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## **Editorial**

This issue is devoted to the Southern Baptist Convention's January Bible Study book, Nehemiah. The articles contained in this volume are written to aid the busy pastor or teacher who will be leading in studies on this Old Testament book.

Our guest contributor to this issue is Dr. Mervin Breneman, Professor of Old Testament at ESEPA Seminary in San Sebastián, Costa Rica. He is the author of numerous scholarly works, including a volume on Ezra and Nehemiah in the New American Commentary series. Breneman contributes to this journal a helpful article titled, "A Theological Primer for Nehemiah."

Other contributors of articles to this issue include: Dr. Stephen Andrews, Professor of OT and Hebrew at MBTS, who provides a teaching outline for Nehemiah. Stephenie Long and Andrew McClurg, MBTS teaching assistants, also supply an annotated bibliography for this OT book. Dr. Albert Bean, Professor of OT and Hebrew at MBTS, furnishes an article on preaching points from Nehemiah, and Dr. Terry Wilder, Associate Professor of NT and Greek at MBTS, contributes a previously unpublished sermon from Nehemiah 11:17 preached by Peter Grant, a 19th-century Scottish Baptist pastor and hymn writer. Finally, Dr. Phil Roberts, President of MBTS, provides a special report on some recent efforts by the Church of the Latter-Day Saints to increase understanding and improve relationships between them and evangelicals. He concludes that this endeavor by the Mormons is evidently just a recasting of their image—without sacrificing anything of substance—so that they will be thought of as a more mainstream, and even distantly evangelical, church. This issue also contains several reviews by MBTS faculty and others on recent books and software.

If you like what you read in this issue and would like to have one of our faculty members speak in your church or lead your congregation in a study of Nehemiah, please do not hesitate to contact us. We are more than happy to serve you.

To God's glory! Enjoy.

## **A Theological Primer for the Study of Nehemiah**

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### **Introduction**

As we read and study the book of Nehemiah, what should we be looking for? True, we will not observe well-developed theological statements as in the book of Romans. We will not find the lofty, inspiring visions of God's transcendence and glory as in Isaiah, or the emotion-stirring poetry of the Psalms. However, a study of Nehemiah is rich and rewarding. This book is also part of God's inspired word.

God speaks to us through all the literary genres of the Bible including narratives such as Nehemiah. Approximately half of both the Old and New Testaments consists of narrative. Throughout the centuries God has used the narratives of Abraham, Joseph, Joshua and myriads more, including Nehemiah, to teach and inspire his children. In addition to biblical narrative, God also uses our narrative as we share our personal testimony of his action in our lives, as we teach, as we preach, declaring the glorious message of salvation in Christ Jesus.

So, what emphases should we look for in this narrative of Nehemiah? Can we find inspiration for our lives and our own narratives? Can Nehemiah help us grow theologically? Certainly it is an excellent leadership training tool, used frequently to teach godly leadership qualities and methods. However, we also want to show the profound theological teachings in Nehemiah.

The purpose of using the title "theological primer" for the study of Nehemiah is to help the reader or Bible teacher be aware of the theological teachings and implications of Nehemiah's life and ministry. Our purpose is to suggest what to look for as we study the book. Just as Nehemiah constantly depended on God to teach and guide him, we need to allow the Holy Spirit to teach us and to apply his truth to our lives as well as those of our students.

## The Significance of Nehemiah in God's Redemptive Plan

### *The Narrative Structure Emphasizes Nehemiah's Significance*

To discover and understand what God wants to teach us in the book of Nehemiah, it is important to grasp the structure of the book; indeed, the structure of the entire work known as Ezra-Nehemiah. Ezra and Nehemiah were originally one book. Much of the combined book consists of the writings of Ezra (Ezra Memoirs) and Nehemiah (Nehemiah Memoirs). The final author used these two writings along with other documents and some of his own comments. Although the identity of the author is still discussed, perhaps the best candidate is Ezra himself.<sup>1</sup>

An examination of the narrative structure helps us notice what the author intends to communicate to the readers. His use of repetition, dialogues, points of view, as well as his choice of events and organization of the material, all will guide us in finding what he wants to teach and what God wants to teach us. "A biblical-theological analysis of an OT narrative is incomplete until it has shown the relationship between the theological message of the narrative and the narrative itself. In other words, one must demonstrate how the narrative's theological message develops along the line of the narrative."<sup>2</sup>

First, let us look at the basic structure of Ezra-Nehemiah. We can divide the whole book into four main sections.<sup>3</sup> The first section, Ezra

<sup>1</sup> See my discussion in Mervin Breneman, *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther*, in the *New American Commentary* 10 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1993), 35-41. Since some readers will have access to the commentary, throughout the article I will make references to it (Br-EN).

<sup>2</sup> A. Philip Brown II, "Introduction to A Literary and Theological Analysis of the Book of Ezra," digital edition: [http://www.bible.org/page.asp?page\\_id=2570](http://www.bible.org/page.asp?page_id=2570).

<sup>3</sup> See Mark A. Throntveit, *Ezra-Nehemiah* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1992). Eskenazi divides the whole book of Ezra-Nehemiah in three sections. The first, Ezra 1:1-4, "potentiality," records the decree of Cyrus to rebuild the temple. The second section includes Ezra 1:5 to Nehemiah 7:72 and indicates the "actualization" process. Her third section, Neh 8-13, is similar to our fourth section. Tamara C. Eskenazi, *In an Age of Prose: A Literary Approach to Ezra-Nehemiah* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988). This is an important work which has influenced subsequent work on the narrative structure of Ezra-Nehemiah and the theology of the book.

