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Book Reviews

James K. A. Smith. *Letters to a Young Calvinist: An Invitation to the Reformed Tradition*. Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2010. ix-xv + 134 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-1-58743-294-1. \$14.99. Paperback.

The Reformed tradition is a wild and woolly region with grand vistas and deep valleys. Dark and mysterious woodland dots the landscape as well, where the timid or naïve wanderer can easily get lost. This is why James K. A. Smith's *Letters to a Young Calvinist* is a welcome delight as an introduction to the world of all things Reformed – from its history, to major figures, to theological doctrines, and to even its cardinal virtues. As the title implies, the angle of “Reformed” here is Calvinistic rather than Lutheran. The register for Smith's volume is aimed the average reader, though both clergy and scholars will find insight and help here.

The volume is comprised of a series of fictitious letters in the fashion of C. S. Lewis' *The Screwtape Letters* or more precisely, in the fashion of Christopher Hitchens' *Letters to a Young Contrarian* and George Weigel's *Letters to a Young Catholic*. From these latter two authors, Smith discovered a format to introduce Reformed Calvinism to a broad readership. So Smith writes letters to “Jesse” to unpack the tradition and guide him through its prospects and pitfalls.

An impetus for the book came in part as a response to the upsurge in interest in Calvinism proper in a variety of rather unlikely places: amongst non-denominational churches in inner-city and the rural countryside, Anabaptist traditions, as well as institutions like the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. As Smith rightly notes, the kind of adoption of Reformed tradition in these places tends to move in the direction of Scottish Calvinism and maintains an emphasis upon soteriology (TULIP). The Continental Dutch Reformed stream of Calvinism is less dominant. So major influencers become the Old Princeton School (Charles Hodge, B. B. Warfield, and W. G. T. Shedd) as well as luminaries like John Owen and Jonathan Edwards rather than Abraham Kuyper, Herman Dooyeweerd, and Herman Bavinck.

Smith sees this general rise in interest as both a kind of blessing and a curse. He notes that the Scottish vein of Calvinism was a source both rich and deep

for his own theological pilgrimage (pp. xi, 12) but he grew to embrace the Dutch Reformed stream for its comprehensive scope and linking back to the grand narrative of the Bible, from creation to new creation (pp. 97–111; 117–24). And yet he also recognizes a danger inherent in this newfound knowledge: theological pride (p. xi). The second letter “On Religious Pride” (pp. 5–9) is one of the sharpest and accessible critiques of theological hubris available in such a short space and one that should be read widely. So his letters to Jesse have a pastoral concern to open the heritage of Calvinism and guide the young Calvinist through the dangers of pride, elitism, and condescension that sometimes come with the tradition. Further, the letters highlight for Jesse the riches and beauty of the tradition, the cardinal virtues of grace and charity, and the universe of Calvinism beyond the well-worn roads of TULIP.

This reviewer was especially pleased to note the strong emphasis of the Dutch Reformed Calvinist tradition stemming from Abraham Kuyper so prominently set alongside the Scottish Reformed Calvinist tradition. Smith characterizes the Dutch Reformed tradition as setting out the “big-picture” reality of the Christian faith, and as such focuses upon the way that the gospel affects the whole of life. He rightly notes in dialogue with the tradition that we see “The God of Calvinism didn’t just spend some precreation eternity coming up with decrees about the destination of souls. The Triune God has desires for his creation, desires for your flourishing, not just in your ‘religion,’ but in your work and family and play” (p. 100). In this way, the gospel reveals that humanity is saved from sin in the atoning work of Christ but humanity is saved for new creation life, for thriving before God.

One will find as well in these letters a bevy of primary sources as well as helpful secondary sources that will guide the reader into the Reformed tradition. Through the use of “postcards” to Jesse, the reader is taken literally from Geneva, to Princeton, to Amsterdam, with the requisite lights of the tradition from each particular locale connected in the letters. The works of Michael Horton, Anthony Lane, George Marsden, Randall Zachmann, Richard Muller, and John Piper amongst others pepper the letters, giving resource for deeper investigation.

And finally, one notes the masterful way that Smith grounds Calvinism firmly on the insights of Augustine. The notion that Calvinism is based on grace of God all the way down matched with the foundational virtue of charity as a hermeneutical key are well taken and helpfully advanced in the letters. Calvin is deeply indebted to Augustine, and it is nigh impossible to understand Calvinism without acknowledging that debt.

James is to be commended for this volume. He effectively introduces the breadth, nuance, and foundation of Calvinism to a wide readership. The theological, historical, and bibliographical insights in the letters matched with pastoral tone throughout make this a very useful resource, especially for seminaries and colleges as well as small group studies in the church.

Heath Thomas
Wake Forest, North Carolina

William A. Dembski and Michael R. Licona (eds). *Evidence for God: 50 Arguments for Faith from the Bible, History, Philosophy, and Science.* Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2010. 272 pp. Paperpack. ISBN 978-0-8010-7260-4. \$19.99. Paperback.

This book is a collection of fifty 3–4 page essays written by conservative evangelical scholars. Taken together, the essays are meant to provide a sort of cumulative-case apologetic for the Christian faith. The book is divided into four sections—The Question of Philosophy, The Question of Science, The Question of Jesus, and The Question of the Bible—within which scholars address various questions that would-be seekers or skeptics might have. So, for example, in the first section, on “The Question of Philosophy,” topics addressed include cosmological and moral arguments for God, Christian responses to the problems of evil and suffering, a critique of naturalism, and an assessment of the apologetic relevance of near death experiences.

The book has much to recommend it. The second half, which covers the questions of Jesus and of the Bible, contains most of the really excellent material in the book. Gary Habermas, Ben Witherington III, and Craig Blomberg are some of the heavy hitters here, and each of them offers compelling arguments on topics ranging from evidence for the empty tomb and the resurrection appearances (Habermas), the credibility of Jesus’ miracles (Blomberg), the historical reliability of the Gospels and the legitimacy of the New Testament canon (Blomberg), and whether or not Paul is the “inventor” of Christianity (Witherington). These articles and several others in the latter half of the book are exemplary models of apologetic writing; they are clear, informative, even-handed, relevant, and convincing.

I am happy to have the book on my shelf, and I am sure that in the future I will refer questioning students to particular articles within the book. “Is the Bible today what was originally written?” (Köstenberger); “What should we think about the Coptic Gospel of Thomas?” (Blomberg); “Did Jesus really exist?”—each of these titles restates word-for-word questions that Christians will be asked by seekers and skeptics alike. And each of these articles provides compelling coverage of the issues.

The weakness of the book lies in its editing. Subtitles like “50 Arguments for Faith from the Bible, History, Philosophy, and Science” may enhance book marketing but they also indicate an artificial and forced approach to the topic. The careful reader of this book will be left wishing that some number significantly less than 50 had been selected. Especially in the area of apologetics, where restraint is an essential virtue, it is unfortunate that the editors (or whomever) felt the need to pack in fifty arguments.

Several of the arguments are simply out of place. Take, for example, the following articles: Philip Johnson’s “Darwin’s Battleship,” William Dembski’s “The Vise Strategy,” and Daniel Wallace’s “Inerrancy and the Text of the New Testament.” Each of these articles reads like a sort of progress report to insiders within a particular movement. It is as though the reader has stumbled upon a bit of in-house

strategizing at the Discovery Institute or the Evangelical Theological Society. Daniel Wallace, for example, introduces the “problem” he is discussing as follows: “The fundamental doctrinal commitment of the Evangelical Theological Society—the doctrine on which this society was founded in 1949—is as follows.” To which most readers of this book (unless I am just misunderstanding the intended reading audience) will reply, at best, “Who cares?” These articles should have been omitted.

Other articles should have been omitted because they are unconvincing or uninteresting. A pair of articles by Jay Richards and Guillermo Gonzalez exhibits the ID movement at its most overreaching. Another pair of articles by Michael Licona, both of which address the question of religious pluralism, inaccurately proceed as though exclusivism and pluralism are the only options with respect to the salvation of those who belong to other faiths.

My worry about the book overall is that the benefits to the skeptical reader that are available in the many excellent articles especially in the second half of the book will be offset by the unconvincing, irrelevant, or unnecessarily in-house material in several other articles. Especially in the midst of the wave of “new atheism,” apologetics is urgent. But compelling, attractive, and persuasive defenses of Christian faith have as much to do with what is unsaid as with what is said. I hope that this book has not said too much, for there is much within it that is worth hearing.

Kent Dunnington
Greenville, Illinois

Richard Bauckham. *The Jewish World around the New Testament.* Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010. 560 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-0-8010-3903-4. \$59.99. Paperback.

This volume contains twenty-four essays on various topics related to the Jewish world surrounding the New Testament. It was originally published in 2008 in Germany by Mohr-Siebeck and is now available in this less expensive paperback edition (though still a bit pricy at \$59.99). The essays are put in their original order of publication (except for chapter 3); appendices are added to chapters 2 and 20. Essay topics include “The Martyrdom of Enoch and Elijah: Jewish or Christian?,” “Enoch and Elijah in the Coptic Apocalypse of Elijah,” “The Rise of Apocalyptic,” “The Delay of the Parousia,” “A Note on a Problem in the Greek Version of 1 Enoch 1.9,” “The Son of Man: ‘A Man in my Position’ or ‘Someone?’,” “The Apocalypses in the New Pseudepigrapha,” “Pseudo-Apostolic Letters,” “Kainam the Son of Arpachshad in Luke’s Genealogy,” “The List of the Tribes of Israel in Revelation 7,” “The Parting of the Ways: What Happened and Why,” “The Messianic Interpretation of Isaiah 10:34,” “The Relevance of Extra-Canonical Jewish Texts to New Testament Study,” “Josephus’ Account of the Temple in Contra Apionem 2.102–109,” “Life, Death, and the Afterlife in Second Temple Judaism,” “What if Paul had Travelled East rather than West?,” “Covenant, Law and Salvation in the Jewish Apocalypses,” “The Restoration of Israel in Luke-Acts,” “Paul and Other

Jews with Latin Names in the New Testament,” “The Horarium of Adam and the Chronology of the Passion,” “The Spirit of God in us Loathes Envy (James 4:5),” “Tobit as a Parable for the Exiles of Northern Israel,” and “The Continuing Quest for the Provenance of Old Testament Pseudepigrapha.”

The above list indicates the considerable scope of these essays and makes clear that some topics are of broader relevance than others. The author notes in the preface that the essays were written over a period of thirty years and acknowledges that the topics are rather diverse but notes that all the essays share a “basic perspective on the historical place of the New Testament writings within late Second Temple Judaism.” Indeed, Bauckham insists that “The NT student and scholar must use the Jewish literature in the first place to understand Judaism. Only someone who understands early Judaism for its own sake will be able to use Jewish texts appropriately and accurately in the interpretation of the NT” (p. 1). The various essays in this book serve as case studies demonstrating the validity of Bauckham’s thesis, even though their relevance to the study of the New Testament varies. The quality of the contributions, as one has come to expect from this scholar, is consistently high and even stellar. Clearly, Bauckham has established himself as one of the leading New Testament scholars of our day, and this collection further showcases the enormous scope of Bauckham’s scholarship.

