Biblical Theology

Malachi Then and Now: An Expository Commentary Based on Detailed Exegetical Analysis. Allen P. Ross. Wooster, OH: Weaver Book Company, 2016, 202 pp., paper. ISBN 978-1941337288

Allen Ross states in his preface to "Malachi Then and Now" that "This commentary is designed to provide two helpful resources for the expositor and serious student of the Bible." He clarifies the two purposes of the book as being both a commentary and a demonstration of how to use sound exegetical analysis as a basis for expository preaching. The introduction is a compact hermeneutics course; and while Allen acknowledges that people will have varying levels of scholarship and access to furthering it, he in no way lowers the bar in laying out the groundwork of solid biblical study and research required of those who would rightly understand Scripture. This is a wonderful encouragement, and Allen gives an excellent foundation for new students of the Bible and those trying to dig a little deeper into the Scriptures. For continuing and committed students of God's Word, such as pastors and teachers, this two-fold method of approaching the text should seamlessly integrate with existing studies and help to refine and solidify the process of sermon and lesson preparation.

Allen fulfills the commentary purpose of the book admirably by making the content very accessible while being in-depth enough to hint at the wealth of understanding that undergirds his exposition. The reader is able to clearly understand the basis of the exposition and is given word studies and background information where it is needful or helpful for rounding out the application. The "Then and Now" nature of the prophetic literature as found in the book of Malachi is clearly demonstrated, and Allen does a fine job throughout the commentary of explaining the significance of the revealed word for both the original and contemporary audience. I appreciate the way that each chapter deals with universal truth without becoming entangled in controversy or drawing unnecessary conclusions. The best example of this spirit is found in Chapter 7 where Allen gives the basic message of the passage being studied and simply notes that the eschatological meaning of the prophecies "will require a good deal of study." This intent to provide biblical truth that Christians everywhere can be blessed and instructed by is probably the greatest reason that the book is so insightful and helpful.

The instruction in the proper study of God's Word is shown by example throughout the book. Each chapter is carefully laid out according to a prescribed plan and it allows the reader to get a clear sense of what good study

habits look like. This is very helpful and the consistent application of the exegetical method prescribed in the introduction demonstrates the fruit of intentional and methodical exegesis. Each chapter includes Allen's translation of the text, notes on the text and context, and exegetical notes that are first outlined and then summarized into a main theme. It is these notes that form the basis for the commentary, showing how careful study is foundational to providing useful commentary. It is in these parts of each chapter that the casual reader and beginning student may encounter some difficulty keeping their attention on the seemingly disconnected paragraphs where individual ideas and words are studied, but the layout has been chosen to make this as easy as possible for all readers. Allen has had to pick and choose in this portion; I think he has done a good job of making each chapter as readable as possible as an exegetical outline while still maintaining a natural flow into the commentary portion.

No one is disqualified from picking up the book and learning from it and everyone is encouraged to advance their scholarship for the sake of learning all they can from the Word of God. This is a wonderful resource and I highly recommend it to all who have an in interest in the study of the Scriptures and especially the book of Malachi.

Reviewed by Stephen Plouffe, pastoring in the Eastern Charge of the Free Church of Scotland, Prince Edward Island.

James, 1 & 2 Peter, and Jude. **Jim Samra. Teach the Text Commentary Series*, gen. eds. Mark L. Strauss and John H. Walton. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2016, 285 pp., paper. ISBN 978-0-8010-9240-4**

*For general observations on the purpose and format of this commentary series, see the review on 1 & 2 Samuel (*Haddington House Journal*, 2017:37-38).

Firstly, Jim Samra is to be commended for his ability to talk to his reader as someone who is equally tasked with the responsibility to teach the text in a way that is both faithful to the inspired author's intended message and relevant to a particular known congregation in the preacher's present context. In fact, throughout the commentary, but especially in the Teaching the Text sections, one almost has the sense that Samra is a friend sitting alongside the reader in his study considering how best to preach the text. His options for illustrating the text are always helpful, either because they can be used directly or because they stimulate further ideas.

I also like the assumption throughout the commentary that systematic, consecutive expository preaching is the norm. Thus, Samra comments on earlier passages with an awareness that a foundation is being laid for the exposition of later passages and comments on later passages with reminders of

information and lessons from earlier passages. Samra also very effectively presents the text in context by simply showing the connections and logical flow from the pre-text, to the text, and to the post-text. Similarly, the description of the structure of a passage is never made overly complicated but is always useful for understanding and preaching the passage.

Samra is able to keep his commentary concise yet extremely helpful for two reasons. Firstly, he is very good at selecting only those words and parts of verses that need explaining in order to bring interpretive insight to a passage. Secondly, Samra's interpretive and theological insights invariably cut through the complexity of the text and reveal the crux of its message in a way that in relevant for today. For example, Peter's expression, "arm yourselves" in 1 Peter 4:1 connects the believer's attitude to suffering not only with Christ's suffering but also with spiritual warfare. Thus, "in spiritual warfare, having the right attitude about suffering is absolutely essential to enduring it" (p. 167).

Another strength of Samra's commentary is that on several occasions he provides clear summaries of the Bible's theology on a relevant topic. For example, in dealing with 2 Peter 1:12-21, he provides a brief biblical theology of prophecy and Scripture (pp. 211-212). In dealing with 2 Peter 2:1-9, he presents concise biblical theologies of both false prophets and teachers (pp. 215-216), and homosexuality (p. 218).

To my mind, Samra's commentary on James is brilliant because he has identified the book's purpose so precisely. The epistle of James is "a multifaceted picture of what it means to be a mature Christian, a doer of the Word and not a hearer only" (p. 1). Thus, the Greek adjective *teleios* (James 1:4, 17, 25; 3:2) meaning mature, perfect, complete, and related verbs (James 2:8, 22) are key to understanding James. In particular, this insight helps Samra to deal very well with the critical question of how to interpret James 2:20-24, the issue of justification by works and not by faith alone. "James is not saying that when Abraham offered Isaac as a sacrifice he 'was declared to be righteous,' as if this were the moment he exercised saving faith. Instead, when Abraham offered Isaac, this was the moment that he showed himself to be righteous. In other words, what happened in Genesis 22 is the 'work' that demonstrated his faith" (p. 34).

A very helpful insight that Samra applies to 1 Peter frequently is the election-ethics-community-mission principle (p. 137; *cf*. Wright, 2006, *The Mission of God*). This pattern can be seen throughout the Bible from the call of Abraham to God's purpose for the Church. By election God creates a community whom He intends to become like Him in their character and behaviour so that ultimately the world may be blessed.

Finally, Samra's affirmation of the importance of the book of Jude in an increasingly ungodly and anti-Christian contemporary society is much needed and appreciated considering that this little book is frequently overlooked.

Overall, one is impressed by how concise and yet extremely helpful this commentary is, especially for the preacher but also for any Christian reader.

Reviewed by Greg Phillips, the academic dean & registrar of Dumisani Theological Institute in the Eastern Cape, South Africa.

Revelation. **Reformed Expository Commentary. Richard D. Phillips*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2017, 764 pp., hc. ISBN 978-1-62995-239-0**

*Richard Phillips is Senior Minister at Second Presbyterian Church in Greenville, South Carolina. He is the author of dozens of books, including many in the Reformed Expository Commentary series. His latest contribution in that series is in the book of Revelation. Readers might recall that other commentaries in this series - Galatians, Ephesians, and 1Timothy - were also reviewed in this journal. (I would refer you to Volumes 8 and 11.)

The Series

The series as a whole has received some high-profile endorsements of late; not least of which was being chosen by *WORLD Magazine* as book of the year. In a review of *WORLD Magazine's* top books of 2017 issue, Marvin Olasky Editor in Chief writes,

> *This year for the first time we are recognizing a series, the publication of which requires great perseverance. Chartres Cathedral took 25 years to build, Salisbury Cathedral, Notre Dame de Paris 100, and Cologne Cathedral 600. By those standards, P&R Publishing's 30-year plan to publish a* ***Reformed Expository Commentary*** *(REC) series covering all 66 books of the Bible is not record-setting. By American publishing standards, though, it's audacious.*

As the series title suggests, these commentaries are biblical commentaries that are expository in nature, attempting to present the text as it might be typically preached before a congregation while drawing attention to the doctrines of grace that have been so much a part of the Reformed heritage. Phillips, along with being the author of this volume on Revelation, also serves as co-editor of the series alongside Phillip Ryken. They state the purpose of the series this way:

> The Reformed Expository Commentary has four fundamental commitments. First, these commentaries aim to be biblical, presenting a comprehensive exposition characterized by careful attention to the details of the text. … Second, these commentaries are unashamedly doctrinal. We are committed to the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms as containing the system of

> doctrine taught in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. Third, these commentaries are redemptive-historical in their orientation. Fourth, these commentaries are practical, applying the text of Scripture to contemporary challenges of life—both public and private—with appropriate illustrations.

Who is the audience for this series? Again the editors:

> The contributors to the Reformed Expository Commentary are all pastor-scholars. As pastors, each author will first present his expositions in the pulpit ministry of his church. This means that these commentaries are rooted in the teaching of Scripture to real people in the church. While aiming to be scholarly, these expositions are not academic. Our intent is to be faithful, clear, and helpful to Christians who possess various levels of biblical and theological training—as should be true in any effective pulpit ministry. Inevitably this means that some issues of academic interest will not be covered. Nevertheless, we aim to achieve a responsible level of scholarship, seeking to promote and model this for pastors and other teachers in the church.

The Commentary

One item readers might charge is a glaring omission is the introductory sections that typically cover audience, date, themes etc. However, rather than multiplying words in an already generous commentary, Phillips, I believe sensibly, confines his introductory remarks to the exposition itself. Plus, most, if not all, of these areas he deals with early on in the commentary. Very early on, the reader has a good grasp of the intention, audience, date and the kind of literature we are dealing with.

In considering chapter 1 verse 8, Phillips deals with the question of purpose stating, "…the great purpose of Revelation is to provide Christians with a view of history from God's perspective in heaven." (p. 47) Later, quoting James Boice, he says "...to be comforted and strengthened by it to live for Christ and his glory at all times." (p.47)

A second example is his treatment of the question of structure. Is Revelation a chronological work, describing events as they fall out one after another? Phillips argues it isn't! Rather, it is arranged "into seven sections, each presenting the history of the church age from God's perspective in Heaven." (p. 166) Phillips goes on to say "Dispensationalists read Revelation as one continuous history, from chapters 1 to 22, resulting in complex and confusing explanations for the recurring depictions of Christ's return and God's final wrath. Revelation makes better sense, however, when we recognize seven sections that present parallel depictions of history, each with its own perspective." (p. 166)

One element I found encouraging was how liberally Phillips was able to quote (in agreeable ways) authors who hold to a different eschatological

scheme than Phillip's amillennialism – including John MacArthur and George Eldon Ladd. He says this is due to the fact that "…even when there is disagreement about the interpretation, the primary message comes through clearly enough." (p. xvi). In a book such as Revelation, there are many points of disagreement but many points of agreement as well.

One area where Phillips excels is in his grasp of church history. While his historical-grammatical skills reach back into the previous 65 books to give a sound and consistently biblical understanding of Revelation, he also (throughout the body of work) is able to show how the themes of the book are not confined at all to the first century nor to the time just before Christ's return but can be seen in the major epochs of church history and in the daily lives of ordinary Christian.

A more specific example is his consideration of the Great Tribulation that John references in Rev 7:14, "These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation." Phillips, I believe rightly, doesn't confine this tribulation to any one moment in church history but asserts that it characterizes the whole of the church age, which is often marked by suffering and sacrifice. Phillips says, " Faithful servants of Christ were thrown to the lions in John's day, were burned at the stake in the English Reformation, were hunted through the countryside during the persecutions in Scotland, were sent to forced labour camps in Communist China, and more recently have been bombed during their worship services in Sudan and Nigeria." (pp. 254-55) "How", asks Phillips, "might one go about convincing Christians in China, Iraq or North Korea that the tribulation has not yet started!"

Nevertheless, when looking at the various areas of difference, Phillips is generous in laying out the other schools so you know clearly the position he is critiquing. Invariably, he highlights two or three areas of an opposite position, usually highlighting the strongest argument in each area, and then gives his considered response. I found this most helpful!

The commentary as a whole is substantial at over 700 pages, but one is not to be intimidated by the size. The content, though thorough in its coverage of the passages, nevertheless maintains a mostly devotional quality and broadly lay-Christian appeal. Its chief aim is to present the material in such a way as to convey the message of strength and hope for the reader, as it was likewise intended for its original audience.

This is a book that can be used in the study or read at the bedside. If you are a pastor, this book can be enormously helpful; perhaps too helpful, as one feels inclined to restate what Phillips has laid out so well! But what I love about this series is their stated goal to promote and model a strong level of scholarship and exegetical skill for church pastors. In all the volumes I have read, including this one, they excel in their purpose.

If you are not a pastor and are one of those who finds the book of Revelation a closed or at least an enigmatic read, Phillips is the place to start. Because this material is first presented in a pulpit ministry, these commentaries arise out of the preached Word directed to real people in the pew. Each chapter ends, as

would any good sermon, with points of reflection, challenge, and application. I would enthusiastically recommend Phillips' excellent work!

Reviewed by Kent Compton, the minister of the Western Charge of the Free Church of Scotland, Prince Edward Island.

