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Corrine L. Carvalho. *Primer on Biblical Methods*. Winona, MN: Anselm Academic. xiii + 93 pp., paper, \$15.95.

Dr. Carvalho, professor of theology at the University of Saint Thomas in Saint Paul, presents an amazing amount of material in a brief span. The primer seeks to introduce the novice to methods of biblical interpretation, drawing examples from both the Old and New Testaments. She divides her material into four chapters, with an introduction which includes forewords for teacher and student, a definition of exegesis, and the question vexing many beginners as to whether approaching sacred Scripture in a questioning way might be detrimental to one's theological health.

The first chapter, the world behind the text, introduces source criticism, form criticism, tradition criticism, redaction criticism, historical criticism (including 'new historicism' with its awareness of ideology of text and interpreter), and sociological analysis. For each, she concludes with sample questions of the type practitioners might ask, as well as a set of exercises for the student.

In 'The World of the Text,' the author explores elements of literary criticism, namely textual criticism, narrative criticism, rhetorical criticism, reader-response criticism, and ideological criticism, with the same types of questions and exercises already noted. The third chapter, looks at 'The World the Text Creates,' exploring the bridge between original and current reader. It has sections on reading communities, postmodernism and deconstructionism with specific mention of several approaches – canonical, liberation theology and postcolonialism, a section on contextual approaches such as feminist and materialist readings, and finally a brief discussion of cultural criticism.

Chapter four, 'The History of Biblical Interpretation,' provides several diverse views taken on biblical texts, including the exploitation by theology (Catholic theology in particular) of visions from Ezekiel, Isaiah's suffering servant in the New Testament, Jewish-Christian approaches to Isaiah 7:14, and artists' renditions of the sign of Jonah's in Matthew 12 and Luke 11. The volume concludes with suggestions for further reading, a list of cited works, and a topical index.

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All told, the volume succeeds very well in the task which it sets for itself. One hopes that those just developing an interest in reading and understanding Scripture will be led further in that exploration, moving even beyond this slim volume.

David W. Baker

R.A. Horsley, ed. *In the Shadow of Empire: Reclaiming the Bible as a History of Faithful Resistance*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008. 199 pp., paper, \$24.95.

In biblical scholarship, it is common now to see a scholarly awareness of politics in the background of the various theological and rhetorical discussions, especially thanks to the work of people like Richard Horsley, N.T. Wright, and Neil Elliott. This new political focus has arisen because of a number of considerations in scholarship. We have seen a rise in interest in post-colonial interpretation, which looks at power and domination. Also, many scholars have been inspired to study these issues due to concerns over politics and power in the modern world, particular *American* politics. Horsley, particularly, points to a concern over those who view the United States as an empire with an “imperial power aggressively in pursuit of its own interests and ideals” (3). Some have compared the American attitude of Manifest Destiny with the imagery of a “New Rome” (3). This empowering of the American empire, Horsley argues, supposedly hangs on a view of God’s blessing on this country and its progress. The purpose of this book, though, is to observe that there is a strong biblical tradition of God’s people fighting imperial oppression (7). The thread that runs throughout the essays in this book is the idea that the “empire” is never the hero of the story according to the Bible. It is from this perspective that Horsley and the other contributors analyze the Bible, offering “a basic survey of key issues and passages focused on the political-religious rule of empires and the people’s accommodation or resistance to imperial rule” (7).

Three chapters focus on the Old Testament and the life of Israel in various times and places: “Early Israel as an Anti-Imperial Community” (Norman K. Gottwald), “Faith in the Empire” (Walter Brueggemann), and “Resistance and Accommodation in the Persian Empire” (Jon L. Berquist). Before turning to the New Testament, John Dominic Crossan offers a

background study of “Roman Imperial Theology.” Chapters 5-9 concentrate on various New Testament texts: “Jesus and Empire” (Horsley), “The Apostle Paul and Empire” (Neil Elliott), “Matthew Negotiates the Roman Empire” (Warren Carter), “Acts of the Apostles: Pro(to)-Imperial Script and Hidden Transcript” (Brigitte Kahl), and “The Book of Revelation as Counter-Imperial Script” (Greg Carey).

One can always appreciate when a group of scholars makes cutting-edge research available to students and laypeople in such a work as this. As you enter this discussion, it opens up the world of the Bible. For too many years, it was assumed that non-believing Jews were the main opponents of the early Christians. We can see now that people like Jesus and Paul were engaged in other issues as well, such as challenging or critiquing imperial propaganda and ideology. One welcome insight is the shift from translating the Greek word *basileia* as “kingdom” to “empire” in some contexts (see 125, 150). There are also, though, some drawbacks to the approach in this book. Firstly, given the orienting statements made by Horsley in the introduction, the essays seem (whether legitimately or not) agenda driven, that is, towards a critique of American political pride. While it is appropriate to re-read the biblical texts to challenge inappropriate views of the Bible, some of the essays can come across as dogmatic. Also, there is a tendency for some of the contributors to present only one possible interpretation of the evidence and this can lead the reader (who is not always up to speed on the state of the debate) to believe that the political reading is universally accepted by scholars.

To take one example of what I consider to be a significantly flawed essay, Elliott’s perspective is that the Paul of the undisputed letters is anti-imperial. He views the Pastoral Epistles as well as Colossians and Ephesians as part of a “canonical betrayal of Paul” – an attempt to accommodate to imperial values and ideals (see, e.g., the household codes). However, Elliott represents only a small portion of scholars that would take such a view. Granted the household codes are a matter of concern to many, but there are a number of scholars that see subversion to Roman order in the Pauline versions of the household codes.

Finally, while I understand that it would not have been possible to include *all* the books of the NT in the volume, I was surprised not to see a treatment of 1 Peter – a text that shows signs of both accommodation and

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resistance. In fact, there is a long history of debate about this issue in 1 Peter and I think it would have made a very instructive test-case.

While I appreciate that Horsley has brought this important discussion to a wider audience, I would caution readers that some of the contributors have neglected to supply alternative interpretive options. But that is probably part of the *politics* of *this* scholarly debate!

Nijay K. Gupta

Lee M. Fields *Hebrew for the Rest of Us*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008. Pp. xvi + 281, PAPER, \$29.99.

Hebrew for the Rest of Us is the companion text to *Greek for the Rest of Us* by Bill Mounce. Every student who studies through this text should expect to know the Hebrew alphabet and vowels, understand the basics of grammar and syntax, use basic exegetical techniques (e.g., word studies, sentence diagramming), and interact with exegetical tools (e.g., commentaries and software) in order to responsibly study the biblical text. Fields does caution that students will neither “know” biblical Hebrew nor will have the competence to dispute biblical scholars. The author understands that not everyone is able to learn biblical Hebrew comprehensively; therefore, this text is designed “to enable English Bible students to maximize the benefit gained from using the many tools that exist to help bridge the language gap” (ix).

The text is intended to be covered in one half of a three-hour semester course and is composed of six major units—each intended to be covered in a week, each week composed of several chapters. The text progresses systematically and combines detailed explanation with charts and tables, making the text pedagogically effective. Most chapters conclude with an exercise to practice the skills learned and/or a brief section (“Advanced Information and Curious Facts”) which either introduces the student to a topic related to the study of Hebrew or discusses a particular exegetical issue. These features help to broaden the student’s understanding and show the applicability of learning Hebrew.

Week 1 teaches Hebrew consonants (ch. 1) and *dagesh*, explains transliteration, and gives a brief history of the Hebrew language (ch. 2). The discussion of Hebrew language history is a valuable asset to this text since few

comprehensive grammars even include such an introduction. Week 2 introduces students to vowels (ch. 3) and the basics of biblical studies (ch. 4). Included in the lesson on vowels are discussions of the development of the *matres lectionis* and vowel points as well as accent marks. Introducing students to accent marks is another topic which many comprehensive grammars lack. Chapter 4 begins by discussing canonization and the formation of the Old Testament canon (both the Jewish and Christian arrangement). In this chapter, Fields also introduces students to concepts of transmission, textual criticism, and translation. By this point students should be able to work on pronouncing Hebrew words.

Week 3 (chs. 5-8) moves beyond word pronunciation and begins to focus on grammar. Chapter 5 covers roots, parts of speech, and explains how to use tools such as a concordance, interlinear Bible, and software (i.e., Libronix). Fields' explanation of these tools is important since the goal of this course is to help students get the most out of using exegetical resources. Clauses, the conjunction *vav*, and prepositions are discussed in chapters 6, 7, and 8, respectively.

Weeks 4 (chs. 9-12) and 5 (chs. 13-17) teach students about nominals and verbals. Overall, these lessons cover all the basics of grammar and syntax. The text does teach Hebrew nominals in terms of cases, but clearly identifies that case refers to function, as biblical Hebrew only exhibits remnants of actual case endings. Very helpful to the beginning student is the chart and discussion in chapter 13, which introduces the student to the varied vocabulary regarding Hebrew verbs. The diverse terminology regarding biblical Hebrew aspects/tenses can be confusing for many beginning students, which Fields acknowledges to the student's benefit. While Fields does not identify all of the different terms used (e.g., *affix*, as used in Kittel's grammar; or *perfective* and *imperfective*, as used in Waltke and O'Connor's *Syntax*) he introduces enough terms to limit confusion for beginning students.

Week 6 (chs. 18-21) provides the student with more practical guidance to assist in Hebrew exegesis. Chapter 18 focuses on word studies and briefly addresses the concern for context, provides a basic step-by-step guide, and identifies some common pitfalls. Chapter 19 provides a useful guide for choosing exegetical tools and even proposes a buying strategy. The last two chapters of the text introduce the student to the basics of Hebrew prose (ch. 20) and poetry (ch. 21). Concluding the text are three appendices which include a song, a blank word study guide, and an index of the text's figures. Missing is an

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actual index or glossary of terms used. This is unfortunate and would be most helpful for the beginning student.

This is certainly not a grammar of any sort, but will help students get more out of their studies without a comprehensive knowledge of Hebrew. I recommend this text for any student wishing to increase their exegetical capabilities or to build a basic knowledge base before studying Hebrew in-depth.

Jason Riley

A. Philip Brown II and Bryan W. Smith, eds., *A Reader's Hebrew Bible*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008. Pp. xxviii + 1652, paper, \$49.99.

A Reader's Hebrew Bible (RHB) is the Hebrew companion to *A Reader's Greek New Testament*. *RHB* is not a critical edition, contains no text-critical notes, and is not intended to replace the need for a critical edition. The editors' stated purpose is "to facilitate the regular reading of Scriptures in Hebrew and Aramaic" (xii). This volume attempts to accomplish that goal by providing glosses for all Hebrew words occurring less than 100 times (over 3000 words) and all Aramaic words occurring less than 25 times, excluding Hebrew and Aramaic proper nouns. Proper nouns which occur less than one hundred times are distinguished by a grey font. In addition, the editors also include a glossary at the end of the Hebrew text (Appendix A) which provides glosses for all Hebrew words occurring 100 times or more. There is no Aramaic glossary; however this should not be a problem since this only leaves approximately twenty nine Aramaic words, which consist mostly of Hebrew cognates. Every word for which there is a gloss is marked in the Hebrew text by a superscripted footnote. The superscription numbering restarts with each new chapter.

The Hebrew text is the Westminster Leningrad Codex version 4.4, which varies slightly from *BHS* or *BHQ*. In this case, the editors have included a list of known differences at the end of the volume in Appendix B. Another stated goal of *RHB* is to facilitate a reader's shift to or from *BHS* or *BHQ* fairly easily; therefore, the textual format, e.g., paragraph breaks and prose and poetry formatting, is identical to *BHS*, with few exceptions. The text also includes both the *Kethib* and *Qere* readings in the text, both marked by the superscriptions ^K and ^Q respectively.

The primary source for the glosses which occur was *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (HALOT), supplemented by the Brown-Driver-Briggs *Hebrew-English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (BDB). In addition, other sources were consulted including Holladay's *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, vol. 1-5, and various commentaries. Footnoted glosses for verbs are arranged as footnote, homonym number, lemma stem, HALOT; BDB; alternate. Therefore, the word בָּרָא in Genesis 1:1 is footnoted as follows: ²ברא QAL: create; shape, fashion. Footnote entries for non-verb lemmas are formatted as footnote, homonym number, lemma HALOT; BDB; alternate. Each gloss is context specific; however, idioms are left for the reader to decipher. Readers will have no trouble using the footnotes as they read the text.