While few will read this volume cover to cover, students of the New Testament are certainly advised to consult a given essay in this volume if it impinges on their research interest. I will definitely recommend essay #14 on the relevance of extra-canonical Jewish texts to New Testament study to my students, as well as a number of other broader essays (such as those on the rise of apocalyptic, the delay of the parousia, and on life, death, and the afterlife in Second Temple Judaism). That said, given the price of the volume, I cannot necessarily recommend the purchase of this volume to students on a limited book-buying budget. In most cases, there will be only be one or two essays on one’s immediate topic of interest, and it will be more economical to use a library copy to do one’s research rather than to spend \$60 on buying a book with as many diverse essays as this one.

Andreas J. Köstenberger
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Mark Senter III. *When God Shows Up: A History of Protestant Youth Ministry in America.* Baker Academic Youth, Family and Culture Series. 3. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010. xviii + 313 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-0-8010-3590-6. \$26.99. Paperback.

What is not to like about a youth ministry book that combines organization based on jazz and movie titles as chapter headings? At first glance, a reader might surmise that Mark Senter has written another pop culture youth ministry book of which there are legion. Those who know Dr. Senter would expect otherwise and they are not disappointed. Growing from his doctoral dissertation at Loyola University

and *The Coming Revolution in Youth Ministry* (the book that emerged from his early research), *When God Shows Up* is a near exhaustive description of the history of youth ministry as it relates to the changing culture.

Senter's thesis is stated in the preface. He states: "This history of Protestant youth ministry in America is the story of a search for Christian spirituality in young people. . . . Prayer served as a central discipline and faith communities provided support and accountability. The Bible provided a portal for youth to establish and maintain a personal relationship with God" (p. xi). In further introductory comments, Senter suggests that "Approaches varied [. . .] Some used their minds to engage the God of Scripture. Others experienced God emotionally through their hearts. Still other young people found God as they served others" (p. ix). Dr. Senter understands youth, youth ministry, and youth ministers and his careful description of the historical cycles of youth ministry is an important contribution to the academic conversation in youth ministry, an emerging aspect of practical theology.

The book is divided into five parts which are cleverly titled corresponding to the various eras of jazz music in American history. However, the flow of the text does not necessarily break down into linear "eras" as Senter moves back and forth through American history as he traces the development of youth ministry. Part 1 describes the context of youth ministry development with clarification of the definitions of youth, adolescent, and spirituality. To understand youth ministry in the 21st century is to understand that until the latter half 20th century, the concept of "youth" varied according to the life expectancy of the culture and the employment and marital status of individuals.

Senter takes an interesting side trip into the cyclical nature of youth ministry, comparing to the cycles in economics and industry. It was somewhat surprising not to see reference to the work of Neil Howe and Bill Strauss who have written extensively about the generational cycles in American history as the discussion had a similar feel to their first book, *Generations*. Parts 2 through five are based upon the assumption of the cyclical pattern. Specifically, the rise and fall of church and parachurch ministries have followed patterns of robust growth, plateau, and decline.

The dramatic illustration of cycles of youth ministry was in Christian Endeavor, the initial growth of which Senter asserted "shaped modern youth ministry" (p. 167). The international membership of Christian Endeavor at the beginning of the 20th century was nearly four million in sixty-seven thousand society units in eighty denominations and fifty countries. By the middle of the century, Christian Endeavor had become more of an institution than a movement (p. 167). Dr. Senter believes Christian Endeavor had the strategy and personnel which were imitated by other successful church and parachurch ministries.

Part 4 in this section looks more closely at the teenagers themselves and how the subculture of youth has reoriented away from following adult leadership in favor of peer to peer ministry. Spanning the decades from the thirties through the sixties, the author suggested that both church parachurch "discovered teenagers" resulting in denominational youth emphasis as well as the rise of the next

generation of Christian Endeavor, namely Youth for Christ, Young Life, and Campus Crusade for Christ. Surprisingly little was said about the generational demographics – one wonders about the impact of the sheer number of teenagers that came of age in the sixties and seventies.

The last section of the book was perhaps the most compelling. Given an aging population of youth ministers, and writing as a seminary professor for a seminary journal, Senter's statement that "No significant innovation in Protestant youth ministry has arisen out of seminaries or colleges" was as chilling as it is accurate. The rapid increase of formal training coupled with a more professional environment for youth ministers would seem to contribute something in the way of creativity. However, Dr. Senter is on target – the "new wine" of youth ministry usually comes from the grass roots. It is left to colleges and seminaries to create ways to add the theological and organizational constructs to the energy and passion of youth and lay youth workers.

Senter's honesty as to the weaknesses of Protestant youth ministry as described in his book was refreshing. We are still behind the culture in terms of diversity and ability to translate American youth ministry to ethnic or international settings. He is justifiably concerned with the "disconnect" between the current generation and organized faith communities. His concluding tone is optimistic while admitting the serious challenges that lie ahead concerning reconnecting youth with adults and specifically their parents who need also to be challenged to mature in faith so that they in turn can disciple their children.

R. Allen Jackson
New Orleans, Louisiana

David Naugle. *Reordered Love, Reordered Lives: Learning the Deep Meaning of Happiness*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008. xvi + 216 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-0-8028-2817-0. \$18.00. Paperback.

David Naugle's *Reordered Love, Reordered Lives* integrates themes in theology, philosophy, poetry and broader literature in attempt to answer the questions, "What do you love? How do you love the things you love? What do you expect from the things you love?" It is Naugle's contention that how we answer these questions also answers what we view our purpose and meaning of life to consist in. Why? Because, as Naugle states, as we love in our hearts, "so are we." And so, "Consciously or not, in our brokenness and pain, we attach our loves, affections and desires to people, places or things in ways and with hope that we will finally find the felicity we have been searching for all our lives. Our quest for happiness based on our loves is what our lives [. . .] and this book are all about." The remainder of the book is the development of this thesis – there is an integration between God's creation plan, the place that we attach our affections and love, and whether or not such attachments can make us truly happy.

Largely following the works of Augustine and C. S. Lewis, Naugle presents

an account of happiness ordered by Scripture's delineation of creation, fall, and redemption, or as Naugle explains: the deep meaning of happiness as God intended at creation rooted in rightly ordered loves and lives; happiness lost in the fall of humanity into sin and replaced with devastating ignorance and disordered loves and lives; the deep meaning of happiness already redeemed and one day fully restored in Jesus Christ who graciously reorders our loves and lives through the gospel in this present life (p. xiv).

Accordingly the book reads as a treatise on the brokenness of humanity subsequent to the fall (chapter 1), disordered affections and the destructive impact of living as fallen beings (chapter 2), the multiplicity of ways that investing in this life leads to death (chapter 3), coming to grips with the ultimate futility of living a life without God, and turning to him for restoration and reclaiming our God designed purpose for life (chapter 4).

Naugle rightly notes that Christians underemphasize the tenet that God wants people to be happy, and provides some important definitional matters to clear up what this means. Happiness is not person-relative (do what makes you happy), nor is it grounded in a hedonistic framework. Instead, Naugle argues that happiness is finding and embodying those principles revealed by God in Scripture, and appropriating the good things in life to their rightful place – not as substitutes for a relationship with God, but as divinely given gifts for which we offer appreciation to God. Just as Augustine explains, we are free in Christ to do anything that we want – however, the new person in Christ has a reordered love that changes what the person wants. In this regard *Reordered Love* sounds much like Jesus' teachings in the Sermon on the Mount. Blessing, or happiness, follows from obeying the commands that the loving God issues; and He issues those commands not merely as an act of cosmic authority, but knowing the essences of created being (as their Creator) issues commands for the betterment of those to whom He issues the commands. Obedience is a manifestation of true humanism, Naugle explains, for in obedience we are reclaiming what was lost through disobedience. The move from loving mutable things to loving God who is immutable satisfies our greatest longing.

So what is the deeper meaning of happiness? It is found in reordering love for things with love for God. It is found in properly loving oneself, which means attending to one's own good and never loving self as much as loving God. It properly loves others and God's creation, cultivating a servant's heart and a virtuous mind.

Naugle's volume has much more than this besides. It is a wonderful read for its integration of classic literature such as Augustine's *Confessions*, Lewis' *Four Loves*, Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*, and Karl Barth's *Dogmatics* to pop culture's interaction with this theme as found in the music of U2, Bob Dylan, and Alan Jackson. *Reordered Love, Reordered Lives* is clearly written and spiritually challenging. I highly recommend this volume for anyone interested in cultivating spiritual discipline.

Jeremy Evans
Wake Forest, North Carolina

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

“What kind of person do you have to be to read the Old Testament?” This is the thought-provoking question that Richard S. Briggs, Director of Biblical Studies and Hermeneutics at Cranmer Hall, St. John’s College, Durham University, asks readers in *The Virtuous Reader: Old Testament Narrative and Interpretive Virtue*. Richard Briggs brings to bear his training in philosophy and hermeneutics upon close readings of selected Old Testament narratives in a search for the ethical dispositions an implied reader should bring to the text. Briggs proposes that Old Testament narratives require that implied readers bring the virtues of humility, wisdom, trust, charity, and receptivity to bear upon their reading.

In the opening chapter, Briggs grounds his study in the twin topics of virtue ethics and the implied reader. The chapter begins with a nuanced description of virtue ethics and their value for reading the Old Testament. Briggs traces virtue ethics to Aristotle and Aquinas and then outlines the modern tradition after Alasdair MacIntyre (1984) and “interpretive virtue” after Vanhoozer (1998). Briggs considers objections to using virtue ethics as part of the hermeneutical exercise, asking why an interpreter would jettison tried and true principles, such as historical-critical and theological approaches, in favor of a seldom-practiced virtue ethics approach to hermeneutics. In regard to the implied reader, Briggs follows Wayne C. Booth (1961, 1988) and Seymour Chatman (1978), stating that the “sense in which we are interested in the implied reader of our biblical texts is the sense in which such texts presuppose certain interpretive virtues on the part of the reader they are aimed at” (p. 38) – a more limited perspective than the “implied reader” category typically involves. Finally in this first chapter, Briggs argues that concentrating on a particular text for each interpretive virtue in later chapters of the book is appropriate in that Scripture itself is “best understood as accessed through the particular” (p. 39).