Eskenazi bases her structure on generic literary analysis.

1. Potentiality (objective defined): decree to the community to build the house of God (Ezra 1:1-4)
2. Process of Actualization (steps taken): the community builds the house of God according to the decree (Ezra 1:5-Neh 7:72)
  1. Introduction: proleptic summary (Ezra 1:5-6)
  2. First movement (Ezra 1:7-6:22)
  3. Second movement (Ezra 7:1-10:44)
  4. Third movement (Neh 1:1-7:5)
  5. Recapitulation: the list of returnees (Neh 7:6-7:72)

1-6, narrates the initial return of exiles from Babylon to Jerusalem and Judah in 538 B.C. Cyrus authorized them to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. In the second section, Ezra 7-10, Ezra, under the authorization of King Artaxerxes, leads the return of a second group of exiles to Jerusalem in 458 B.C. In addition, Ezra is commissioned by King Artaxerxes to teach God's Law to the Jews. In the third section, Nehemiah 1:1-7:3, Nehemiah is commissioned by the same King Artaxerxes to return to Jerusalem and reconstruct the walls of the city.

It is interesting to note in these sections various parallels in the narrative: a) The initial return was carried out under the divinely prompted authorization of the king of Persia; b) in sections one and three there was almost constant opposition to the construction of the temple and the construction of the wall; c) the people overcame the opposition with God's help.<sup>4</sup>

Also, the author shows three principal concerns in all three sections. First, the role of the Persian kings in the fulfillment of God's purposes. This emphasizes God's sovereignty and providence, and was a strong encouragement to the small community of returned exiles struggling to come to terms with the fact that they no longer had political autonomy.<sup>5</sup> Second, in all three sections there is an emphasis on separation from other peoples. Third, we notice a strong emphasis on legitimacy—on continuity with the pre-exilic Jewish community. We see this in the bringing back of the temple vessels from Babylon, in the genealogies and in the book of the Law. To some degree, these are cultural matters, but they also certainly are theological.

The fourth section of Ezra-Nehemiah, Nehemiah 7:4-13:26, emphasizes the renewal and reform of the community. It serves as a climax to the whole book. The first section of the book, Ezra 1-6, emphasizes the restoration of the temple. The second section emphasizes the restoration of obedience to the Law with Ezra's teaching ministry. The third section, Nehemiah 1:1-7:3, puts the main emphasis on the restoration of the walls of Jerusalem.<sup>6</sup> Now, in the fourth section, we see

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3. Success (objective reached): the community celebrates the completion of the house of God according to the Torah (Neh 8:1-13:31).

<sup>4</sup> See H. G. M. Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, Word Biblical Commentary 16 (Word Books, 1985), lii. Eskenazi, in her introduction, points out that Chronicles emphasizes a more direct retribution where the fate of each generation is determined directly by its own obedience/disobedience, how they respond to the prophetic message. In Ezra-Nehemiah, on the other hand, the piety of the leaders and/or the people is not reflected in sudden upturns of fortune, but on the contrary may entail an increase of opposition (Ezr 4; Neh 4). Nehemiah may be helpful in correcting the twisted emphasis on prosperity in some circles where the impression is given that God is always obligated to prosper us.

<sup>5</sup> Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, li.

<sup>6</sup> Throntveit, *Ezra-Nehemiah*, 4.

the culmination of the first three restorations with an emphasis on continual reform. Indeed, the events of chapter 13 indicate that the community cannot rest on its laurels.<sup>7</sup> In fact, this may be seen as a definite intention to point toward the need of a greater solution in the future.

Although our focus here is on the theology of Nehemiah, this brief look at the structure and emphases of the whole book of Ezra-Nehemiah will help us understand the specific contributions of Nehemiah. The viewpoints of the Nehemiah-Memoirs, the Ezra-Memoirs, and the overall editor are basically the same. The overall theme of the book is the restoration of the Jewish people—both physically and spiritually. In reading Nehemiah we should be looking for the main themes of the book. One possible listing of these is: a) the continuity of God’s plan and people; b) separation from sin, the world, and syncretism; c) Scripture; d) worship; and e) prayer.<sup>8</sup> In a recent monograph Philip Brown emphasizes the continuity of the covenant community, divine sovereignty, human responsibility, and Nehemiah’s ethical and leadership example.<sup>9</sup>

In her work, *In an Age of Prose*, Eskenazi finds three dominant themes which combine to “deemphasize the heroic and affirm the prosaic.” First, Ezra-Nehemiah shifts the focus from overshadowing leaders to the participating community. The emphasis of the book is on the whole community’s participation rather than on their heroic leaders. Second, Eskenazi tries to show that the book expands the concept of the house of God from temple to city. Thus the emphasis on sanctity is not confined to the sanctuary, but includes the entire city and all the community. Third, Eskenazi finds in Ezra-Nehemiah an emphasis on the primacy of the written text over the oral as a source of authority.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Tollefson divided this section of Nehemiah 7:4-13:26 in two parts: the first part, 7:5-10:39, The Cultural Revitalization Process, and the second part, 11:1-13:1, The Consolidation Process. K. Tollefson, “Nehemiah, Model for Change Agents: A Social Science Approach to Scripture,” *CSR* XV (1986): 124. See Br-EN, 182, 184, 195, 203, 222.

<sup>8</sup> See Br-EN, 50-54.

<sup>9</sup> A. Philip Brown, II, “The Theology of Nehemiah,” digital edition: <http://pages.prodigy.net/apbrown2/nehss.doc>.