Thinking Through Creation: Genesis 1 and 2 as Tools of Cultural Critique. Christopher Watkin. **Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2017, 170 pp., paper. ISBN 9781629953014**

The author lectures in French studies and also teaches religion and theology at Monash University in Melbourne, Australia, having received a Ph.D. from Jesus College, Cambridge. John Frame hits the nail on the head about this book in his foreword with a tongue-in-cheek comment: "Watkin is a surprise: a well-trained philosopher who is also a clear and helpful writer." (p. x)

Watkin comments in his conclusion that he has "tried to write the book that I would have wanted to read as an undergraduate student." (p. 137) To my way of thinking he has done just that with both panache and conviction. It is to be hoped that many young people, students or otherwise, and anyone who is trying to face up to faith and life issues and integrate faith and culture in holistic biblical reflection, will get hold of this book and find answers to some of their questions. It is a suitable antidote to the mumbo jumbo of social Marxism so prevalent in academia and elsewhere today, and the woolly thinking that goes with it. Or if you feel stale in the ministry, Watkin will certainly help you understand your audience and apply the biblical message in a challenging way.

The aim of this approach is to get "double listening" going between the Bible and present culture. Whereas contextualisation theologies often take a unilateral approach to this question, Watkin goes further with the double focus he presents: "Christianity must not only explain the Bible to our culture, but also explain our culture through the Bible." (p. xiii) I think this is a fruitful approach. If there have been a good many attempts to contextualise, some of them disastrous through compromise, not so many attempts have been made to critique culture biblically. Maybe this is because of the idolisation of popular culture and its media-based stranglehold on opinion today. When celebrities become moral arbiters, many Christians try to take refuge in culture-free zones. Watkin serves up "a vision of biblical doctrine not as a series of facts but as a framework for understanding any facts whatsoever, approaching the Bible not as story within reality but as the story of reality, and as the reality itself within which any other stories must necessarily exist." (p. 12)

The author also backs a winner when he points to the fact that our irrelevance as Christians in the present world can be attributed to things we have either taken to be irrelevant or just too difficult, and have consequently

neglected them, the doctrines of Trinity and creation for starters. On the contrary, salvation is to be found in what Christianity has been guilty of neglecting, in a full-orbed presentation of the whole counsel of God. It is encouraging to see how the author frankly presents "what we know about God before He created the universe", over against Nietzsche's "empty-signifier God". (p. 16-19) Perhaps here Watkin could have taken his point a step further and proposed "what we know about God after the end of the universe and in the centre of its history" with Christ the Alpha and Omega of the book of Revelation! That might have drawn together the whole of the purpose of the divine plan for creation and history, perhaps with reference to Karl Barth's *bête noire* of Reformed theology, the *Pactum Salutis*.

The doctrines of Trinity and creation structure the book as a whole, after a brief introduction on listening to the Bible, thinking it through, and listening to the world. The approach is subsequently threefold and gives a critique of present culture on the basis of biblical presuppositions: in chapter 2) the Trinity who created, chapter 3) the creation of the universe in Genesis 1, and chapter 4) the creation of humanity in Genesis 2. Genesis 1-2 is therefore a key passage for Christian worldview. Have we not been impoverished for having become Christocentric to the point of Christomonism? The influence of Cornelius Van Til and John Frame and other Reformed thinkers is palpable. Watkin's book is a fine application of their thought to the cultural challenges of the modern situation. The illustrations are useful, as are the chapter summaries, the questions for further study, and the book references at the end of each chapter.

Watkin is a scholar of French literature, and a widely read one at that, and, having taught many years in France, I was impressed! As a francophile, he might have profited in his presentation of creation from the classic work of Roman Catholic biblical theologian Paul Beauchamp, *Création et séparation* (pp. 1969/2005). God proceeds in creation by separating the distinct entities one from another and uniting them into one complementary reality. Under the lordship of God creational diversity and unity are respected. Watkin quite correctly sees how modern immanentism breaks down the unity of the created aspects into oppositions. His biblical critique of culture shows how this dichotomisation exercises a stranglehold, and how biblical "diagonalisation" overcomes the oppositions through faith in divine action and presence.

Biblical thinking is the answer to the deconstruction of the unity of reality by autonomous thought. It exposes the false dichotomies of the impersonal universe and the autonomous individual, the one and the many, objective fact and subjective value, hypostatised language and cypher language, functionality and beauty, nature and culture, intellectual and physical activity, work and leisure, nature as mystical other or as exploitable, and male and female. Perhaps the author's analysis could have been underpinned by sphere sovereignty in the Kuyperian tradition which, as the French say, would have brought water to Watkin's mill.

One final remark, a reluctant downside. This work is the result of twenty years study of Western culture and arises from a larger project. The depth of the research and insights of the author are obvious for all to see, insofar as the long term trends of modernism are concerned. However, in recent years things have accelerated at jet speed in popular culture. Christians who were part of a (silent) moral majority a generation ago have become an immoral minority and the churches have hardly woken up to the fact. The liquid culture of constant crisis, radical individualism, the new atheism, feminism, queer lifestyles, the transgender movement, social justice crusading, etc., has become the bread and butter of daily life in the West. Culture wars are becoming increasingly more vitriolic. People in public service who say too much fear for their jobs. Add to that the trauma of mass immigration, ecological catastrophism, and the growing feeling of apocalypse. Watkin barely touches on these issues. Perhaps he answers questions of a previous generation, rather than those of the millennials or the rising snowflake generation.

This comment in no way detracts from the overall excellence and usefulness of this profound and readable book, and may be an encouragement to Watkin himself, or to others, to pick up the ball he has started rolling. The analysis is great, but already needs re-applying to what we are facing.

Reviewed by Paul Wells, Liverpool, England; Professeur émérite, Faculté Jean Calvin, Aix-en-Provence; and Editor in chief of Unio cum Christo.

***The Mind of the Spirit: Paul's Approach to Transformed Thinking*. Craig S. Keener. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016, 402 pp., cloth. ISBN 9780801097768**

Keener's study of Paul's understanding of the relationship between cognition and transformed living is an academically rigorous study, yet presented in such a manner as to be accessible to the motivated reader. The depth of research and mastery of ancient sources is second to none, adding a contextual richness to Keener's disciplined exegetical skill. The result is a cohesive mosaic drawn from Paul's letters and the thought world of his Greco-Roman and Jewish contemporaries. Keener's conclusions, consistent with his research, are well-measured and admirably restrained.

The book is organized according to the numerous expressions of the mind/cognitive processes in Paul's letters (both positive and negative). The negative, *de facto* backdrop of the corrupted/fleshly mind is assumed throughout the study, and receives attention in chapters one and three. The corrupted mind is shown, first of all, to be a recognized malady among the ancients (including Paul, cf. Romans 1 and 7). Both religious and philosophical remedies such as law or reason are prescribed, with limited results. The

agreement of the philosophers is unanimous: human passions cannot be tamed, much less eradicated. Paul approaches this negative reality with neither denial nor capitulation, rather by introducing a new reality: the Spirit of God. The balance of the book is dedicated to discovering the nuances and potential of the mind which is influenced by the Spirit. It receives several names in Paul's letters: the renewed mind, the mind of Christ/Christ-like mind, the heavenly mind, the mind of faith, or the mind of the Spirit, all related in terms of transforming the believer's natural mind. Keener notes that these several titles are actually "…all the same mind…simply different entrances into the same reality in Christ and the Spirit, approached from different angles…" (p. 253).

In spite of this admission, Keener treats the reader to a detailed elucidation of the potential implications of the several Pauline titles, with particular attention given to the letter's immediate context. To this he marshals illustrative contemporary parallels. The mind of the Spirit, he notes, can be manifested in many ways, and in the letters of Paul, this is typically expressed in paraenesis. The calls to unity, humility and transformation anticipate the putting off of strife, pride and conformity to the world. The wisdom of the cross confronts worldly wisdom and status. The believer's heavenly citizenship relativizes all earthly loyalties. The eschatological hope of the resurrection and glory result in thankfulness, praise and peace. Solidarity with Christ redefines our lineage vis-à-vis Adam. Even the grace gifts of the Spirit imply particular callings and mutual service to the body. Each cognitive category anticipates a new core identity that can be the meditative impulse for the believer's deliberate "rethinking and retuning" (p. 263). The implications of Keener's study are enormous in terms of the believer's discipline of thought, and this is precisely where Keener exercises academic restraint. The study is not a "how to" exercise, rather a "what if" challenge.

Although Keener's contribution is decidedly academic, his presentation is not without pastoral impulses. Indeed, at numerous points, he calls for the fruits of peace, unity and reconciliation in the church. He highlights the universal need for transformation on the one hand, and issues an appeal to begin the process of affirming "a new reality" on the other (p. 33). He calls for the recognition of objective realities which can potentially recalibrate (and often eliminate) our present, subjective cognitive categories. This, he maintains, is a function of faith. While firmly grounded in the realism of Paul and the ancients, Keener is decidedly positive in terms of the potential outcomes of transformed thinking.

Reviewed by James P. Hering, pastor of Warrenton Presbyterian Church, South Carolina.

***Knowing Scripture. Expanded Edition.* R. C. Sproul. Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2016, 153 pp., paper. ISBN 978-0-8308-4468-5**

From the preface, throughout most pages of the book, the purpose of this book is clearly spelled out and focused on "studying the Bible" as opposed to "reading the Bible". The book emphasizes that it's through studying the Bible that the reader may come to know God who reveals Himself precisely through the written Word. The major concepts that constitute studying the Bible are given in a most convincing manner to anyone who may desire to know the God of the Bible. It is encouraging that the author motivates the reader through giving a brief history on how the Reformers took pain and some lost their lives as they persisted in translating the Bible into different languages for common people to have a chance to study the Bible in their own languages against the will of the Roman church. This makes clear his point on the importance of the Bible to all Christians who should dutifully study the Bible to gain insight on the God they are serving. Throughout the book, the author's purpose is crystal clear without any shadow of a doubt on what the author intends to drive home.

The author uses simple language which any literate person can understand. It is most commendable that there is no theological jargon that may blur the purpose of his book. Beginning by mentioning the two myths that tend to hinder studying the Bible, the author emphasizes that it is very important for the reader to approach the rest of the book knowing that he or she is pursuing something worthy for any Christian regardless of theological training. The chapters are arranged in such a way that they are in a progressive order in which the question the reader may raise in a chapter is answered in the chapter that follows. As this is not enough, each chapter has sub themes that tend to keep the reader focused on the theme of each chapter. An important point in any part is written in white and highlighted in black, making it easier for the reader to recap. This style makes the argument clearer as the book progresses, such that after reading the entire book, the reader will embrace the need to study the Bible. The author always begins his arguments by giving practical examples; these are strong building blocks to his arguments, because the reader will grasp the points easily.

As I read through this book, I was numbed at some points in seeing how as Christians we ignore our duty to study the Bible as the scriptures articulate. I found out that it is through devoted study of the Bible that we can really move out of 'feeling about Christ' to having the full knowledge of God. This challenge in the book is followed by an explanation of the instruments for studying the Bible, which are helpful to all Christians who want to move beyond *reading* the Bible to *studying* the Bible. I recommend that all Christians should have this book on their shelves and should be constantly referring to it. Their relationship with God will improve without a doubt.

All in all this book is an asset to Christians of all ages and levels since it has the guidance we need most to be able to know God and improve our relationship with Him. However, I want to suggest that the book should have given enough caution on the use of commentaries because Christians may be tempted to dwell much on commentaries and not the Word. Also, the author

should have given an example of how to purposefully use the tools, such as the lexicons in doing word study, to give a simple guideline to lay readers.

Dr Sproul died in 2017 and the forward is by J. I. Packer to this new expanded (third) edition. The first edition appeared in 1977, the second edition in 2009, and now this third expanded edition in 2016. The book has become a fairly standard basic hermeneutic text for entry-level readers.

Reviewed by Wilbert Chipenyu, a Zimbabwean teaching missionary with Timothy Two Project International, currently teaching and serving as acting principal at Dumisani Theological Institute, SA

Systematic Theology

The Essential Trinity. Eds. Brandon D. Crowe and Carl R. Trueman. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2017, 318 pp., paper. ISBN 978-1-62995-298-7

The sub-title of this book is 'New Testament Foundations and Practical Relevance'. The two parts of the sub-title are also the headings of the divisions of the book. The first division is made up of nine chapters, eight of which cover the books of the New Testament and a ninth which covers the Old Testament: the Trinity in Matthew (Brandon D. Crowe), Mark (Daniel Johansson), Luke-Acts (Alan J. Thompson), John (Richard Bauckham), Paul (Brian S. Rosner), Hebrews (Jonathan I. Griffiths), the General epistles (Brandon D. Crowe), Revelation (Benjamin L. Gladd), and The Old Testament (Mark S. Gignilliat). The second division is made of five essays on the Trinity and mystery (Scott R. Swain), prayer (Carl R. Trueman), revelation (Mark D. Thompson), worship (Robert Letham), and preaching (Michael Reeves).

Taken as a whole, the message of this book is that the God who makes Himself known in Scripture is the Triune God. The doctrine of the Trinity is not something which is imposed upon the Scriptures but is the systematisation of what God says about Himself and how He would have us to understand Him in His actions. The doctrine of the Trinity is the answer to the question: Who is the God of the Bible? Nor is this doctrine founded upon a few proof-texts. The Triune God speaks and acts triunely throughout the Scriptures.

Now that I have this book, on which shelf should I put it? Should it be with books on the doctrine of God? Or, should it be among those on New Testament studies? Or, again, what about the practical theology section?

It does not belong in the practical theology section, even though the latter part of the book is called 'Practical Relevance'. Three of these essays (mystery, revelation, and preaching) should be read first as an introduction because they orientate readers for the journey through the Scriptures found in the Biblical

Studies essays/chapters which make up the bulk of the book. They are doctrinal rather than practical, focused on hermeneutics rather than homiletics. Had I purchased this book because the words "Practical Relevance' on the cover caught my interest, I should have been rather disappointed when I read it.