Subsequent chapters each give attention to one particular interpretive virtue, beginning with humility. Focusing on Moses as the most humble man (Num. 12:3), Briggs develops an understanding of “humility before the text” (p. 67), as counter-distinguished from meekness and modesty (pp. 61–62), as one key to faithful handling of Scripture” (p. 67). Briggs’ second virtue is wisdom, seen as paradigmatic in a study of 1 Kings 3, Solomon’s handling of the baby claimed by two women. In his chapter on trust, Briggs turns to 2 Kings 18 and Hezekiah for his study; in this chapter, he posits a hermeneutics of trust as over against the current hermeneutics of suspicion. Briggs proposes that trust is the “framework” within which “evidence and logic can play their part” (p. 132). Briggs’ fourth interpretive virtue is charity, or love. Here, he departs from his practice and focuses on two passages – the book of Ruth and 2 Kings 5 (Naaman) because he sees a two-pronged hermeneutic of love: one which follows the text whatever it demands (Ruth), yet graciously allows for deviation (Naaman). Significantly, Briggs privileges love in the interpretation of

texts to the church (or whomever), even when there may be some shortcomings on exegetical grounds (p. 162). The final interpretive virtue is receptivity. By receptivity, Briggs means “a responsiveness both to the text and the subject matter of the text” (p. 145); his choice of an Old Testament passage is Isaiah 6. In the book’s final chapter, Briggs proposes how his interpretive virtue approach to the implied reader of Old Testament texts can help the moral formation of the real reader in the twenty-first century. Here too he considers the limitations of his proposal (pp. 196–206) and asks what is normative about his proposal (pp. 206–10). “From one virtue to another,” Briggs writes, “in no necessary or particular order, the virtuous reader is led along a path of discipleship” (p. 208, emphasis Briggs’). He closes with a brief glance at Daniel as one who exhibits the virtues.

The Virtuous Reader is a stimulating and valuable book that cuts across the disciplines of philosophy, biblical studies, theology, and literary studies to challenge its readers to be “ideal readers” themselves – both of the Old Testament and the book in hand. The inductive approach, using particular texts, provides helpful grounding in the specifics of interpretive virtues while at the same time framing the discussion and settings its limits. Recommended.

Michael Travers
Wake Forest, North Carolina

Paul Copan and William Lane Craig. *Contending with Christianity’s Critics: Answering New Atheists and Other Objectors.* Nashville: B&H Academic, 2009. v + 293 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-0-8054-4936-5. \$19.99. Paperback.

This book is a collection of essays responding to a number of cutting-edge objections against Christianity. Though a few chapters will be difficult for the non-specialist, overall, they are well-written. One of the book’s unique strengths is the range of topics it covers, which span the fields of philosophy and theology.

The book is divided into three sections. Part one deals with God’s existence. This section has two goals. It defends theism against objections, and it argues against naturalism. As for the first goal, William Lane Craig and Greg Ganssle contribute chapters responding to Richard Dawkins, while Michael Murray responds to how some use psychology to argue against theism. Regarding Dawkins, he thinks that certain features of our universe fit better with naturalism, such as the fact that complex life develops through along process of evolution. While this notion of fittingness needs more clarification than it receives, Ganssle concedes Dawkins’ point, but he argues that there are more features of our universe that fit with theism. These include the fact that our universe is susceptible to rational investigation and contains conscious, free agents. As for the second goal, Victor Reppert and Mark Linville contribute chapters. Linville argues against Darwin’s account of the origin of moral beliefs. Darwin thought moral beliefs originate from instincts people have that are useful for survival. For instance, because of its survival value, people have an instinct to care for their children, and the belief

that people ought to care for their kin originates from this instinct. Linville contends that this view, by itself, cannot explain why people are warranted in taking their moral beliefs to be true, and, at best, it shows that such beliefs are useful for human survival.

Part two of the book deals with the Jesus of history. This section has three goals. First, it defends the reliability of the Gospels as a source of information about Jesus, along with casting doubt on other sources, such as the Gospel of Thomas. Second, it shows that Jesus thought of Himself as both human and divine, along with being the Messiah, and, third, it provides evidence for Christ's resurrection. As for the first goal, Robert Stein, Craig Evans, and Daniel Wallace contribute chapters. Stein, for example, explains a number of tests that can be used to determine whether a text is historically reliable, and he argues that the Gospels meet them. As for the second goal, Ben Witherington III and Michael Wilkins contribute chapters. Regarding Witherington, one part of his case involves looking at Jesus' claim that He was inaugurating an everlasting kingdom where He Himself would reign forever. Witherington argues only someone who thought He was both human and divine would make such a remark. As for the third goal, Gary Habermas contributes a chapter. In contrast to other arguments for the resurrection, Habermas starts with Paul's writings, focusing on 1 Corinthians 15. He contends Paul received the message about the resurrection recorded in this text from Peter and James during his first trip to Jerusalem around 34–36 AD. Given that Jesus' death occurred around 30 AD, and, given that Peter and James were eyewitnesses of the risen Christ, this shows there was reliable evidence circulating regarding Jesus' resurrection shortly after His death.

Part three of the book deals with the coherence of Christian doctrine. The goal in this section is to demonstrate the motivation behind various Christian doctrines and to respond to objections against them. Charles Taliaferro and Elsa Marty reply to objections that arise by reflecting on God's attributes, such as His omnipotence and goodness. Paul Copan contributes two chapters dealing with the Trinity and the incarnation, while Steve Porter, Stewart Goetz, and David Hunt contribute chapters defending the doctrines of penal substitution, Hell, and divine foreknowledge. For example, when it comes to the doctrine of penal substitution, Porter tries to show it is plausible by sketching out the moral framework needed to understand it. He argues punishment is an appropriate divine response to human wrongdoing, and, in some cases, it is good for God to exact that punishment on human wrongdoers. One reason why is that, by doing so, God makes clear that He takes human persons and their wrong acts seriously. Porter then argues that the goodness of such a punishment can still be achieved by God taking that punishment upon Himself in the person of Jesus, since, by doing so, He still shows that He takes human persons and their wrong acts seriously.

Copan and Craig have done an excellent job bringing together a collection of essays from first-rate scholars dealing with a wide range of objections to Christianity. Christian laity interested in apologetics will benefit from this book, as well

as students and scholars looking for a concise yet substantive introduction to the topics it addresses.

Allen Gehring
Bloomington, Indiana

Michael Bergmann, Michael J. Murray, and Michael C. Rea (eds.) *Divine Evil? The Moral Character of the God of Abraham*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010. xi + 337 pp. Hardcover. ISBN 978-0-1995-7673-9. \$125.00. Hardcover.

This book, coedited by three fine philosophers, emerged from the 2009 Notre Dame conference, “My Ways Are Not Your Ways” – a gathering devoted to discussing “the God of Abraham” as portrayed in the Hebrew Scriptures. The allotted space for reviewing this well-crafted project – alas! – requires more a brief overview than in-depth discussion.

According to New Atheists like Richard Dawkins and Christopher Hitchens, this God is “wrathful, severely punitive, and jealous;” indeed, he “commends bigotry, misogyny, and homophobia, condones slavery, and demands the adoption of unjust laws” such as the death penalty for adultery and rebellion against parents (p. 1). This is something of a tease, perhaps raising expectations that the book is dedicated to addressing this broader range of issues. Though some of these secondary topics are raised by the critics (e.g., Louise Antony, Edwin Curley, Evan Fales), they are often not directly addressed by the defenders of the Abrahamic God. The greater proportion of the book is dedicated to the topic of warfare with the Canaanites (and Amalekites), although John Hare adeptly addresses a topic somewhat off the beaten path – “Animal Sacrifices”.

The introduction helpfully summarizes and weighs the options and approaches regarding difficulties in the Hebrew Scriptures. For example, the editors set forth the options regarding *cherem* (“the ban”) – not to mention troubling Hebrew Scriptures in general: (a) deny the texts are divinely inspired; (b) deny God’s goodness; (c) declare the biblical text a mystery on these matters; or (d) “(try to) revise one’s own moral values, intuitions, or whatever in light of the text” (p. 12). Another complementary resource on the topic is Paul Copan, *Is God a Moral Monster? Understanding the Old Testament God* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011).

The book intends to be integrative and encourages further interdisciplinary work of philosophers, biblical scholars, and theologians – a laudable pursuit. The editors mention much-needed work in ancient Near Eastern literary styles and cultures, the relevance of interpretive traditions, and theories about biblical inspiration, divine revelation, and scripture’s/tradition’s authority (pp. 13–19). The introduction is followed by “Chapter Abstracts” – a nice overview of what is to come.

The body of the work is broken down into four parts: (I) Philosophical Perspectives: Problems Presented; (II) Philosophical Perspectives: Solutions Proposed; (III) Theological Perspectives; (IV) Concluding Remarks. The book’s quality and depth are enhanced by the structure of each of the eleven chapters (save the

last). Each chapter presentation is followed by an opponent's comments, to which the original presenter replies to round things out. I have mentioned some of the critics, but the defenders of the Abrahamic God include an impressive line-up of scholars: Nicholas Wolterstorff, Alvin Plantinga, Peter van Inwagen, Richard Swinburne, Mark Murphy, Eleonore Stump, and Christopher Seitz, among others.

Here are some of the highlights. Swinburne follows Augustine's dictum of interpreting particular Old Testament passages as metaphorical when they clearly conflict with purity of life or sound doctrine. By contrast, Plantinga and Murphy tackle the worst-case cherem scenario – that God was justified even if he commanded the slaughter of Canaanites. Plantinga states that God is the Giver (and thus rightful Taker) of life; that death is not the worst thing; that the Canaanites' sin was far more wicked than our dulled modern moral intuitions recognize; and that the Incarnation and Atonement reveal the love of God and that "whatever God did, he must indeed have a good reason, even if we can't see what the reason is" (p. 113). Murphy argues that God did not act wrongly with respect to the inhabitants of Jericho since God did not wrong them; God and humans do not participate in the same "dikaiological order." Murphy states that, analogously, parents do or demand things that are not always understood by their children – things that may appear severe or arbitrary (p. 167).

The book is full of lively engagement, pro and con. I myself found Wolterstorff's chapter ("Reading Joshua" as well as his reply to Gary Anderson) most helpful. He offers important insights based on careful literary analysis – to which left-wing fundamentalists like the New Atheists should pay closer attention; their literalistic, non-nuanced readings of Old Testament's warfare texts often amounts to a crude "the Bible says it; I don't believe it; that settles it" mentality. Wolterstorff persuasively argues that the conquest text of Joshua ("leave alive nothing that breathes" or "no survivor was left") should be understood hyperbolically, not literally: "These texts are highly stylized, metaphorical, hyperbolic" (p. 287). They are not allegory, however, as, say, Origen maintained.

The book is as about as engaging as a scholarly book can get – from the volume's formatting to the range of participants in this debate. Bergmann, Murray, and Rae are to be commended for tackling this difficult issue head-on and for encouraging us to examine further such topics in the context of interdisciplinary dialogue.

Paul Copan
West Palm Beach, Florida

Gene C. Fant Jr. *God as Author: A Biblical Approach to Narrative*. Nashville: Broadman and Holman Academic, 2010. vii-xvi + 201 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-0-8054-4790-3. \$19.99. Paperback.

Gene Fant brings his twin areas of expertise in theology and literature to bear upon the relationship between God's narrative in the Bible and the human narratives we ourselves write. Simultaneously accessible and expert, *God as Author* asks its

readers to consider the idea that, while it is true that the gospel is like narrative, it is also true that narratives are like the gospel – in fact, all human narratives are informed by the gospel. With this reversal – regarding human narratives from the perspective of God’s narrative – Fant explores the meaningful patterns in all narratives and accounts for their significance in our lives.

