprehensibility of both God and life. Chapter 3 then addresses suffering in Jeremiah through an analysis of his "confessions." Thompson suggests that Jeremiah responds to suffering not by acquiescing to sinfulness and thereby producing penitence, but rather by highlighting the suffering that comes as a result of serving the Lord. This is not a point of retributive suffering due to sin, but suffering for righteousness. He finds no answer to this suffering: it is to be endured. Chapter 4 then addresses Habakkuk and Joseph. Although differently placed in the canon, these figures share in the reality of an "extended pause" between suffering and its resolution. The major teaching on suffering as Thompson sees it is that the faithful should learn to watch and wait upon God. Chapter 5 draws in the figure of the suffering servant of Isaiah 53, and the "new light" it sheds upon suffering in the Old Testament. Thompson suggests that Isaiah teaches that suffering is borne on behalf of others and in the midst of others, for the glory of God. Chapter 6 engages the book of Job. Thompson states that Job teaches a number of theodicies rather than just one. He argues that this is one of the major aims of the book. Chapter 7 deals with the apocalyptic hope, or the ultimate eclipse of suffering in the future. Future hope frames human suffering in the present. Chapters 1–6 are interspersed with brief psalmic interludes that create space for readerly reflection and deepen the points that Thompson has made in the preceding chapter.

This is an ambitious and interesting volume. Thompson should be commended for his effort and the skill in which he has delivered the major argument of the book. Still the benefits of the book—its scope and depth despite its relative brevity—highlight its major drawback. There are many texts not considered in this

volume that could nuance and deepen each of his chapters. For instance, how does servant suffering in Isaiah 40–55 relate to the suffering of the world in Isaiah 1–66? How does Habakkuk’s suffering of “waiting” fit within the message of the Twelve on the issue of suffering? What does Joseph’s experience of suffering have to do with the suffering that is on display in the primeval and patriarchal stories? The narrative shaping of the Old Testament may have helpfully informed his discussion as well, as suffering is rooted in the biblical story as deriving from Genesis 3, which is not fully addressed by Thompson. Because it is not a systematic exploration, a good bit is left out of the discussion. What remains is a very helpful but selective portrayal of suffering in the Old Testament. Nonetheless, this volume is one that should be accessed by anyone interested in the topic of suffering in the Bible. There is much here to learn, and Thompson is a good teacher.

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**E. O. Wilson.** *The Creation: An Appeal to Save Life on Earth*. New York: W. W. Norton, 2007. 175 pp. Paperback. ISBN: 978-0-3930-6217-5. \$13.95. Paperback.

In view of his nearly five-decade tenure as professor of biology at Harvard University, his twenty books covering a wide range of environmental issues, and his 400 technical articles on numerous ecological topics, it seems evident that E. O. Wilson is well qualified to pen a book on preserving the environment. Yet, while the breadth of Wilson’s knowledge of the field is indeed manifest in *The Creation: An Appeal to Save Life on Earth*, this text is unlike any of his previous literary works. This book is not primarily written for those in the academic community who endorse naturalistic evolution, but rather Wilson’s intended audience is evangelical Christians who accept special theistic creation as presented in the Bible.

In short, Wilson’s purpose in producing *The Creation* is to bring together supporters of naturalistic evolution and advocates of theistic creation with the common goal of preserving the environment. Wilson writes, “Religion and science are the two most powerful forces in the world today. . . . If religion and science could be united on the common ground of biological conservation, the problem [of environmental destruction] would soon be solved” (p. 5). In order to facilitate this odd coalition, Wilson has penned this text as an open invitation to evangelical Christians to join him, as the book’s subtitle reads, to save life on earth. Structurally speaking, this invitation is given in *The Creation* in the form of seventeen letters, each constituting a chapter of the book, in which Wilson explains to a fictional Southern Baptist pastor the importance of preserving the environment.

There are many facets of this text for which Wilson is to be commended. For example, the prose of *The Creation* is not overly technical; and there are many illustrations throughout the book, undoubtedly designed to keep the attention of his intended audience. Additionally, Wilson’s personal accounts of his field

expeditions, such as his encounter with fire ants as a boy in rural Alabama (chapter 5), are entertaining and informative. Moreover, the description of unique and lesser known animals, such as wolverines and pitchfork ants (chapter 6), are sure to capture the reader's attention as well as produce altruistic feelings toward the environment. Yet, the aspect of *The Creation* for which Wilson deserves the most credit is his stinging observation that most evangelical Christians, especially church leaders, seem to care little about the environment. Wilson writes, "I am puzzled that so many religious leaders, who spiritually represent a large majority of people around the world, have hesitated to make protection of the Creation an important part of their magisterium" (p. 5). Indeed, this fact ought to puzzle many within the Body of Christ.