<sup>10</sup> Eskenazi, *Age of Prose*. This analysis is helpful. The second emphasis of Eskenazi is open to some discussion. Certainly there is an emphasis on the sanctity of all the people of God in Ezra-Nehemiah. However, Eskenazi may overemphasize the idea that the whole city is the “house of God.” The third emphasis is important. We can see here the importance of God’s word in the post-exilic community. Eskenazi also sees the emphasis on “books” as structurally important in Ezra-Nehemiah. “Ezra-Nehemiah is a book of documents. These documents function as an important structural device. They demonstrate the power or propriety of documents as causative principles and forces in human events. The ultimate power behind the documents (Cyrus’s edict and the law which is in Ezra’s hand) is God. But God’s messages in Ezra-Nehemiah, are transcribed

### The Roles of Ezra and Nehemiah

It is true that Ezra-Nehemiah emphasizes the participation of the whole community. At the same time the structure of the book does show the strategic importance of key leaders who guide the community in that direction instead of trying to enhance their own magnitude. Ezra's main ministry was to establish the Law of God as the basis of life for all the people. He also taught an approach to the interpretation of God's word that would keep it from being neglected in spite of historical and political changes.<sup>11</sup> Nehemiah's specific task was to mobilize the community to work together to reconstruct the wall around the city of Jerusalem. The book of Ezra-Nehemiah tells almost nothing about Nehemiah's role as governor of Judah. But it does show Nehemiah's role in uniting the people and in promoting reforms in their community and religious life. These reforms really continue the work of Ezra and show that Ezra's work of instructing all the people in the Law had prepared the people for these reforms.

#### *Nehemiah—Administrator-Theologian*

Nehemiah's ability to administer, to inspire, and to lead the community is admirable. Tollefson said, "The book [Nehemiah] reads much like a contemporary field project of planned social change and reveals a grasp of sophisticated methods and concepts."<sup>12</sup> Many studies in Nehemiah are really manuals for training leaders. But what does that have to do with theology? Can, or should, an administrator be a theologian? Did Nehemiah's theology affect his administration?

If we take seriously the book of Nehemiah, the answer to the last two questions must be an emphatic "yes"! It is true that "every human being is a philosopher" because every person lives according to his understanding of life. Likewise it is true that every Christian is a theologian. The question is whether his theology is coherent and true to God's revelation. Of course, we are understanding theology as a practical discipline. Basically, theology is the application of biblical teaching to everyday life. If we really believe what the Bible says, we will take it seriously and obey. If we really believe God knows best how to direct our life, we will obey his will. If we really believe he is sovereign over all peoples and the entire universe, it will affect our prayer, our purpose in life, and every aspect of our life. God wants us to *learn to think biblically*.

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by divinely appointed human subjects (Cyrus, Moses) into writings which become the definitive forces in the unfolding reality" (Eskenazi, *Age of Prose*, 41).

<sup>11</sup> Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, xlvi.

<sup>12</sup> Tollefson, "Nehemiah," 124, cited in Br-EN, 222, note 3.

So, as we read Nehemiah, let us notice what Nehemiah believes. Though his beliefs will almost never be explained, usually we can discern those that are implicit in Nehemiah's actions and words. Later, we will review the content of Nehemiah's theology (beliefs). Here, we will notice a few pointers. Immediately, in the first chapter, we notice Nehemiah's concern for the Jews in Judah. Even though Nehemiah had a very prestigious position in the court of the king of Persia, the greatest kingdom on the earth at that time, he was deeply concerned about the Jews far away in Judah. Why? Because he believed the Jews were the people of God. He believed that he was part of that covenant community and that God had a purpose for them. He not only cared about himself, but for others and especially God's interests.

Then we notice both the fact *that* he prayed as well as *how* he prayed. Nehemiah cried and prayed with all his heart. His prayer was based on God's word. He recognized that his people had offended God and turned from his ethical principles. His petitions were based on God's promises to Moses, 1:8-9. He believed the history of redemption in the Exodus, 1:10.<sup>13</sup> The first verse of chapter 2 is dated four months after the date of chapter 1. Therefore, we can conclude that Nehemiah spent much time in prayer during those four months. Why? Because he believed that God hears and that God acts in relation to his people's prayer.

From what happens and what Nehemiah says in chapter 2 we can deduce that Nehemiah made very specific requests and that during this time he realized God was calling him to go to Jerusalem. So, when the king granted his petitions, Nehemiah recognized that it was God's work in him and in the king. Likewise, throughout the whole book, we can see how Nehemiah's beliefs influenced his decisions, his humble spirit, his attitude of service, his willingness to give of himself, his courage in the face of very serious opposition, and his patience. He believed and knew God had called him to this task; he believed God was going to grant his people victory and success in the task, and his faith motivated the people he was leading to believe and act in like manner.

Let us go back to the question about the relationship between administration and theology. There are many Christian organizations where the leader is a fine Christian and strong on theology, but has little ability in administration. There is a growing recognition of the need for helping these leaders improve their administrative capabilities. Nehemiah is a good place to start.

The other question is also pertinent: should an administrator in a Christian organization be a theologian? Naturally, every administrator

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<sup>13</sup> This way of looking at Scripture is quite in contrast to what is taught in much of Old Testament scholarship today.



does not need to be a polished, highly-educated theologian. However, Nehemiah challenges us to see the importance that our administrators, in every area of Christian leadership, at least have a strong foundation in basic Christian doctrine and biblical teaching.