Chapters 1–3 lay the groundwork for the study of narrative patterns in human life as they are grounded in God’s story. In chapter 1, Fant briefly surveys the fields of literary and biblical criticism. In the contemporary context of a “hermeneutics of suspicion” (p. 26), Fant proposes instead a “hermeneutics of optimism” as a more appropriate understanding of how we read (and write) narratives. Starting from the point that all meaning is grounded in God and his self-revelation to us in the narrative of the Bible, Fant suggests that a hermeneutics of optimism in fact understands the nature of narrative accurately and also reflects the ultimate hope of mankind, which is grace (pp. 26–34). Chapter 2 puts forth the idea that God is an author too, in that it is his story that is told in the life of ancient Israel, in the incarnate Christ, and to some extent even in nature. Seen this way, Fant suggests, human narratives echo God’s story of creation, fall, and redemption. In chapter 3, Fant proposes a “balance-imbalance-balance” parallel to the creation-fall-redemption pattern which he sees in nature and human narrative (p. 82). The “Restoration Principle,” as he calls it, which follows the fall / imbalance part of the narrative can be seen everywhere in nature (and he provides examples) and serves as the paradigm for all human narratives. This narrative pattern ultimately points us back to God’s story as its grounding.

In the next three chapters, Fant demonstrates the pattern of God’s narrative in human narratives. It is there in the biblical narrative, of course. The biblical narrative, Fant suggests, is in fact the meta-narrative that informs all human narratives. Chapter 4 elaborates the pattern of narrative structure, seen more fully as a creation-balance-tied knot / fall-imbalance-untied knot / redemption-balance-tied knot pattern (p. 99). Chapter 5 demonstrates the presence of the pattern in literary narratives ranging from ancient oriental and near eastern narratives to modern European and American narratives. In this chapter, it is easy to see the pattern writ large over all human narratives – and easy as well to agree with Fant’s conclusion that it is truly God’s narrative we are seeing “displaced” in each of these human narratives. God gives human narratives meaning.

Finally, in the last two chapters, Fant teaches his readers how to “read redemptively” and “write redemptively.” In these chapters, Fant suggests how the great biblical narrative pattern – a pattern which we have largely forgotten or suppressed in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries – can help us to read and write reflectively and relationally so as to praise the God who infused the pattern into all human life from the beginning. Reading and writing this way reflects the image of God in us and brings glory to the One whose story grounds all our stories.

In *God as Author*, Gene Fant recovers for us a major theme in creation, scripture, and all human narratives, a theme that has slipped below our attention in the last two centuries. Well-supported with literary and biblical expertise and

complemented by irenic personal narratives that serve to “incarnate” his own thesis, this book is a must-read for anyone who wishes to see the shape of our lives through the lens of God’s narrative.

Michael Travers
Wake Forest, North Carolina

Timothy G. Gombis. *Paul: A Guide for the Perplexed*. New York and London: T. & T. Clark, 2010. x + 156 pp. ISBN 978-0-5670-3394-9. \$24.95. Paperback.

This relatively expensive text (for its size) offers a unique approach to the introductory study of Paul for undergraduates and beginning graduate students. In the opening chapter, an introduction, Gombis summarizes Paul’s place in the canon, rejecting pseudonymity and taking the thirteen letters bearing his name as fundamentally Pauline in nature. He argues that Acts is a generally reliable account of Paul’s life and uses Acts and data from the letters to give a detailed narrative overview of Paul’s life and ministry. With this background and a few presuppositions established, including the commitment to testing orthodoxies of both church and academy critically, Gombis weighs whether Paul’s vocation is best described as “theologian, missionary, or pastor?” in chapter 2. He emphasizes the pastoral nature of Paul’s letters, and concludes that Paul engages in all three of these tasks as a “herald of the Kingdom of God,” writing “in order to foster vibrant and fruitful communities that will embody this reality – communities that constitute the Kingdom of God on earth.”

Chapter 3 provides an excellent discussion of “The Structure of Paul’s Thought,” with a focus on redemptive history. Chapter 4 examines the participatory role of believers, by the Spirit, in this redemptive history. Gombis places heavy emphasis on cruciformity, the imitation of the pattern of life seen in Jesus and in Paul. The present reviewer was pleased to see this theme given a prominent place it does not often receive. The fifth chapter, on Paul and Judaism, covers the New Perspective on Paul (NPP), primarily by laying out competing visions of traditional Protestant interpretation of a set of notable passages before offering NPP interpretation of the same. Gombis takes the latter side wholesale, eschewing the sort of rapprochement one finds in, e.g., Michael Bird, *Introducing Paul* (2008). In keeping with this theological direction and with the participatory emphasis in earlier chapters, Gombis explores the relationship between divine and human roles in salvation in chapter 6. Tackling tricky topics such as judgment and justification, *pistis Christou*, and perseverance, Gombis stresses the priority of the “initiative and provision of God”; but also cites Paul’s expression of confidence in, inter alia, the Philippians’ “constant and consistent faithfulness from the first day until Paul’s writing.”

In chapters 7 and 8 Gombis addresses hot topics arguably more indicative of contemporary concerns than of Paul’s own agenda. With regard to women, Gombis acknowledges that Paul contains both conservative and liberal statements,

the latter via often achieved by taking Gal. 3:28 “as an interpretive lens,” but not exclusively so. Paul describes women as having authority over their husband’s bodies (1 Cor. 7:1–4): according to Gombis (p. 120), “This is to go beyond merely saying that husbands have ‘authority over’ their wives and ought to be considerate of their needs or desires.” Gombis is particularly helpful in noting the distinction between Paul’s cultural setting and Paul’s approach. His less-than-forceful conclusions from these observations are debatable, namely, his “trajectory” approach (shades of Webb) and his claim that Paul puts the brakes on egalitarian implications so as to avoid doing “more harm than good” and that we are now freer to be egalitarian.

In chapter 8 Gombis lays out the pietistic Paul (esp. Romans 13) and a vision of one type of political Paul, whose rhetoric may well be “anti-imperial,” not least given Jesus’ decidedly political titles. This Paul “speaks of the church as at least an alternative political reality; distinct from Judaism and its social and political values, and separate from Roman social and political values” (p. 144).

In all of these chapters, Gombis focuses squarely on primary texts rather than on scholars and secondary literature, with the exception of one page dedicated to introducing NPP scholars and their contributions, and a few references to Michael Gorman on “cruciformity”. Even those who disagree with Gombis on authorship or NPP might find in this text a short, readable entry to views that are certain to grab students’ attention. I cannot think of another text that digs so deeply into its topic while avoiding footnotes almost entirely. It is easy to reckon that this could be a useful trait for classroom use, capable of driving students to texts rather than secondary literature.

Of course, in the classroom, more engagement – with those supportive or critical of Gombis’s views – could be provided via lecture, or the assignment of dictionary articles, for example, not least since Gombis will leave many evangelical readers perplexed. In a book this short (141 pages of text on small pages) one hesitates to note omissions, but the failure to address the cross in terms of penal substitutionary atonement is noteworthy.

Gombis writes clearly and neatly; the book reads very well. I recommend the use of this text both by those who agree with Gombis and by those needing to (say) present an NPP approach or Paul’s take on contemporary debates (women in society and ministry); but only if an American publisher steps up to cut the price!

Jason Hood
Memphis, Tennessee

Christopher R. Seitz. *The Goodly Fellowship of the Prophets: The Achievement of Association in Canon Formation.* Acadia Studies in Bible and Theology. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009. 136 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-0-8010-3883-9. \$19.99. Paperback.

There is considerable debate over the way in which the biblical canon developed. On the one hand are those who view the Old Testament as stable and closed before

the appearance of Jesus, even as early as the fourth century. On the other hand are those who view the writings of the Old Testament as part of a larger collection of religious literature and see the Old Testament as becoming a stable, closed canon much later, usually as the result of institutional decisions. In many ways, Seitz is attempting to mediate the positions at both extremes. However, he does so without taking the middle ground, but by breaking new ground through reshaping two traditional paradigms and exploring their implications. The first paradigm models how the canon has been formed; the second, how the canon is authoritative.

Seitz begins by describing a traditional paradigm for canon formation: the process occurs in distinct stages. Often, the paradigm assumes that each stage has a bit less authority than the one that precedes it. There may be three stages (reflected in the threefold Hebrew arrangement of Law, then Prophets, then Writings) or only two (Law and then prophets, later divided into prophets, history, and wisdom/poetry). Proponents argue that the arrangement and number of books included in the Greek Septuagint supports this paradigm since the Septuagint is fourfold (Law, history, poetry/wisdom, prophets) with a number of apocryphal works. They conclude that the Old Testament canon is neither stable (since it exists in at least two variant forms, threefold and fourfold) nor closed (since there are apocryphal works included alongside the Old Testament).

In response, Seitz offers two observations. First, Seitz looks to the Prophets in order to show that this division of the canon did not develop piecemeal, but that the books themselves developed in a mutually interdependent manner. He derives his primary support from the Book of the Twelve wherein the integrity of each individual prophet is maintained while there is a significant effort to associate the prophets with one another through “literary cross-references” (p. 75) and other literary means (p. 88). Building on observations from the Twelve, Seitz argues for the same type of intentional association taking place within the canonical division of the Prophets (p. 91).

Second, Seitz points out the fixed designation “Law and Prophets.” The designation is known from the New Testament and other Jewish sources of the same general time period. Seitz argues that if the Septuagint preserved a fourfold canon at that time, then it is difficult to conceive how the Law and Prophets remained a fixed convention since the fourfold arrangement shows no sign of a twofold canonical witness (p. 64). Furthermore, the fourfold arrangement of the Septuagint is not preserved in any of its earliest witnesses. In fact, there appears to be no fixed arrangement in the Greek tradition, but the fixed expression of Law and Prophets is still operative. Seitz attributes this fact to the nature of the Law and Prophets. Just as Seitz argues for a mutually interdependent development of the Prophets, he accepts Chapman’s work arguing in the same direction for the development of the Law and Prophets. This development points to the Law and Prophets as a grammar “that is, this literary conjunction is the means (rules and syntax) by which the language of Israel’s scriptures makes its voice most fundamentally heard” (p. 33). Therefore, the presence of a rival arrangement, which Seitz argues never really existed, does not diminish the fundamental role for the Law and Prophets.

What remains for Seitz to explain for canon formation is the division of the Writings and their placement in the canon. Seitz argues that in contrast to the “Law or the Prophets, the Writings do not exhibit a concern to order the individual works in any theologically significant way” (p. 105). Instead, the Writings are connected to the Law and Prophets. This connection helps explain why these works migrate throughout the Old Testament. This migration is not intended to disrupt the fundamental character of the Law and Prophets, but it is an attempt “to make explicit by literary rearrangement a form of association [with the Law and Prophets] that the Writings were content to accomplish more implicitly and generally” (p. 111).

Seitz also addresses a model of canonical authority that “makes closure the most fundamental aspect of canonical authority” (pp. 32–33). In this model, canonization confers authority to the Scriptures at the end of a process. Seitz has reversed the model by arguing that the intrinsic scriptural authority drives the process of canonization. This authority is most clearly evident in the attempts of association between the Law and Prophets and among the Prophets themselves. Therefore, one can speak of canonical authority even if the canon is not closed because of the unique role that the Law and Prophets play as the primary grammar of the Old Testament.