Despite the many positive features of *The Creation*, there are several drawbacks to this text of which the prospective reader should be aware. First, Wilson describes himself as an atheistic "secular humanist . . . [who] thinks existence is what we make of it as individuals" (p. 3). While he surely tries to be fair and balanced in his discussion, Wilson's biases are evident throughout the book. For instance, in his discussion of Darwin, Wilson refers to the "dogma" of creationism, as compared with the "intellectual freedom" of evolutionary theory (p. 7). Moreover, in an attempt to gain credibility, Wilson repeatedly notes that he was raised as an evangelical Christian; yet, the Christianity that Wilson describes is exactly that which he left as a boy in the 1940s—that is, the rural Southern Baptist Christianity of the Deep South. Upon reading his description of church life and Christian theology, many modern evangelicals will conclude that Wilson is either trying to caricature their religion, or that he has misunderstood Christianity to the point that he cannot authoritatively speak to it. Either way, Wilson's invitation to evangelicals to join his coalition is lost.

A second, perhaps more weighty shortcoming of *The Creation* is a problem that plagues most non-theistic environmentalists—that is, answering the question, "Why?" In other words, the burden upon atheistic evolutionists who desire to save the earth is to generate a reason for doing so. In this book Wilson tentatively offers several cryptic, pragmatic reasons for ecological conservation such as the complexity of biology (p. 5), the potential for furtherance of knowledge (pp. 12–13), and our own physical well-being (p. 26); however, it seems that none of these answers provide a truly sufficient impetus for conservationism. Biblical creationists, on the other hand, have a built-in rationale for being good stewards of the created order—that is, it is commanded by the Creator (cf. Gen. 1:26–28).

In conclusion, the above criticisms notwithstanding, *The Creation: An Appeal to Save Life on Earth* is a good book that ought to be read by those within the evangelical community. Although Wilson misses on his goal of uniting creationists and evolutionists together in a coalition to save the earth, this book is a good reminder to believers of their duty to interact properly and responsibly with the environment.

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**Robert J. Spitzer.** *New Proofs for the Existence of God: Contributions of Contemporary Physics and Philosophy.* Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010. xiii + 319 pp. Paperback. ISBN: 978-0-8028-6383-6. \$28.00. Paperback.

*New Proofs for the Existence of God* is Robert J. Spitzer's case for the existence of God based on contemporary physics and philosophy. The book is divided into three parts. The first part summarizes relevant parts of contemporary physics for the purpose of showing how these findings strongly support theism. Spitzer succeeds in providing an accurate, yet accessible, account of how contemporary physics is being used to support theism in two ways. First, he explains how contemporary physics supports that the universe has a temporal beginning. Second, he points to a number of findings in physics that support the fine-tuning argument from design. Bruce Gordon has written a valuable postscript to the first part of the book, which provides a rigorous explanation of many of the facets of contemporary physics to which Spitzer has written a popular and more accessible account. However, Gordon's postscript is likely to be inscrutable to those who do not have a strong background in physics.

In the second part of the book, Spitzer presents three philosophical arguments for the existence of God. Contrary to the overall theme of the book, these philosophical arguments are reminiscent of some of the traditional ancient and medieval arguments for theism. In the first argument he makes the distinction between conditioned reality (i.e., existing on some condition) and unconditioned reality (i.e., existing without condition), and then he argues that all reality cannot exist as unconditioned reality. This argument is similar to Thomas Aquinas's third way (based on necessity and contingency), however, Spitzer incorporates aspects of contemporary physics to bolster his account. The second philosophical argument relies heavily on the philosophical work of Bernard Lonergan, a Thomist thinker of the previous century. The main idea in this second argument is that unconditioned reality implies unrestricted intelligibility. The third philosophical argument is Spitzer's version of the kalam cosmological argument, which has garnered interest in some circles of contemporary philosophy. The kalam argument justifies the existence of God on the grounds that it is conceptually impossible for the universe to have an actual infinite temporal past. If the universe's temporal past is not infinite, then it must have a beginning, and if the universe has a beginning, then it has a cause—which must be God. The second part of the book ends with a discussion of some objections to his arguments as well as a variety of problems that Spitzer believes makes justifying atheism conceptually impossible.

The third and final part of the book discusses the five transcendentals (being, love, the good, the true, the beautiful). Spitzer contends that the transcendentals are identical with God. Then, he maintains that human longing for these transcendentals are a kind of existential yearning to know God. Spitzer draws heavily on the work of Plato and Saint Augustine to make this case.

Spitzer's *New Proofs* is commendable for presenting a number of arguments that are worth considering. However, the book has some weaknesses as well. The first weakness is that most of the book does not live up to its title, "new proofs." Rather, most of the arguments are Spitzer's recapitulation of old arguments for theism, and sometimes the arguments themselves seem to come primarily from ancient and medieval sources. Even though good arguments have no expiration date, the reader may have a sense that this book is not living up to its title. A second problem is that Spitzer is trying to do too much in one book. In addition to presenting arguments for theism, Spitzer devotes a few pages to a theory of space and time, the problem of evil, and finite interpretations of mathematics. These topics take more than a few pages to address adequately. A final difficulty is that some of Spitzer's ideas rely on ancient and medieval philosophical assumptions that most contemporary philosophers (Christian and non-Christian alike) would find spurious. For example, most contemporary philosophers think it is a category mistake to think that being, love, truth, goodness, and beauty are existing things. (Many believe that truth, goodness, and beauty are properties of things.) As a result, the book may fail to connect with most contemporary philosophers.