One need only look at the list of abbreviations to know that this book can be catalogued under Biblical Studies. However, the subject matter is too specific for the book to be placed beside the New Testament histories, introductions, and theologies. If Leon Morris's *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross* and *The Cross in the New Testament* are shelved beside other works on the atonement, then *The Essential Trinity* should be with other books on the doctrine of God. It will not replace other works on the biblical doctrine of the Trinity as the usual passages referenced are not treated to any great extent here. It will earn its place by complementing them.

How shall I use this book? Were I writing an essay on the Trinity, it would be very tempting to add a lot of material from this book. But the essay would lose cohesion. On the other hand, the careful use of some material from this book would show due diligence in research and make my essay stand out from others which merely parroted the common places. Using this book will give a freshness to any essay or lecture on the Trinity. Were I asked to recommend a good book for someone wanting to know what the doctrine of the Trinity is, I should not recommend this one as a starting place. It assumes too much prior knowledge.

As a preacher, I find this book stimulating. Where the Triune God speaks triunely, the exposition and application must follow. Rather than thinking that some passages provoke a sermon on the Trinity, or the deity of Christ, or the deity and personhood of the Holy Spirit, think that many passages provoke a point or sub-point on these subjects tied to the thrust of the passage. The doctrine of the Trinity permeates Scripture and must permeate preaching. Before preaching through a book of the New Testament or when studying a passage which looks to have a trinitarian bearing, I shall review the relevant part of *The Essential Trinity*.

I understand that the contributors to this book come from a range of backgrounds and that I cannot assume that they share my presuppositions. However, they have opened up the subject and given me food for thought. I might question some details, but the general message of this book is relevant to my preaching. If you read it, it will become relevant to yours.

Reviewed by D. Douglas Gebbie, the minister of the Presbyterian Reformed Church in Chesley, Ontario and a frequent contributor to this journal.

God's Word Alone – The Authority of Scripture: What the Reformers Taught...and Why It Still Matters. **Matthew Barrett.**

The Five Solas Series, ed. Matthew Barrett. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016, 402 pp., paper. ISBN 978-0-310-51572-2

Matthew Barrett concludes his book, *God's Word Alone: The Authority of Scripture* with this statement, "If God did not speak with authority in his written Word, I would be lost in my sins to this day, and so would you. So it is with much confidence that I can say that if the authority of Scripture is abandoned, our faith will be too. It is only a matter of time" (p. 374). Our faith and our life in Christ stand or fall on the doctrine of the inerrancy and authority of the Bible. To articulate and defend the inerrancy and authority of Scripture, Matthew Barrett has written an excellent, relevant book on the Reformation principle and biblical doctrine of *sola scriptura.*

Barrett's work is well organized. He begins with a substantive Introduction to prepare the reader for his material. First, Barrett's Introduction highlights the need for Christians to be aware of what *sola scriptura* is and what it entails. If people accept the Bible as their final authority, they often do not know why. *God's Word Alone* adequately answers this "why" question as it explains the "relationship between biblical authority and the nature of Scripture, namely, its own inspiration, inerrancy, clarity, and sufficiency" (p. 22). The Introduction further readies the reader by giving an understandable definition of *sola scriptura.* First, *sola scriptura* means "Scripture alone is our *final* authority" (p. 23). Secondly, *sola scriptura* means "that Scripture alone is our *sufficient* authority" (p. 23). And, thirdly, *sola scriptura* means "that only Scripture, because it is God's *inspired* Word, is our *inerrant* authority" (p. 24).

Part 1 of *God's Word Alone* is entitled, "God's Word under Fire, Yesterday and Today." In three chapters Barrett traces the rise of *sola scriptura* during the Reformation period and the attack against it during the Enlightenment and Modern period.

Chapter one gives a concise and clear treatment of *sola scriptura* during Reformation period. The medieval Roman Catholic Church held to a two-source theory of divine authority, church tradition and Scripture. The Reformers rejected this outright. Barrett shows that Martin Luther, Huldrych Zwingli, William Tyndale, and John Calvin understood that inspired Scripture alone is the sole authority of the Christian faith. They did not invent a new doctrine but sought, as Barrett writes, "to return to the position of the fathers, a single-source theory of divine revelation" (p. 74).

In chapter two, Barrett tells the account of how the Enlightenment usurped *sola* scriptura by promoting human reason as the path to truth. He briefly describes *how* the Enlightenment attacked *sola scriptura*. But Barrett also helpfully describes *why* this occurred. Barrett shows how Baruch Spinoza, H.S. Reimarus, G. E. Lessing, and Frederic Schleiermacher held to a type of *nuda scriptura*, which states that church tradition should never help in the interpretation of Scripture and that the human mind alone is adequate to discern Scriptures meaning. Barrett writes that men mentioned above, "Rejected all ecclesiastical authority and tradition, believing them to be

oppressive and warped by superstitious dogma" (p. 88). Eventually, this led human reason to sit in on judgment of the Word of God, and Barrett shows how modern Christian liberalism did just that!

Barrett's third chapter lists the fallout of Christian liberalism's rejection of *sola scriptura.* The chapter is entitled, "Today's Crisis over Biblical Authority: Evangelicalism's Apologetic and the Postmodern Turn." Barrett first zeros in on the crisis between American Fundamentalism and Neo-Evangelicalism at the beginning of the twentieth century. It involved the doctrine of the inerrancy of Scripture. Fundamentalism upheld inerrancy and consequently the account of creation in Genesis. Neo-evangelicalism, on the other hand, compromised on inerrancy, and as a result, questioned the traditional doctrine of creation. Barrett helpfully recounts how evangelicals, who maintained *sola scriptura,* responded to neo-evangelicalism in 1978 with the "Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy." Nevertheless, the crisis continued and still continues. Barrett shows that the Bible is still under fire from within evangelicalism, and, to help the church, he lists names and gives a short explanation of their positions. Secondly, Barrett zeros in on the subject of Postmodernism and its polemic against *sola scriptura*. Postmodernism asserts that there is no objective truth, only different perspectives and realities we build around ourselves. *Sola Scriptura* is *the* antidote to this unsustainable position. Thirdly, Barrett zeros in on "the Postconservative Reconstruction of Sola Scriptura" (p.136). This is a very helpful section. Barrett lucidly writes how some evangelicals, rather than affirming Scripture's inerrancy and infallibility, slyly say Scripture is authoritative only when God speaks through the Bible. No, Scripture is the Word of God and thus authoritative, period.

Part 2 of *God's Word Alone* has the title, "God's Word in Redemptive History." This is a *tour de force* on how, why, and to whom God has spoken. Though it is the shortest section in the book, it is its heart because the reader learns the connection between God's saving, covenanting, and revealing acts, and his Word. Barrett also shows the connection between God's spoken Word and the Word made flesh in Jesus Christ. Through God speaking his Word and then fulfilling his Word in Christ, we have a revelation of the inerrancy of God's Word. God's Word has left its mark on our world, and it is an inerrant Word, thus our final authority. This section is a must to read, and worth the price of this book.

Part 3 of *God's Word Alone* is entitled, "The Character of God's Word and Contemporary Challenges," and contains four chapters. Each chapter explains the key theological components that make up *sola scriptura.* Those doctrines are the inspiration, inerrancy, clarity, and sufficiency of Scripture.

When dealing with inspiration in chapter seven, Barrett answers the question of whether or not inspiration reaches to all and every word of Scripture. Barrett clearly shows that Scriptures inspiration is both verbal *and* plenary. He goes on to show that the Old Testament, the Words of Christ, and the Words of the apostles witness to the inspiration of the Old Testament. The

same attention is paid to the inspiration of the New Testament. Next, to Noel Weeks' work, *The Sufficiency of Scripture,* Barrett's work is the clearest on this subject.

When dealing with the Bible's inerrancy Barret has precision. What is refreshing in Barret's work is his strong argument for inerrancy, and he concludes if there is no inerrancy then there is no assurance in Scripture as our final authority. His section on Jesus' belief in inerrancy is especially helpful. Jesus is God; if God held to inerrancy, so should the church. Ministers and Sunday school teachers could use this chapter to teach on the subject of the trustworthiness of the Bible.

Barrett then tackles the clarity of Scripture in chapter nine. His fundamental message here is that God is a clear communicator and that language can be clear too. Language is God's gift, and he has purposed to use it to be a clear and effective tool to reveal his truth. Theologians like Barth and Bultmann mistrust language and thus cannot trust that God can communicate clearly. The church, however, can trust the Bible to give a clear message for all that is necessary for salvation, obedience, and eternal life.

The final chapter, "God's Speech Is Enough: The Sufficiency of Scripture" is a grand capstone to this book. Barrett first gives a biblical explanation and careful definition of the sufficiency of Scripture and then effectively answers modern challenges to this doctrine. Modern evangelicalism and its aversion to tradition as well as Roman Catholicism and its modern exaltation of tradition are both addressed. To evangelicalism, Barrett says, "Remember church tradition can and should act as a *ministerial* authority" (p. 346), a point he made earlier in chapter one. To Roman Catholicism Barrett says, "The church may be the rule of faith, but it is not the foundation of faith" (p. 363). Barrett also addresses science and reason. These realities in our world are not in opposition to the Bible. They are problematic only when they are used against God. Experience and culture are also great enemies of the sufficiency of Scripture as they argue that Scripture is a man-made book and irrelevant. Barrett gives a concise and cogent rebuttal: because Scripture is God's Word, thus inerrant and sufficient, it is always relevant and applicatory. "We have God's *best* Word already, and nothing needs to be added to it" (p. 370). Barret concludes this chapter by saying the Bible's sufficiency meets real life. First, it is a comfort to pastors. As they preach the Scriptures, souls will be saved, and Christians will thrive. Secondly, Scripture moves Christians to action. Lastly, Scripture reminds us that Christ and his Word take center stage in the church.

Barrett's book, *God's Word Alone,* is a sufficient work on the authority of Scripture. I have only positive comments for this volume. Go and read it – it will build you up in the faith of Jesus Christ.

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

***Christ and Covenant Theology: Essays on Election, Republication, and the Covenants*. Cornelis P. Venema. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2017, 462 pp., paper. ISBN 978-1-62995-251-2.**

Dr Venema is a minister in the United Reformed Churches in North America and President of Mid-America Reformed Seminary, where he is also Professor of Doctrinal Studies. As one would expect, he writes mainly from a Dutch-American perspective. Yet, there are many important references to the Westminster Standards. Indeed, when Dr Venema wishes a concise statement or definition of covenant doctrine, he cites the Westminster Confession as the Three Forms of Unity, coming from an earlier period, do not address covenant concepts so clearly. This, together with his use of consensus writers in his historical discussions, makes the book very useful to the wider Reformed audience.

The book is made up of twelve chapters. The first three chapters are part one. Chapter one is on 'The Covenant of Works in the Westminster Confession of Faith'; and chapters two and three are on 'The Covenant of Works and the Mosaic Economy'. Part two has five chapters, covering covenant and election in the works of Herman Bavinck, studies of Article 1:17 of the Canons of Dort regarding the election and salvation of the children of believers who die in infancy, and infant baptism. The third part has three chapters on 'Covenant and Justification and the "Federal Vision"' and one on N.T. Wright's interpretation of Romans 5:12-21.

This is a collection of essays which have different origins. The author, however, has gone over them for this book and given them a oneness of style and voice which gives a flow and unity to the whole work. That flow and unity also reminds the reader that the discussions are connected. These are, after all, essays in systematic theology.

The first essay describes criticisms of the Westminster doctrine of the Covenant of Works made from a neo-orthodox perspective, from a neo-Calvinist perspective, and from that of the biblical theology of John Murray; it concludes with a very reasonable defense of the Westminster doctrine. Those whose views are being discussed are treated fairly but plainly, and Venema's counterpoints are expressed with care and nuance.

The second and third essays are an extended interactive review of *The Law is Not of Faith: Essays on Works and Grace in the Mosaic Covenant*. Venema states and then assesses the case for the republication of the Covenant of Works in the Mosaic Covenant as the authors of the collection of essays display it. His assessment is that they have failed to make their case; and that even

allowing for their use of the phrase republication 'in some sense', their views are outwith the historical Reformed consensus.

The next five essays deal with the interplay of election and covenant, particularly, as they impact infant salvation and infant baptism. The first two are studies in Herman Bavinck's views on these subjects. Bavinck is presented as a mediating voice standing in the historic tradition of Dutch Reformed theology. In his original context, he was a mediating voice between the Afscheiding and Doleantie wings of the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland. Here, he is a mediating voice between the presumptionist followers of Abraham Kuyper, the election focused followers of Herman Hoeksema, and the covenant focused followers of Klaas Schilder in today's North America. Those whose origins lie with the Afscheiding churches which did not unite with the Doleantie are not included.

The second two essays are a historical and contemporary exposition of Article 1:17 of the Canons of Dort, which deals with the election and salvation of infants who are born of godly parents and who die in infancy. Venema presents two interpretations of the Article: the first takes it to be statement of the fact of the election and salvation of such infants; the second takes it to be an encouragement to grieving parents not to doubt the salvation of their departed child, leaving the question of the election of every such child open. Describing the alternatives as the objective and the subjective interpretations, Venema opts for the former.

The last is an essay on infant baptism with an emphasis on covenant. In this chapter, the author, very helpfully, gives his own exposition of the Covenant of Grace rather than interacting with the views of others as he does in the rest of the book. The key feature of his discussion is the 'dual aspect' of the covenant: the outward administration of professing believers and their children and the inward reality which belongs exclusively to the elect. He then discusses the place of the sacraments, particularly baptism, in this schema.