The reader should be aware of a few difficulties with the text. First, the footnotes which occur in the text often create significant space between each word. This makes it somewhat more difficult to quickly and smoothly read the text. Second, the grey font for proper nouns is often difficult to read. Third, the addition of both the *Kethib* and *Qere* readings in the text itself, while useful for keeping the margins empty, will often surprise the reader and slow the reader's progress through the text. Fourth, the brightness of the paper creates a significant contrast with the black text which does make reading difficult on the eyes. I have found the *RHB* text more difficult to vocalize than *BHS*. As a recommendation, it would be helpful if the editors could produce a smaller edition.

Overall, *RHB* is an exquisite resource for anyone who does not have a large Hebrew vocabulary and who desires to gain in Hebrew reading proficiency. *RHB* possesses all things necessary for students to read through the Hebrew Bible. A. Philip Brown II and Bryan W. Smith have done a tremendous service to Hebrew Bible students.

Jason Riley

Steven L. Bridge. *Getting the Old Testament: What it Meant to Them, What it Means for Us*. Peabody: Hendrickson, 2009. Pp. xx + 227, paper, \$14.95.

Steven L. Bridge, Professor of Theology at St. Joseph's College in Standish, Maine, provides us with a thoughtful, creative, and resourceful volume

in *Getting the Old Testament*. Bridge bases this monograph on the principle that when reading the Bible, we are eavesdropping on the conversations of others and that "...when third parties ... overhear a conversation, they glean only its content, devoid of its context... This requires the eavesdroppers to supply the missing contexts for themselves" (4). Therefore, Bridge attempts to help modern readers fill in some of the missing context for these ancient biblical conversations. The intended audience of Bridge's book is ambitiously large as he tries to provide a work that "might satisfy both institutions of learning and communities of faith; one simultaneously sensitive to Jewish, Catholic, Protestant, and Muslim perspectives" (xiii).

The approach of this work is to provide a case study of a different portion of Scripture in each chapter of his book, with chapters organized by the Hebrew divisions of the Bible (Torah, Prophets, and Writings). His chapters cover individual passages, such as Genesis 1 and the flood, and entire books, such as Jonah, Daniel, Ecclesiastes, and Job. Using everything from the *Enuma Elish* and Gilgamesh to Bart Simpson and modern political cartoons, Bridge draws comparisons to help students think more creatively about interpreting the Bible. He helps them bridge the communication gap by comparing the biblical text or a biblical principle to something with which a modern reader can identify, including stories, unusual laws still in American law books, and even the Bible code. Bridge also includes several helpful appendices (timelines, comparative canons, further information on specific topics) and an annotated list of suggested reading.

The strength of this work lies in its creative and effective pedagogy, using modern and post-modern culture to bridge contexts and make the Bible understandable and relevant. While other works make the same attempt, Bridge uses a think-outside-the-box approach that meets young readers where they are. *Getting the Old Testament* would be particularly useful as a supplemental text in an undergraduate introductory Bible class. Any teacher of Old Testament, especially one who needs a few ideas for class lectures or discussions, would also find this book helpful.

However, *Getting the Old Testament* is not without weakness. Possibly due to the introductory nature of the book, Bridge tends to oversimplify certain issues unnecessarily and without explanation. For example, Bridge presents the Documentary Hypothesis as the only option regarding the authorship of the Pentateuch, even though the theory is now considered outdated (see, for

example, R.N. Whybray, *The Making of the Pentateuch* [Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987]). While a detailed discussion of the issues surrounding the authorship of the Pentateuch is beyond the scope of Bridge's work, an appendix or even a footnote would be helpful in alerting the reader to the fact that other theories exist on the matter. The same is true for the assumptions Bridge makes regarding the authorship of the book of Daniel. Because of the selective nature of the work, Bridge also leaves out of his analysis large portions of the Old Testament, making this an unlikely candidate for a general introductory textbook for the Old Testament.

In spite of these drawbacks, Bridge's work makes a valuable contribution to the teaching and learning of the Old Testament.

Jennifer E. Noonan

Sandra L. Richter, *The Epic of Eden: A Christian Entry into the Old Testament*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008. 263 pp., paper, \$24.00.

Sandra L. Richter, professor of Old Testament at Wesley Biblical Seminary, provides a compelling and refreshing look at the Old Testament (OT) in her work, *The Epic of Eden*. Intended for Christian lay readers (with plenty of endnotes for those who want to delve deeper), Richter sets out to overcome three issues that keep New Testament believers from the OT (16): First, Richter believes that many Christians "...have not been taught that the story of the OT is their story." Second, Richter identifies a "great barrier" that must be overcome in order to fully understand and appreciate the OT. This barrier includes history, language, culture, and geography. The final issue is what Richter calls "the dysfunctional closet syndrome," the tendency among Christians to remember a random assortment of facts, people, and events in the OT, with little order or organization, making the information less than meaningful and often unusable.

In order to remedy these three issues, Richter sets about the monumental task of bringing order and meaning to the OT for Christians, providing a structure within which one may organize the facts he or she knows about the OT. In the first two chapters of *The Epic of Eden*, Richter introduces the reader to her primary organizing principle for the OT (and the Bible as whole), redemption, and helps the audience to overcome the great barriers of culture, history, and geography. Richter provides a review of OT history,

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centered around five major eras (which she identifies with five major characters: Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and David), followed by a review of geography, centered around three major areas: Mesopotamia, Canaan/Israel/Palestine, and Egypt. Chapter three introduces the concept of covenant and identifies five major OT covenants, corresponding to the five major characters from the previous chapter. In the next two chapters, Richter delves into God's original intent for humanity in Eden and his corresponding final intent found in Revelation. Chapters seven through nine detail the history, geography, and culture of each of the OT covenants as they build on one another and ultimately fulfill God's plan of redemption, stretching from Eden to the New Covenant and the New Jerusalem. Each of these primary chapters also includes a one- to two-page excursus, providing more detail on a particular issue, often written in a tone of personal reflection or application, which helps her audience understand how the OT story is also the Christian story. The final chapter of the book, entitled "Frequently Asked Questions," serves as an appendix and addresses the relevance of the Mosaic Law for Christians and how believers might approach the issues surrounding modern-day Israel. This is followed by 20 pages of endnotes, a short glossary (with references to pages and figures in the text), and a Scripture index.

The strength of Richter's work lies in her ability to grasp the big picture, including the overall structure of the OT and its significance for Christians, and effectively bring it to the lay reader without sacrificing biblical scholarship in the process. While the task of overcoming the issues that keep Christians from the OT are indeed monumental, Richter accomplishes the goal with insight, academic integrity, and humor. However, in her attempt to be accessible to lay audiences, Richter's style occasionally enters unnecessarily into the realm of pop culture, taking away from the timeless appeal of the book. Additionally, the structure of Richter's arguments could be strengthened by an overall conclusion to the book that parallels her introduction, one that reminds her readers of the original intent of the book and reinforces the clarity and focus of her insights. These detractions are, however, minor compared with the overall value of Richter's contribution. Undoubtedly, this book will have wide appeal within the Christian community, serving well in both adult Sunday school classes and in college OT courses.

Jennifer E. Noonan

Jerome T. Walsh. *Old Testament Narrative: A Guide to Interpretation*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2009. 266pp., paper, \$29.95.

Many fine studies of Hebrew narrative have appeared since biblical scholars began applying the insights of narrative criticism to the Hebrew Bible more than thirty years ago. Those wanting to learn about its distinctive features, tropes, and techniques now have a considerable array of works from which to choose. None, however, excels the present work in guiding the reader from description to practice. Those familiar with Walsh's fine reading of 1 Kings in *Berit Olam* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996) know him as a masterful reader of the biblical text. In this volume, we discover that he is a master teacher as well. This is a book written for those who want to become better readers of Hebrew narrative, and it succeeds impressively in that task.

Walsh begins with a brief introduction and a first chapter that provide cogent explanations of the theoretical issues that orient the study of narrative: the text's different worlds of meaning; the relationship between author, text and reader; and ideas of the narrator, narratee, implied author, and implied reader; the relationship between story and narrative. He follows up with two chapters that elaborate the two main elements of story: the plot and the characters.

Chapters 4 through 8 constitute the core of the book and describe the various devices that configure the story and its telling. Chapters 4 through 6 offer succinct but thorough explanations of the three aspects that constitute the focus of narrative analysis: that is, characterization, which examines the way the narrator shapes and presents characters; point of view, which deals with what the narrator shows and what characters see and perceive; and the manipulation of time, which discerns the way events are situated in time and the tempo by which they unfold. In chapters 7 and 8 Walsh turns to elements two of the distinctive features of Hebrew narrative: its exploitation of gapping and ambiguity and the occurrence of repetition.

In chapter 9 Walsh takes up the role and identity of the narrator, a topic that has generated considerable discussion among scholars, sorting through the relationship of "narrator" to "author" and "narratee" and addressing the slippery topics of the narrator's reliability and multiple narrative voices. In the following chapter, he elaborates another distinctive element of Hebrew narrative, that is, its use of symmetrical structures. He concludes with a chapter that addresses the

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role of the reader in the production of meaning and the roles of particular readers (that is the critic, believer, and preacher).

The book displays the fruit of years of thinking and teaching about biblical Hebrew narrative. As skillful and lucid as his explanations are, however, what really makes this book exceptional is the way Walsh guides, models, and encourages a close and careful analysis of the text. He does this in a number of ways. First, he directs his reader to 1 Kings 1-11 and draws most of his illustrations from that narrative complex, allowing the reader to become familiar with narrative devices while at the same time becoming familiar with a textual block. Second, he directs his reader to further study in one of three stories in 1 Kings: Jeroboam (11:26-14:20); Elijah (17:1-19:21); and Ahab (20:1-22:40). Chapters 2 through 10 conclude with blocks of questions and directions on these stories, often preceded by suggestions for helping the student discern the devices in question. Then, after the final chapter, he offers an extensive appendix that works point by point through each story - from plot to symmetry - through an extensive catalogue of his own observations. The student thus has the advantage of reading a clearly-presented explanation of specific aspects of narrative, followed by questions and suggestions to guide personal study, and finally a set of observations for review.

Theorists may quibble about the ways Walsh situates and categorizes the elements of narrative, but there is no doubt that his organization is effective as a teaching approach. Two areas that could be expanded are: 1) the role of genres (kinds of narratives, like spy movies or farces) and type scenes (particular kinds of stories that share common elements) and the manipulation of their conventions, and 2) the influence of ideology and location on the ways readers read. To the discussion of symmetrical structures, I would add parataxis, an ancient device that alternates between story lines, not present (as far as I know) in 1 Kings 1-11 but illustrated, for example, in the narrator's alternation between Hannah and her sons and Eli and his sons in 1 Samuel 1-4. These are not so much omissions as enhancements to what is an excellent study of narrative. While the phrase "essential reading" has now become hackneyed, it nonetheless fits this book for those aspiring to faithful and careful reading of the narrative literature of the Old Testament.

L. Daniel Hawk

John Goldingay. *Genesis for Everyone: Part One: Chapters 1-6; Part Two: 17-50*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press/ London: SPCK, 2010. ix + 197 and ix + 186 pp., paper, \$14.95 each.

Donald L. Griggs and W. Eugene Marsh. *Genesis from Scratch: The Old Testament for Beginners*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010. v + 133 pp., paper, \$12.95.

Westminster John Knox has released two works on the same Bible portion simultaneously. Both are directed toward the lay audience, though the approach of each is markedly different.

Goldingay's two volumes are the first of a projected seventeen which he is producing for a new series paralleling a similar series on the New Testament. The division between these two is relatively pragmatic, preserving volumes of approximately equal length, rather than being based on some textually explicit division of the unified book of Genesis. The introduction to both volumes begins volume one, providing maps of the ancient Near East and Canaan/Israel, what the 'Old' testament is, an outline of it, and an introduction to Genesis and its authorship (all in six pages). Then follow brief, 3-4 page, expositions of the entire book of Genesis divided into one-half to twenty-four verse sections, each beginning with the author's own fairly literal translation.

The exposition is invariably readable and engaging, constantly establishing ties between the biblical text and elements as intimate as events affecting Goldingay's own family and friends or as sweeping as contemporary international events. When he mentions a term which is likely unfamiliar to the lay reader, it is **bolded** and briefly explained in a glossary, with which each volume ends. Goldingay keeps an eye on the ancient Near eastern background of the text, but also on its New Testament development and the Christian perspective of most readers of this series. The goal of the volumes fit well its description from the back cover: "for daily devotions, Sunday school preparation, or brief personal visits with the Bible."