Seitz’s book has opened up new avenues for discussing canon formation and authority. Certain features of Seitz’s model for canon formation are helpful and insightful. The work that he does to demonstrate that biblical authors were aware of other biblical material should inform any model of canon formation and authority. At the same time, much of his model relies heavily upon current Old Testament historical-critical results (p. 25) and will require caution when evaluating his proposal. On the other hand, Seitz’s discussion regarding canon authority is entirely on the right track. The authority of the Old Testament is not determined by religious institutions (Christian or Jewish), but rests in the works themselves. It seems unlikely that Seitz’s work will resolve the debate over the canon, but it does provide directions for moving forward.

Joshua E. Williams
Fort Worth, Texas

Lynn H. Cohick. *Women in the World of the Earliest Christians: Illuminating Ancient Ways of Life.* Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009. 350 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-0-8010-3172-4. \$26.99. Paperback.

Lynn Cohick, associate professor of New Testament at Wheaton College, has produced a treatment of the lives of women in the ancient world that is comprehensive in its scope, measured in its assessments, well-organized, and highly readable. While written with an awareness of contemporary gender debates, Cohick steers clear of these and aims at bringing to light the complexity of women’s lived experiences in the Jewish and Greco-Roman worlds in which the New Testament

drama takes place. Her goal is “to tell the story of the average woman and her life passages, her opportunities and limits, the sorrows and joys that accompany her throughout her journey” (p. 23).

Methodologically, Cohick assesses a variety of evidence, including “epigraphic, inscriptional, and archaeological remains” (p. 20), and takes an appropriately critical posture toward the literary evidence. She does this in order to account for the rhetorical aims of the composers of the varieties of literature she encounters. As an example, Cohick cites Seneca’s discussion of divorce in which he displays a dismissive view of women that would shock modern readers. He inveighs against women, taking it for granted that they are naturally prone to wantonness and immorality (p. 22). The historical fact of it is that most surviving literature from the ancient world was written by men, and very often they discuss women in order to score other polemical points. Gaining a clear vision of the lives of women necessitates a critical posture, and Cohick employs social science models, along with literary and feminist critical tools in giving her historical account.

Cohick also sets gender properly in terms of other social dynamics in the ancient world. She claims that gender is often trumped by other factors, such as social status (p. 22). Further, while modern readers regard freedom of choice and having a number of options as being keys to personal value and fulfillment, this was not the case in the ancient world. Honor was the social currency and communal relationships were far more important than individual freedoms (p. 25).

With these in mind, Cohick then investigates the lives of women in such a wide variety of settings and roles throughout the classical period that the term “exhaustive” comes to mind. It might be better, however, to characterize this work as a comprehensive resource for understanding the lives of women in the time period in which the New Testament drama takes place – something more like a very lively and well-written encyclopedia on this topic.

In terms of analysis of her work, Cohick’s grasp of the ancient world and its social and political dynamics is excellent. Her discussion of the supposed “new woman” and Augustus’ conservative regulations to shore up morality in Rome is an example of how she rightly assesses the character of public rhetoric and the political dynamics faced by Augustus after years of unrest in the empire (pp. 71–78). Many modern appeals to these efforts at “moral reform” and the problems they aimed to solve, do not rightly comprehend the broader political and social challenges faced by Augustus.

Cohick’s discussions of New Testament texts are thorough and measured. She warns against easy characterizations of the Samaritan woman in John 4 (pp. 122–28), and notes the difficulties in making sense of Paul’s comments in 1 Timothy 2 about women being saved through childbirth (pp. 138–40).

In sum, this is an excellent resource for the study of the New Testament as it sheds light on the varieties of relationships in the ancient world. It is also a model of careful and comprehensive scholarship. Cohick’s treatment of the evidence from the ancient world is subtle and judicious, and her discussions of biblical texts are measured. Though she avoids direct engagement in contemporary discussions

of gender, she provides a model for the appropriation of ancient evidence for understanding biblical texts that those who participate in contemporary debates will do well to emulate.

Timothy Gombis
Cedarville, Ohio

Todd L. Miles. *A God of Many Understandings? The Gospel and a Theology of Religions.* Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010. xiii + 397. Paperback. ISBN 978-0-8054-4822-1. \$29.99. Paperback.

In this volume Todd L. Miles, Assistant Professor of Theology and Hermeneutics at Western Seminary, has provided a valuable resource for preachers, teachers and students. This resource serves at least two important purposes. The first is to document just how pervasive and prominent various forms of syncretism and pluralism are in contemporary religious discourse. Miles painstakingly identifies and addresses scholars such as Charles Pinnock, Amos Yong, John Hick and many others, some writing from within Christianity and others from without, whose arguments deny the necessity of faith in Jesus Christ for salvation. The second service this book provides is to gather and present passages from throughout the Bible alongside these arguments, allowing readers to evaluate them in light of the full body of scriptural evidence.

Miles takes his title from Bishop Eugene Robinson's prayer at the 2009 presidential inauguration, which began with an appeal to a "god of our many understandings" (p. 1). Robinson, a bishop of the Episcopal Church, recognized by many—including, evidently, our President—as an important contemporary Christian leader, is quoted as having been "horrified" at previous inaugural prayers for being explicitly and unashamedly Christian. Rightly, Miles takes this as indicating the appropriateness of addressing in a clear and sustained manner the logic of the various pluralisms, inclusivisms, and universalisms we encounter in the academy and the culture, as well as within Christianity today. Because so often the specific iterations of these positions are easy to recognize as logically incoherent, it is tempting to dismiss them as not warranting serious attention. In fact, however, Miles shows that, given "the enormous cultural pressure, masquerading as a commitment to the 'value' of tolerance, to reject any claim that assumes superiority to alternatives," it would be negligent to let them persist without comment.

Miles' arguments take two general forms; he is strongest when he is pointing out the logical incoherence of various pluralist positions. He writes, for example, "Simply, if the claims of Jesus are true as revealed in the Bible, the contrary claims of all other religious figures are false" (p. 148). Similarly, Miles notes the incoherence of contentions that it is impossible to make truth claims about God (p. 172). Of course, such a statement is itself a truth claim about God's nature. These and other such observations are certainly right but not necessarily original; the value Miles provides in this chapter is to highlight some of these contrary claims of

other religions as well as to demonstrate the incoherence of pluralism and the ways pluralists necessarily “deny the very essence of Christianity (and that of every other religion)” (pp. 165–66) in the course of making their arguments.

Elsewhere, Miles’ arguments center on questions of interpretation of Scripture. Here too Miles tends to make strong cases for his positions and continues to provide value by gathering together relevant passages, but readers who do not share his view of inerrancy may not always find him convincing or terribly charitable. In his argument against Christian Universalism, for example, he contends that the root of the problem is that Christians who hold to the view that all will ultimately be saved through Christ’s death and resurrection mistakenly allow their “theological presuppositions” to “distort their exegesis of scripture” (p. 102). While Miles may be right to contend that not all will be saved – and he certainly presents his case with ample quotations from scripture – one might think that those who allow their theological presuppositions to influence their scriptural exegesis are merely following Paul’s lead in doing so. In fact, we might say that this is exactly what he was doing when he reinterpreted the Hebrew Scriptures in light of his experience of the risen Lord. In other places Miles seems to overstate his conclusions, such as when he contends that there is “no reason to understand the reconciliation of all things as a universal salvation for all humans” (p. 108). He may be right that it does not mean this, but it is too strong to say that there is “no reason” to think that this is what “reconciliation of all things” means.

However, even when one may find his conclusions less than convincing, Miles’ book remains a valuable resource and is to be recommended for those beginning to do research in the areas he addresses. Furthermore, his final chapter, in which he considers the implications of his conclusions and whether, for example, “inter-religious social cooperation” (pp. 344–49) is legitimate, provides some interesting food for thought.

James R. L. Noland
Richmond, Virginia

Paul Helm, Bruce A. Ware, Roger E. Olson, and John Sanders. *Perspectives on the Doctrine of God: Four Views*. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2008. ix + 273 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-0-8054-3060-8. \$24.99. Paperback.

Each contributor argues for one view along a spectrum of positions on the doctrine of God in evangelical theology today followed by responses from the others. The book commends itself for thoroughly but succinctly summarizing recent and novel views available elsewhere only in book-length treatments. Although written by theologians the book is accessible to non-specialists and presents each position’s pros and cons.

Helm advances the classical Calvinist view as the “mainstream” view, using tradition and scripture to argue for God’s absolute independence and exhaustive providence. Appealing to the classical texts for his position, he argues for

anthropomorphisms in texts *prima facie* differing from classical theism. Surveying figures in the tradition, Helm nicely demonstrates the role of non-infallible tradition and caveats about using philosophy in classical Protestant theology. Helm's attention to detail in showing differences among classical theists and indicating points even informed readers may be unaware is a highlight. Helm preemptively criticizes the other views and argues philosophical systems are secondary to scripture. Arguing that neither libertarian nor compatibilist freedom is taught in scripture, he urges mystery in the relationship between divine action and free-will analogous to other mysteries like the Trinity. Criticisms from other contributors include too facile an identification of his view with the mainstream doctrine of God while ignoring free-will theist variants in historical theology, claiming his view is the Bible's teaching, and that his critique of free-will theism focuses on middle knowledge.

Ware presents a "modified Calvinistic" view to address concerns of free-will theists. Using primarily scripture he argues for a robust classical theism with modifications of God's independence and eternity, with "real" relations to space and time. He combines middle knowledge and compatibilism to retain meticulous divine sovereignty in an attempt to obviate the "Achilles heel" of Calvinism, God's ultimate responsibility for evil. Here Ware exemplifies the *semper reformandum* aspect of the Reformed tradition in a charitable way. The originality and creativity of Ware's contribution, which he argues is more scriptural than traditional Calvinism, merit careful attention. Other contributors question the incompatibility of his modifications of divine eternity and immutability with classical theism, and whether his proposal addresses the concern attracting some free-will theists to middle knowledge: independent creaturely activity that really affects God. His reconstruction is also liable to criticisms of compatibilism, including the claim that libertarian free-will is necessary for human responsibility.

Olson presents the case for classical free-will theism, focusing on Arminianism, including its core doctrine of simple foreknowledge. He summarizes the historical, theological, and biblical support for this view. Far from being the products of modern humanism, free-will theism and libertarian free-will are venerable, ubiquitous, and essential parts of Christianity back to its earliest responses to pagan fatalism. Libertarian free-will is necessary for genuine human freedom and to extricate God from responsibility for evil, which in theological determinism makes God "virtually indistinguishable from the devil." Strengths include the debunking of common myths about free-will theism. Arminianism is a major "Reformed" tradition in its own right, with strong doctrines of sin and grace. Libertarian free-will is not an "idol" of human pride but is rooted in God's nature and the *imago Dei* in humans. Olson also admits weaknesses in his position but contends it has fewer liabilities than theistic determinism and open theism. Other contributors see shortcomings in the unsatisfactory account of the biblical data on meticulous divine sovereignty and unconditional predestination, contingency in God's knowledge, the possible logical incompatibility of libertarian free-will and exhaustive divine foreknowledge, and that simple foreknowledge seems like a half-way house on the way to

free-will theism. Exhaustive foreknowledge could still make God responsible for the moral evil he foreknows, and does not account for God's genuine responses to free creatures.