The third section of the book deals with the Federal Vision. Here again, Venema is dealing with election, covenant, and the sacraments. In these essays, he uses the Three Forms of Unity as his creedal foundation. While (as those from a continental Reformed background often point out) the collective voice of the Federal Vision came out of a PCA church, Venema notes that Continental influences were not absent. In effect, he is bolting the door which might allow Federal visionaries to flee from the Westminster Standards and hide under the Three Forms of Unity. Federal Vision is an aberration from the wider Reformed consensus: even before the subject of justification by faith alone is discussed.

Taking a step back and looking at the book as a whole, it becomes clear that: the prelapsarian Covenant of Works and its relation to the postlapsarian Covenant of Grace, the interplay between election and the Covenant of Grace, and the connections and tensions between the dual aspects of the Covenant of Grace, cross over its divisions – whether it be the parts or the chapters. This collection of essays does have cohesion. Positively, it sets out a neo-Calvinist

position in the spirit of Bavinck on the subjects treated. Polemically, it compares and contrasts that position with the positions held by others. As Venema sets out the ordinary workings of the Triune God in election and covenant administration and then the exceptional circumstance of the deceased infants of believing parents, what becomes clear is that the Federal Vision has made the exception the rule and bent other aspects of the doctrines to fit. Federal Vision appears to be a twisting of neo-Calvinist thought.

Personally, first, I was pleased to read that no matter how great the 'judgement of charity' regarding the regeneration of the baptised, the need exists for conversion and self-examination to be preached to the covenant community. Perhaps, now that Bavinck's major works are available in English, further study and wider discussion might include those whose origins lie with the Afscheiding churches which did not unite with the Doleantie.

Second, I thank Dr Venema for listing Louis Berkhof's *Systematic Theology* in his bibliography and citing it respectfully in the footnotes. It has been over forty years since I went into a Christian bookshop looking for a volume that had the doctrines of the Bible set out in order and a book which would walk me through the history of redemption. Because of the Banner of Truth Trust's pricing policy in those days, I was able to purchase both Berkhof's Systematics and Vos's Biblical Theology out of my meager wages. Such was my teenage ignorance that I did not know that these books should have been bought on an either/or not a both/and basis. Although Berkhof (and Vos) and I have grown apart, I, like so many others, owe him a great debt.

Last, I am not a Neo-Calvinist. Dr Venema would probably dismiss me as a 'pietist'. Nevertheless, I enjoyed reading this book and benefited from his clearly-put contribution to the discussion of election and covenant theology.

Reviewed by D. Douglas Gebbie

Historical Theology

2000 Years of Christ's Power: The Age of Religious Conflict, volume 4. Nick Needham. Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications and Grace Publications Trust, 2016, 686pp, paper. ISBN 978-1-78191-977-4

This, the much awaited fourth volume of Dr. Nick Needham's series, reviews the history of the Church in the period 1560 to 1740. In the meantime his previous three volumes have become standard texts in many theological colleges throughout the world. And this book seems set to follow suit. The series has been well received by reviewers and critics alike, though some have questioned whether comprehensiveness has been achieved at the cost of closer analysis and interpretation. Maybe. But, as we are reminded so frequently these days, although you can't have your cake and eat it, you can pick the cherries. Needham apologises, quite unnecessarily, for limiting himself to the story of the Church in England, Scotland, France, Germany and Russia. One may quibble with his choices. I, for one, want more of the early days of the Protestant missionary movement (section 5, chapter 1) and something of Irish, Hungarian and South African church history, but not at the expense of the story of Christ's power in the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches. If cherries have to be picked, Needham's choice is well made.

The book follows the format of the previous volumes. The eight chapters survey developments in German Lutheranism and the continental Reformed Church, including the Synod of Dort and the Amyraldian controversy. Puritanism in England is covered in two chapters and Scotland is explored to the end of the Covenanting era. There are two very useful chapters on the Roman Catholic Church, exploring Catholic piety, Jansenism, Quietism, the persecution of the Huguenots and Catholic missions. A final intriguing chapter introduces us to people and movements within Eastern Orthodoxy. There follows a list of important people, a reader of primary sources to savour an authentic flavour of the times, a glossary, bibliography and indexes complete the work. For better or for worse, there are no academic footnotes cluttering the page. With the bibliography, list of names, and the aid of
Google readers can follow up their interests with little trouble

Stylistically, Needham cracks on at a formidable pace, fairly galloping through the material. He draws rein only to offer explanatory asides to help a new-comer to historiographical or theological terminology draw breath and keep up. Inevitably, in an age of conflict, ugly street-brawls spill out across Needham's road. Most are aptly described but neatly avoided with little more than a glancing blow from the author *en passant.* But at a few places Needham pauses long enough to strike hard, perhaps nowhere more so than in Scotland's

Covenanter country. Describing the deplorable battle of Dunbar (1650), Needham exposes the folly of each side's praying and singing the same metrical psalms to the same Lord, despite the fact "only one side could win." Needham also strikes at the hoary old chestnut of Covenanting hagiography, that the Covenanters suffered only because they sought to worship God according to their own consciences. That, as we are shown, is but a half truth. They suffered because they wanted everyone else to worship according to their - the Covenanters' - consciences. Needham deftly shows how intolerance begat intolerance and turned otherwise godly men into virtual and, at times, real insurgents, bringing the whole farrago of national covenanting down on their heads in the welter of the Presbyterian holocaust.

And whilst we are on the subject, what a crisp cameo of Jamie Graham, the 1st Marquis of Montrose, Needham paints. Perhaps it is Needham's Baptist convictions that allow him more easily to appreciate the perspectives of Max Hastings, Montrose's military biographer, and John Buchan, that other Presbyterian cavalier. At any rate, he sees Montrose's true greatness without carping. The strengths of Puritan and Covenanter have long been placed before us to be gratefully appreciated, but Needham balances this by holding up their not inconsequential weaknesses to scrutiny, even exposing them to the biting satire of Butler's *Hudibras*.

Cameos of people and sketches of events are what Needham does so well. I especially appreciated, amongst others, his miniatures of the Orthodox Cyril Lucaris, Pietist Philipp Spener, Puritan William Ames, Roman Catholic Blaise Pascal, Separatist John Bunyan, and Anglicans Richard Hooker, John Donne and George Herbert. Though Needham's doubt as to whether any of Herbert's poems have achieved fame is surely open to challenge, not least by the millions who not so long ago in school assemblies sang "Teach me, my God and King" (The Elixir from The Temple), "King of Glory, King of Peace" (Praise II, The Temple) and "Let all the world in ev'ry corner sing" (Antiphon I, The Temple), and are grateful to have them in our hearts. Coming from such intolerant times, it was good to re-read John Owen's tribute to John Bunyan, "Could I possess that tinker's abilities for preaching, I would gladly relinquish all my learning." The last three chapters bring to sight attractive Christians too often lost to sight in a largely Protestant crowd.

We are deeply indebted to Dr. Needham for this volume, much of which is taken up with what Wordsworth once called 'old, unhappy, far-off things, And battles long ago'. Though these may galvanise for theological conflict today, I hope that even more they will alert us to the danger of division and give us determination to live in Christian harmony with all who have come under Christ's gracious power. We eagerly look forward to the next volume in the series.

Reviewed by John S. Ross, former CEO of Christian Witness to Israel, currently resident interim-moderator at Kilmallie and Ardnamurchan Free Church of Scotland.

Christianity in Eurafrica: A History of the Church in Europe and Africa. **Steven Paas. Wellington, SA: Christian Literature Fund, 2016, 554 pp., paper. ISBN 978-1-86804-350-7**

This book was originally two separate books (one on Africa, one on Europe) that were primarily used for textbooks in Malawi where the author was teaching at Zomba Theological College. In 2016 they were combined as one volume using that curious word 'Eurafrica' implying here, in a positive sense, a close connection between the two continents – hence the book's sub-title.

Part one, "From Galilee to the Atlantic", has 40 chapters. These chapters chiefly deal with Europe but not exclusively as one chapter deals with North America and another with some of the Church Fathers who lived outside of Europe. Part two, "The Faith Moves South" contains 21 chapters – ranging fairly broadly over Africa but with noticeable content on Malawi, Zambia, and South Africa – many portions of Africa receiving little or no attention.

In reading this book, it must be kept in view that it is very difficult to write a one-volume survey of African church history which is both accessible *and* treats the whole continent. Given the immense scope of what constitutes African Christian history, one must be selective in their writing, so the difficult choice is either to be quite generalist or to focus on a particular strand, mission work, or locational context. In saying this, the current need for an up-to-date general survey of African church history is highlighted. So Paas has taken on a real challenge. The current dearth of texts in the field is evidence of the problem. The real question is, "Does Paas succeed?"

The use of the word Europe is somewhat limiting beyond what is mentioned above. One could argue that trying to focus on Europe undercuts other theological and missional influences on Africa. Thus, the book's marriage is not always helpful or totally convincing. Mission work in Africa has many influences – such as Dowie and Zion, Illinois (p.486). Paas recognises this influence, yet the book title does not indicate that African Christianity has been influenced also from beyond Europe; as a result, I am not exactly taken by the title.

A disappointing feature of this book is that after chapter five the Table of Contents' pagination does not match the text. It is generally out by one to two pages for the remaining chapters, and there are a total of 63 chapters. It is surprising that this slipped past the publishers. Some other curious mistakes: on page 298 the author is discussing Raymond Lull, the medievalist, in one line then jumps into South African 19th century history in the same sentence; on page 436 the information about the United Church of Canada is not correct.

This book does begin with a helpful and accessible introduction to church history as a field of study, somewhat in the tradition of Philip Schaff. Overall Paas' book has certain merits. Part Two is particularly helpful. Some chapters here will be of great service in teaching African church history, both on the continent of Africa and also on other continents. Paas has also included some themes which are easily ignored, such as African Instituted Churches, Faith Missions, and Pentecostals and Charismatics. So yes, the book is a definite contribution in the field but there are limitations.

The author provides various bibliographies and has done serious work. These bibliographies are to be found at different points throughout the book. Footnotes have been kept to a minimum but when used are helpful to guide the reader. The maps are most helpful and enhance the text. A few English-language issues remain in the text, such as the word "register" for the common word "index" (p.533).

I personally think it would have been better to have kept the book as two separate books; then each volume could have been expanded to bring forth a broader picture. There may be certain economic advantages to combining them, but it seems a forced union. By keeping them separate, then the limiting word 'Eurafrica' (that carries a lot of historical baggage with it) could have been avoided.

The first 50 pages of the book may be read here: https://www.clf.co.za/images/pdf/Sneak-preview-PAAS.pdf.

Reviewed by Jack C. Whytock.

***Martin Bucer's Ground and Reason: A Commentary and Translation*. Ottomar Cypris. Yulee, FL: Good Samaritan Books, 2016, 180+pp., paper. ISBN 978-1540468116**

Delighted, is my first reaction to seeing this book in print. It was laid away in German and then in a Ph.D. thesis in translation into English until this 2016 book was published. This immediately raises two questions: Why was it not published until recently? Is it really that significant of a work? I would answer the first as Cypris would also—Martin Bucer has often been a neglected Reformer and stands in the shadows of Luther, Melanchthon, Zwingli, and Calvin. The neglect of Bucer has impoverished much contextual understanding of the Reformers as it has prevented us from seeing more in the galaxy of the Reformers just listed. Next, the primary source here, *Ground and Reason*, sets the proper context for understanding so much of the Reformation on worship, the sacraments, and liturgy, so a study of this document will pay many dividends. Yes, it needed to be published.

The translator and commentator, Ottomar Cypris (1915-1986) is not a well-known name. He was a German, was born in what is now Poland, grew up in Western Canada, and studied in both Canada and the United States. He was

ordained during the Second World War and one of his Ph.D. supervisors was the noted John T. MacNeill, the Calvin scholar born on Prince Edward Island (I just had to include that last detail). Getting this book to press began as a conversation between Terry Johnson and Brian Nicholson and was latterly taken up by Christopher Bogosh of Good Samaritan Books. Hughes Oliphant Old had written in, *Worship: Reformed According to Scripture* that "*Grund und Ursach* is one of the most significant documents in the history of Reformed worship."[1]

Now about the book, *Ground and Reason*, or in German, *Grund und Ursach*. This work is primarily about *the grounds* for the new evangelical worship in Strasbourg and the *reasons to justify* these new worship practices in Strasbourg in 1524 as arising from the Word of God. Its chief author is Martin Bucer, but he certainly benefited from the collegial atmosphere of his colleagues in Strasbourg at the time as is evidenced from the last page where seven additional names were willing to sign beside Bucer's name in point number 189 which began, "The contents of this little book are the common faith of those of us who are in the ministry and under compulsion to preach the Gospel publicly here in Strasbourg…."(p. 180). The names include Wolfgang Capito and Matthew Zell.

The text of the book is about 100 pages in 189 numbered paragraphs organised within 12 "chapters", plus a covering letter from Bucer to Count Friedrich of the Palatine by the Rhine or Duke Friedrich (the latter contains a separate 13 paragraphs). The majority of the 12 chapters centre upon the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, yet even within each of these chapters one will find side discussions which help to make the book much more than just a book about the Lord's Supper. One chapter is on vestments, one chapter on baptism, one on holy days, another on images, and then the final chapter about songs and prayers. So *Ground and Reason* does address key evangelical and emerging Reformed understandings on evangelical worship principles, the sacraments, liturgy, leadership, Christian freedom, and the laity. It is larger than one might initially grasp. Cypris' translation reads nicely.