We are not talking about advanced philosophical theology. But every person in a responsible position in a Christian organization, whether a church or para-church ministry, must make many decisions that influence people. Nehemiah challenges us to see that every leader is equipped in this area. This does not mean that we depreciate the need for well-trained theologians. The church needs theologians that can grapple with the issues that we face in modern society with its many philosophically oriented religious beliefs. In fact, if all church members are better trained to think theologically at the grass-roots level, we will have more leaders who can deal with the difficult controversial issues at the macro-level.

### **God's Purposes Made Effective in History**

#### *God's Ways, God's Plans*

The Bible is an amazing book. Only through the Bible can we know God's purposes and God's ways. Psalm 103:7 says, "He made known his ways to Moses, his deeds to the people of Israel." On the one hand this is typical parallelism where the second phrase repeats the same basic meaning as the first phrase. However, here, as in many places, the second phrase also carries an important variation. The people of Israel in the Exodus and wilderness wanderings remained quite superficial in their faith. They saw and experienced God's great deeds. But Moses' experience went much deeper. He also understood God's ways. That is why he could intercede for all Israel and avoid the destruction of the whole people in Numbers 14.

Throughout the Bible God gives glimpses of his great plan of redemption and eternal kingdom. In the covenant with Abraham we see that God calls one man to form a people through whom God can bring salvation to all peoples. We see glimpses of God's plan throughout the historical books. In 2 Samuel 7, it seems that David understood at least some of the far-reaching implications of the Davidic Covenant. Isaiah's explanation of God's plan is amazingly complete; it is the most detailed presentation of God's plan of redemption we have in the Old Testament.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> By far the best explanation I have seen of the development of God's plan in Isaiah is the work of John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah*, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986 & 1998).

### *Strategic Moments*

If we see Ezra-Nehemiah in the unfolding of God's great redemptive plan, we can understand Nehemiah's strategic importance. God's promises made it clear that he would reveal his love and salvation to the world through the descendants of Abraham, and that the Messiah would come through the sub-family of David. But with the destruction of the Northern Kingdom in 722/21 B.C. and the fall of the Southern Kingdom, the destruction of Jerusalem and the exile of the people in 587/6, from a natural viewpoint, it appeared that this people was coming to an end.

So now in Ezra-Nehemiah we have a very small community in the midst of many different peoples, all with pagan religions. The Jewish community was in danger of being destroyed by their neighbors. Even more, they were in danger of losing their distinctive faith and God's revelation in their written Scriptures.

Although the "news" in the great population centers of the Persian Empire probably never took much notice of this small Jewish community, in God's scale of values this was the focal point in the development of his redemptive plan. All the past history of Israel and all God's promises for the future, at this particular time, were focused on this community. Here again we can see how the narrative structure of Ezra-Nehemiah points to past achievement as a model for future expectation.<sup>15</sup>

Throntveit calls attention to the sequence of great theological moments in Ezra-Nehemiah.<sup>16</sup> The rebuilding of the altar, then the temple, in the first section, Ezra 1-6, marks the renewal of worship as God had ordained. The arrival of Ezra and his work of returning the people to conform their life to God's Law was a second great theological "moment" that had a deep effect on the community. Nehemiah's arrival and work of uniting the people and reconstructing the city wall was a third strategic "theological moment." These three movements lead up to the renewal of the covenant and the events associated with it in chapters 7-13, the fourth section of the book.<sup>17</sup>

This fourth section is the climax of the whole book. "Just as Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi stress that a rebuilt temple and restored Jerusalem are irrelevant unless the people are reformed, so Nehemiah 8-13<sup>18</sup> insists

<sup>15</sup> See Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, lii.

<sup>16</sup> Throntveit, *Ezra-Nehemiah*, 4ff.

<sup>17</sup> B. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 632-33.

<sup>18</sup> In Br-EN, I included Neh 7:4-73 in the former section on the building of the wall. But it can also be included in this fourth section because its emphasis on the continuity with the pre-exilic community is also part of the revitalization (cf. Tollefson) and renewal of the community.

upon a return to covenant obedience as the most significant aspect of national revival. This spiritual reformation must be grounded in and guided by God's revealed word."<sup>19</sup> Chapters 8-10 show us how the written word of God functions authoritatively in the post-exilic community.<sup>20</sup>

We can see three important theological moments in chapters 7 and 8: a) the list of returnees, 7:4-73a, emphasizes a renewed interest in seeing the continuity in God's people; b) the reading of the Law, 8:1-14, emphasizes the role of God's revelation in the renewal; and c) the celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles, 8:15-18, was a time of renewed emphasis on God's grace in the past and in deepening the people's understanding of God's purposes in the present and future.<sup>21</sup>

### The Place of Scripture in Renewal

We do not know if Ezra had led other readings of the Law before this. Nor do we know if these chapters are in exact chronological order.<sup>22</sup> What is clear is that these chapters are placed here as a climax of the rest of the book to emphasize the renewal of the covenant and the reordering of the community's life.<sup>23</sup>

The first important theological detail is the place of the written Scriptures in this revival or renewal.<sup>24</sup> We should note the combination

<sup>19</sup> Paul R. House, *Old Testament Theology* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1998), 519-20.

<sup>20</sup> Throntveit, *Ezra-Nehemiah*, 110.

<sup>21</sup> Throntveit (*Ezra-Nehemiah*) sees the third movement at "joyous dedication."