Sanders expounds the case for open theism and responds to objections in a thorough but compendious summary of what is presented at length elsewhere. Highlights include how he grounds his position in the doctrine of the Trinity, evinces the biblical support, and employs modern biblical scholarship. Noting shared concerns, Sanders shows why open theists argue traditional free-will theism like classical Arminianism is inconsistent. Exhaustive divine foreknowledge is logically incompatible with libertarian free-will, and only open theism exculpates God from responsibility for evil. With personal examples he urges open theism resonates more with practical piety in the importance of human activity, the efficacy of prayer, and consolation in suffering. Other contributors find a dissatisfactory account of biblical data on divine sovereignty and exhaustive divine foreknowledge, reliance on the presentist B-theory of time implausible in light of contemporary physics, and unacceptable modifications to classical theism.

In summary, this book does a superb job of presenting four major views on the doctrine of God available in evangelical theology today. The reader will find a concise summary of the pros and cons for each position and summaries of newer views.

Marc Pugliese
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Joel N. Lohr. *Chosen and Unchosen: Conceptions of Election in the Pentateuch and Jewish-Christian Interpretation*. Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2009. xviii + 254 pp. Hardcover. ISBN 978-1-5750-6171-9. \$39.50. Hardcover.

Joel N. Lohr strikes a raw nerve in examining the topic of election within the Old Testament. A revision of his PhD under Walter Moberly (p. xiv), he approaches the subject from a canonical view of the Scripture, only occasionally dealing with historical-critical issues. Part of the uniqueness of his approach is in his comparison of both Christian and Jewish treatments of election. His stated aim is to demonstrate, "that the unchosen are important to the overall worldview of Scripture and, although election entails exclusion, and God's love for the one people Israel entails that it is a love in contrast to others, it does not follow that the unchosen fall outside of the economy of God's purposes, his workings, or his ways. The unchosen often face important tests of their own and have a responsibility to God, and the chosen, however much such an idea defies modern-day notions of fairness" (p. xii).

The first chapter consists of an overview of Christian interpretations found in theological dictionaries, monographs (H. Rowley, Seock-Tae Sohn), and theologies (W. Eichrodt, D. Pruess, W. Breuggemann, and C. H. Scobie). He finds in these "Christian" approaches an unwarranted prediction to understand Israel's election as "always in the interest of the entire world" without any exegetical proof of such. Lohr concludes that most Christian interpreters have "skewed" the idea

of election in the OT by reading it with a view to mission. Lohr says, “such a view leads swiftly to a belief that ‘God’s election of Israel has thus served its purpose – bringing salvation to the whole world – and is of little value for today apart from this formative role” (p. 1). Secondly, the outsider has been reduced to an “object of mission.” It is these two maladies which Lohr attempts to remedy.

The second chapter contrasts these views with the approaches of Jewish authors Joel S. Kaminsky, David Novak, Michael Wyschogrod, and Jon D. Levinson. For example, Kaminsky contends, “election is not about salvation and damnation [. . .] rather, election reveals God’s mysterious love and the fact that he elects to a task, purpose, or test” (p. 43). Kaminsky helpfully provides a three-tiered system of elect, non-elect, and anti-elect, to distinguish between those who are merely out of the covenant, and those actively working against it. Lohr notes that the Jewish authors surveyed tended to emphasize the chosenness of Israel as an “abiding principle,” and not as a step on the way toward inclusivity. They also generally seem to preference the Pentateuch over the prophets (contra the Christian commentators) and hold Abram’s blessing as primarily concerning his own welfare rather than that of the nations.

Lohr largely adopts these approaches, and proceeds to put them to the test, examining several cases of “outsiders.” In chapter 3, he looks at Abram and Abimelech (Genesis 20) and in chapter 4 he looks at Pharaoh’s daughter (Exod. 2:1–10). He attempts to shed a positive light on the enigmatic prophet Balaam (Numbers 22–24) in chapter 4 and in chapter 6, he looks at the subject of Israel and the nations in Deut. 4:1–40; 7; and 10:12–22. After his concluding remarks, he adds an appendix on the relationship of the Balaam texts to the book of Numbers, and one on the notion of *cherem* in the ANE. He also includes a helpful index of Scriptural citations.

Lohr makes a considerable contribution to the question of election in comparing Christian and Jewish authors on the subject. His desire not to read Christian mission into a text both provides insight for the subsequent narratives and reveals an Achilles’ heel. Lohr’s approach helpfully explains why an innocent Abimelech requires prayer from a deceitful Abraham (Genesis 20). Likewise, Lohr’s highlighting of the role of the non-elect in distinction with the anti-elect (Kaminsky) draws attention to the import of these oft-overlooked characters. Yet, his approach offers little help in dealing with the Canaanites (anti-elect), whose demise, Lohr contends, is based less on their sinfulness than on the fact that, “they must be removed because Israel is to possess their land; further, their staying will prove to be a snare” (p. 192). Furthermore, by reading the key text in Israel’s election, Gen. 12:1–3, without reference to its canonical placement following the Table of nations (Genesis 10) and Babel (Genesis 11), Lohr seems to miss what God himself is doing in the metanarrative, and significantly alters its purpose. Overall, though, Lohr furthers this interfaith dialogue, highlighting both the nature of election and the essential role of those outside it.

Brian Howell
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James G. Crossley, *The New Testament and Jewish Law: A Guide for the Perplexed*. London: T. & T. Clark, 2010. viii + 134pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-0-5670-3434-2. \$24.95. Paperback

Jewish Law has had a bad press both amongst Christians in general and also amongst New Testament scholars. Often it is used simply as a “dark” backdrop against which to make Christianity look good. Yet not many New Testament scholars invest the time needed to get to grips with the specifics of Jewish Law – to really understand the Law. James Crossley is one of a new generation of New Testament scholars that have immersed themselves in the complexities of Jewish Law and he appreciates better than many the wide diversity and nuances of Torah interpretation amongst Jews during the Second Temple period. This has made him a fascinating mould-breaking interpreter of some New Testament texts, especially in the Synoptic Gospels. It also makes him ideally suited to write a guide such as this.

Crossley himself is neither Jewish nor Christian and takes no view in this book on whether the Law is right or wrong. His goal is simply to help readers better appreciate the Law and better understand New Testament texts by grasping some of the basics regarding what various Jews thought on some Law-related matters. This book does exactly what it says on the box: it serves as a well informed and reliable but basic introduction to Jewish Law and the New Testament. But, just so as to avoid confusion, it does not set out to serve as a guide to the ongoing debate about NT theologies of the Jewish Law.

Chapter 1 sets the scene by briefly sketching the story of Torah and its interpretation. The Torah reached its final form in the Persian period but the law codes could not possibly include enough regulations to cover all the kinds of situations which arise in life. Nor could these codes take into account changing social and historical circumstances. Indeed, the specifics of what God requires of Israel are underdetermined by the commandments (e.g., what precisely must one abstain from on the Sabbath?). Thus, as the books of Ezra and Nehemiah bear witness, interpretation of the Torah was critical right from the start and such interpretation could be considered authoritative. Later on various groups emerged with competing interpretations of Torah (some very strict and other much less so). The destruction of the Temple in 70 AD led to the rise of Rabbinic Judaism (descended from the Pharisees). Ongoing expansion and interpretation of the Law led to the Mishnah, the Tosefta, and the Talmuds which, if used with great care, can shed light on the NT texts. Crossley guides readers clearly and simply through the twisting plot with the main players and themes relevant for readers of the NT.

The following chapters explore specific matters, such as purity laws, that NT readers may find of special relevance. Each chapter sets out the biblical foundations of the matter and then various issues in subsequent Jewish interpretation as well as engaging related NT texts.

Chapter 2 considers the Sabbath. Here we find differing views on whether Gentiles may observe Sabbath and on what constituted “work.” Chapter 3 reflects on purity/impurity with special reference to food and ritual hand washing. A lot of

space is given over to explaining the complex issue of how impurity is transmitted. Whilst this may seem indulgent it actually helps shed light on the dispute between Jesus and the Pharisees in Mark 7:1–23 (an issue that Crossley has written on at greater length elsewhere and in the process has corrected common Christian misunderstandings of the pericope). Chapter 4 discusses three issues that crop up in the Sermon on the Mount – divorce, the *lex talionis*, and oaths and vows. Chapter 5 focuses on Jewish identity, specifically the importance of family, circumcision, and the issue of whether Jews may mix and eat with Gentiles. One point that I appreciated Crossley highlighting is that, contrary to the claims of some scholars, Jews were able to eat with Gentiles so long as they did not compromise their obedience to the commandments by, for instance, eating food sacrificed to idols or consuming blood. This needs to be taken into account when interpreting certain NT texts about the unity of the *ekklesia* and food.

One interesting observation Crossley makes in conclusion is that once we appreciate the range of Jewish opinions it seems that, according to recent scholarly studies, “Jesus’ views on the Law were all paralleled in early Judaism” (p. 116). Jesus need not be seen as a radical who sought to abolish the Law (as Christians have often portrayed him) but rather as a Torah-observant Jew, albeit one who saw himself as offering an authoritative interpretation of that Law.

I do not agree with a few of Crossley’s interpretations of NT texts. For instance, I do not see Acts 10–11 as about abolishing food laws and I maintain that Paul’s apparently radical “rejection” of Torah was related only to Gentile Christ-believers and was tied into an prophetic narrative in which Gentiles would worship with Israel in the last days without having to convert to Judaism – Paul, so I think, believed that Jewish Christ-believers were obligated to observe Torah. But, to be fair, Crossley only deals with such texts in passing and little hangs on them in terms of the overall thrust and value of his book. If I could summarize this book in a few simple words they would be: informed, clear, concise, balanced, relevant, and illuminating. It is by no means a last word – nor is it intended as one – but it is a trustworthy first word. A great guide for the perplexed.

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J. Gordon McConville and Stephen N. Williams. *Joshua. The Two Horizons Old Testament Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010. x-xii + 257 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-0-8028-2702-9. \$20.00. Paperback.

The Two Horizons Old Testament Commentary series is designed to bridge the traditionally disparate fields of biblical studies and dogmatic theology so as to gain a deeper appreciation and embrace of the Old Testament as God’s word to the church in the present day. While a traditional biblical commentary is interested in philology, syntax, and historical issues, newer theological commentaries (Brazos Theological Commentary; Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture;

Concordia Commentary; NIV Application Commentary) do not sleight these interests but contextualize them within the larger framework of constructive theological engagement with the biblical text. Gordon McConville and Stephen Williams' Joshua commentary fits within the newer paradigm.

It is divided into three parts and follows a kind of dialogic interchange between the authors. The first is written by McConville and follows the norm of a traditional commentary with a traditional introduction that addresses author, date, composition, theological themes, and the nature of Joshua as Scripture. This is followed with McConville's close exegesis of the biblical text and is relatively unencumbered with scholarly footnotes. This streamlined approach magnifies the accessibility and readability of the commentary, though to be fair those interested in highly technical exegesis and engagement with a range of scholarly viewpoints should look to other commentaries like Anchor Bible Commentary, New International Commentary on the Old Testament, or the New American Commentary. Nonetheless, McConville's mature scholarship details major scholarly issues and important exegetical detail that impacts a theological appreciation of the book.