The volume by Griggs and Marsh follows two earlier works by Griggs, *The Bible from Scratch: The Old Testament for Beginners* and *The Bible from Scratch: The New Testament for Beginners*, looking in more detail at a single Old Testament book. The series is well-suited for lay readers (the 'beginners' of

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the subtitle), and is self-consciously directed toward a teaching/learning environment.

The book is divided into two main portions, guides for participants and leaders, with a brief appendix containing a bibliography for further study: commentaries, Bible study aids, and study Bibles. The two major sections are divided into seven chapters each, covering much, but not all, of Genesis: beginnings (1:1-2:25, creation; 6:1-22, the start of the flood; 9:1-17, covenant with Noah), promise (12:1-20, promises to Abram and descent to Egypt; 17:1-27, covenant and circumcision; 22:1-19; testing Abraham's faith), Isaac and Rebekah (24:1-67); Isaac (25:1-28:9); Jacob's marriages and children (28:10-32:32); Jacob, Esau, and Dinah (33:1-36:43); Joseph (37:1-50:26). The participant's guide runs 57 pages, about the same as the text of Genesis itself, and is mainly a summary of the textual material. March makes brief note of useful ancient Near Eastern material, as well as helpful literary elements. Theology is mainly noted in the conclusion of each chapter.

The leader's guide by Griggs fulfills its description well. The first session, as a sample, has three elements: 'Before the Session' (session focus, advance preparation, physical arrangement, teaching alternatives); 'During the Session' (welcoming, introducing the course, opening prayer, building community, introducing Genesis, comparing the two creation accounts, exploring the Noah story, closing) 'After the Session'. The content and layout shows careful consideration for teacher and student, but one wonders about the intended venue. Most Sunday school classes run 10-13 weeks, to which schedule 7 sessions is hard to fit. As they stand, each session seems too long for a 50-60 minute time slot, so the teacher will need to do some careful planning.

Both series have a place in the church library as well as that of its lay members. The latter will most likely pique the reader's hunger for more, which the former can provide, moving readers along the spectrum toward the use of more fully developed commentaries.

David W. Baker

Thomas B. Dozeman, *Exodus*. Eerdmans Critical Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009. Pp. 887, paper, \$55.00 /£35.99

The appearance of Thomas Dozeman's extensive commentary on the book of Exodus may prove to be an important landmark in the study of the Pentateuch. Dismissing major aspects of the long-standing Documentary Hypothesis of Graf and Wellhausen, Dozeman contends that the book of Exodus is best interpreted on the understanding that it was composed of two sources, the 'Non-P History and the P History', both of which were composed during the exile or later (48). While respectful of prior scholarship, Dozeman consigns both the Yahwist and the Elohist to the grave, a significant departure from the Documentary Hypothesis.

Yet, having boldly dismissed the Yahwist and Elohist as imaginary creations of 19th century scholarship, Dozeman adopts a very different position as regards the Priestly Writer (P). Although, in line with much recent Pentateuchal scholarship, he distances himself from the Documentary Hypothesis, he tenaciously retains the P source, viewing it as consisting of both an independent P source and supplemental material produced by a P author when reworking the Non-P History (see 41-42). At this point a major inconsistency arises. Having acknowledged the difficulty of attributing material to J and E, Dozeman fails to be rigorously consistent in questioning the allocation of material to P.

This shortcoming is most apparent in his discussion of the opening chapters of Exodus. Two problems arise here. Firstly, there is the paucity of supposedly P material in chapters 1-5. In all, ten and a half verses are attributed to P (1:1-5, 7, 13-14; 2:23b-25), five of these coming at the start of chapter 1. Not only is the attribution of this material to P open to debate, but the presence of so little material hardly provides sufficient evidence to support the existence of an independent P narrative, a point partially conceded by Dozeman. Secondly, and more tellingly, the contents of 6:2-8 do not support the thesis that this passage parallels the Non-P version of the commission of Moses in 3:1-15 (see 162). Although Dozeman frequently affirms that 6:2-8 is the P version of the commission of Moses, a careful reading of the text reveals that Yahweh gives Moses only one instruction: 'Say to the Israelites' (6:6), a common

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command in Exodus to Numbers. Every other statement in 6:2-8 is about what Yahweh has done and will do, highlighted by the abundant use of the 1st person singular. Even Dozeman acknowledges that 6:2-8 lacks 'the essential characteristics' of a commission genre (162). Rather than being P's commission account of Moses, the contents of 6:2-8 address very appropriately Moses' complaint to Yahweh in 5:22-23. To classify 6:2-8 as a commission account reveals a profound failure to comprehend the text as it comes to us. This is a prime example of how a unified passage is unnecessarily torn apart to create duplicate accounts in order to support the existence of parallel sources, one of the hallmarks of the Documentary Hypothesis.

In a short review it is not possible to interact with all that Dozeman has to say about the supposedly parallel histories Non-P and P. Having been sufficiently courageous to abandon two of the major 'parallel' sources of the Documentary Hypothesis, Dozeman ought, for the sake of methodological consistency, to have abandoned the remaining 'parallel' source P, especially when the evidence for its existence is exceptionally weak. What might otherwise have been an opportunity to set a new direction in the study of Exodus falls short because it remains shackled to the concept of duplicate sources. More than anything else, the modern critical study of Exodus needs to be freed from the compositional model of the Documentary Hypothesis and its offspring.

As Dozeman often underlines, his discussion of Exodus is largely dependent on the identification of two bodies of literature, the Non-P and P Histories. Since the existence of these sources has not been demonstrated beyond doubt, many of his conclusions must be treated with caution. While there are edifying insights to be gained, the uninitiated may not be able to discern easily the wheat from the chaff.

T.D. Alexander, Union Theological College, Belfast, N. Ireland

C.L. Seow, *Daniel*. Westminster Bible Companion. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003. Xiii + 198 pp., paper, \$29.95.

The Westminster Bible Companion series aims to 'assist pastors and students in their study of the Bible as a guide to Christian faith and practice.' C. L. Seow is Professor of Old Testament Language and Literature, Princeton Seminary. On the usual 'introduction' issues of the authorship, date and

historicity of the book of Daniel he adopts the mainstream 'liberal' positions. However, he is open to more conservative positions. For example, in his 'Introduction' he says it is a problem that the book speaks of Belshazzar as the successor and son of Nebuchadnezzar and of Darius the Mede as the person who captured Babylon (5). Yet in his discussion of Daniel chapter five he points out 'that in the Semitic languages, "father" is not limited to that of a biological parent or even adoptive parent' and that in cuneiform inscriptions Jehu is called 'the son of Omri' although he was not of the Omride dynasty (p. 77). He also notes that in the case of 'Darius the Mede' the name could be a throne name (p. 77), though he does not go on to mention Prof. Wiseman's argument that Dan. 6:28 should be read as identifying Darius the Mede with Cyrus the Persian.

In Seow's view 'the value of the book of Daniel as scripture does not depend on the historical accuracy of the props on its literary stage, but on the power of its theological message. The authority of the book as scripture lies in its power to inspire and shape the community of faith' (6). In accord with this, his commentary is primarily concerned with the book's theological message, which he sees as centring on the theme of the sovereignty of God. This does indeed make it a very useful commentary for students and pastors. There are valuable theological insights in every chapter. A characteristic of the commentary are helpful cross-references to other parts of the Old Testament. In the discussion of the 'court tales' in Daniel 1-6 there are references to similar stories elsewhere in the Old Testament, especially to the Joseph story. Seow also notes the use of language and imagery from the Old Testament prophets in the visions in Dan. 7-12. He sees the seventy weeks in Daniel chapter nine as a symbolic periodization of history rooted in the theology of jubilee found in Lev. 25&26. There are indications of how the theological message of the book takes on fresh significance in the light of Christ. There could have been more of this if the book were intended as a guide to Christian faith and practice. Having said that, because of its theological insights, this is a very helpful commentary on the message of the book of Daniel.

Ernest C. Lucas, Bristol Baptist College, England.

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Constantine R. Campbell. *Basics of Verbal Aspect in Biblical Greek*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008. 160 pp., paper, \$16.99.

Koine Greek grammars, at least the most recent ones, treat the issue of verbal aspect and highlight its unique significance within the Greek verbal system. Constantine Campbell argues that, according to NT linguists and philologists, 'Aspect holds the key to understanding the Greek verbal system' (32). But grammarians disagree as to what it is and what to do with it. So where do we go from here? Campbell does an excellent job of introducing the development in scholarly thought on how aspect works and also outlines his own approach to understanding its exegetical significance.

What is verbal aspect (VA)? Campbell defines it simply as 'viewpoint' where 'An author or speaker views as action, event, or state either from the *outside* or from the *inside*' (19). When viewed from the *outside*, this is called *perfective*; the *inside*, then, is *imperfective*. How does this relate to *Aktionsart*? Campbell differentiates this because *Aktionsart* is more about 'how an action actually takes place—what sort of action it is' (22). On the other hand, VA 'refers to viewpoint—how the action is viewed' (22).

This is not too controversial. The real issue is what we do with tense and *time*. Some people think the present tense, for instance, is inherently linked to present *time* (e.g., aorist and imperfect to past). How else do you know *when* an action occurred? Campbell disagrees. He argues that one can find clues in the text (i.e. *deictic markers*) that indicate time ('now', 'already', 'then'). But, then, if tense does not mark time, why are there so many tenses? Campbell explains: '[time] is not regarded as a semantic value [=always true, generic] of verbs in the indicative mood, even though each tense-form has a characteristic temporal reference on the pragmatic [=in context] level' (32). The tendency for a tense to be found in a particular time can be explained another way through the tendency of the semantic value of the tense.

For example, aorist has the quality of 'remoteness'. Sometimes that remoteness is a temporal one (past time, remote from present). But 'Remoteness also offers explanation for those fifteen percent of aorists that do not refer to the past' (36). They still convey remoteness, but it may be 'logical', for example. The example he gives comes from Mark 1.11 where *eudokesa* is aorist. Here the remoteness involves viewing Jesus' life from 'afar'.

If the aorist perfective aspect has the value of remoteness, the present imperfective is proximate. This may be temporal (the near-time=now=present). From an aspectual angle, 'we watch as the action unfolds' (40). In narrative we get information that is 'beyond the narrational mainline'; information that 'describes, explains, and provides background; it puts flesh on the skeleton' (44). This can explain the 'historic present' where proximity does not involve 'time'. Similarly, Campbell also labels the Perfect tense as proximate, but with intensity. It is 'heightened proximity' (51); or 'super-present' (54).

Campbell's language of proximity and remoteness does offer a cogent explanation of the basic idea behind the Greek tenses. However, to disassociate tense and time does not seem to do justice to the fact that the present tense is *often* in the present time and the aorist in the past. Pedagogically, it is sensible to link tense with time and allow for flexibility. On another issue, though I think Campbell has done much to raise red flags when exegetes base arguments on tense, his interpretation of 'remoteness' or 'proximity' opens its own bag of troubles. I am concerned when we speak of 'logical' remoteness (when it is not temporal) that people will make some wild guesses as to what the logic is. Should we get from Mark 1.11 that the use of the aorist for 'I am well pleased' means that God is looking at Jesus' whole life? Isn't that just as dangerous exegetically as using outdated categories for understanding VA in Greek? We need more tips for how to interpret remoteness and proximity, if Campbell's model is going to be more useful and clear.

These criticisms aside, Campbell does help to untangle many confusing issues and questions related to VA. This text, though entitled 'Basics', would best serve an intermediate course in Greek grammar.

Nijay K. Gupta

J. Harold Greenlee. *The Text of the New Testament: From Manuscript to Modern Edition*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2008. Pp. 130, paper, \$12.95.

Although the New Testament is the most well-attested document from antiquity, much of its modern readership are sadly uninformed concerning its history. There are several scholarly volumes available treating the subject – Metzger and Ehrman, Aland, etc. –, but the offerings for the average Christian reader are scant and typically less than desirable. Enter J. Harold Greenlee's *The*

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Text of the New Testament. The present work is a slight revision of his earlier work titled, *Scribes, Scrolls, and Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985). Greenlee describes his task as answering the significant questions regarding the New Testament history in “layman’s language but with scholarly accuracy” (x).

In the initial chapters, Greenlee describes the “look and feel” of ancient documents. While the scroll was the medium of choice for the Jewish biblical texts, one interesting phenomenon of early copying of Christian texts was the early preference for the codex (15). In addition to describing and showing the materials involved in making a codex, Greenlee suggests that Christians preferred the codex because it allowed for easy reference use which facilitated looking up passages quickly (14). Other scholars are less certain of why Christians used the codex, but simply observe the phenomenon of its increasing use by Christians.