<sup>22</sup> The location of Neh 8-10 and their origin have generated a lot of different theories (see the discussion in Br-En, 38-41). Some insist that this belongs to the Ezra-Memoirs and Nehemiah's name was later added to make it appear that both Ezra and Nehemiah were present. While it is true there are strong arguments on both sides of the issue, it is preferable to understand the text as we have it, rather than postulate theories that have no textual basis for deleting Nehemiah's name. "The explicit intent of the author is to describe this event as one shared by both Ezra and Nehemiah" (Childs, 635, cited in Br-EN, 41). We simply do not know if Ezra was in Jerusalem all the time between Ezra 10 and Nehemiah 8; perhaps he had returned to King Artaxerxes for a time. Or, he may have been teaching the Law during all this time. The people's respect for the Law and desire to obey the Scriptures speak of the deep effect Ezra's teaching had on the community. The fact that other occasions of Ezra and Nehemiah being together are not mentioned in Ezra-Nehemiah is not a very strong argument against their being together here. Haggai and Zechariah both preached at the same time in Jerusalem, but neither mentions the other.

<sup>23</sup> Childs, 632-33, see Br-EN, 221.

<sup>24</sup> It is often stated that all revivals or renewal movements in the history of the church have been characterized by a renewed interest in God's word. "The centrality of the Bible in Present-day renewal is reflected in almost all facets of the movement, including the greatly increased scholarly activity. The primary emphasis of participants in awakenings is on the truth and authority of the Bible" (N. A. Magnuson, "Church Renewal," in Walter A. Elwell, ed., *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* [Baker, 1984], 934-36). Magnuson goes on to show that the emphasis is on understanding God's word in order to

of the work of God in the hearts of the people with the reading of God's word. Any renewal depends on both the work of the Holy Spirit and the reading or hearing of God's word. The people had a tremendous thirst to know the Law of Moses. They were eager to listen from daybreak until noon. And it was the whole community, "men and women and all who were able to understand" (Neh 8:2). Not only did they listen, they worshipped the Lord. Also, Nehemiah, Ezra and the Levites explained the meaning to the people.<sup>25</sup>

It is evident that God's Spirit used the Scripture to convict the people and renew their faith. First they cried, then, with the encouragement of Nehemiah, they rejoiced in what God was doing. "Only when the people understand God's word as it condemns and consoles, do they respond in ever-increasing ways: first with a renewed sense of strength in the joy of the Lord, then with a renewed sense of their dependence achieved through the reinterpretation of the Festival of Booths, and finally with a renewed commitment to the covenant relationship itself."<sup>26</sup> We can also notice how God used the interpretive role of the leaders.

We can note many theological implications of this renewal process. The people were not satisfied with just one climactic experience of renewal. They were eager to obey and to know all God wanted them to do. They continued to hear the Book of the Law. When they read in the Law that they should live in booths during the seven days of the Feast of Tabernacles,<sup>27</sup> they immediately obeyed (Neh 8:16). Simply knowing and obeying God's word brought them great joy.

### *Prayer and Commitment*

"Chapter 9 fits precisely into the author's purpose to show the place of Scripture reading and confession in the covenant renewal explained in chapter 10."<sup>28</sup> "This section contains the third reading of the Law (9.3) . . . After the first reading (8.4-8), celebration was called for (8.12). After

obey the Lord. Also, the Bible serves as an objective standard to "correct the tendency for awakened energies to move in unsound directions."

<sup>25</sup> Neh 8:8, "Making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people could understand what was being read." The Scripture was read from a Hebrew scroll. But the everyday language of the people was Aramaic. It is thought that the explanation was necessary because many of the people did not understand perfectly the Hebrew. Hebrew and Aramaic are similar, perhaps similar to the relation between Spanish and Portuguese; therefore, many of the people would have difficulty understanding without some help.

<sup>26</sup> Throntveit, *Ezra-Nehemiah*, 110.

<sup>27</sup> Lev 23:42.

<sup>28</sup> Br-EN, 231. Scholars disagree as to the origin of this long prayer. Did Ezra compose it for this occasion? Was it part of the Ezra-Memoirs? Was it a Psalm-prayer composed earlier and used here? The fact is its place here makes perfect sense and perfectly fulfills the author's theological purpose.

the second reading (8.14-15), Tabernacles was celebrated. The third reading (9.3) would be followed by a prayer of confession (95b-37).<sup>29</sup> “Having learned Torah, having read the book of the Torah (Neh 9.3), the people demonstrate a new competence, a new understanding of what they have read, and prove able to translate these into commitment and action.”<sup>30</sup>

Nehemiah 9 is a prime source for Jewish theology.<sup>31</sup> The most important theological themes are: 1) God as Creator, v. 6; 2) God’s choice of Abraham and his covenant with him, vv. 7-8; 3) God’s miraculous redemption of Israel from Egypt, vv. 9-12; 4) God’s revelation at Sinai, mediated by Moses, vv. 13-14; 5) God’s ordaining of the Sabbath, v. 14; and 6) God’s attributes of grace, compassion, love, and patience, vv. 27-33.<sup>32</sup> Eskenazi considers this chapter the theological centerpiece of Ezra-Nehemiah.<sup>33</sup> The prayer of the Levites and the people, 9:6-37, is largely made up of material found throughout the Hebrew Bible. This fact also has implications for our understanding about the existence of the Hebrew Scriptures prior to this time.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Eskenazi, 101, cited in Br-EN, 235.

<sup>31</sup> See P. Sigal, *Judaism: The Evolution of a Faith* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 36-37. See Br-En, 236.

<sup>32</sup> Br-EN, 236. The commentary on this prayer calls attention to many theological details (235-43).

<sup>33</sup> Tamara Cohn Eskenazi, “Nehemiah 9-10: Structure and Significance,” Los Angeles: Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, digital edition, [http://www.arts.ualberta.ca/JHS/Articles/article\\_21.htm](http://www.arts.ualberta.ca/JHS/Articles/article_21.htm).