The third part of the volume (Theological Horizons of Joshua) follows upon McConville's commentary proper and is co-written in a kind of dialogic style by Williams and McConville. Williams tackles critical theological issues at stake in the book of Joshua itself, including the issue the land, the command to annihilate the Canaanites and the question of divinely-sanctioned genocide, the problem and threat of idolatry, and the reality of the covenant. Additionally, Williams addresses the theology of miracles and mystery in Joshua, a neglected topic that the present reviewer found to be enriching and illuminating. Williams addresses the nature of miracles and their scientific verifiability as well as a deep theology of mystery that pervades Joshua. This reinforces the notion that Scripture draws its readers into a relationship with God that is indeed mysterious yet present.

McConville follows Williams by setting Joshua in the context of biblical theology. In this, he sets the theology of Joshua in against the theology of the larger Old Testament canon and establishes a theological reading that shows a God who faces evil and violence and overcomes the threat of Chaos. In so doing God establishes peace and justice in the world. McConville comes to this reading by following the theological contours of the Old Testament (and no doubt informed by the New Testament as well) and a particular theological understanding of the people of Israel. It may be argued, then, that Joshua and the Israelites winning the battle of Jericho serves as a blueprint in the Bible for Christian life. But McConville diverges from such an interpretation and avers that the real triumph comes not through human achievement but divine grace and transformative power. At the end of the day, in the context of biblical theology, Joshua is not a mere "exemplary tale" but shows that "the life of Israel lies between present reality and the future realization of the kingdom of God. It is part of the story of the long postponement of that kingdom" (p. 192). In the end, God himself will overthrow Chaos in spite of human rebellion against him – even if the rebel is Israel. As such, Joshua presses forward to an eschatological hope.

Williams provides the penultimate reflection to the volume with a response to McConville and a discussion on reading Joshua as Scripture today. This is fertile reflection that draws together philosophical and theological insights and brings them to bear on the nature of history and the factuality of biblical events. Further Williams offers an engaging theological assessment of the God set on display in Joshua. Here Williams tackles in particular the thorny issue of the purported violent deity that accompanies Old Testament “holy war” with the tools of dogmatic theology. This is an important section that should be consulted by those interested in these theological quandaries.

Finally, McConville rounds out the volume by responding to Williams and providing a conclusion to the book as a whole. One notes the disagreement between McConville and Williams on the nature of history that is presented in the Old Testament in general and Joshua in particular. Both views, one could say, are grounded from the text. The disagreement lies in how to understand what is counted as “historical” the purpose of the giving of the writing of Joshua itself. Both writers agree that Joshua is not interested in merely giving the facts of history but diverge on the purpose of Joshua itself and how the historical question should be related to that. It is this divergence that provides much ground for further thinking, and should be read alongside the new volume by Douglas Earl, *Reading Joshua as Christian Scripture* (Eisenbrauns, 2010).

This volume is a welcome addition to Joshua scholarship in particular and to theological interpretation in general. Theological interpretation of biblical texts these days needs less talk, more action. McConville and Williams’ Joshua commentary is an insightful enactment of theological interpretation that should be received warmly and read widely.

Heath Thomas
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Steve Moyise. *Paul and Scripture: Studying the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010. 151 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-0-8010-3924-9. \$21.99. Paperback.

Steve Moyise, professor of New Testament at the University of Birmingham, has produced this very useful study of Paul’s use of the Old Testament. Moyise is highly qualified on this topic as it has been his area of interest and publication for over a decade. He writes as both scholar and teacher as this book, intended mainly for advanced students of Paul, manages to cover the major issues and main lines of interpretation very clearly and in accessible prose.

An introductory chapter provides an overview of Paul’s life, including his early years and conversion, with special attention to the forms of Scripture with which Paul likely was familiar. Moyise helpfully highlights some of the interpretive challenges, including determining when Paul is quoting from the Septuagint or from the Masoretic Text. The canonical progression of the book’s eight subsequent

chapters makes good sense. Moyise first discusses Paul's use of Genesis 1–3, including the creation of Adam and Eve and the subsequent fall. In this chapter, as with the following two chapters, Moyise handles the main lines of Paul's use of Scripture while refraining from drawing strong interpretive conclusions. He leaves this, rather, for the reader's consideration. This is commendable, though his very brief treatment of 2 Tim. 2:11–15 (p. 29), a battleground text in the gender debates among evangelicals, seemed to leave some stones unturned.

In the second and third chapters, Moyise discusses Paul's treatment of Abraham and Moses. He begins each chapter by describing how these figures appear in the Old Testament and then the roles they play in Jewish tradition. This provides the opportunity to draw lines of continuity and discontinuity between Paul and his Jewish tradition.

Paul's use of these two major figures from Israel's Scriptures leads naturally into what had become the singular issue in Pauline studies over the last thirty years—the problem of Paul and the Mosaic Law. In chapter 4, Moyise again provides a succinct yet comprehensive account of the manner in which the debate over what has come to be called “the New Perspective on Paul” relates to how Paul is viewed to be citing Old Testament texts. Paul's seemingly contradictory statements about the Mosaic Law have provoked a range of interpretations throughout the ages, none of which have been lastingly satisfying. Most have made divisions in the Law which neither Paul nor the Scriptures make or they have wrongly denigrated Judaism as a religion of “works-righteousness” (pp. 60–66). Moyise rightly notes that the issue turns on whether or not one discerns a “works-faith” dichotomy at work in Paul, supported by Scriptural texts. Moyise does not, though his treatment of the various positions remains fair and evenhanded.

The following two chapters discuss Paul's use of the prophets. In chapter 5, Moyise describes how the prophetic vision of God's fulfillment of his promises determines Paul's vision for his ministry among the gentiles. The following chapter covers the manner in which Paul's pastoral exhortations draw upon the prophetic vision of God's redeemed humanity. A final chapter contains a discussion of various hermeneutical approaches to the study of Paul's use of the Old Testament. This is followed by three appendices.

The use of the Old Testament by Paul has massive implications for the debates that have dominated Pauline scholarship over the last three decades. Moyise, covering some rough ground while writing with a light touch, provides an eminently helpful guide through this area of interpretation and maps very helpfully the theological implications for the study of Paul more broadly. This volume functions as a starting point for students working in the field of the New Testament writers' use of the Old Testament. It might also be used very well as a textbook for courses in colleges and seminaries that are focused on Paul. Pastors and interested general readers will also find much here from which to benefit.

Timothy Gombis
Cedarville, Ohio

Gregory J. Lockwood. *1 Corinthians*. **Concordia Popular Commentary.** Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2010. xii + 373 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-0-7586-2545-8. \$24.99 Paperback.

Volumes in the Concordia Popular Commentary series are Bible book commentaries that are condensed from the more technical and academic Concordia Commentary series. The Popular Commentaries retain the full text of the original translation and commentary of their corresponding parent volume, but exclude the technical notes, minimize and transliterate any original language work, and explain all academic terminology. According to the preface, “this commentary series brings faithful Christian Bible scholarship to the people” (p. vii). The “popular” edition of *1 Corinthians* by the Reverend Dr. Gregory J. Lockwood lives up to that purpose. This is an accurate distillation of scholarship on *1 Corinthians* that is “faithful” (and decidedly Lutheran) in its approach and written for an educated but non-specialized audience.

The layout of *1 Corinthians* follows the standard layout of most popular commentaries. The author begins with an abbreviated introduction to the background material related to the city of Corinth and to Paul’s letters to the churches in that city. Following that introduction, Lockwood then begins the commentary proper. The text is divided into manageable sections. Each section begins with a fresh translation of the text. The translation is then followed by an essential discussion of the text, focusing on Paul’s meaning and how that meaning would have been understood by the church. Often this discussion requires the highlighting of certain textual features, and nearly always this discussion entails an explanation of how each text bears on larger Pauline thought and theological issues. At appropriate points the author also follows his commentary with short excurses on how various passages bear on issues affecting the modern Christian church. There are many places that New Testament scholars are likely to disagree on the interpretation of *1 Corinthians*, but Lockwood handles the text and the issues with competence and care.

As a popular commentary, *1 Corinthians* successfully navigates the middle ground between being inaccessibly academic and being overly non-technical. For example, on issues upon which scholars are likely to disagree (e.g., the unity of the text of *1 Corinthians*, the debate over the content of the “previous letter,” etc.), Lockwood typically saves the discussion for the larger, more technical parent volume, only giving his view a passing mention. On issues where churches are likely to disagree, such as the ordination of women (pp. 299–315), the ongoing use of the supernatural spiritual gifts (pp. 249–55), etc., Lockwood often provides a discussion of multiple approaches to the issue and then argues for the superiority of his approach. The only exception to this seems to be with regard to issues that are core to Lutheranism. For example, in his discussion of *1 Corinthians 11* Lockwood assumes a “real presence” view of the sacraments in his interpretation with no discussion given to other views. Given the volume’s stated purpose, however, this selective inclusion is probably helpful in keeping the content fresh and relevant to a Lutheran audience as well as keeping the volume down to a manageable size.

Probably the most interesting feature of 1 Corinthians are the excurses placed throughout the text. The author identifies by heading six excurses: Modern Denominations (pp. 32–33), Christian Maturity (pp. 54–55), Homosexuality (pp. 116–19), Spiritual Gifts in 1 Corinthians (pp. 248–55), Worship Practice Today (pp. 287–89), and The Ordination of Women (pp. 299–315). Additionally, there are other sections that would rightly be called “excurses,” though they are not identified as such by the author (e.g., “The Christian and Courts of Law,” p. 110 and “Closed Communion,” pp. 230–31). These excurses take the biblical/theological principles being discussed in the text and relate them to contemporary issues in the life and practice of the church. Lockwood’s handling of these issues are, as advertised, from a decidedly evangelical and Lutheran approach, delivered by a firm, competent hand and a generous pastoral spirit.

1 Corinthians in the Concordia Popular Commentary series accomplishes its purpose—to provide a distillation of an academic commentary to a non-specialist and largely Lutheran audience—with care and excellence and should serve as a model for the “conversion” of the highly technical work produced by Christian scholars to a form accessible to the church at large.

Edward D. Gravely
Wake Forest, North Carolina

Gary Smith. *Isaiah 1–39. The New American Commentary. 15A. Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 2007. 696 pp. Hardcover. ISBN: 978-0-8054-0115-8. \$19.79. Hardcover.*

Dr. Smith has written an up-to-date and resourceful commentary on the book of Isaiah in two volumes. It engages an impressive bibliography of secondary literature (even for an Isaiah commentary) and covers all of the important aspects of the study of the book. In this first volume on chapters 1–39, Dr. Smith quickly establishes his command of the various critical discussions (dating, authorship/unity, the book’s historical scope relative to its genre as prophetic literature, the nature of prophetic literature itself), often taking a conservative line, but never apparently afraid to leave contested matters open (e.g., the degree to which the composition of Isaiah is riveted to the prophet himself, pp. 43, 68).