In the fourth chapter, Greenlee discusses the problems of New Testament textual criticism. Although scholars has observed nearly 400,000 variants among the New Testament manuscripts now available, Greenlee rightly points out that “what is at stake is not the number of difference, but their *nature*” (38). The reader is introduced to various kinds of changes introduced into copies of the New Testament and briefly introduced into the manner in which scholars go about making informed decisions about what the text originally said.

Greenlee clearly has the KJV – the so-called Authorized Version – on his radar throughout the course of the book. His aim is not to slander the text, but to question the kind of translational dogmatism that is found in some circles who advocate only this text. He notes that “some voices are proclaiming that many or all of the recent English translations of the New Testament are corrupted” (x). In a discussion of the earliest printed editions of the Greek New Testament, Greenlee briefly surveys the eclipsing of the Textus Receptus by the Eclectic Text in biblical scholarship (52-57). Greenlee advocates for “reasoned eclecticism” in his approach to textual variants, meaning that both internal and external evidences are given a fair hearing (56, 58, 69). This would also fall into the category of responding to dogmatic claims for KJV, because the KJV is based upon the majority text and a textual methodology which prefers external evidence.

A significant section of the book is the discussion on intentional errors introduced by copyists. Greenlee argues that most of the errors introduced were not done to intentionally corrupt the text, but by pious scribes who thought they

were improving the text. The dubious ending of Mark's gospel is examined, where the author concludes (in conjunction with the majority of other scholars) that both the internal and external evidence strongly suggest that Mark 16:9-20 was not part of the original gospel (103). Greenlee, however, does not speculate either that the original ending was lost or that it actually ended at Mark 16:8. While one appreciates the humility of not overinterpreting the data, given the intended audience of Greenlee's book, it would have been beneficial for Greenlee to explain the implications of the options.

Although those who have read more sizable volumes on this subject will be left wanting, Greenlee's *The Text of the New Testament* is a helpful primer for the uninitiated reader. The concise format and low cost make it both readable and affordable for the average parishoner. The presentation will help readers appreciate the NT text with greater depth and nuance. And ultimately, the idol of false certainty will be challenged as readers are called to appreciate the robust history and tradition of the NT text.

Seth Ehorn, Wheaton College

K. Berding, J. Lunde, and S. Gundry, eds. *Three Views on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007. 256 pp., paper, \$16.99.

The subject of the relationship between the Old Testament and the New Testament, and particularly how to understand the method by which NT authors "use" Old Testament texts, has been much discussed for centuries. One could argue that it is one of the most significant problems in New Testament studies today. Though many studies have been written on this topic, scholars continue to disagree on numerous aspects of this subject. Zondervan has done us a great service by presenting three evangelical views on this topic from three eminent biblical scholars.

The "Counterpoints" series in Bible and Theology is known for taking an issue, finding a few representative perspectives, and allowing readers to overhear a debate. Thus, you will find not just chapters representing these scholarly views, but space is given for responses – each contributor presenting his thoughts, reflections, compliments, and especially criticisms. Indeed, some of the most insightful thoughts come from the responses. Another attractive

feature of this book is the inclusion of a very well-written introduction (by Jonathan Lunde) that catches the uninitiated reader up on the state of the discussion in a simple manner.

The formal debate begins with Walter Kaiser Jr.'s viewpoint entitled: 'Single Meaning, Unified Referents' and his subtitle is '*accurate and authoritative citations of the Old Testament by the New Testament*'. For the use of the Old Testament by New Testament authors, Kaiser is insistent that the intentions and interests of the original OT author are significant. In the kind of *sensus plenior* reading that goes on in many interpretive traditions, Kaiser fears that the New Testament is seen as cancelling out the meaning of the OT passage in its context. When it comes to prophecy and fulfillment, Kaiser attributes to the OT author special insight as they were 'more attuned to the continuing, unifying plan of God throughout history than many contemporary scholars or believers allow' (65). Overall, Kaiser is also very critical of letting second temple Jewish interpretive methods inform our understanding of how the NT authors used Scripture.

The second contributor, Darrell Bock, offers the title: 'Single Meaning, Multiple Contexts and Referents' discussing '*The New Testament's legitimate, accurate, and multifaceted use of the Old*'. In his model, he observes that in NT citations 'the sense of a passage is fixed, but referents shift in surprising (but scripturally anticipated) directions as a result of the progress of divine events' (113). Bock relies on a two-levels-of-meaning approach: 'historical-exegetical' and 'theological-canonical'. For Bock it is not an either-or: 'the text can yield meaning at either level and the meaning of the two readings are interrelated' (117-118).

Finally, Peter Enns' approach is 'Fuller Meaning, Single Goal' which involves '*A Christotelic approach to the New Testament use of the Old and its first-century interpretive environment*'. Enns stands, largely, on the opposite end as Kaiser. He argues that the NT must be read alongside second temple Jewish texts and was influenced by the same hermeneutical traditions and strategies. He also argues that it is simply too difficult and anachronistic to assume that the NT authors' use of the OT does and should conform to our modern standards of legitimacy. He accepts that, though sometimes the NT author was interested in the original context of the OT passage, it is not necessary. What was important was that the OT passage was read in light of Christ as *telos* to which the OT story is moving. In terms of whether or not it is

expected that modern interpreters should replicate the NT authors' hermeneutics, Enns argues that we are probably best off imitating their 'Christotelic goal' and eschatological focus, and not as much their specific hermeneutical methods.

The book ends with a very nice summary (along with a chart) of the viewpoints expressed and where each contributor falls on key issues in the discussion. It is not easy to declare one of the participants a clear 'winner' in this debate, as readers will naturally appreciate different arguments, viewpoints, and rebuttals. However, I suppose that many like myself will lean more towards Bock's tempered approach which neither goes as far as Kaiser in seeing the OT author as so forward-looking, nor as far as Enns in keeping the hermeneutic so distant and ambiguous. In any case, the exercise of simply reading these views, without feeling the need to make a decision on who was most convincing, is profitable and I commend this book to anyone interested in the New Testament's relationship to the Old Testament.

Nijay K Gupta, Seattle Pacific University

John P. Meier. *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus. Volume 4, Law and Love*. Anchor Yale Bible Reference Library. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009. Xiii + 735 pp., cloth, \$55.00.

The fourth volume of John P. Meier's *A Marginal Jew* is, possibly, the most exciting in this excellent series. Meier breaks new ground for understanding, and Jesus' role within, first century Palestinian Judaism as a teacher of *halakah*, or how to live, for, as Meier concludes: "No halakic Jesus, no historical Jesus" (648).

This simple conclusion does not, however, make the historian's task easier. To grasp the significance of Jesus' halakic teaching, one must consider "how Jesus can at one and the same time affirm the Law as given, as the normative expression of God's will for Israel, and yet in a few individual cases of legal areas ... teach ... what is contrary to the law simply on his own authority." To answer this question, Meier discusses the following topics: "Jesus and the Law – But What is the Law?" (26-73); "Jesus' Teaching on Divorce" (74-181); "The Prohibition on Oaths" (182-234); "Jesus and the Sabbath (235-341); "Jesus and Purity Laws" (342-477); "Widening the Focus: The Love Commandment of Jesus" (478-646); and "Conclusion" (647-663).

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As with any other first century Jewish teacher, the historical Jesus must have been concerned deeply with the legal discussions of *halakah*. Yet, Jesus stands alone in his prohibition of divorce and oaths. In these two instances, Jesus took positions that actually refute provisions in the Mosaic Law. “By completely forbidding divorce, Jesus dares to forbid what the law allows—and not only in some minor, obscure halakic observance but in one of the most important legal institutions in society” (113). In contrast to Deuteronomy 24:1 and the Mishnah tract *Gittin* (see especially *mGit.9:1*), Jesus prohibited divorce in Mark 10:2-12 on the grounds of God’s intention at creation. Meier concludes that this prohibition derives from the historical Jesus. Likewise, prohibition of oaths found in Matthew 5:34-37 (see also Jas. 5:12), likely goes back to the historical Jesus. In both cases, Jesus prohibited something not only allowed, but sometimes even required by the Mosaic Law.

Meier expresses less certainty that the gospel teachings on the purity laws and the love command derive from the historical Jesus. Mark 7:1-23 is deemed especially problematic. Meier concludes that, with the possible exception of 7:10-12, the condemnation of *qorban*, that Mark 7 is an early Christian dispute over the validity of Mosaic dietary laws read back into the life of Jesus.

Likewise, Jesus’ teaching on the love command is not as simple as it appears. Meier is confident that the unique combination of Deuteronomy 6:4-5 and Leviticus 19:18b (Mk. 12:28-34), which prioritizes love of God and neighbor as the greatest and second commandments, stems from the historical Jesus. On the other hand, the “golden rule” of Matthew 7:12 lacks theological justification and reflects common Jewish and Greco-Roman wisdom found in various sources. Therefore, Meier concludes the “golden rule” “cannot with confidence be ascribed to the historical Jesus” (557). On the other hand, the terse, “love your enemies” (Mt.5:44b//6:27b) is so unlike anything found in Judaism or Christianity that Meier concludes it derives from Jesus.

The Jesus that emerges will be disturbing to some readers. Far from being a philosopher expounding on the virtues of universal love, Jesus was a teacher deeply concerned with the legal debates of his time. He did not preach love for love’s sake. Instead, as a prophetic authority Jesus made stringent demands on the life of any would be disciple, “one that already is made possible by and responds to the power of God’s rule, present in Jesus’ preaching and actions” (658). This observation alone is important for anyone who wishes to

understand Jesus' teaching on the Law, and gives more than adequate justification for a careful reading and pondering of volume 4 of *A Marginal Jew*.
Russell Morton

John Ashton. *Understanding the Fourth Gospel*. Rev. ed. Oxford/ New York: Oxford University Press, 2007. Xx + 585 pp., cloth, \$49.95.

This book is a thorough revision of Ashton's early 1991 monograph. The result is that the reader is treated to the mature thought of a leading Johannine scholar. The book is well written and stimulating. Following an introduction (1-56), *Understanding the Fourth Gospel* is divided into two sections. The first, "Genesis" (57-302) examines the history of the Johannine community and the gospel's place in the development of Christian thought. The second, "Revelation" (303-529) is devoted to exegesis, considering the gospel's "dominating motif" (305).

Ashton accepts one of Bultmann's principle theories, that John's Gospel was composed over a period of years (47). This conclusion places his work in the mainstream of much of Johannine scholarship, represented by such writers as R. E. Brown, J. L. Martyn and B. Lindars. Ashton agrees with Martyn that John reflects the history of the theological development of the Johannine community in its controversy with the synagogue (100-35). For example, Ashton concludes that the "I am" sayings "sum up and express insights which can only have been reached through a profound reflection on the essence of Jesus' message" (128).

Yet, although the Gospel of John was composed over a period of time, well demonstrated by the literary seams and anomalies within the book, Ashton also notes major themes of the gospel, particularly its account of Jesus' words. Among the concepts to which Ashton devotes particular attention are "Messiah" (141-94); "Son of God" (195-239) and "Son of man" (240-80). These terms have their root in Jewish thought, but have been transformed in the course of the Johannine community's dialogue with the synagogue. The terms have very distinctive nuances. For example, "Messiah" is related to Jesus' actions, particularly his signs (183). "Son of God" while possibly Jesus' self designation, referring to his deep relationship with God, does not necessarily imply incarnation or explain John's high Christology. In the term "Son of man", on

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the other hand, the Johannine writer(s) utilize Daniel 7's designation of a heavenly figure and apply it to Jesus. Through the equation of the earthly Jesus with the heavenly Son of man, already prefigured in the Synoptic Gospels, impetus is given for further Christological development within the Fourth Gospel.

In part two, the implications of the Johannine community's theological developments are applied to the interpretation of the gospel. It is noted, for example, that John's gospel is not merely "realized eschatology," but also "apocalyptic" in the true sense of the term, an unveiling. In Jesus, God is not only revealed in history, but intervenes in the demonstration of divine glory (p. 329). But, this glory is not manifested in the usual way. It is revealed in Jesus' departure from this world. This theme is especially prominent in the farewell discourse of John 14-17, which Ashton views as a composite composition. Perhaps, in Ashton's view, the best way to view this material, particularly the promise of the Paraclete, is as an example of Jewish testamentary literature, such as found in the Testament of Moses, which is reproduced on pp. 454-59. The final discourse prepares the reader for the last narrative, the passion and resurrection. Ashton reads the resurrection symbolically, indicating that the community fulfills in its experience Jesus' role. Because the "Crucified One is rightly recognized as the Risen Lord; in pursuing its mission the community re-enacts the experience of Jesus himself" (486).