The other main portion of this edition is the commentary by Cypris with about 70 pages. Cypris knew the subject well. His "Introduction" provides a context for the Reformation in Strasbourg and a very good survey of the life of Martin Bucer with clear recaps of Bucer's contributions in Reformation history, not just on worship, but also on the education of ministers and others, his involvements in Cologne, Hesse, and England, and with many of the Reformers in efforts to find common ground. Cypris reminds readers that early in 1524 the first German Mass was conducted in Strasbourg and later that year many more radical changes followed. Thus Bucer was under pressure to defend all these changes – hence, the writing of *Ground and Reason* on 26th December, 1524. In this book we are allowed to see how one great medieval

[1] Hughes Oliphant Old, *Worship: Reformed According to Scripture,* revised edition (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 12

city – Strasbourg – encountered Reform in worship and liturgy. By examining this one city and the document for that city we can see wider patterns for comparison to Geneva, France, and Scotland.

Cypris' largest commentary section is on Bucer and the Lord's Supper. The author here sets forth a finely crafted and detailed contextual study. In many ways this is worth the book alone, next to the primary document. His commentary is very helpful. I have only found one paragraph in his commentary about the Lord's Supper with which I would quibble (p. 49). His commentary on baptism is helpful and a good complement to the text.

The commentary portion includes footnotes when referring to the particular paragraph in *Ground and Reason*. This method generally works well, although on occasion one wishes the author would have given a few more such footnotes.

This work was originally Cypris' Ph.D. thesis, awarded in 1971. Thus his research is now a little dated, yet in many regards surprisingly not so. The 2016 published work is a large-sized book and handles well and could serve as a class text for study. Four slight detractors: a few typographical errors have remained into the text; a signature indicating the author of the biographical sketch of Ottomar Cypris should have been included; page numbers for the bibliography and prefatory pages should also have been given; and, an index of some kind should also have been compiled. The value of the present publication is that we now have this neglected work available in English. Thank you for this labour of love. I look forward to introducing my students and others to it.

Reviewed by Jack C. Whytock.

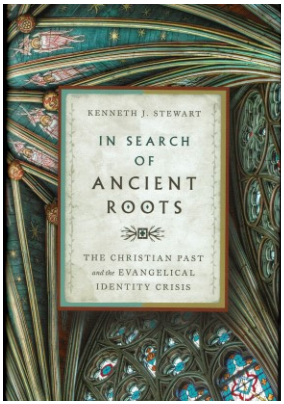
In Search of Ancient Roots: The Christian Past **and the** ***Evangelical Identity Crisis.*** **Kenneth J. Stewart, Wheaton, IL: IVP Academic, 2017, 286 pp., hc. ISBN 978-0-8308-5172-0**

We Canadian Evangelicals sometimes blanch at the way in which our theological position is identified in the United States with various unpalatable political views, becoming a byword for extremism of the worst variety – racist, mindless, reactionary and ignorant. Ken Stewart, a Canadian who is now professor at Covenant College in Lookout Mountain, Georgia, has provided us with excellent reasons for defending our right as historic Evangelicals to assert the view that links our understanding of the Christian faith with Shaftesbury, Wilberforce and more recently, John Stott and Billy Graham. As a past President of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, I applaud his efforts.

Titled *In Search of Ancient Roots: The Christian Past* and the *Evangelical Identity Crisis* (IVP Academic, 2017) Stewart sets out to do two things:

establish the position that there has always, throughout the entire history of the Christian faith, been an evangelical tradition, that Evangelicals are not some Johnny-come-lately but an ongoing emphasis by certain parts of the Christian faith. He paints a somewhat rosier picture of the medieval church, and specifically some of the church fathers, than I would personally be happy with but his point is well taken. Where would we be without Jerome, Augustine, and Bernard of Clairvaux whom Calvin so admired and emulated? These traditions need to be faithfully examined, not to make a point, but to state clearly that we, as Protestants, differ from so-called the Benedictine option, because we agree with Abraham Kuyper and the Reformed emphasis of taking on the culture not retreating from it.

Thus he describes Evangelicals today as being in "an identity crisis" as many bail out of active involvement in, and commitment to, what we once called "Bible-believing and teaching" local congregations. Two friends of mine, one an elder in my congregation who was fed up with the petty power structures in our church, left for an Orthodox congregation where his semi-ordained status gives him an authority he claimed was lacking in the anarchic and leaderless Protestant church, a reassertion of what Stewart calls "the principle of authority". The other came out of liberal Unitarianism and embraces the ancient creeds and prayers of the church with considerable relief and personal edification. Many Evangelicals today lack a clear and biblical ecclesiology and church becomes a matter of indifference or personal preference.



His second emphasis is an even wider one: how Evangelicals have appropriated the history of the church in the last five hundred years. It is a breathtaking vista that Stewart paints, showing a remarkable ability to combine telling details with a broad brush while at the same time debunking some of the myths of our immediate past that we Evangelicals have perpetrated from Sunday School days. There is hope, however: Linda Finlayson's recent *God's Timeline: The Big Book of Church History* (Christian Focus Press), intended for children and youth and beautifully illustrated, has just sold out its first edition.

Stewart highlights the importance of church history for the life and future of the Evangelical cause. Ask any of us who are in seminaries and you will learn that church history is the great neglected subject in the theological curriculum: difficult if not impossible to fund, a subject that can be relegated to the non-essential and unimportant, paling in significance to creating PowerPoint presentations and how to run the church sound system. Stewart has interesting sidebars in his account: baptism, John Henry Newman, (the ex-Evangelical who shocked Victorian England by following what he took to be a "kindly Light" all the way to Rome). As one reviewer said, Stewart

demonstrates an encyclopaedic knowledge of his subject from more than three decades of teaching, alas in the United States, Canada's great loss.

In his final chapter, Stewart addresses the issue of those who have joined Newman and become Roman Catholic (or even Orthodox). How do you lovingly deal with them? Is their view of their new faith realistic or idealistic? He has helpful and pastoral responses to six reasons provided for this wrenching change. Indeed the whole book, while scholarly and intellectually responsible in its content, has a pastoral commitment. It could helpfully be used in a church small group discussion with questions provided at the end of each chapter which bring what could be an ivory tower academic discussion to the level of a living room discussion.

We are grateful to Ken Stewart for this timely book. He makes 'we Canadians' proud.

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

***A Little Book for New Philosophers: Why and How to Study Philosophy*. Little Books series. Paul Copan. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2016, 126 pp., paper. ISBN 978-0830851478**

A Little Book For New Philosophers is a small book densely packed with important ideas. Modelled after Helmut Thielicke's *A Little Exercise for New Theologians* (p. 9), its author Paul Copan says it is written for philosophically inclined Christians as well as the "philosophobic" who doubt philosophy's value and legitimacy (p. 9). It is written for the person in the pew as well as fledgling students of philosophy.

Part one, Why Study Philosophy, is a defence of philosophy in general and Christian philosophy in particular. Copan argues that philosophy is both useful to, and compatible with, Christianity. He addresses anti-philosophy biblical texts and concludes that the problem is not philosophy per se, but philosophy that is not centred in Christ (p. 24). He offers Ecclesiastes and Job as examples of philosophically-oriented biblical texts: "Ecclesiastes… explores issues of fatalism, hedonism, nihilism, human nature, mortality, meaning, and purpose — common topics in philosophy class" (p. 51).

Philosophy provides tools for the "life of the mind" (p. 9) and "thinking hard" (p. 37) about metaphysics (what is ultimately real), epistemology (what we can know), and axiology (values and virtues) (p. 31). Copan characterizes philosophy as a "second-order" intellectual endeavour (p. 34), and argues that it can enrich "first-order disciplines" (p. 33) such as history, science, theology etc. He links the concept of worldview (which everyone has), with philosophy, and concludes everyone has a philosophy and is, in a sense, a philosopher,

whether they realize it or not (p. 32), and Christ-centred philosophy can be useful in both defining and defending the Christian worldview (pp. 37-40).

Copan next considers philosophy in the contexts of faith, Scripture, and God. Christianity is a "knowledge tradition" (p. 43) and faith is not a blind leap, but a volitional act based on reasoned evidence (p. 42). Moreover, all truth is God's truth, and "we should welcome God's general self-revelation in nature, conscience, reason, and human experience" as well as "his special revelation in Christ and Scripture" (p. 46). He concludes that "all true academic disciplines are worthy of study" (p. 46). He uses the farming imagery of Isaiah 28, where God teaches the farmer, "who isn't necessarily a believer in God", how to farm, to illustrate how God provides instruction in "the lessons of nature", and then concludes, "The same could be said about philosophers…. It is God who sheds light and gives them insight about metaphysical, epistemological and ethical realities" (p. 47).

In Part Two, How To Study Philosophy, Copan discusses the ethical and moral dimensions of doing Christian philosophy; introduces the idea of doing philosophy in community rather than as a solitary, ego-centred endeavour; and then covers the epistemological issue of doubts (On this he says, rather than letting your doubts rule, why not doubt your doubts). The section ends with practical suggestions to new philosophers on how to get on with it.

In *A Little Book For New Philosophers,* Paul Copan reveals his twin-passions for Christ and philosophy. He offers a holistic vision of Christian philosophy that engages both mind and heart. It will be of value to intellectually-minded Christians in general, and, for fledgling Christian philosophers, it is sure to become a must-read. More than that, however, because of its brevity, this book would enrich any theological program that may not cover philosophy formally. It could become one of those small books a Bible college or seminary student reads incidentally as part of his or her required reading, but then remembers long after the diploma or degree has been obtained.

Reviewed by Dr. Rick Ball, who ministers as a PEI Anglican lay-reader and teaches apologetics at Trans-Africa Christian University, Zambia.

***Philosophy In Seven Sentences: A Small Introduction To A Vast Topic*. Douglas Groothuis. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2016, 156 pp., paper. ISBN 978-0830840939**

In *Philosophy In Seven Sentences*, Douglas Groothuis (Denver Seminary) seeks to write a "personal introduction to [philosophy] and to thinking in general" (pg. 81) through the vehicle of seven provocative pronouncements written across millennia. Aiming to profit "philosophical neophytes" and "seasoned philosophers" alike, it's chiefly about "*epistemology* (how and what

we can know)" and "*metaphysics* (the study of being)" (pg. 12). Groothuis introduces the seven sentences, gives each a chapter that includes biographical data, then offers concluding thoughts.

Pre-Socratic Protagoras: "Man is the measure of all things: of the things which are, that they are, and of things which are not, that they are not" (pg. 15): Groothius considers serial killer Ted Bundy a follower of this line of relativistic thinking (pg. 27ff) and dismisses it as self-refuting (pg. 29).

Socrates' "The unexamined life is not worth living": Groothuis discusses Socrates' use of dialectic and the value of suffering. He uses narcissism to illustrate the second-order nature of philosophic self-examination: "The patient may know he [is a narcissist]… without reflecting on the nature of the human condition as a whole or why narcissism is something to be contained" (pg. 39).

Groothuis leverages off of Aristotle's pronouncement that "all men by nature desire to know" to introduce the bedrock of logical thinking discovered by Aristotle: the law of noncontradiction. Aristotle "codified and championed" this principle which he "claimed was true at all times and for all people" (pg 52). Groothuis dismisses postmodern criticisms of this principle as self-refuting (pg. 56).

Augustine's pronouncement "You [God] have made us for yourself, and restless is our heart until it comes to rest in you" marks the beginning of philosophy expressed autobiographically (pg. 17). Augustine plumbs the depths of sin and evil. His statement that "evil is parasitic on the good; it warps and twists what is good by not submitting to the source of all good, who is God himself" (pg. 77-78) arguably demolishes the atheistic argument that man can be "good without God".

Descartes' pithy "I think, therefore I am": Unlike Augustine, Descartes' biographical angst was "more epistemological than moral" (pg. 85). Groothuis concludes that if Descartes is right, he shows empiricism to be false" (pg. 89).

Groothuis interprets Christian great-heart Pascal's "The heart has its reasons that reason knows nothing of" epistemologically: "Humans have the capacity to calculate and reason methodically, but they may also know some things by tracing out the contours and resources of 'the heart' — another organ of knowledge" (pg. 18). He argues that Pascal and Descartes both believe in innate ideas, but "disagree as to [their] content and extent" (pg. 109).

Finally, Kierkegaard's less well-known and arguably more opaque statement: "The greatest hazard of all, losing one's self, can occur very quietly in the world, as if it were nothing at all": Kierkegaard considers the self and existential despair, and laments the loss of meaning for "mere knowledge, social conformity, or economic success" (pg. 128). Groothuis was converted from atheism while reading Kierkegaard and finding "the book was reading me" (pg. 129).

Considered together, Augustine, Pascal, and Kierkegaard provide x-rays of the human soul which may challenge the reader but be healthy nonetheless.

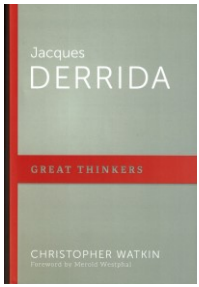
Groothuis hopes the seven sentences may function as "*bridges* to other lands of thought" and "*doors* into worlds previously unknown" (p. 19). He succeeds — this accessible book is a Whitman Sampler that whets the appetite for more. As such, it is eminently suitable for personal study, as a gift to a high-school or college-bound student, and for use in Christian and secular educational contexts.

Reviewed by Rick Ball.

Jacques Derrida. (Great Thinkers: Critical Studies of Minds That Shape Us). Christopher Watkin, Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2017, 148 pp., paper. ISBN 978-1629952277

Christopher Watkin's recent contribution to the P&R's *Great Thinkers* series is a most welcome addition. Derrida has been abused by both critics and the public alike, perhaps more than any other twentieth-century philosopher, and remains generally misunderstood; this is where the P&R series really shines, with the goal of providing a concise and accessible overview of a thinker's writings and ideas, within the context of a Biblical worldview. Watkin divides his book into two parts, with the first part devoted to a survey of Derrida's key thoughts and concepts. The first chapter, *What is Deconstruction?,* is particularly valuable; if you're a skim reader, apply your attention to this section of the book. Watkin's survey also addresses commonly-held misconceptions regarding Derrida's thought. He is especially helpful in dealing with the myth that deconstruction meant language was meaningless for Derrida. Rather, for Derrida, deconstruction is a warning against treating our meanings as completely clear and our truths as The Truth.