Consequently, *New Proofs* is going to have limited value for scholars and pastors. Scholars will benefit the most from the first part, but they will benefit more from studying the newest developments in natural theology from contemporary scholars like William Lane Craig, Richard Swinburne, Jordan Howard Sobel, and Graham Oppy (to give an incomplete list). Ministers will struggle with some of the ancient and medieval metaphysics that is laden throughout the second and third parts of the book, which can make some chapters appear unintelligible to those untutored in the proper philosophical background. Ministers will probably be better off reading Timothy Keller's *Reason for God* or Dean Overman's *A Case for the Existence of God* to find accessible and accurate portrayals of recent work on the existence of God.

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**David T. Lamb.** *God Behaving Badly: Is the God of the Old Testament Angry, Sexist and Racist?* Downers Grove: IVP, 2010. 205 pp. Paperback. ISBN: 978-0-8308-3826-4. \$15.00. Paperback.

*God Behaving Badly* is a fine introduction to the troubling portraits of God in the Old Testament. Dr. David Lamb of Biblical Seminary in Pennsylvania is a helpful guide. And the book is timely, as the God of the Bible has come under attack from a number of different fronts on its apparent lack of concern for modern sensibilities that inform current (western) ideas of religion.

In the modern world, racism, sexism, and abusive violence are rightly deemed unjust and wrong. But because the biblical and especially the Old Testament portrayals of God harbor examples of these ills, the Bible and its God remain the very

things that should be eschewed rather than embraced in our society. This is true especially when they reveal latent or explicit violence, racism, sexism, abuse, or the like. Attempts to bridge the gap in this problematic area have ranged: to deny that the Bible or God displays these features, or to turn the tables on the interrogators and offer a “who are we to judge—is God not God and free to do as he wishes?” approach, amongst other options.

What remains wonderfully refreshing about Dr. Lamb’s volume is that it is neither reactionary nor demeaning to modern conceptions of what God *should* be like. Rather, he attempts to bridge the gap between modern notions of God and Biblical notions of the same by close examination of both the ideology of text itself in its ancient Near Eastern context as well as the ideologies of potential interrogators. What Lamb finds, then, is that oftentimes modern readers with modern sensibilities have read the Bible and its God in a naïve and undeveloped manner. But the Old Testament especially reveals a complex and nuanced divine characterization. The presentation of God that Lamb provides is lucid, reasonable and helpful. This is a book particularly suited to undergraduate students who are working their way through the Old Testament and finding a good amount of difficulty rectifying what they perceive to be the biblical presentation of God and what they learned growing up, oftentimes in church.

Lamb’s analysis proceeds along several fronts. He addresses a number of inter-related topics, all revolving around the centre of a problematic God with a bad reputation in the Old Testament. Chapter 1 explores this point. Chapter 2 then begins tackling the first topic: is God angry or loving? Chapter 3 then addresses the issue of sexism and God whilst Chapter 4 tackles the very important question of racism and the Bible. Chapters 5 and 6 are helpful in that they expose the violence of God and the law of God in the Old Testament, respectively. Chapters 7 and 8 then deal with the thorny questions of divine mutability/immutability and divine transcendence/nearness. At first, these may seem a bit out of step with the remainder of the book, but Lamb successfully reveals how these issues inform a robust theology of divine goodness and love. Lamb then helpfully summarizes his work in an epilogue and provides a series of discussion questions for each chapter of the book, reinforcing the usefulness of the book in the classroom.

Any quibbles with the book are minor, but a one might be pointed out. His mention in Chapter 3 that Adam and Eve were standing next to one another (p.54) is a point that may be accurate, but nonetheless is an interpretation based upon inference rather than unambiguous evidence. His suggestion that the plural forms of the verbs spoken by the serpent then indicates that the man was with the woman may be true, but it may be that the serpent is merely quoting God’s speech to the woman, and the man is not present at all. After all, the serpent uses a 2f.sg. verb when speaking to the woman as well (Gen 3:4). Still this is not a major point and does not detract from the overall argument of the book.

There are a number of strengths in this volume, one of which is the fine accessibility of quite complex topics that require nuance and a critical eye. Lamb is up to the task and is to be commended for the readability of the volume as well as

its nuance. Another strength lay in Lamb's irenic approach, even with those with whom he disagrees. The benefit of his approach here is that it allows the reader to have a fair hearing of opposing viewpoints. He is not out to "strike a point" against someone else but rather to get to the bottom of an issue. One could say that he successfully goes to the heart of an idea rather than the jugular of his interlocutors.

*God Behaving Badly* should be used in consultation with a number of other books in this genre, notably Paul Copan's *Is God a Moral Monster* and C. J. H. Wright's *The God I Don't Understand*. All told, Lamb's work is to be commended and it is one I will use in my classes.

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