Ashton's book is thought provoking. Certainly a casual reader of John's gospel would fail to note the nuances that differentiate the titles Son of man, Messiah and Son of God. At the same time, there is something a bit dated in the presentation. Although a reworking of the earlier edition, the main conversation is still with Bultmann, Dodd, Martyn and Brown. Other writers, such as Moloney, while cited, are not engaged with same vigor. Thus, while Ashton's book is certainly worth reading, it needs to be a beginning point in the study of John's theology and message.

Russell Morton

Jerry Sumney, *Colossians: A Commentary*. New Testament Library. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008. Pp. 344, cloth, \$49.95.

The scholarly study of Colossians, especially in the form of commentaries, is currently blossoming. Students of this epistle benefit from excellent detailed commentary work from such eminent scholars as James D.G. Dunn, P.T. O'Brien, Markus Barth, and F.F. Bruce. In recent years, commentaries have also come from Marianne Meye Thompson, Ben Witherington III, and Charles Talbert. Can *another* commentary on Colossians be justified? In my estimation, Sumney's commentaries fits a niche that has not yet been filled, even with the challenge of working in a series known for its short page length.

Sumney's commentary does not offer verse-by-verse exegetical discussion with close attention to Greek words, grammatical details, and relevant parallel ancient texts. Given the style and constraints of the series, he offers, essentially, a 'forest' (without microscopic attention to the 'trees') perspective. In terms of method, it is more properly a social, rhetorical, and theological approach to Colossians. He accomplishes this with great aplomb. In terms of social context, he is particularly attentive to the Roman Empire and matters of politics (and especially the politics of identity and resistance to the *status quo*). As for rhetoric, he appeals to classical rhetorical categories and tools that the Colossian author appears to employ to persuade his readers. He is also sensitive to the overall theology of Colossians regularly discussing matters pertaining to Christology, theology (the study of God), ecclesiology, eschatology, and ethics.

Sumney stops once in a while to discuss a particular interpretive problem or important 'background' matter with an extended excursus. His discussion of the Colossian household code is especially excellent, as he draws from the latest research in political theory, sociology, and postcolonial criticism. One small concern kept coming to mind as I progressed through this commentary. Sumney leans towards viewing Colossians as pseudonymous, as many scholars do. In and of itself, this is not a surprise. However, it tends to color his comments, especially as Sumney can come across as depicting the author as using rhetorical tools to manipulate his readers into feeling, thinking, and doing the kinds of things the false writer desires.

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Nevertheless, Sumney does not limit or suppress the theological weight of this epistle, but capably raises important themes and motifs throughout the book. In the end, it is probably too brief and cursory to be consulted for general exegetical discussion, but especially when considering how Colossians is understood in the context of the Roman Empire, there is great wisdom in the pages of this commentary.

Nijay K. Gupta

Craig L. Blomberg & Mariam J. Kamell. *James*. Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008. 280 pp., hardback, \$24.99.

Although once dubbed the 'straw epistle' by Martin Luther, the epistle of James has enjoyed a resurgence of scholarly attention in the last several decades. From Dibelius' form critical analysis to liberationist readings such as *Poverty and Wealth* by Maynard-Reid, the letter continues to both allude and fascinate all types of readers. Blomberg and Kamell's work is a welcomed addition to the growing research on James.

The format for the commentary is reader-friendly and easily navigated. The introductory section covers both structure and authorship. The arguments for and against James (the brother of Jesus) as the author are presented in a clear and concise manner. The footnotes offer the reader additional discussion and an abundance of resources for further study.

Chapters I through II provide the exegetical analysis of the epistle of James. For each section of text, the authors first provide the literary context, a one to two-sentence main idea, a structure, and an exegetical outline. Additionally, a graphic layout of the English translation is presented in which the reader is able to see the main ideas of the passage (put in bold font) as well as how clauses and phrases are grouped together. This layout captures the Greek sentence structure and makes it accessible to readers who are not proficient in Greek. Each chapter also contains a verse by verse explanation based on the Greek text of James. The emphasis of the analysis is to convey meaning through an examination of "words and images, grammatical details, relevant OT and Jewish background to a particular concept, historical and cultural context, important text-critical issues, and various interpretational issues that surface" (II-12). Readers are invited to further reflect on issues that emerge out of the

text by means of an “In Depth” section. Finally, each chapter concludes with a segment on “Theology in Application” in which the authors summarize the theological message of the text under consideration and offer suggestions on how the message can speak to the church today.

The final chapter of the commentary presents the theology of James. The authors indicate that they use headings that emerge from an “inductive study of the text” and deal with the theological topics in an order that proceeds from “the most central to the most peripheral” (254). In this chapter, the themes presented are: wealth and poverty, trials and temptations, wisdom and speech, prayer, faith and works, law and word, God, Christology, eschatology, and a short section on other themes. These themes are presented in concise fashion and are not exhaustive treatments. The authors allow the text to speak rather than imposing their particular theological suppositions upon the reader.

The commentary also includes a helpful Scripture index, subject index, and author index as an aid to the reader.

The strength of this commentary series is its accessibility for all types of readers. For those with knowledge of Greek, this commentary would be a great resource for an advanced Greek course or Greek-based book study of James. For those without Greek proficiency, the benefits of the commentary can still be reaped through its clear presentation and analysis of the text and theology of James.

Melissa L. Archer, Pentecostal Theological Seminary

David A. deSilva. *Seeing Things John's Way: The Rhetoric of the Book of Revelation*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009. ix + 349 pp. \$39.95

In brief, deSilva's study aims to understand Revelation in its original setting. Distinctive to his study is his use of ancient Greco-Roman classical rhetoric. Within this exegetical framework, he examines the overall literary structure of Revelation, its social and literary settings, authorship, date of writing, as well as providing a critical discussion of popular interpretative approaches to Revelation. In a final provocative chapter, deSilva applies the fruits of his exegesis to modern readers through challenging them to see Revelation as protest literature against an Empire committed to domination.

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deSilva demonstrates how studying Revelation from the perspective of classical orators' use of ethos, pathos and logos is exegetically valuable. In terms of ethos, deSilva examines how the author of Revelation (John) establishes his credentials to present his views about the world through his understanding of Jesus' life, death and resurrection (chapters 5-6). In chapters 7-8, deSilva shows how John appeals to the emotions (pathos) of his hearers to encourage those who set themselves at odds with Rome and its policies. In chapters 9, 10 and 11, deSilva considers John's concern for logos showing how Revelation exhibits rational argumentation.

deSilva also discusses John's concern for ethos, pathos and logos within the framework of three central rhetorical genres: epideictic, deliberative, and forensic. He shows how they assist John in addressing his listeners in their various situations. He concludes that epideictic and deliberative genres are the most prominent. This might seem a surprising conclusion to reach given John's predilection for forensic language. However, deSilva argues that John uses forensic topics for deliberative purposes calling Christians to withdraw from Rome.

In a final chapter, deSilva responds to criticism that Revelation is violent and anti-Christian. In particular he tackles criticism against John being too authoritarian in regards to the churches he writes to (315). He also takes issue with those who attack John's use of feminine imagery believing that it contributes to the alienation of women readers. Without denying the valid concerns of commentators regarding how such language can be used for purposes of domination, deSilva is concerned to avoid reading Revelation outside of its own literary context. Therefore, deSilva's careful application of classical rhetoric places him in a good position to respond to these issues in a way that places John in his first-century context rather than imposing anachronistic ideas or questions on Revelation which John would never have imagined or asked.

Although this book is technical, it is lucid and can, therefore, act as introductory to Revelation students but also stimulate and challenge graduates and established scholars. An example of this lucidity can be found on pages 25-26 where an overview of each chapter of the book is provided. Better still, it is accompanied with questions that deSilva himself has in mind. Students, as part of developing good reading strategies, may choose to return to these pages to be reminded of central questions deSilva tackles.

An obvious critical question we might ask of deSilva is whether he errs in understanding Revelation as addressing only Christian communities living in Asia Minor? It is a common view that John has in mind the whole of world history and not only the seven churches in Asia Minor. However, Revelation, for deSilva, arises from the late first-century context empowered by its own meta-narrative, i.e. the Hebrew Bible and Jesus. For deSilva, John does not envisage the dark ages, Sadam Hussein, 9/11, or the present Middle East crisis. He draws upon the Hebrew Bible to demonstrate how the seven churches in Asia-Minor are mirrored in Israel's exile in Egypt, Assyria or Babylon.

Some scholars might question deSilva's use of ancient classic rhetoric for exegesis. It would, however, be unfair to accuse deSilva of imposing foreign classical text books of rhetoric. To this extent deSilva application of classical rhetoric is as an exegetical tool to enable modern readers to cross from their own setting to that of first-century Asia Minor. To this extent deSilva is exegetically sound in his use of classical rhetoric framework.

The only downside I see of deSilva's application of classical rhetoric is that other heuristic tools are neglected. This is demonstrated in deSilva's index of ancient texts where the Dead Sea Scrolls hardly get a mention. The lack of attention to the War Scroll, for example, which in view of Bauckham's work on Revelation as a Christian War Scroll (*Climax of Prophecy* Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993: 210-237) is surprising. Surely the well-known Jewish notion of God's justice being established through holy war would be of key significance in understanding Revelation's literary conventions. I would like to know why classical rhetoric is of more importance than the more socially and culturally related writings from Qumran.

Overall, I highly recommend this book as a major contribution to our understanding of Revelation in its own context. This book is the product of a senior scholar who has invested much of his time on Revelation and must be taken seriously.

Mark Bredin, Tutor for Extension Studies, St John's Theological College, Nottingham, and associate lecturer Cambridge University

Book Reviews

Diogenes Allen and Eric O. Springsted. *Philosophy for Understanding Theology*, 2nd ed. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007. 252 pp., paper, \$29.95.

Philosophy for Understanding Theology is a most impressive pedagogical product from Diogenes Allen and Eric O. Springsted. The aim of the book matches well with the title. They concentrate on philosophical concepts that lead the theological student into the ideas, logic, and arguments that are helpful in explaining Christian doctrines and have been catalysts for differentiation and distinction within the entire Christian tradition.

The preface states clearly the motivation behind the book. Allen and Springsted acknowledge the problems that have arisen in seminaries and divinity schools due to the lack of philosophical education. The question of faith and reason has been translated by some into the exclamation theology versus philosophy. As for others the question has lingered inconspicuously in the background, never making its way to the fore. Still, other theology students recognize the importance of philosophy, but have not had the advantage of adequate philosophical studies, not to mention any that are immediately relevant to their theological concerns.

Allen begins the introduction by defining and demonstrating what *ontology* and *epistemology* are. He smartly weaves these concepts as enduring threads throughout the work. The first three chapters deal with Plato and the Platonic tradition. Allen segues seamlessly into a treatment of Aristotle and likewise from there into Medieval Scholasticism. He then focuses the book onto Aquinas' natural theology and the Barthian and process critiques of it. Chapter seven backtracks to the advent of nominalism and treats conceptual trajectories, or perhaps commonalities, that take place in the Renaissance and the Scientific Revolution. The next chapter succinctly treats Rationalism, Empiricism, and the Enlightenment. Having ended that chapter with Hume's perplexing problems, he spends chapter nine on Kant. The subsequent chapter moves to Hegel's turn to history: his attempt to circumvent the severe limitations that Kant put on knowledge. Chapter eleven treats an array of issues in contemporary philosophy including existentialism, phenomenology, and hermeneutics. The last two chapters, not found in the first edition, and written by Springsted, deal with postmodern philosophy on a significant array of issues, such as hermeneutics, social issues, and physical science.

The authors do not stray from the original impetus of the book in all that they include and the figures covered. Although, their interlocutors go unnamed, they do overturn some common misperceptions in theological literature circulating today such as the claims that ancient Greek thought is purely cognitive and the unfortunate identification by some of Ockham's nominalism with contemporary thought structures of the same name.

The flow of the book is smooth. The authors repeat important points frequently that serve as markers that remind the reader where he or she has been and is headed. Also, they will occasionally articulate important questions that bear on a Christian assessment of a particular philosophy or figure, even when they do not have the pages to respond. The quasi-chronological treatment of philosophy—as opposed to a purely chronological or purely topical approach—is effective in drawing out the impacts of the various trajectories or undercurrents whose full force is not felt until after a significant lapse in history. In short, they do not unnecessarily interrupt the flow, eschewing prolixity and the dizzying effects that detailed histories of scholarship would have on the philosophical theology neophyte.