<sup>34</sup> Eskenazi recognizes that the prayer in Nehemiah 9 “is almost entirely a mosaic of allusions to material found elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible. She quotes another study of Nehemiah 9, where Newman says, “How was history retold in these prayers? It was recalled through the lens of scriptural memory, using the words of a sacred text that was itself shared by a people” (Judith H. Newman, *Praying by the Book: The Scripturalization of Prayer in Second Temple Judaism* [SBL Early Judaism and Its Literature 14. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999], 115, cited in Eskenazi, Ibid.) But Eskenazi does not agree with Newman. Eskenazi suggests and plans to investigate the theory that rather this prayer was part of a movement to produce the Pentateuch as we have it. Later she says, “It is my view that there is a degree of mirroring between the two compositions, EN and the Pentateuch.” This reflects the tendency, in vogue today, to date the final composition of the Pentateuch after the Babylonian exile. In regard to this matter Kauffmann commented on the situation of the Levites in Nehemiah 10.37b-39. This particular law was given in Numbers 18, but at that time the Levites greatly outnumbered the priests. Here the situation was reversed, there were fewer Levites. But they did not change the law even though the tithing by the Levites was not sufficient in the time of Nehemiah. Kauffman says, “In spite of the long conflict over the tithing, the priests did not introduce a new law into Scripture that would decide this vital case. Instead, they kept on record obsolete laws, whose harmonization produced the unnecessary and unbearable annual Levitical tithing. Nothing proves more clearly how mistaken is the view that in postexilic times the Torah book was still being added to and revised” (Y. Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel* [London: Allen & Unwin, 1960], 193; cited in Br-EN 250).

The structure of chapters 9 and 10 can help us see the theological emphasis of the section. Eskenazi's outline is helpful:<sup>35</sup>

- I. The staging of the prayer/pledge, Neh 9.1-5
- II. The prayer/pledge, Neh 9.6-10.40
  - A. The foundational paradigm: The relation between God and Israel, Neh 9.6-10
  - B. The historical retrospective, Neh 9.11-31
  - C. The present crisis, Neh 9.32-27
  - D. The community's response: the Pledge, Neh 10.1-40

The section "II, A" helps to focus on the foundational beliefs of the Jewish community. We can extend that division to verse 15, making it 9:6-15. Thus all the first five great theological themes mentioned in the paragraph above are part of the foundational paradigm of beliefs. The sixth, God's attributes of grace, compassion, love, and patience are illustrated in the historical review in verses 16-31.

It is helpful to notice the pronouns used in this chapter. In the section, 9:6-15 the emphasis is on "you," on God. Israel's basic beliefs centered on God and what he has done. In verses 16-18 "they," referring to "our forefathers" is prominent. In verses 22-31 both "you" and "they" are used to show God's continued mercy and the people's continued fluctuation between obedience and rebellion. This review of their history emphasizes, first, God's mercy and righteousness on which this community can still rely, and second, an explanation of the reason this community is in a precarious situation now. "Both these aspects are necessary for communal survival and communal identity."<sup>36</sup>

In the third section of the prayer, 9:32-37, the emphasis is on the first person, "we" and "us." The leaders and all the people in the small post-exilic community are presenting their situation to God. This section has much in common with the Psalms of Lament and with the Penitential Prayers in Ezra 9, Daniel 9 and Psalm 106. However, in Nehemiah we do not have the expected plea for God's saving help. Instead we are introduced to a pledge, a solemn promise of the people to take certain action to change the situation.

The following section, 9:38-10:40, describes the deep commitment produced by the renewal movement begun in chapters 7 and 8. Notice the prominence, again, of "we": verse 30, "we promise . . ."; verse 31, "we will not buy"; verse 32, "we assume the responsibility"; verse 34,

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<sup>35</sup> Eskenazi, "Nehemiah 9-10."

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

“we also assume”; verse 36, “we will bring”; verse 37, “we will bring”; verse 39, “we will not neglect.”

Notice the theological beliefs involved in this response of the community. They recognize that Israel’s predicament was a result of their sin. They believe God is merciful and God wants to bless them. Therefore, instead of simply pleading with God to change the situation, they propose to do something about it. They make a binding pledge to be faithful in the specific details that God asks in his word. This is not to doubt God’s mercy and God’s grace. It shows their trust in God to protect them and to provide for them as they trust him and assume their responsibilities in the covenant. It is really a covenant renewal ceremony with a renewed dedication to God.

In this renewed commitment and dedication to God we can notice two important teachings. Nehemiah puts emphasis on the community; this was a community renewal. At the same time, the list of names in Nehemiah 10:1-27 is significant. A community is composed of individuals. Each individual must make the commitment personal, just as the church is a community, the body of Christ, but each individual must make his or her own personal commitment to Christ. This commitment was not simply a vague, nebulous emotional pronouncement. The people recognized that it implied specific actions and specific responsibilities. They also had the wisdom to put it in writing and require the signature of each person.

The prayer and the people’s response with a pledge tell us a lot about what is genuine prayer. Prayer is direct communication with God. It requires a contrite heart and a willingness to do God’s will. Here, in addition to being part of a genuine renewal movement, it also fulfills a social function; it links the people with their history. Its theology explains the reason for the present difficult situation while at the same time giving the basis for trust in God. “But it goes even further than that. It provides a means for changing the situation by galvanizing the community. The prayer exemplifies strategies for empowering the community to take charge of its destiny even as it calls for trust in God.”<sup>37</sup>

### **The Process of Consolidation**

In many ways chapters 11-13 of Nehemiah seem anticlimactic after the great renewal in chapters 8-10. Tollefson noted the need for the consolidation process, 11-13, after the cultural revitalization process in 7:4-10:39. Some of the events in this section, 11-13, might not be in

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<sup>37</sup> Eskinazi, “Nehemiah 9-10.”

chronological order, but are narrated here in accord with the author's theological purpose.