The commentary is easy to use, whether for extended reading or for quick reference. Though the NAC series uses the NIV, Smith is engaged at every point in a close reading of the Masoretic Text. The commentary portion of each volume is generally organized according to the discernible literary units in Isaiah, with the NIV translation in bold preceding the comments. The comments then progress by verse, with verse headings in bold for easy spotting. Each section of comments is further organized by various capitalized headings, (e.g., HISTORICAL SETTING, STRUCTURE, and THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS). Though the headings do not follow a consistent order and seem to be used in an ad hoc fashion, they serve to specify the particular focus of their paragraphs from the

general interpretation of a text which itself resists a singular mode of reading or engagement. Smith keeps most of his even more detailed exegesis and scholarly interaction up in the main body of each page, with footnotes typically reserved for subsidiary points and citation. (Interestingly, Hebrew words and phrases are always transliterated up in the main body and left in their traditional script down in the footnotes, but this seems to be a consistent practice of the NAC series. In any case, a solid knowledge of Hebrew is required to benefit fully from all the comments.)

One obvious feature which distinguishes Smith's commentary among the 17 others this reviewer consulted is the enormous amount of front matter to introduce the book of Isaiah – 71 pages! (Sweeney and Oswalt were next longest at 62 pages each. John Barton's 127-page Isaiah 1–39 is singularly concerned with introductory matters and offers no commentary on the text itself.) The usual methodologies are summarized (Source Criticism, Redactional Approaches, Rhetorical Argumentation, the Canonical Perspective) and the tone is fair and even-handed. Part of the reason for the extended introduction is Smith's thorough analysis of the primary literature involved in the book of Isaiah, and the issues this complex dynamic raises for interpreting it. Readers will find his engagement with text-critical issues between the MT and other text traditions (Dead Sea scrolls, Greek, Aramaic Targum) to be an illuminating resource, as he finds a way to be specific without being tedious. For example, on p. 44, he offers nine examples throughout chapters 1–39 (more are covered in the commentary section) in which there is clearly a textual problem which can nonetheless be engaged in a way that does not call into question the ability of the text to deliver up its inspired message.

Another laudable feature is the manner in which Smith maintains his attention to his interlocutors throughout both commentaries. This is often more at issue in monographs where a specific argument is being advanced, but it is refreshing to see in the commentary genre as well. Chief among Smith's influences on interpretive decisions are Wildberger and Beuken, despite the theological distance between them and himself (p. 10). The tone is consistently charitable and descriptive rather than polemical. Smith does not hesitate to draw heavily from those with whom he parts ways elsewhere. For example, his appreciation for Beuken and Wildberger puts him in close company with Childs (who also singles out Beuken as particularly formative for his own commentary), though Smith and Childs (and Beuken) handle questions of authorship and dating differently.

Although it does not pursue a particular angle in its reading of Isaiah that might make it especially useful in a given niche environment, this is a strong contribution to the general study of the book, and it ought to be on the shelf of anyone researching Isaiah. Again, high marks especially are due for the extended introductory discussion which will function as a resource we are likely to see increasingly cited alongside Barton in future Isaiah studies.

Chad Steiner
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Torsten Uhlig. *The Theme of Hardening in the Book of Isaiah: An Analysis of Communicative Action.* *Forschungen zum Alten Testament. II/39.* Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009. xvi + 423 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-3-16-150143-2. \$167.50. Paperback.

Although there is a long tradition, at least among preachers, of examining Isaiah's call only up to the point where he responds "Here I am, send me," such an approach suffers from the fact that it ignores the second half of the chapter where Isaiah seems to be sent on an almost impossible, and certainly perplexing, ministry where he is actually to harden the people. Populist readings of Isaiah might want people to go enthusiastically into ministry, but they seldom encourage them to think that their faithfulness might result in something so discouraging. Likewise, scholarly readers of Isaiah have struggled with how to relate this call to the wider context of the book so that its implications for its interpretation are insufficiently developed. In this mildly revised doctoral dissertation completed at the University of Gloucestershire (under the supervision of Gordon Wenham and H. G. M. Williamson) Torsten Uhlig thus not only explores an important issue for the interpretation of the book of Isaiah but also a matter that is of pastoral importance for those who seek to apply the message of the book to contemporary congregations. As a piece of academic research it is primarily directed towards answering the questions as posed by scholarly readers, but there is a sensitivity to the pastoral issues that are thrown up by this throughout. Moreover, it amply demonstrates the importance of good scholarship and its relevance to pastoral issues.

The published form of the doctoral dissertation is now a well established genre, and Uhlig follows it through in the customary manner with an outline of the problem as it has emerged in the history of research before outlining his own approach. The summary of previous scholarship is brief but helpful, enabling Uhlig to develop his own concerns with communication. In essence, he notes that a prophetic book aims to communicate, and so draws on speech-act theory in dialogue with the hermeneutics of Paul Ricoeur to address the question of what is meant by the hardening motif. Although he is interested in Isaiah as a book, Uhlig does not ignore historical questions, interpreting the book as something which contains two principal prophetic voices, one emerging from Isaiah ben Amoz and the second around the time of Cyrus. He is aware of the difference in focus between chapters 40–55 and 56–66, seeing the former as directed by this voice to the exiles and the latter to those in the land. In spite of this diversity in origin, Uhlig argues persuasively for a unified communicative intent, showing that connective righteousness (the link between deed and consequences) is the means by which Yahweh is restoring order to creation. There are different emphases in chapters 1–39 and 40–66, but these operate coherently with one another. Hardening then emerges as a crucial element in how Yahweh deploys connective righteousness as it is traced through Isaiah 6, where Isaiah's proclamation brings about hardness in Israel, but this is gradually reversed through a number of communicative acts in chapters 40–66. It is through the communication of the Servant that

the hardening of the exiles is affected and this “de-hardening” is what enables the exiles to return to the land. Likewise, it is through prophetic proclamation that those in the homeland are de-hardened, though this preaching also continues to reveal those who are hardened still. The hardening of the people prevents proper communication, whereas those who are de-hardened are able to communicate again. Thus, in Isaiah 1–39 the prophet’s message embodies Yahweh’s judgment of their misguided communication because of its lack of righteousness, but the prophetic voice in Isaiah 40–66 removes this hardness, enabling communication and a move back towards righteousness.

What emerges from this is a complex and nuanced portrayal of Yahweh. The hardening in Isaiah 6 is neither incomprehensible nor evidence of divine absence but rather evidence of how sin prevents people from hearing Yahweh’s voice, though paradoxically it is Yahweh who works through his prophets to renew the people. Although at times the argument is dense, and there are occasionally points where Uhlig’s English is perhaps not as clear as it might be (although thankfully mostly in the footnotes), this is a provocative and theologically alert reading of a difficult issue in Isaiah. It breaks new ground in its integration of speech-act theory with connective righteousness and demonstrates the fruitfulness of the approach with fresh insights into the message of Isaiah as a book. Unfortunately the price will probably preclude individuals from obtaining their own copy, but this is an essential addition to theological libraries.

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Mark J. Boda. *A Severe Mercy: Sin and Its Remedy in the Old Testament.* Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2009. x + 622pp. Hardcover. ISBN 978-1-57506-164-1. \$59.50. Hardcover.

Mark J. Boda offers a substantial contribution to Old Testament theology in treating the themes of sin and its remedy, carefully couching this discussion in a canonical context for the community of faith. He avoids typical pitfalls of forays into biblical theology by not only looking at lexical studies, but also conceptual and imagistic frameworks – what he calls “word views” (p. 7). Thus, this work represents a consistent attempt to treat passages in their immediate, book, and canonical contexts.

Boda gives a preliminary definition of sin. It is “an offense against a divinely ordered norm” (p. 11). In the Pentateuch, the remedy for sin is initially seen in terms of divine punishment. However, this is often tempered by Yahweh’s mitigation, which can be through sacrifices which act as fines, or even the covenant curses, which serve as a preferential alternative to the death of the offender. Boda notes, “it is surprising how often admission of sin and possibly also repentance is not offered as a solution” (p. 121). God’s wrath can also be deterred by a human mediator.

In the legal code, a two-fold process was required to deal with sin. For ritual uncleanness, an individual rite was performed for cleansing. Deliberate sin required both cleansing and the forgiveness provided at the Day of Atonement. Though its contaminating influence could be dealt with, defiant sin was without remedy, throwing the offender upon God's mercy. Both moral and ritual elements are interspersed in the legislation, indicating their common purpose in facilitating the presence of Yahweh among the people.

In the former prophets, sin is again seen in covenantal terms: "the demand for exclusive worship of Yahweh alone at the central shrine" (p. 184). It deserved retributive justice, and often contains affects extending beyond the individual to the succeeding generations. The remedy involved faithful leadership, God's word, judgment and discipline, and grace. These "various divine strategies functioned together to encourage human covenantal response" (p. 188). Thus, there is a much greater emphasis on penitence as a human response to God's grace.

In the latter prophets, God remains free with respect to sin and its remedy in that, "at times he may reject what appears to be a penitent cry and at others respond with grace where there is no penitence" (p. 354). This serves what Boda deems as "the prophet's greatest contribution to the theology of sin and its remedy [. . .] the ultimate hope is shifted from human response to a divine gracious and transformative initiative" (p. 355).

In the writings, Boda finds both a "muting" of lament and the embrace of penitence. That is, although Yahweh's discipline is lamented, this voice is gradually replaced with the call to penitence as the way forward. Additionally, he claims, "according to the wisdom tradition, divine discipline is not merely punishment for sin but functions to awaken humanity to repentance so that they may receive grace and experience inner transformation" (p. 509).

Helpful is Boda's treatment of intergenerational sin, whose effects he finds to be limited to the family unit, as three and four generations often lived under one roof. "The qualification in Exod. 20:5-6 and Deut. 5:9-10 that these punishments apply to 'those who hate me' suggest[s] that punishment will only endure if the later generations continue in the patterns of the offending generation" (p. 518). However other cases like Jeroboam and Manasseh seem to indicate "an accumulation of guilt, which may affect the severity of the judgment, but this guilt is not immediately responsible for the judgment itself" (p. 519).

Notably, Boda contradicts several authors (Wenham, Lucas, Hartley, Gane) in "challeng[ing] the view that forgiveness is granted only by the divine will" (p. 75). Rather, he sees the rites in Leviticus 4 as "creating the expectation" of forgiveness. However, in doing so, he draws a fine line between the recognition of guilt and confession of sin required in these sacrifices, only finding the idea of remorse later in the Holiness Code.

Although not revolutionary, Boda's study fills a significant lacuna in biblical theology in elucidating both the continuity and tension within the various OT corpora concerning the nature of sin and its remedy. This can be seen in his primary conclusion, that "the dominant pattern of human sin/divine discipline, human

response/divine grace in all of its forms cannot be reduced to an impersonal retribution principle separated from the dynamic relationship between Yahweh and his people” (p. 521). Due to both the variety of approaches to sin and responses to human penitence, much is left to the freedom and character of God, (Exod. 33:19) who, “forgives and yet punishes, that is, he displays a severe mercy” (p. 522).

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