A few specific highlights of the book are in order. Chapter four is a concise explanation of the use of philosophy within the mysteries of the Trinity and, albeit briefly, the incarnation. Allen masterfully demonstrates in a few pages the appropriation of Aristotelian language and concepts by the Cappadocians in the formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity. The book's last chapters, twelve and thirteen, on postmodernism, will be found invaluable by the student trying to get her bearings in philosophical discussions today. Here Springsted demonstrates the effects of postmodernistic thought resonating through various fields of learning. The addition of these last two chapters into the second edition round out the book and bring it up to date.

There are a few minor points where the book could be improved. First, although there are good reasons to treat Barth and process thought in the context of Aquinas' natural theology, there are more reasons to treat them after or alongside Hegel, a scarcely mentioned Schleiermacher, and other post-enlightenment philosophers. Secondly, Barth and process thought should have been treated in more detail due to their respective impacts on 20th-century theology. Points like these are minor however when taking into account the authors' obvious erudition and what they have accomplished in a mere 250 pages.

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Finally, there is the aspect of how best to use this book. It is definitely not for the seminary student with virtually no background in philosophy to pick up and read straight through. Rather it lends itself to being used in a couple different scenarios. It serves as a primer for certain figures, epochs, connections, and debates. The index may prove adequate in some instances for tracing out the views throughout the history of philosophical theology on a particular topic. Also, it could be used as a fine seminary coursework text for those informed students that have had the sufficient theological background such that they are already asking the questions Allen and Springsted are treating and who can fill in the gaps for themselves in what the authors do not cover. These two manners of using the book just described will help the student glean the most since the authors draw out important clues and connections in philosophical development whose import on theology they do not always state. Theology students would do themselves a great service in making it their goal to eventually make it through this book and grasp each chapter's salient points.

Jonathan S. Marko, Calvin Theological Seminary

James K. Mead, *Biblical Theology: Issues, Methods, and Themes*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007. Pp. 328. paper, \$29.95.

One could say that in recent years 'biblical theology' (BT) as a discipline and topic has made a comeback. This is due, in part, to postmodernity and its challenge to the reign of historical criticism which, in many of its manifestations, found the pursuits of biblical theologians naïve and methodologically suspicious. Another reason why BT has been leased a new life is the recent interest in the *theological interpretation of Scripture*, inspired in part by the neo-orthodoxy of Karl Barth who passionately promoted a God-centered view of theology (versus an anthropocentric perspective) and also Brevard Childs who fostered an appreciation for studying the Bible in its canonical form. Thus, the time is ripe to take the discussion of this topic further.

In this very useful introductory book, James Mead offers a way into the discussion for the uninitiated. As the subtitle explains, he presents the major issues, methods, and themes discussed within the circle of those who have contributed to the topic of BT. The real beauty of this book is that Mead covers nearly everything one might need to know about BT in its history of

interpretation while also presenting the information in a very simple and straightforward way. In six chapters he covers these topics, respectively: the definition of BT, the history of its study, issues raised in BT, the methods used, themes that are developed through BT, and where the subject may go in the future.

In the first chapter Mead defines BT simply as a discipline that 'seeks to identify and understand the Bible's theological message, that is, what the Bible says about God and God's relation to all creation, especially to humankind' (2). He deals also with the matter of the canon, its authors and framers, the overall unity of the Bible (or lack thereof) and some preliminary hermeneutical matters. Not much here is surprising.

I found the second chapter, on the history of interpretation, to be very stimulating, for Mead begins, not with modern scholarship, but by going back to how Scripture interprets itself ('intrabiblical theological reflection'), moving on to the 'growth of the canon', into medieval BT hermeneutics, through the Reformation, ending with Post-Reformation scholarship and those beyond. He aptly concludes that pre-critical scholarship raised many of the same issues, even if only in a cursory fashion, that occupied the Enlightenment era in the study of BT.

The third and fourth chapters, on issues and methods related to BT, are quite wide-ranging and deal with matters such as scope, contextual issues for the modern interpreter, the problem of organizing a BT, and certain hermeneutical and epistemological challenges to undertaking the task of BT. In these sections it is evident that Mead has distilled a massive amount of research, frequently summarizing the work of James Barr, Walter Brueggemann, Rudolf Bultmann, Brevard Childs, Walter Eichrodt, Johann Gabler, Gerhard Hasel, Gerhard von Rad, and Charles Scobie (to offer only a sampling). Such a synthesis is an impressive resource with great insight regarding common ground and divergences between these scholars.

Mead offers his own brief overview of 'themes' in BT in the fifth chapter arranged under three main categories: 'The God attested in BT', 'Living in Relationship with God', and 'Living in Relationship with other Human Being'. The final chapter offers 'prospects' for BT and treats, again, the areas of definition, history of BT, issues, methods, and themes.

I detected only two very minor shortcomings of the book. First, given the constant interaction with numerous significant BT scholars, I was surprised

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at and frustrated with the use of endnotes versus footnotes. I personally can never see justification for using endnotes in an academic book unless the notes are entirely personal anecdotes and points of clarification (rather than citations of sources). In fact, there are many times when Mead quotes a scholar, but does not name him or her in the main text. One is left to flip to the back of the book to even discover the author being cited. Secondly, because Mead is interacting with so many scholars, he has a tendency to lump many people together in categories that only loosely unify a group of scholars. This labeling, though, is almost practically impossible to avoid, but it can come across as inaccurate at times.

The above concerns notwithstanding, I learned a lot from this book and I will turn to it time and time again as a reference for the viewpoints of various scholars of BT. It is an excellent text and would make a very useful textbook for a course on biblical theology.

Nijay K. Gupta

Everett Ferguson. *Baptism in the Early Church: History, Theology, and Liturgy in the First Five Centuries*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009. 975 pp., hardcover, \$60.00.

It would be difficult to commend highly enough the work that Everett Ferguson's *Baptism in the Early Church* represents. Here we have a comprehensive examination of the texts, history, and developments of baptism in the Christian tradition during the first five centuries. Just like Ferguson's earlier volume, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, readers will find the immense benefit of this book to be in the synthesis of ideas, not innovation.

After surveying the scholarly landscape with regard to studies on baptism (pp. 1-22), Ferguson begins his own undertaking by exploring antecedents to Christian baptism. Included in this section are explorations of Greco-Roman washings for purification and Jewish ritual washings. Because the use of water as a means for purification is "widespread in the religions of the world" (p. 25), it should come as no surprise that many have drawn parallels between Christian baptism and pagan religious ceremonies which pre-date baptism. Addressing this common correlation, Ferguson notes that such comparisons rest on blending the "preliminary baths with effects of the initiation

itself...or...on late Christian writers who Christianized the significance of the ceremonies” (p.29). In his detailed chapter on the use of the *Bapt-* root in Classical and Hellenistic Greek, Ferguson concludes that the primary meaning of *baptizō* is “to dip” implying submersion or a thorough overwhelming of the object by an element (p. 59). This section concludes with a study of the meaning and manner of John’s baptism in the New Testament and Josephus. Interestingly, Ferguson asserts two functions of John’s baptism which are (admittedly) provocative and contested: initiation into “true Israel” and protestation of the current temple establishment (p. 93).

Part two explores Christian baptism throughout the New Testament by examining each of the relevant texts within their canonical framework. The treatment begins with the baptism of Jesus, which he sees as a transition between John’s baptism and Christian baptism (p. 99) and continues to examine early textual interpretations (pp. 113-123) and artistic representations (pp.123-131) of that baptism. Ferguson’s analysis of the Pauline baptism texts concludes by emphasizing the role of the association established in baptism with the death and resurrection of Christ which draw out the themes of forgiveness of sins and new life in the Spirit (p. 164). The book of Acts provides numerous texts to survey which aid in discussing the manner of baptism in the early church. Ferguson concludes that baptism was performed “in Jesus’ name” and was always accompanied by gospel proclamation (p. 185). Further, human response was typically required and a confessed faith was called upon. Thus, Ferguson asserts that paedobaptism should not be inferred from any New Testament text (p. 198).

In Ferguson’s exploration of baptismal practices in the late second and third centuries, he explores the roots of paedobaptism and offers an explanation of its’ origin by appealing to various cases of emergency baptisms of sick children (p. 378-79, 856-57). The primary evidence he cites in favor of this conclusion are Christian inscriptions (typically gravestones) which often have a close correlation between a date of baptism and a date of death (p. 372). Although infant baptism is not well-attested as a normal practice in the first centuries, by the fourth century it appears to have emerged as a more routine practice (p. 379, 627).

Although a book of this size and learnedness does not make for light reading, the depth and breadth of detail make it an incredibly useful reference tool for understanding the nature and development of baptism at various stages

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in early Christian tradition. The book is logically laid out—section divisions by century—with chapters on specific corpora of literature. Most sections conclude with summary remarks, drawing together all the information gleaned in a helpful format. This text will surely find its place as the “go to” volume on Christian baptism in earliest Christianity.

Seth M. Ehorn, Wheaton College Graduate School

Jerome H. Neyrey, *Give God the Glory: Ancient Prayer and Worship in Cultural Perspective*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007. Pp. 273, paper, \$20.00.

It is a sad fact that the topic of prayer is very rarely ever studied by Biblical scholars. Therefore, I was eager to read Neyrey’s treatment of prayer from a social-scientific perspective and his research does not disappoint. Neyrey has often argued that full recognition should be given to the fact that ancient Mediterranean culture is ‘radically “other” in regards to ours’ and, thus, insights can and should be gained from applying models and concepts from the social sciences (and especially cultural anthropology) to the biblical texts (see 1-2 in introduction). In this particular book he focuses exclusively on prayer with a view towards its shape, meaning, and social dimensions as discussed in the New Testament and in early Christianity in general.

The first chapter seeks to appropriately define prayer with the use of ‘social and cultural lenses’ (7). He appropriates Bruce Malina’s model of analyzing prayer as an ‘act of communication’ that involves a (1) sender, (2) message, (3) medium, (4) receiver, and (5) purpose (8-10). He also discusses *types* of prayer: petitionary, regulatory, interactional, self-focused, heuristic, imaginative/contemplative, and acknowledgement. In this chapter he also engages with the question of how the giving of honor (ascribed and/or achieved) figures into ancient conceptions of prayer.

In the second chapter, Neyrey explores ‘the cultural world of the prayer’. Stepping away from the topic of prayer in particular, he introduces the modern reader to the important cultural models that would have defined their world at the time. Therefore, he discusses value systems, honor and shame, types of exchanges, forms of reciprocity, patron-client relationships, and rituals. Under media of exchange, I found most interesting Neyrey’s description of Talcott Parsons four-fold categories: power (by authority), commitment (by

close relationship [i.e. friend, brother, lover), inducement (by payment/tangible benefit), and influence (by logic/transfer of information). Neyrey points out that, when it comes to prayer, the one praying can hardly use any of these to impact a deity except 'commitment'. He notes that, when biblical pray-ers refer to the God who chose his people or God the *Father*, this is an appeal based on commitment (see 45-46).

Chapters 3 and 4 attempt to demonstrate and apply these cultural models to particular prayers in the NT and early Christian literature. Chapter 3 gives special attention to the Lord's Prayer. In the fourth chapter, Neyrey focuses on doxological prayers and the way that they enhance the glory and honor of God by labeling him 'first' (or 'only'). The fifth chapter reflects more widely on the topic of 'worship' from a cultural perspective. Neyrey highlights, not only how pray-ers communicate with the deity, but how their god communicates with them. In the case of 'God speaking to the Jesus group', Neyrey outlines these forms: hearing the Scriptures, hearing the words of Jesus, hearing the deeds of Jesus, hearing Jesus honored, homilies to the Holy Ones, exhortations, and prophecy. The sixth and seventh chapters zoom in on three case studies in prayer and worship: John 14-17, the *Didache* and Justin's *First Apology*.

In my opinion, Neyrey has succeeded in doing what he intended to do, that is: 'to use appropriate models from the social sciences to interpret a wide variety of materials that are generally lumped together as "petition" and "worship"' (245). In studies of this kind, it is not uncommon to see religious language and behavior de-theologized and dissected in such a way as to explain away the social dimensions of the literature, setting aside its metaphysical orientation. Neyrey does a fine job shedding light on these texts using social-scientific models without immediately making conclusions about the question of God. One of the most attractive features about Neyrey's writing style is its accessibility. I would be happy to recommend this to both a research scholar and a theology student. If I have one small quibble with the book, it is only that I had wished the chapters were more streamlined, such that they flow easily from one to the next. Nevertheless, this is a much-needed treatment of a very important topic of Christian theology and biblical studies and I whole-heartedly recommend it to all.