In chapter 11 it appears that the people preferred to live in the surrounding villages and not in Jerusalem itself. But if the walled Jerusalem was going to be a fortress of protection in times of enemy attack, and if it was to again be the center for Jewish worship, it needed to be populated. Therefore, some Jews had to sacrifice living in the "suburbs" in order to fulfill God's purpose for Jerusalem. Some were willing to do it. "The people commended all the men who volunteered to live in Jerusalem" (Neh 11.2). Again, the list of names in the rest of the chapter shows the significance of each one's personal decision in an important community project.

What is the theological significance of the dedication of the wall in 12? Throntveit asks why the dedication of the wall was delayed until after the covenant renewal ceremonies of chapters 8-10. He suggests that only now after the covenant renewal were the people in a position to see the genuine meaning of the dedicatory service.<sup>38</sup> The wall was not an end in itself. It was a means to an end. The wall provided security for the temple, the Law and the faithful community, important for the life of faith. Also, we can see a certain emphasis on the fact that not only the temple was holy, but the entire city and all the community are holy.<sup>39</sup>

Throntveit notes that the word for dedication also carries the idea of "initiation." So this great service of dedication of the walls was also an initiation, a new beginning for the people of God. Psalm 48 may be related to this dedicatory service.

Chapter 13 seems like an anti-climax. After the victorious completion of the wall, the glorious covenant renewal experiences and the dedication of the wall, why does the book end on a seemingly negative note? We can see chapter 13 as a lesson on the need for ongoing efforts to conserve revival. McConville suggests that such a disappointing conclusion to a book with so many triumphs produces in the reader a longing for the more complete and lasting spiritual restoration that Scripture promises.<sup>40</sup> Certainly the author had a purpose here; this conclusion is not accidental. It underscores two needs: a) the need for a perfect leader, and b) the need for a perfect covenant. If we see Nehemiah in its canonical context, as we look back from our position in Christ, we can see how God used

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<sup>38</sup> Throntveit, *Ezra-Nehemiah*, 117. If, as some suggest, this dedicatory service took place earlier, the question is, "Why was it only narrated here?" It must be for a theological reason. We prefer to think it is in its correct chronological place. In any case Throntveit's answer is valid.

<sup>39</sup> As Eskenazi suggests.

<sup>40</sup> J. G. McConville, "Ezra-Nehemiah and the Fulfillment of Prophecy," *VT* 36 (1986): 223.



Nehemiah to help fulfill his purpose by preserving the identity of the covenant community. At the same time this conclusion helps us look forward to the complete fulfillment for which Nehemiah helped prepare the way.

When we read of Nehemiah's actions in chapter 13 we wonder about his patience. At the same time we must recognize the intensity of his commitment to preserving the results of the renewal and maintaining the identity of the covenant community. The godly leader sometimes has to take emphatic action. Nehemiah reminds us that tolerance of evil leads to spiritual stagnation, which leads to indifference on doctrinal matters. The final result is moral and spiritual degeneration. In order for God to fulfill his purposes in providing us with the Scriptures and bringing our Savior and Lord, it was necessary that this community maintain its distinct identity and holiness. As Kidner says of Nehemiah, "His reforming zeal, partnered by the educative thoroughness of Ezra, gave to postexilic Israel a virility and clarity of faith which it never wholly lost."<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Kidner, 133, quoted in Br-EN, 275.

## A Teaching Outline for Nehemiah

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### Introduction

By nature, all literary compositions have structure. Structure conveys meaning and understanding. This is especially true of Scripture, and in the Old Testament, the organization of a book's various parts is very much a deliberate and integral part of its meaning.

As can be seen in the sometimes divergent ways two commentaries will outline a book, analyzing the structure of an Old Testament book can be difficult.<sup>1</sup> There are several reasons for this, but three in particular stand out for the book of Nehemiah. First, the text of Nehemiah, like that of the entire Hebrew Bible, does not use any visual or graphic structure markers to designate the organization of the narrative. There are no chapter headings, section titles, and paragraph indentations. The Masoretes employed accent marks to indicate only the most major punctuation marks after A.D. 500, and chapter and verse divisions were added much later.

Second, we must realize that the common patterns of ancient Hebrew structure and its typical narrative conventions are different from ours. The Hebrew authors employed parallelism, symmetry, chiasm, and repetition in constructing their narratives. These forms are often new and confusing to the Western mind.<sup>2</sup> A portion of Nehemiah is said to contain his memoirs. But "memoir" is our way of describing the words of Nehemiah, and we must be careful not to require from the text our expectations of a modern day memoir.

Finally, the structure of a book might point to a larger whole beyond its own boundaries. Such is the case for Leviticus. The Pentateuch can be divided structurally into three parts, all of which relate in some way to the covenant made at Mt. Sinai. Leviticus stands in the middle of the second part enumerating the treaty (Exod. 19:3-Num. 10:10). In order to

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<sup>1</sup> An excellent introduction to the structural analysis of Old Testament texts may be found in the first five chapters of David A. Dorsey, *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament: A Commentary on Genesis-Malachi* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999), 15-44.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

understand the book, it must be placed within the larger structural context to which it belongs. This is also true for Nehemiah, and as a consequence, we shall see that this factor makes it difficult to offer an outline for the book by itself.