Watkin conducts his examination, not by sympathizing with Derrida's ideas, but in being a faithful listener to Derrida's writings, a trait from which many writers could benefit. Watkin proceeds to examine Derrida's politics and ethics, and closes the first part of the book with a study of Derrida's theology, that from the late 1960s onwards consistently engaged with themes from the Western theological tradition. Watkin issues an important warning that we must be careful not to isolate Derridean ideas and graft them into our "Christian register", which would be an injustice to both the Bible and Derrida.



The second part of the book considers the three areas of Derrida's thought examined in the first half and responds to them from the viewpoint of a biblically Reformed specifically the Van Tillian position. Watkin provides a brief overview of other Reformed thinkers', especially John Frame's, treatment of Derrida's ideas. While some readers may appreciate this context, the high-level view does not

provide as much value as chapter five, which proposes a Van Tillian response to Derrida in light of John 1:1-18.

In summary, readers will find in this book a fair appraisal of Derrida's writings and ideas, although it should be noted that this book will find appreciation with two distinct reader audiences. The first part of the book will most surely be appreciated by undergraduate and graduate students studying Derrida's writings, and the second part will be more valuable for divinity and theology students. However, Christians looking to critically engage with Derrida's thought will do well to also pick up this concise and readable volume.

Thomas Aquinas. (Great Thinkers: Critical Studies of Minds That Shape Us). K. Scott Oliphint, Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2017, 145 pp., paper. ISBN 9781629951416

P&R rounds out its *Great Thinkers* series with the addition of Scott Oliphint's study on Thomas Aquinas, which was published at the same time as Christopher Watkin's book on Derrida. Beyond the differences of medieval and contemporary philosophy, the two writers take very different approaches in their respective studies. Given the sheer volume of writing by the medieval philosopher Aquinas, choosing a point of examination is a task in itself. Oliphint, due to the constraints of the book format, limits the book's study of Aquinas and his writings to two areas: epistemology; and, the existence and character of God. Oliphint provides a very brief overview of Aquinas' intellectual development, which helps soften some of his later critiques of Aquinas, as in many ways his writings are representative of the medieval period. In comparison to Watkin's quiet and patient listening approach, however, readers may find that Oliphint is too swift in his critique of Aquinas. Nevertheless, Oliphint fulfills one of the *Great Thinkers* series' goals of examining ideas from a Reformed biblical perspective.

Ian Whytock lives in Halifax, Nova Scotia and is the chair for the Malagash Bible Camp and a member of the World Economic Forum's Global Shapers.

Applied Theology

Departing in Peace: Biblical Decision-Making at the End of Life. Bill Davis. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2017, 300 pp., paper. ISBN 978-1-62995-259-8

Bill Davis is professor of philosophy at Covenant College and adjunct professor of systematic theology at Reformed Theological Seminary. He also serves as a ruling elder in the Presbyterian Church in American and as a hospital ethics consultant. As the subtitle indicates, this book focuses on the making of end-of-life decisions in a biblical way.

The perspective set forth in the book is consistent with the findings of the study committee on Heroic Measures that was adopted by the Presbyterian Church in America in 1988. This book was written, however, to take the findings of that committee and show how they work out in practice in a contemporary setting (xv).

The book consists of eight chapters. After an introductory chapter to the book, chapter 2 deals with many of the foundational principles that underlie the reasoning of the book. This is a very helpful chapter as the book tackles some areas that may cloud our judgment. Using Scripture as his guide, Davis explains that while we are *obligated* to accept loving care that is likely to maintain or restore our health, we are not *required* to suffer merely in order to live as long as possible. Another difficult area he addresses relates to prayer. He asserts that while we ought to pray for healing, our plans should not depend on God performing a miracle.

Chapter 3 deals with end-of-life treatment decisions. The format covers the topics dealt with in an advanced directive (or health care directive). He addresses conditions including permanent unconsciousness, permanent confusion, permanent illness and dependence for daily living. He also explains

treatment options such as CPR (Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation), Ventilator, treating new conditions and tube feeding.

There are a number of things to appreciate about this book. To begin with, the book does an excellent job of providing clarity to issues that can become very complicated. Davis establishes 33 biblical principles that ought to help Christians think through end-of-life decisions. These principles are also gathered together as an appendix, which provides for easy reference.

The book is also very pastoral. In Chapter 4, Davis puts the principles set forth in the book into practice by considering six real-life scenarios. What is so helpful about this section of the book is that it will ask readers how they would speak into the situation as if questions were posed to them. The author provides three potential responses to the situation and then provides his own recommendation and his reasoning for it.

The book is also very practical. In Chapters 5-8, Davis gives guidance and his own recommendations on how to fill out an advanced directive. He also dedicates a chapter to addressing the issue of money as it relates to medical decisions. The aim of this chapter is to establish that Christians should not accept medical services that they cannot reasonably expect to pay back (199).

Due to the very nature of the topic, the material of this book is ideal for every Christian. Pastors would benefit in working through this material, but this book was written to bless the church broadly. There are supplementary lesson plans that can be downloaded from P&R's website, www.prpbooks.com, which are designed to be used in a Sunday school setting and will no doubt prove to be useful in helping every Christian to think through these matters with a biblical lens.

Reviewed by Peter Aiken who serves as the minister of the Central Charge of the Free Church of Scotland, Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island.

***No God but One: Allah or Jesus?: A Former Muslim Investigates the Evidence for Islam and Christianity*. Nabeel Qureshi. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016, 316 pp., paper. ISBN 978-0-310-52255-3**

The late Nabeel Qureshi's first breakout book: *Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus* quickly became a New York Times bestseller after it was published in 2014. Qureshi, a former Muslim who converted to Christianity, initially began to research the Bible with the purpose of disproving it and further bolstering his staunch belief in the teachings of Islam. Instead, Qureshi was confronted with the truth of Scripture and renounced his Islamic roots. He discovered that Jesus is truly the Son of God, and that He is the only one who can atone for our sins.

In S*eeking Allah, Finding Jesus*, Qureshi shared his testimony and related the difficulties of his journey to faith in Christ.

In *No God But One*, Qureshi examines Islam and Christianity side by side by drawing on historical records, ancient texts, philosophers and of course - the Quran and the Bible. The book is primarily directed towards Muslims but will be meaningful to anyone who wants to know more about the claims of either religion.

I greatly appreciated Qureshi's balanced approach to what can quickly become a demonizing debate. As a former Muslim, Qureshi understood what the Quran means to Muslim people. As a strong Christian, he also understood the veracity of the Gospel and the consistency of God's word. Using a methodical approach, Qureshi examined the texts and practices of each religion in order to compare them. He demonstrated the arguments that caused him to doubt his Islamic upbringing and move towards faith in Jesus. Along the way, he dispelled many myths about what Muslims do and do not believe, and he refuted the modern idea that both peoples worship the same God.

Qureshi concluded the book by reminding readers, particularly Muslims, what it costs to abandon everything and follow Christ. He says, "There is no God but one, and he is Father, Spirit and Son. There is no God but one, and He is Jesus. It is worth all suffering to receive this truth and follow him." (p. 294) Indeed, Muslims around the world who come to Christ are shunned by their families and often banished from their communities. Sometimes the outcome is far worse than that. However, Qureshi has shown that the truth matters, whatever the cost.

No God But One is an excellent survey of the key teachings of Islam. There were many things that I did not know about the Muslim faith before reading this book, but having an insider's perspective helps me to appreciate my own faith and understand the shortcomings of Islam from more than a biased but ill-informed Western point of view. Qureshi's work also draws heavily on the rich history of Christendom, which further validates the claims we find in the Bible.

Reviewed by Andrew M. Whytock of Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island who runs a professional writing services company.

***Effective Intercultural Communication: A Christian Perspective*. A. Scott Moreau, Evvy Hay Campbell, and Susan Greener. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014, 405 pp., paper. ISBN 978-0-8010-2663-8**

Scripture is clear that communication is very significant to God, and is a necessary component of our relationship to Him as our Creator, and to one another. God's Word communicates to us the gospel—a matter of life and death (John 1:12, Romans 6:23). It tells us that the words we speak actually

expose the attitudes of our hearts (Mark 7:21-22, James 3:1-4:1-2). Furthermore, it tells us that the manner in which we communicate will bear on our effectiveness in what we are trying to convey (Proverbs 15:1, 2 Corinthians 5:11, 1 Peter 3:15). All this is to say that effective communication is a very worthy topic to ponder as Christians. And as we are commissioned as the Church to make disciples of all nations, *intercultural* communications are something we participate in regularly, whether we always realize it or not.

In *Effective Intercultural Communications,* the authors set out to walk the readers through what they consider to be the critical introductory elements of intercultural communications for all types of Christian workers. The book is comprised of 24 co-authored chapters that are divided into four parts: Introducing Intercultural Communication; Foundations of Intercultural Communication Patterns; Patterns of Intercultural Communication; Developing Intercultural Expertise.

Some very interesting topics were chosen for discussion and much research was surely involved in putting this book together. I appreciate the authors' attempt to point out the fact that the history of Christian missions is not always fairly portrayed as it relates to its effects on the cultures that have received missionary workers over the past centuries. I also commend their conviction that our communication skills, or lack thereof, really do (in part) impact others' receptivity of the gospel and further teachings of the Bible.

However, I also have some concerns. My first concern regards the importance that the authors place on secular fields of study as they pertain to Christians participating in intercultural communications. In the Introduction of the book, a statement is made about how anthropology, linguistics, sociology, and psychology shed light on aspects of intercultural communications, which is then followed by this comment: "For the Christian, of course, theology and missiology must also be included" (p.2). I would critique that statement because, as most Evangelical church statements of faith make clear, we recognize the Holy Scriptures (which are infallible, inspired by the Holy Spirit, and therefore sufficient) as *the rule* of faith and practice. Since good theology is based upon Scripture, it is not just something to be added; rather, Scripture is our *all-sufficient* basis of faith and practice, and our goal in theology is to compartmentalize the Bible's teaching. The authors do point out specifically some of the challenges that Christians are up against in confronting secular concepts of intercultural studies that do not conform to the Bible's teaching.

Another area of concern is the lack of significance placed upon the role of the sending church as it relates to preachers communicating the gospel and teaching cross-culturally. One danger of downplaying the importance of church polity, for example, is that contextualization could then become a main driver of the way that Christian missions is played out, almost leaving a cross-cultural Christian worker with the liberty of redefining significant areas of church life in trying to accommodate local customs.

For example, endeavoring to show the readers how to develop intercultural expertise in sharing the gospel, the authors affirmed Tsu-kung Chuang's alternate version (for the sake of seeking greater appeal in China) of what is commonly referred to as the Four Spiritual Laws. In the authors' words, "Rather than stating that we are all sinful, as in the original version, he states that no one can become the ideal perfect person, a point well known in Chinese culture. Further, he changes the statement about Christ being our provision for sin to Christ being the one who can restore our relationship with God. Finally, he removes the individualistic emphasis on receiving restoration with God" (p.257). Though they urge caution in such a condensation, do we actually have that freedom to change the emphasis of certain aspects of the gospel due to one's culture? On the contrary, the apostle Paul was opposed on many occasions for his consistent preaching of the same gospel everywhere (1 Corinthians 16:9, 2 Corinthians 11:23-26, Acts 16:23; 26:20; 28:22). That said, the authors do point out dangers of highly contextualized ministry and suggest boundaries.

As a church minister serving in a foreign field, I have realized that syncretism is a *real* danger crouching at the doors of developing churches. Therefore, I am convinced that unashamedly holding fast to Scripture, and, as a result, seeking wise direction from one's Bible-believing sending church in working to resolve difficult matters are at the core of a Christian worker being faithful in communicating the gospel and participating in the process of church planting. Though I know this may seem mundane, it is my caution that we do not unintentionally overlook or compromise these fundamental components as we seek to work through the challenges involved in the making of Christian disciples of every nation. Again, I commend and share the authors' *passion* for winning the lost for Christ.

Jonathan Emanuelson is a missionary serving with Zion Evangelical Ministries of Africa, currently teaching at Zion Evangelical Bible Schools in the Eastern Cape of South Africa.

The Mentoring Church: How Pastors and Congregations Cultivate Leaders. **Phil A. Newton. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2017, 230 pp., paper. ISBN 978-0-8254-4464-7**

In *The Mentoring Church*, Phil Newton argues that the best preparation for pastoral ministry takes place in a context of the local church. Effective mentoring will be led by an experienced pastor with heavy congregational input and a deliberate interaction between theological learning, personal devotion, and real-life ministry engagement. The book explores the theology of mentoring, provides examples from the Bible and church history, and ends with models of mentoring in six contemporary local churches in the USA.

The Mentoring Church is a culmination of more than 30 years of Phil Newton's pastoral ministry at South Woods Baptist Church in Tennessee, USA where he and his fellow elders have trained countless servants for ministry.

The book opens in Chapter 1 by establishing the need for deliberate mentoring for pastoral ministry, openly acknowledging that an academic theological education is not sufficient to prepare a person for ministry. Chapter 2 explores Jesus' method of training his disciples, which first involved calling them into a relationship with himself, teaching them personally, and sending them little by little into the harvest. Chapter 3 shows how leaders in the book of Acts developed their ministry skills in teams. Chapter 4 details Paul's training strategy: ground the trainees in sound doctrine; always keep the healthy church in view; develop local church leadership; focus on personal mentoring.