Nijay K. Gupta

Book Reviews

Peter Vardy. *An Introduction to Kierkegaard*. Peabody: Hendrickson, 2009. 109 pp., paper, \$14.95.

In my mind, there are two kinds of people: those that understand philosophers and those that do not. I am one of the latter. Yet I recognize that so many philosophers, especially several Christian philosophers, have made a huge impact on western thought. Thus, I have always been interested in philosophy, but this area has yet remained largely inaccessible to me. When I saw this book, therefore, I had hope that someone could invite me to join the conversation without too much intimidation. Peter Vardy has not let me down!

Vardy's *An Introduction to Kierkegaard* is basic, but he is full of passion and excitement about Kierkegaard that his world and thoughts come alive for the reader. And, at just over one hundred pages, it is a modest length that enables one to finish the book rather quickly. He begins with some biographical notes regarding Søren Kierkegaard's upbringing, education, and key experiences before spending several chapters on his writings. The biographical elements are so critical to understanding his philosophy as he was a tortured and troubled soul with many skeletons in his closet and events that affected his view of God, humanity, and the world around him.

When it comes to Kierkegaard's actual philosophy, Vardy starts broadly with his view of faith and reason and the nature of truth. Then he goes into the three life stages of aesthetic, ethical, and religious (the first two leading into despair). Finally, he handles miscellaneous subjects such as works of love, inter-religious dialogue, and Kierkegaard's relationship with the church.

Vardy's writing style is very attractive, as he regularly draws modern illustrations (Harry Potter, Indiana Jones, *The Truman Show*, etc...) to demonstrate some aspect of Kierkegaard's thought or argumentation. Also, his work is not only descriptive, but he sometimes corrects false notions of this philosopher. For example, Vardy argues that Kierkegaard's existentialism is largely misunderstood as his view of subjectivity and personal belief is not as universal categorically as others have been led to believe.

If you are like me, finding philosophers dense and difficult to comprehend, I commend this book to you. Vardy has brought this great thinker to my level without too much reduction, a feat not accomplished by many theologians.

Nijay K. Gupta

Elizabeth Conde-Frazier, S. Steve Kang, and Gary A. Parrett. *A Many Colored Kingdom: Multicultural Dynamics for Spiritual Formation*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1994. 224 pp., paper, \$24.00.

The book engages three professors who want to bridge the gap in spiritual formation and building relationships across cultures. Conde-Frazier is a Puerto Rican-American religious education professor; Kang is a Korean-American Christian formation and ministry professor; and Parrett is a white American educational ministry professor. All three have a passion for spiritual formation, yet come from different cultural backgrounds that shape their view of the subject. "This book is both an exploration and an experiment" (7). With three diverse professors discussing spiritual formation, it creates an experiment in which one can explore spiritual formation from different angles, yet bringing all to the importance of reconciliation with one another.

With such diversity, it is important to clarify terms such as "culture," "race," "ethnicity," "class," and "gender;" which is accomplished in the introduction of the book" (17-21).

Chapter one reveals three stories that portray the differences in the authors' lives which account for their perspective and passion on spiritual formation and multiculturalism.

Written by Kang and Parrett, chapter two explains, "Personal experience may play a key part in forming conviction commitments regarding issues of culture and ethnicity. Far more significant, however must be the reading of Scripture" (51). Thus, Scripture reveals that Christ is "Lord of the Nations" which is an inclusion statement (51).

Chapter three is about the cross and reconciliation with "neighbor," "stranger," and "to the ends of the earth" (65-70). Parrett ends this chapter with "unity" giving a compelling argument for reconciliation (75-78).

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Chapter four considers three “theological frameworks for kingdom citizens” (79). Kang presents the faith community and how it develops people. Exploration of “theologies for kingdom-building Christian formation” is considered (88). He ends with “critical pedagogies” that will contend for “social reconstruction” (104).

Chapter five embarks on two subjects; “prejudice and conversion” (105). Conde-Frazier writes, “Christian education in a context that is diverse in terms of gender, class, culture, and ethnicity requires a multicultural sensitive pedagogy, or pedagogy of reconciliation” (105). Professors need to teach students to “recognize the image of God reflected in each culture” (107). Prejudice must be eradicated. Conversion must be embraced, which is “turning to new patterns and habits” (119).

Chapter six considers the need for culturally sensitive ministers. Parrett states one must be “secure in the love of God” (125). Freedom to love others comes easily once one is secure in God’s love.

In chapter seven, Kang imparts, “the more self-discloser and embracing of one another there is – in terms of sharing the values, assumptions, and life views that are being sanctified through the work of the Triune God – the more potential there is for formation to take place among citizens of the kingdom community” (153). In a learning community, the teacher and the student are learning together. It is a “mutual formation process” in which the teacher is a “model and friend,” an “enabler,” an “innovator,” and a “questioner” (155-166). Although learning should be mutual, it is not always lived out in the classroom; thus hindering true kingdom community.

Chapter eight, written by Conde-Frazier, brings a “spiritual journey as the framework” for the previous chapters (167). It is contended that “hospitality” is the beginning work of multiculturalism (171). “Encounters” with those of other cultures involves being open to others, listening to their stories, and even the chance to ask questions (176). Shalom is the ultimate response. “It is the biblical vision in which all of creation is one...” (206).

This book concludes with all three authors giving their final thoughts on how to live out the biblical vision of living in *A Many Colored Kingdom*. Although it is a well written, thought provoking book with a strong multicultural value, it would only improve by having an African-American voice.

Overall there are solid teaching principles throughout the book with underpinnings of theological and biblical values. Strong support is given with a

dynamic approach from three perspectives, yet tying it all together for the advancement of the kingdom of God. This is a must read for every professor as it will allow readers to consider their own teaching and approach to students of varied backgrounds, as well as how to bring community in a greater sense to the classroom.

Dawn Morton

Stephen Bourke, *et al.* *The Middle East: The Cradle of Civilization Revealed* (Ancient Civilizations). London: Thames & Hudson/ Lane Cove, NSW, Australia: Global Book Publishing, 2008. 368 pp., cloth, \$24.99.

This lavishly illustrated, coffee-table type volume is ideal for browsing and exploration for all ages. The organizers drew on the expertise of fourteen scholars from Australia, Canada, Israel, Great Britain, and the United States. The contents are divided into seven sections, given here with subsections: Introducing the Middle East (what is the Middle East?; peoples and cultures; economy and agriculture; water's importance, archaeological finds), The Fertile Crescent: Birthplace of Agriculture (early humans, advent of agriculture, Neolithic cultures), Mesopotamia: The Cradle of Civilization (urban expansion, emerging city-states, Ur), Power Struggles: Kingdoms at War (growing city-states, western states, Assyria's rise), Masters of the Known World: The Age of Empires (Assyrian and its rivals, Medes and Babylonians, Persians), Under Occupation: Hellenistic and Roman Conquerors (Hellenistic conquerors, Romans and Parthians, Byzantines and Sasanians), Search for Origins: The Rediscovery of the Middle East (travelers to and antique land, first discoveries, developing a discipline). The book concludes with a three-page chronology spanning from the Paleolithic period to the spread of Islam and the collapse of the Umayyad dynasty, a two-page bibliography for further reading, a subject index, and acknowledgements.

The volume is aimed at the popular rather than a scholarly audience, with clear, succinct writing and no footnote references. Every page has at least one full color photograph or map, and there are numerous sidebars to delve further into particular topics of interest. As is clear from the contents, the Bible is not the main focus, but biblical characters and events receive mention, and the volume serves well to place them in their historical and geographical context.

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No matter how literate we are, we all like pictures to accompany words, and this work does an admirable job providing both. It will be a welcome addition to church as well as personal libraries, and will make teaching and learning come alive.

David W. Baker

Mordechai Cogan, *The Raging Torrent: Historical Inscriptions from Assyria and Babylonia Relating to Ancient Israel*. A Carta Handbook. Jerusalem: Carta [distributed by Eisenbrauns, Winona Lake, IN], 2008. Xiii+250 pp., hard, \$64.00.

The author, Professor of Biblical History at The Hebrew University in Jerusalem, is very well qualified to produce this work. Among his many works are commentaries on I and II Kings in the Anchor Bible series, and this volume continues his interest in the historical background of the Hebrew Bible.

The volume consists of translation and comment on 47 texts. They are organized into 12 chapters covering the period from the 9th to 6th centuries BC, namely the reigns of Shalmaneser III, Adad-nerari III, Shalmaneser IV, Tiglath-pileser III, Sargon II, Sennacherib, Esarhaddon, Ashurbanipal, Nebuchadnezzar II, and Cyrus, as well as the Assyrian Eponym and Neo-Babylonian Chronicles.

Each chapter begins with a brief introduction to the ruler and his period. Each text also has its own introduction, pointing out ties to the Hebrew Bible (among other things), a translation by the author from the most recent scholarly text edition, an explanatory commentary, and a reference section which includes bibliographic information for the official text edition, previous translations, and secondary studies of the piece. Interspersed are useful black-and-white figures of the rulers and material relevant to the texts, as well as appropriate maps. The book concludes with a brief appendix concerning the few cuneiform royal inscriptions found in Israel, a glossary, chronological tables from the 9th-6th centuries of kings of Assyria, the Chaldean dynasty of Babylonia, Egypt, and Israel and Judah, and indices of biblical, classical and Mishnaic sources, divine names, persons, and geographic and ethnic names.

This volume cannot replace the standard sources such as J. B. Pritchard's *Ancient Near Eastern Texts relating to the Old Testament* of William Hallo and K. Lawson Younger's 3-volume *Context of Scripture*, nor does it set out to do so. It is an excellent, more limited collection of historical texts which

shed light on the important monarchical period in Israel. While of use to scholars, it is also accessible for non-specialists who have an interest in either history or the Bible.

David W. Baker

G. M. Grena. *Lmlk—A Mystery Belonging to the King*, vol. 1. Redondo Beach, CA: 4000 Years of Writing History, 2004, corrected 2010. 425 pp., hardback, \$199.99.

This interesting volume is a labor of love by its author, a professional engineer with an interest in the topic of seal impressions from around Jerusalem reading *lmlk*- ‘belonging to / for the king’. It is a self-published work by one who seems self-taught in the field. Grena draws material of many kinds from numerous sources, and the book is supplemented by a web-site (www.lmlk.com) where much of the material is available. In contrast to most published research, the copyright page states “This document...is public domain that may be copied & distributed without restrictions.”

The chapters (which he calls ‘layers’, based on archaeological excavations) include a discussion of the author’s own background; a very brief discussion of archaeology, written artifacts, and biblical places, including a map and list of sites from which *lmlk* impressions have been recovered; relevant iconography; an analysis of the paleography (letter forms) of the inscriptions and a discussion of the biblical and extrabiblical uses of the words which they contain; various seal types; the jars upon which the seals were impressed; the history of discussion of the impressions; bibliography of discussions including numerous excerpts (left untranslated if not in English) from most of the pieces, arranged by period: 1870-1899 (11 works), 1899-1925 (38 works), 1925-1960 (44 works), 1960-1975 (56 works), 1976-1994 (71 works), and 1995- 2003 (36 works), plus 5 pages of supplemental bibliography; stratigraphy of the seal impressions’ find sites; suggestions concerning their meaning and use; a record of current locations of the impressions. The book closes with a subject index, and has an accompanying CD which contains the entire book in PDF and Microsoft Word format (so making it searchable and able to be copied), high-resolution copies of the figures used in the book, and some sample music tracks to provide background for what the author describes as “not going to be your ordinary scholarly reference work.”

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The volume provides a fascinating introduction to the topic, and shows what amateurs in the field can do to make scholarship more accessible. The cost of the volume works against this access for most, but the web-site can be used by everyone.

David W. Baker

Victor H. Matthews, *Studying the Ancient Israelites: A Guide to Sources and Methods*. Grand Rapids, Mich./Nottingham, England: Baker Academic/Apollos, 2007. Pp. 232, paper, \$24.99.

As Victor H. Matthews, professor of religious studies at Missouri State University, remarks in the introduction of this book, there is a lack of works concerning the Israelites in their ancient Near Eastern environment (7). In a form intended for students and educated laypeople, this volume seeks to fill this gap by examining the ancient Israelites in their historical, literary, and social context.