The next section of the book surveys models of training for pastoral ministry from church history. In Chapter 5, Newton portrays Zwingli as 'a tutelary god' to his mentees (83) devoting personal attention to them. Calvin trained men for ministry through the establishment of the church-based Geneva Academy and the flourishing team of a "Company of Pastors". Calvin's "Company" thoroughly grounded their trainees in language, theology and Bible and then sent them out to plant churches based on the Geneva model. Chapter 6 presents the Lutheran Philipp Jakob Spener's reaction against the barrenness of 17th-century, university-based theological preparation of ministers. Spener focused on training the laity, using small group Bible studies, and developing the inner life of the candidate for ministry. Chapter 7 opens up Charles Spurgeon's model of mentoring in the 19th century. In his Pastor's College, he lectured both ministerial candidates and lay leaders on the full scope of pastoral ministry. The training ground for these lectures was active involvement in the congregation at Spurgeon's Metropolitan Tabernacle. Spurgeon relished the personal interaction with ministry candidates as they enjoyed long hours of his personal attention in his home on Friday afternoons. Dietrich Bonhoeffer in 20th century Germany held that the exclusive use of the German theological schools in universities as a method of pastoral preparation was a waste of time (109). In his book *Life Together*, Bonhoeffer writes about his small "preachers' seminaries" where mentees lived out heart-felt discipleship in community.

In the ninth chapter, Newton contends that a theology of leadership must emerge from a biblical theology of church. Since the church is God's great project on earth, training to serve that church will happen best within the structure of the local congregation. Newton does not disparage parachurch ministries, like Bible institutes and colleges. But those ministries are specialist ministries and should confine themselves to those specializations to serve the

greater church. Wise church leaders will use the expertise of parachurch ministries to carry out what churches often cannot do.

Chapters 9-13 provide concrete local church-based models of mentoring. In Chapter 9, Newton gives personal example from his own experience in training men for ministry. Such mentoring emphasizes the example of the primacy of preaching, life-on-life relationship between pastor and trainee, supervised training assignments, accountability and feedback, all within the sphere of the local congregation.

Here, one of Newton's central burdens becomes clear – the congregation must be involved in the training of future leaders. Not only does the church body provide real-life ministry opportunity for the potential shepherd, but the church itself is a mentoring community to the ministry candidate since "no one mentor can adequately cover all the bases necessary for a trainee" (141).

Chapter 10 presents Capitol Hill Baptist Church's "Boot Camp" – a five-month exposure to as many elements of regular pastoral life as possible. In chapter 11, Newton shows the focus used by The Summit Church in Raleigh-Durham, with its deliberate intent on training and sending church planters. At Grace Community Church in Nashville (chapter 12), the pastor brings on one or two trainees at a time and provides ample face-to-face accompaniment through all areas of pastoral ministry. Lakeview Baptist Church in Alabama demonstrates the way the church and academy can work in harmony – the academy provides the theological instruction and the church grounds that academic work in real-life ministry
preparation (chapter 13).

The final chapter summarizes the main emphases of the book by providing a template for training leaders in the local church. Summarizing his findings, Newton recommends the following:

- Mentors must speak holistically into their trainees' lives.
- Mentoring must train the protégé in the art of healthy relationships.
- Mentoring should encourage a team-approach to Christian ministry, beginning in the mentoring process.
- Mentors must give responsibility to the trainees and then trust them to carry out those tasks.
- The pastor, elders, and staff must be committed to the idea of mentoring in their church and set aside time to invest in it.
- The congregation where the trainee serves should be committed to engaging the trainee.
- The leaders must wisely select the trainee who will serve under their care.
- The internship must be uncomplicated but well planned out and well communicated to the mentee.
- The trainee should be exposed to and involved in as many types of ministry experience as possible.

Many mentorships require substantial reading from their trainees. Newton provides a helpful booklist in his appendix, Suggested Books for Pastoral Training.

There is a great need for deliberate mentoring in the evangelical churches of Africa. *The Mentoring Church* offers models which can help. Given the differences in culture, economic sustainability of the local church, the reality of bi-vocational pastorates, and the sparsity of theological education in Africa, a book on mentoring for pastoral ministry written on this continent would be a welcome companion to *The Mentoring Church*.

Reviewed by Karl Peterson, a former church planter in Mozambique and lecturer at the Bible Institute of South Africa and currently on staff at Parker Hills Bible Fellowship in Denver, USA.

***The Benedict Option: A Strategy for Christians in a Post-Christian Nation*. Rod Dreher. New York: Sentinel [an imprint of Penguin Random House], 2017, 262 pp., hc. ISBN 978-0735213296**

On the centennial of J. Gresham Machen's birth (July 28, 1881), Charles Dennison observed in *New Horizons* that the man in many ways responsible for the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) died a long way from where he started. Dennison, then the historian for the OPC, was not just commenting on the distance between Baltimore and Bismarck, North Dakota, where Machen succumbed to pneumonia. The historian was also drawing attention to the cultural isolation that Machen experienced over the course of his life. The son of a well-to-do Baltimore attorney, he studied at elite universities and rubbed shoulders with the nation's wealthiest and most influential persons. Yet Machen went to his grave as the leader of a small, obscure, and largely discredited cause—ministering the Word of God according to Presbyterian orthodoxy. Machen's life as a pilgrim in exile, Dennison believed, was also true for the OPC. This was not a communion characterized by prestige or cultural influence. Dennison repeatedly called upon Orthodox Presbyterians to remember and embrace their heritage. The OPC, he wrote, "begins where Machen ended and that is her secret, her genius, and her calling." The OPC's founding was a recognition that Christians are called to be strangers and aliens, a peculiar people, not transformers of culture.

Not everyone in the OPC shared Dennison's call for cultural exile or his interpretation of the church's founding, but Rod Dreher's new book, *The Benedict Option*, is a confirmation that Machen and Dennison had a point in eschewing the American mainstream for ecclesiastical authenticity. A writer at *The American Conservative* with a remarkable knack for hitting the sweet spot of discontent among Americans who prefer tradition to progress, Dreher with this book adds to his reputation for thinking beyond small government, a

strong national defense, balanced budgets, and family values. He argues that American Christians (and he tries to write with Protestants, Roman Catholics, and Eastern Orthodox in mind—he has been all three) are in the midst of a deluge that threatens the family, morality, communities, and churches. He quotes an Anglican theologian approvingly: "There is no safe place in the world or in our churches within which to be a Christian. It is a new epoch."

The current revolution in sexuality and marriage is the culmination of a long process, Dreher argues, begun even in the late Middle Ages, which saw the secular triumph over the sacred. Christians now confront a situation similar to what Benedict of Nursia experienced at the time of the Roman Empire's collapse in the fifth century. Just as Benedict formed a monastic community to preserve a Christian witness and culture, Dreher argues, so also contemporary believers need a "Benedict Option" to preserve the faith and pass it on to future generations. (The anomaly of monastic ideals and having children is a conundrum that runs through this book.)

The qualities that informed monasticism—order, work, prayer, asceticism, stability, community, and hospitality—are features that Dreher recommends to Christians in their everyday lives. This Benedictine outlook means above all being intentional about distinguishing Christianity from the surrounding culture. Parents should consider living in neighborhoods with like-minded Christians. They should also pay attention to the education children receive by looking at classical Christian academies or homeschooling. Christians should also, Dreher says, recognize the value of hard work and the virtues it instills, one of which includes rejecting the casual attitude to sex that prevails in the modern West. It also means that Christians should be self-conscious about their use of social media and other technologies that distract from either reflection or quiet.

The greatest weakness of Dreher's prescription is his understanding of Christianity. On the one hand, he idealizes a medieval social order, the kind that sustained Benedictine monasticism. That older European society assumed God haunted everything, all parts of creation and society were also signs of God's presence, and the whole world was sacramental. This means, of course, that Protestantism rained on Christendom's party by destroying the sacred canopy that bequeathed religious significance to all parts of human existence. Luther and his fellow travelers were not entirely to blame for upending Christendom. Renaissance humanists and modern scientists and philosophers also added to the decline of Christian Europe. But Dreher's narrative of the West reinforces the idea, made popular recently by Brad Gregory in *The Unintended Reformation* (2012), that Protestants "segregated the sacred from the secular" in ways that led to the current climate of cultural relativism. Whatever the merits of that historical claim, and there are a few, it conflicts with Dreher's larger aim of writing for all of "us" Christians. He hopes that all Christians can embrace the Benedict Option, and yet the book implicitly favors older over modern forms of Christianity. Dreher should have been more forthright about his own religious beliefs.

On the other hand, Dreher adopts a utilitarian approach to Christianity. It is most evident in his chapter on church life, which begins with a quotation by historian Robert Louis Wilkin, that "nothing is more needful today than the survival of Christian culture." Dreher does use the word "gospel" a number of times, but whoever indexed the book did not think the subject merited an entry in the index. It was omitted for good reason, since Dreher's book shows more concern for culture than for the gospel, that is, salvation. Indeed, the sacraments and liturgical worship become vehicles to raise an awareness of God's presence in the universe, while iPads and smart phones are distractions from religious meaning in the world. Dreher follows that line of conservative thought that sees cult (or worship) as the basis for culture. The logic inherent in tracing culture to cult might make sense of Old Testament Israel, but the example of Christ and the apostles does not. They gave little attention to culture (beyond ending Old Testament requirements) because they were more interested in salvation than assessing the polyglot world of the Roman Empire. Had Dreher started with a concern for the salvation of the next generation of Christians, he may well have had to distinguish among the branches of Christianity the one with the true gospel.

Despite this defect, Dreher deserves credit for embracing counterculturalism, and readers will find in parts of this book sound advice for evaluating unhealthy activities or reconsidering seemingly benign assumptions about modern life. At the same time, Dreher is late in his critique. Not only did Machen see in his day how accommodating culture had compromised mainline Presbyterianism, but fifty years before the OPC was formed Abraham Kuyper also recognized the path on which liberal European society was headed and took measures to preserve a Christian witness by forming separate institutions (church, schools, media, political parties). Because Reformed Christians have been worried about the culture for over a century, some of what Dreher writes may sound familiar and even repetitive. For that reason, readers may also wonder after reading Dreher what took Christians like him so long to wake up. The book is a testimony to the dangers that even mainstream Christians now see in the wider world. If mainline Protestants had not been so dismissive of Machen and the OPC eight decades ago, the Machen Option might be as worthy of consideration as the Benedict Option that Dreher now proposes.

Reviewed by D.G. Hart, an Orthodox Presbyterian ruling elder and lecturer at Hillsdale College, Michigan.

This review first appeared in the Aug-Sept 2017 issue of New Horizons.

***The Pastor's Book: A Comprehensive and Practical Guide to Pastoral Ministry*. R. Kent Hughes & Douglas Sean O'Donnell,**

consulting editor. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015, 592 pp., hc., ISBN 978-1-4335-4587-0

What a beautifully bound hardcover book complete with a marker ribbon, good quality paper – a book which should be on every evangelical pastor's book shelf. This has been a delight to read and return to since receiving a review copy. R. Kent Hughes, who had been a long-standing pastor at College Church in Wheaton, Illinois, has given us the best of his wisdom by collecting from years in Christian ministry and bringing it together into this book. Hughes is the chief author and collator for this book, but he has been ably assisted by Douglas O'Donnell. Many others have given permission for their materials to be included. Each is properly acknowledged and the reader clearly knows who did what; this makes for good reading and shows great care in the way the book has been put together.

There is one puzzling feature of this book: the sub-title. When I read this sub-title, I had the vision of a book that was going to look at many aspects of pastoral ministry. However, when I read the preface, I learned that the following aspects of pastoral ministry would not be included (except by way of a reference to a bibliographic source): "calling to ministry, personal character, family life, preaching, leading a pastoral staff, working with elders, church discipline, and church planting, would make this large go-to book too bulky to go to" (17). So my impression is that the preface has limited the focus of the book. A quick survey of the contents of the book will confirm this, with approximately three-quarters of the content dealing with worship-related ministry.

Hence, my bewilderment; I do not see how the sub-title fits this book. It is almost like then the book should have been a series of three books with this one being the one called The Pastor's Book: A Comprehensive and Practical Guide to Leading in Worship, then the next volume, The Pastor's Book: A Comprehensive and Practical guide to Pastoral Counselling and Visitation, and finally, The Pastor's Book: A Comprehensive and Practical Guide to Leadership, Church Growth and Revitalisation, or something along these lines. It is very strange to me that such a well-written and published book should have such a sub-title. Least a reader thinks that I am not endorsing this book, no, this is not the case. In fact, I would make selections of it mandatory reading in courses that I teach, and I would encourage congregants looking for a gift for a pastor or would-be pastor to buy a copy. So I am giving my endorsement as stated in my opening sentence. I am just confused by the sub-title.

The book operates on a principle of open candour and respect for both paedo-baptism and credo-baptism and the two names on the cover represent both convictions. This will offend some and will also make the book more popular across the evangelical churches today.

There are three parts to the book: Christian Gatherings, the Worship Service, and Ministerial Duties. Parts One and Two constitute about 75% of

the book. The two sections in part three on pastoral counselling and hospital visitation are excellent. I highly commend them.

Concerning the remainder of the book, I would say that this book is going to make liturgical practices relevant for today with good reflection and understanding. The Christian gatherings dealt with in the book are regular Sunday services, annual services, weddings and funerals. Rich resources are included, such as select funeral and wedding sermons. These would be very good for discussion at fraternal meetings or in a theology class.

It seems there is a renewed interest today in liturgy, especially by many younger pastors. *The Pastor's Book* would be good have alongside the new book by Jonathan Gibson and Mark Earngey, *Reformation Worship: Liturgies from the Past for the Present.*

Reviewed by Jack C. Whytock.

Preaching Points: 55 Tips for Improving Your Pulpit Ministry. **Scott M. Gibson, editor. Wooster, OH: Weaver Book Company, 2016, 123 pp., ISBN 978-1-941337-54-7**

Preaching Points is a collection of transcripts drawn from the weekly podcast of the same name produced by Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. The book is primarily an answer to requests from listeners for a printed version of the podcast, but it is also offered with the hope of connecting with preachers beyond the podcast audience. Listeners and fans of the podcast will already be familiar with the format and my goal is to present the book to the second group, those coming to it fresh.

As the subtitle makes clear, the 55 tips gathered together are aimed at those involved in preaching. They are presented by five members of the preaching and teaching staff of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, and all are very accessible in both style and content. Each chapter is short, the longest being three pages, with an average chapter length of less than two pages. With the exception of a single passing reference to a point made in a previous chapter, each chapter is self-contained. A variety of topics are touched on throughout the book, but the majority of the points are related to the process of preparation and delivery, which is in line with the book's stated purpose of helping preachers to "Be clear!" However, the book is not simply a quick reference of how-to tips but maintains a clear emphasis on the authority of the Word of God in the preacher's life and ministry. I was surprised to find no direct mention of the person and work of the Holy Spirit. Whether this was an oversight or this aspect of preaching is simply being taken for granted with the intended audience, this is a serious shortcoming since there is no true preaching without the Spirit.

Those familiar with the standard works on preaching will recognize many of the points, and the refresher on a main point that may otherwise stay buried

in the larger volume on the shelf makes the book very helpful for those who already have a solid background. The temptation for these readers will most likely be to zip through the book in one sitting and put it away, but the greatest benefit will come from remembering its source, a weekly podcast. I recommend approaching the book as a sort of preaching devotional, reading one chapter each week and then taking the week to pray and think through how you might implement that one idea.

For readers who may not have had the opportunity to read the larger works, or for whom those works may be inaccessible, this book will be a great resource provided it is taken in context. Many of the tips are condensed or extracted from more thorough discussions on preaching and readers coming to them for the first time will be in danger of taking them as more complete than they really are. Wisdom and care must be taken to work through the tips while giving each their proper weight within the individual's pastoral setting and ministry.

The style of the book makes it readily accessible and readable, and the short chapters make it easy to take in without being overwhelmed. It is helpful for both those with wide experience and those just starting out in preaching; where it does fall short in its treatment of the Spirit, those with a Spirit-led heart will undoubtedly benefit from its pages. Each point is clearly marked with the author's initials, which may be of help to those with complementarian convictions, and if the points are helpful to you, then they will lead you to further works by those authors.

Reviewed by Stephen Plouffe.

***Playing With Holy Fire*: *A Wake-Up Call to the Pentecostal Charismatic Church* Michael L. Brown. Lake Mary, Florida: Charisma -House, 2018, 202 pp., paper.ISBN 978-1-62999-499-4**

"… How can the Spirit's presence be so strong in our midst while we remain so carnal?... Why have we allowed so many abuses to continue in our midst?" (pp. 159,186). So asks Dr Michael Brown (PhD), a charismatic "insider" (pg. xv) dismayed by the excesses and errors associated with the charismatic movement he affirms and loves. He writes pastorally, with a "deep sense of burden, with grief over the lives hurt… and with pain because of the reproach that has been brought to the name of our Lord" (p. 7).

Brown's thesis is that a legitimate move of the Spirit, one which has resulted in the salvation of millions and rocked continents (p. xvi), has been accompanied by a litany of problems: "immaturity, gullibility, carnality, sensationalism, merchandising, corruption and doctrinal error" (p. xvi), ill-prepared and abusive leaders, compromise, and moral scandals (pp. 6-7), and fads (p. 22). He compares these immaturities and excesses to the Spirit-filled church at Corinth (e.g., pp. xvi, 136). A distinctive feature of Brown's theology is that he believes the gifts and callings of God are "without repentance" and

that, by way of partial explanation, the Spirit's gifts are genuine and continue even among sinning and erring leaders (e.g., p. 31) – a sobering thought.

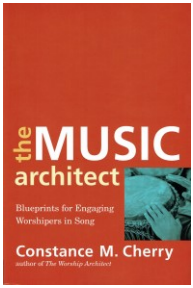
The author identifies three overarching reasons for these problems: immaturity, gullibility, and the sin of pride among leaders. He argues for sound teaching to address the first – he quotes Alastair Begg approvingly: "The main things are the plain things, and the plain things are the main things" (p. 148); the cultivation of discernment to address the second; and repentance for the third. At the same time, he urges the church to avoid scepticism, arguing that "*discernment is not the same thing as scepticism, and cynicism is not a fruit of the Spirit*" (p. 18).

Brown has written a helpful book. It belongs in pentecostal/charismatic colleges, on the charismatic pastor's bookshelf, and in the hands of ordinary charismatics. Although not addressed to the movement's critics, they could benefit as well. Readers may be shocked, dismayed, informed, cautioned, and, at times, delighted. His conversational style and generous use of anecdotes helps to keep the reader's interest. His book includes many references to the developing world churches, African especially (e.g., pp. 23-24, 58-59, 123, 125-6), e.g., "… even Baptist churches in Africa commonly pray for the sick and drive out demons" (p. 126).

There are three areas where I wish he had said more. First, Brown, admittedly for good reasons which he outlines (pp. xvii-xviii), declines to name the charlatans and authors of various excesses and abuses. In some cases, the names were obvious to me; in other cases, I must confess I found myself wondering. Second, he sometimes asserts something is wrong without saying why. For example, he says, "it's a short step from proclaiming yourself to be an apostle to thinking that you carry the same authority as the first twelve apostles. That is a very serious error" (p. 75). And leaves it at that – no further comment. Finally, and more substantively, he stresses gullibility among charismatics, but I wish he had probed its psychological, sociological, and theological dimensions. I suspect it has to do with genuine enthusiasm for the living God and the desire to see the Spirit moving as per Acts and I Corinthians 12, coupled with a belief that uncritical, fideistic faith is the key to making this happen. This kind of in-depth analysis would be very helpful and would make an excellent follow-up.

Reviewed by Rick Ball.

The Music Architect: Blueprints for Engaging Worshipers in Song. **Constance M. Cherry Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016, 272 pp., paper. ISBN 978-0-8010-9968-7**



Because we are creatures of habit—people whose practices become deeply-embedded parts of our lives—it can be easy to think that the way *we* do things is the way they *always* must be done. This applies to ordinary parts of our domestic lives: how we organize our kitchen or celebrate a holiday. However, the assumption that these practices *must* be carried out in a certain way can be swiftly disrupted by marriage or by being taken in by another family, where another's practices and preferences are vastly different than, and challenging to, our own. This applies all the more when it comes to church music—the order of the liturgy, the style that is played, or the songs that are selected. Of all the ecclesial spheres in which to introduce change, music is among the most difficult. We can be quick to canonize our own preferences and suppose that any other way must be a form of unfaithfulness.

But congregational song is far more dynamic and rich than we realize. Across time and geography, there is an array of church music that is both diverse and dazzlingly bright. In *The Music Architect: Blueprints for Engaging Worshipers in Song*, professor of worship and music minister Constance Cherry offers a glimpse into this wide breadth of traditions and practices, and helps worship leaders to navigate how to use music to disciple those whom they are serving in their churches.

This book follows *The Worship Architect* and *The Special Service Worship Architect,* by the same author, in expounding upon various components of the Christian worship service. Particularly, *The Music Architect* narrows in on congregational song in order to understand the relationship between worship and music (see Chapter 3, p. 37). They are not, after all, the same thing. On the one hand, our performance-driven, production-centred worship music culture can easily seem to blur the two into one. But on the other hand, it is truly appropriate that we would have a hard time imagining a worship service *without* song—after all, singing is a command and is a gracious means that the Lord has given us to commune with and respond to him. So, how should we understand music's purpose in relation to worship?

With clarity, Cherry states the relationship between the two by saying, "The role of music in worship is to facilitate the proclamation and celebration of the story of God" (p.39). The story of God, of which the gospel of Jesus is central, is the heart of the church's worship. Music is not an end in itself, but an important means to the end. If music points to itself as *the* end, or if the ends it points toward are unbiblical, it fails in its God-given purpose.

We could think of the pitfalls of the smartphone in similar ways. If we neglect to use our smartphone to assist with the functions for which it was designed—communication, navigation, gathering useful information—or if it points us toward destructive ends—self-absorption or social isolation—it is no longer fulfilling its purpose. Music has the same capacity for misuse.

But, when practiced rightly, music beautifully comes alongside to facilitate the rehearsal and enactment of God's story (see Chapter 2, p.17). In order to

do this, music functions in a multitude of ways. It accompanies the liturgical movements of worship in order to engage the worshipers and make them primary participants with God in the story. It enables us to internalize the story in a way that the spoken word alone could not. It invites us into not only the dialogue of worship—the dance of revelation and response—but also into communion with each other, the body of Christ, as together we taste and see that God is good.

Cherry helps us to see that when music functions rightly, a whole expanse of congregational song opens up before us. She challenges the worship leader to evaluate their canon of song (see Appendix A, p. 266) for soundness and balance, and poses many helpful questions to help in the process. Selecting which songs to sing must be done intentionally and pastorally, because not only will a canon of song begin to identify a group of people as a bonded community, but the songs themselves will shape and form the hearts and minds of the worshipers (see Chapter 5, p. 97).

The songs we sing, therefore, must display the range of experience in the Christian life. They must both praise and lament, address God and address one another, declare God's story and tell of how our own intersects. The songs we sing should include "longer" and "shorter" songs—songs that develop extended ideas, and songs that are simple meditations and embody one particular liturgical act. They should include old songs (psalms, faithful hymns) and new ones. They should challenge us to personal holiness and to societal justice. They should reflect the breadth of the Christian tradition so that we can identify ourselves as part of the universal, orthodox church; they should also reflect the distinctives of our personal tradition and particular convictions (pp. 109-114). This book deconstructs many unnecessary dichotomies, such as the ones above. Where we may be quick to demand that music be done one way, we can easily miss the complementary perspective. The apostle Paul broke down dichotomies in a similar way: "I will sing with my spirit, but I will sing with my mind also" (1 Cor. 14:15).

The variety and availability of congregational song and worship practices today is immense, and Cherry opens the door far enough to show us that there is still much more to see. One could only hope to dip one's toes in the ocean of new ideas that she describes—for some, that will be singing an African American responsorial song; for others, a rich metrical psalm. Cherry steers the reader toward only taking on a few new ideas at a time and working slowly to apply them in their context. This is wise.

Cherry's work is also an important reminder of the humility and love that are required when leading congregational song. Learning to lay down your own preferences for the sake of others necessitates and cultivates love. Choosing liturgical acts that will stretch and grow your local church body in new ways will take discernment and humility. And while it may be challenging to realize that the way we have done things is not the way things always need to be done, we should see the opportunity to widen our sights as a gift. In the

end, the cultivation of these practices will enrich our worship as we celebrate the story of God together.

Reviewed by Tyler Stitt, a final-year M.Div. student at Bethlehem College & Seminary, Minneapolis, Minnesota and a former worship leader at Cornerstone University, Michigan.

Crossing Cultures in Scripture: Biblical principles for mission practice. **Marvin J. Newell. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2016, 302 pp., paper. ISBN 978-0-8308-4473-9**

The author, a former missionary in Indonesia and missiologist at Moody in Chicago, begins by highlighting the Bible as the absolute truth, with other disciplines only being helpers to enable the reader to gain a deeper understanding of the Bible – they are not the truth on their own. This sends a strong message on the importance of the Scriptures even in understanding culture, its source, and what it entails. It is important for the author to identify that culture was perfect at creation, deteriorated because of sin, and was redeemed. This puts all cultures at equal footing and helps readers not to impose or elevate their cultural values over others. In other words, the order of culture points to the biblical culture (redeemed culture) as the standard culture to which all other cultures should conform for transformation because all other cultures are fallen cultures.

It is of great importance that the author points to practical examples where crossing cultures is elevated in the Bible, starting with the call of Abraham in whom all peoples of the earth would be blessed. This indicates the need to reach out to all people groups in their cultures and to transform their fallen culture by the Word of God. The giving of different Old and New Testament peoples who crossed cultural boundaries is good in identifying the effects, results, challenges faced and how they were resolved or failed to be resolved. These examples are important insights for present missionaries who would enter the mission field equipped with the necessary skills.

At the apex of cross-cultural mission is the example of our Lord Jesus. I like the way the author first gives the different cultural boundaries that existed during Jesus' time, which Christ skillfully and successfully crossed and in so doing achieved the intended results. Giving the seven marks of Jesus' prayer for His disciples (in John 17) highlights what the church needs to do as part of her mandate and how she should successfully do it cross-culturally.

The link and development from Jesus' examples and the seven marks to how the early church followed the guideline and was successful is very important for the present church. The example of Acts 1:8 given by the author (and explanation thereof) is important in preparing evangelism for different groups of people from E-1 (same culture) through to E-3 (radically different culture). If this is not grasped, evangelism across cultures will bear little or no

fruit because each group needs appropriate skill to successfully evangelize them.

I like the fact of contextualization by the missionary, but I suggest the author should have emphasized the fact that this should be carefully done to prevent the missionary from conforming to the fallen culture of the target group. The core of the gospel should remain unchanged in contextualization. Again, the author's parallelism of the Trinity and cultures on the aspect of unity and diversity should be carefully explained to avoid grey areas that might be brought by the parallelism. The Trinity is divine, as the author suggests, and lacks nothing while all cultures are fallen in their diversity and need the divine culture of the Bible to be transformed. The book is highly commended in the foreword by Patrick Fung, the general director of OMF.

Reviewed by Wilbert Chipenyu