The first chapter of this book, "Historical Geography," deals with a topic often neglected by biblical scholars. Yet, as Matthews notes, it is foundational for understanding the ancient Israelites, especially for those of us unfamiliar with an agrarian society (19-21). Scientific investigation of topography and climate, archaeological surveys and excavations, and analysis of ancient maps and historical records all contribute to understanding the geographical layout of ancient Palestine (21-25). Within this framework, one is able to more fully appreciate, for example, the meaning of the expression "from Dan to Beersheba" in the Old Testament (Judg 20:1; 1 Sam 3:20; 2 Sam 3:10; 17:11; 24:2, 15) or the significance of the locations to which David brought his army when Absalom revolted (2 Sam 15-17).

The next chapter, "Archaeology," begins with a discussion of the limitations of archaeology. Matthews stresses that, because of these limitations, archaeology cannot be used to prove the Bible (60). After describing a typical excavation in Palestine (65-67), the author summarizes the types of artifacts that can be discovered in an excavation: pottery and ceramic typology, architecture (both domestic and monumental), tombs, and ancient Near Eastern texts such as Shalmaneser's Black Obelisk inscription or the Arad Letters. According to Matthews, each of these archaeological data "is one of the pieces of the puzzle"

that “adds a dimension to what can be learned through close study and careful attention to details” (89).

Matthews subsequently turns to the literature of the ancient Near East, including the Old Testament. He emphasizes the need to read these ancient texts from an etic perspective (92-93). Because as interpreters we are removed from the society and culture of the ancient Near East, a variety of methods must be employed to understand the biblical text, including textual criticism, form criticism, structural criticism, and social-scientific criticism. This analytical approach “does not dismiss the Bible but rather gives a better sense of the real value that the Bible holds for a reconstruction of the world of ancient Israel” (99).

The fourth chapter focuses on the application of social-scientific criticism to studying the ancient Israelites. This approach entails identifying the different layers of cultural meaning in the biblical text, best discerned by determining the various perspectives of the Old Testament’s authors and editors (126-27). Matthews next provides a list of sociological questions that should be asked of the biblical text (132-58) that includes a summary of ancient Israelite social institutions, including marriage, inheritance, and patron-client relationships.

The last chapter deals with historiography and the Hebrew Bible. To demonstrate the “continuous, dynamic process” of the historian in interpreting ancient records (163), several examples of the recording and interpreting process (royal record keeping at Mari, Israelite administration and *lmk* seals, and Sennacherib’s campaign against Judah in 701 BCE) are provided. Asking “what do we really know about the history of ancient Israel?” Matthews contends that the biblical text, ancient Near Eastern inscriptions, and archaeological data support the possibility of writing a history of Israel (181-83). Lastly, in an analysis of 1 Kings 16, the author concludes with a useful example of how dialogue should proceed between the biblical text, archaeology, and extrabiblical literary sources (191-95).

This volume provides a concise introduction to students of the Hebrew Bible and ancient Near East. It is written clearly with many examples that give the reader a better idea of how to apply the discussed concepts to the biblical text. The numerous sidebars interspersed throughout the book are also quite helpful. Advanced scholars may find this book’s contents too elementary, but

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beginning students and their professors will welcome this work as a useful educational resource for studying the ancient Israelites.

Benjamin J. Noonan, Hebrew Union College

Ronald J. Sider, *I am not a Social Activist: Making Jesus the Agenda*. Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 2008. Pp. 214, paper, 16.99.

To anyone familiar with Ron Sider's work with Evangelicals for Social Action (which he helped to found in 1973) or his array of more than thirty books - most of which address social issues - the book's title is intriguing. Has he changed his mind? Or is he correcting a stereotype that does not reveal his true theological passion? The subtitle, "Making Jesus the Agenda," suggests the second option gets nearer to the purpose of the book.

The book is a collection of forty-four editorials that Dr. Sider wrote for *Prism* magazine (published by Evangelicals for Social Action) between November 1993 and February 2004. The articles are arrayed under eight subject headings: Jesus, Be the Center; Family and Marriage; Theological Fragments; Combining Evangelism and Social Action; Evangelicalism; Wealth, Poverty, Materialism and Sabbath; Peace and Nonviolence; and Thinking Politically. The diversity of the topics indicates the breadth of his concerns. That is why he cannot be identified as a "one issue person."

He begins his selections with four articles which set forth clearly what are his deepest theological convictions. Jesus is the center of the Bible's authoritative revelation. His life, death, resurrection, Pentecostal gifting, and second coming make him the mediator of redemption and establish his Lordship in the Kingdom of God, which he both inaugurated and will ultimately consummate. Christians are the people who have experienced the liberating power of Christ's resurrection and the enabling power of the Holy Spirit. Apart from this there is no effective witness and no liberating social action. Christians are those who already begin the practices of the Kingdom of God. That is why their lifestyles are so different than those still held captive by the kingdom of darkness. Jesus is the center.

I have personally known Ron from his first academic position as Director of Messiah College's Philadelphia campus in cooperation with Temple University. We were colleagues at Messiah and team-taught courses on

contemporary Christianity and Christian social responsibility. He has grown through his vast experiences and constant writings over the last four decades, but he has not wavered on his core Christian convictions and commitments.

From the beginning of his career he has worked to right what has been the disastrous division of Christianity for more than a century – the divorce of evangelism and social justice. Ron has always believed the gospel of Jesus mandates both and that to slight either is a perversion of the truth. This present book is meant to demonstrate his life-long effort to combine both concerns. Those who know Ron personally testify that this quest is more than an academic flag. He, his wife, Arbutus, their grown children, and the Christians who work with them in inner-city Philadelphia live their lives by these principles.

I heartily recommend this book to all readers as one Christian's earnest, and candid, reflections on what it means to make Jesus the center.

Luke Keefer, Jr.

Ephraim Stern, ed. *The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land*, vol. 5, *Supplementary Volume*. Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society/ Washington, DC: Biblical Archaeological Society, 2008. xxiii + 600 pp. + 32 plates, cloth, \$150.00.

Originally published in 1993, *The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land* immediately became the gold standard for those interested in learning of the archaeological work in Israel (and to a much lesser degree, Jordan) from the biblical period. Archaeology has not slowed down in the almost two decades since its completion, so this new, supplementary volume is most welcome.

One hundred sixty-three archaeologists, mainly from Israel but also from Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Gaza, Japan, Sweden, the United Kingdom, the United States, and the West Bank, contributed to the volume, which consists of updates of articles found in the first edition, as well as new articles. Each new article has an extensive bibliography, supplemented articles have a supplemented bibliography, and articles from the first edition which are not reworked here also have an updated bibliography in a special 'Bibliographic Appendix'. These all have been updated to 2005. Separate articles describe each site, except for those in Jordan, where the numerous sites are collected under

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that title into an extensive (fifty-page), multi-authored article. Generally, where they were available to do so, the lead archaeologist, or someone else actively involved in the most recent excavations, was asked to write each article.

The end-pages of the volume provide maps with the main excavation sites marked. There is also an introductory users' guide to the volume, numerous black and white photographs, maps, plans, and tables scattered throughout, as well as full color plates at the end of the volume. There is an alphabetical table indicating the map reference points for the sites discussed as well as an indication of their occupation periods. There are chronological tables of archaeological periods, Egyptian, Mesopotamian, Israelite, Roman, and Byzantine rulers, a glossary, an index of people, and places.

While the volume is useful in its own right, it best serves according to its stated purpose, as a supplement to the previously published four-volume set. All serious biblical studies libraries should have this volume, and, if they do not have them already, should take the opportunity to get the previous four as well.

David W. Baker

Stephen Chapin Garner. *Getting into Character: The Art of First-Person Narrative Preaching*. Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2008. 142 pp., paper, \$15.99.

Getting into Character is an intriguing title, which captured the reader's attention. Bible stories are the heart of Christian education, but also the heart of the Word of God. "The first-person biblical narrative" style of preaching is a powerful way to bring the scriptures alive and into this century (17). This unique style of preaching "literally shows people the gospel story" (19). By employing first person narratives the preacher introduces biblical characters to the audience. At the same time, this method also brings these ancient persons to life for twenty-first century listeners. "Anyone who is committed to sound exegetical sermon preparation, and who is willing to spend some time examining the keys to effective development of dramatic monologue, can preach powerfully effective first-person narrative sermons" (19).

With an overview and history of dramatic monologue, chapters 1 and 2 set the tone for the book. Concerns are mentioned such as the congregation being reluctant to receive the presentation. How does one accomplish this avenue of preaching? Understanding "dramatic monologue" is necessary (23). It

is a phrase used by “professional storytellers to describe that moment when an individual begins to tell a story without the help of other actors or performers” (23). There are no actors other than the narrator. Narrative preaching involves one of the primary methods of Christian education: storytelling. We tend to think of storytelling exclusively for children. Adults, however; also like to hear stories. Storytelling becomes a visual way of bringing the written word to the adult and embraces sight, sound, and emotion of the story.

Chapter 3 addresses the concept of how to use dramatic monologue and dialogue. Considerations of “taking on the voice of another” and choosing a character are of importance as it creates the illusion of the character (39-42). In the next part of the process, one must “study” the character at great lengths (49). Joseph is an example of a character study which is shared in chapter 4.

Chapter 5 describes how to “tell” the story (63). How will you introduce the character? What is the plot? How will you set the stage so that all will be able to follow the story line? There are “obstacles” within a story which “frustrate resolution” (70). What will be the obstacle to solve in the story? How will the resolution come to the surface within the story of the biblical character?

“Writing the character” in chapter 6, instructs how will you speak as the character so that you can set up the main point of the message (79). Not only is the written word important but the “getting into character” is extremely vital to the presentation (91). Chapter 7 takes into account that one must “get into character” so that the narrator’s identity is lost in the presentation and the character’s identity is revealed (91-92). What movements will you make? What costumes or props are needed? All of these will play into the bringing the character to life in front of the listener.

The point of chapter 8 is that “if pastors had some instruction in crafts like playwriting and screenwriting, their characters and the stories they tell would be far richer and much more engaging” (103). Examples of such ideas are presented within the chapter such as: “The Playwright,” “The Pastor,” and “The Citizen Employer” (105-119). Three biblical examples of first-person narrative are shared in chapter 9. The narratives of Hagar, Joshua, and The Scribe are shared along with a critique of the narratives (121-136). Chapter 10 concludes the book with resources and ideas for presenting first-person monologues. Garner concludes that one does not need to be an expert at the process to employ it.

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This style of preaching may not be for every person. This book appeals to those who have a dramatic or creative flair. No doubt, much work is involved, but the results are worth it. For those who embrace this style of preaching, it can have long lasting positive results for the congregation.

Dawn Morton

Craig Brian Larson and Andrew Zahn. *Movie-Based Illustrations for Preaching & Teaching: 101 Clips to Show or Tell* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003). 240 pp., paper, \$14.99.

Craig Brian Larson and Lori Quicke. *More Movie-Based Illustrations for Preaching & Teaching: 101 Clips to Show or Tell* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004). 240 pp., paper, \$14.99.

These two volumes begin a series which one hopes will continue and even expand. Undoubtedly, more people today develop biblical and theological understanding through the media of contemporary culture than through systematic reading, study, and church attendance. Film, television, and now YouTube and other online media are powerful tools for forming and shaping one's worldview, often subconsciously, and partakers should be critical in their consumption, but that is the topic for other works.

In this series, the authors well fulfill the promise made by the title-providing useful illustrations which can be used to drive home points relevant to life. They base these on a range of films. Many of these were relatively current when the books were written (but this belated review renders them further in the past), as well as some older classics (e.g., 'It's a Wonderful Life'). Some have explicitly Christian themes (e.g., 'The Inn of the Sixth Happiness', 'Veggie Tales: Madame Blueberry'), while most are decidedly secular ('A Beautiful Mind', 'The Piano') or even providing worldviews which blatantly contrast with orthodox Christianity (e.g., 'Star Wars Episode 1: The Phantom Menace', 'The Matrix'). The films also range from G through R, so those who use them need to exercise caution, but each entry provides guidance for their judicious use.

Each two-page entry is organized alphabetically around the theme being illustrated, e.g., calling or reconciliation. This is headed by the movie title, a statement of a topic found in the film, a list of Scripture verses and keywords relevant to it, a brief description of the pertinent scene, and a concluding box

which indicates the elapsed time of the scene within the film, the content rating, and a citation of the exact title, distributor, writer and director. Submissions were prepared by numerous authors, who are also identified.

The same film is at times identified with more than one point, and one could argue for even more appropriate points, with 'The Green Mile' illustrating not only injustice, but also providing a powerful example of substitutionary atonement. This series should provide not only useful material for preachers and teachers, but a helpful catalyst to everyone, spurring us to analyze whatever we view for such important elements, whether positive or negative, and to become more critical consumers. The series should be in every church library.

David W. Baker