### **The Compositional Unity of Ezra-Nehemiah**

Structural analysis suggests that the book of Nehemiah must be considered along with the book of Ezra a compositional unity.<sup>3</sup> Since Ezra and Nehemiah fit so well together structurally they must be regarded as one book, and studied as one. This important recognition explains several things about the two books. One, for example, would explain the puzzling repetition of the list of returnees under Zerubbabel in Ezra 2 and Nehemiah 7. However, when the two books are regarded as one, the repetition is clearly understood as an *inclusio*, a beginning and end to the larger whole.

Understanding the compositional unity and structure of Ezra-Nehemiah also helps identify one of the controlling metaphors of the author. For example, the repetition of the theme of enemy opposition within the accounts of Zerubbabel's reconstruction of the temple and Nehemiah's rebuilding of the walls is not coincidental. It points to a pattern and a major theme: "God's people may often experience opposition when they attempt to carry out his work; but through prayer and God's gracious help they can succeed in their work despite the opposition."<sup>4</sup> Likewise, three times in the book—once each under Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah—the Jews left comfortable lives in the Diaspora to return to an uncertain future in Judah and Jerusalem. And each time, despite hardship and opposition, God answered their prayers and blessed their efforts.

### **The Structure of Ezra-Nehemiah**

Like most commentaries, Breneman divides the combined work of Ezra-Nehemiah into several sections, the last units of which are in Nehemiah:<sup>5</sup>

#### **I. Prophecy Fulfilled: First Return from Exile (1:1-2:70)**

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 158. For a good discussion on the compositional unity of Ezra-Nehemiah see Mervin Breneman, *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther*, New American Commentary 10 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1993), 35-41.

<sup>4</sup> Dorsey, *Literary Structure of the OT*, 161.

<sup>5</sup> Breneman, *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther*, 59-63. But compare also the fourfold division in his article, "A Theological Primer for the Study of Nehemiah," elsewhere in this journal.

- II. The Construction of the Temple (3:1-6:22)
- III. Ezra's Return to Jerusalem (7:1-8:36)
- IV. Ezra and the Problem of Inter-marriage (9:1-10:44)
- V. Nehemiah Builds the Walls (1:1-7:73a)
- VI. The Covenant Renewed (7:73b-10:39)
- VII. The Resettling of Jerusalem and Further Activities of Nehemiah (11:1-13:31)

Such an outline is helpful for showing the general sweep of biblical history involved in the two books. However, it does not overtly address the patterns and symmetry occurring within Ezra and Nehemiah as a whole.

On the other hand, Dorsey has located the parallel patterns as well as the symmetry that exists in the structure of Ezra-Nehemiah. He also recognizes that the whole contains seven well-defined sections. The difference, however, is that he sees a recurring parallel pattern:<sup>6</sup>

- a. Zerubbabel's return (Ezra 1-2)
- b. Zerubbabel's accomplishment (Ezra 3-6)
- c. Ezra's return (Ezra 7-8)
- d. Ezra's accomplishment (Ezra 9-10)
- e. Nehemiah's return (Neh. 1-2)
- f. Nehemiah's accomplishment (Neh. 3:1-7:3)
- g. Final reforms and lists (Neh. 7:4-13:31)

This recurring pattern is carried over into the structural symmetry as well. In this case a chiastic pattern may be found. Note carefully that in Dorsey's structural analysis the center of Ezra-Nehemiah (and, hence,

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<sup>6</sup> Dorsey, *Literary Structure of the OT*, 158, 160. This parallel pattern can be either paired or alternating.

the most important discourse) is found in the resolution of the problem of intermarriage in Ezra 9-10:<sup>7</sup>

- a **Zerubbabel's return and list of returnees** (Ezra 1-2)
  - list of returnees, gold, silver, priestly garments (2:1-70)
- b **building of temple and opposition from enemies** (Ezra 3-6)
  - themes: opposition, the story of the Jew's success
- c **Ezra's return** (Ezra 7-8)
  - dealings with king
  - orders from king to Transeuphrates governors to assist Jews
  - recounted in first-person
- d **CENTER: purification of people** (Ezra 9-10)
- c' **Nehemiah's return** (Neh. 1-2)
  - dealings with king
  - orders from king to Transeuphrates governors to assist Jews
  - recounted in first-person
- b' **building of walls and opposition from enemies** (Neh. 3:1-7:3)
  - themes: opposition, the story of the Jew's success
- a' **Zerubbabel's return and list of returnees; final reforms** (Neh. 7:4-13:31)
  - list of returnees, gold, silver, priestly garments (7:4-73)

Dorsey's analysis clearly points to a structure that transcends Ezra and Nehemiah as individual books. If such a structure is real then the essential meaning of Ezra would be understood as being bound together with Nehemiah, and likewise, the essential meaning of Nehemiah would be bound together with Ezra. The natural and obvious conclusion would be that Ezra and Nehemiah stand together, and it would be exegetically dangerous to treat them as separate units.

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 161.

### **Developing a Teaching Outline of Nehemiah**

Given the compositional unity of Ezra-Nehemiah, the ideal situation would be to teach both books together. But lacking this opportunity, great care must be taken in developing a teaching outline for either book separately. A major temptation in providing an outline for one book alone would be to over-emphasize a minor point at the expense of the internal integrity of the whole. It would be helpful if a teaching outline for Nehemiah could show its essential connection to Ezra.

An attempt to do this has been made in the outline which follows by adopting the basic enumeration of Dorsey<sup>8</sup> and summarizing in the first part the significant elements of Ezra. It is hoped that by doing so the teacher will be able to point how the ways in which the narratives of Nehemiah bring to a conclusion the work of God in restoring his people, the temple, and the walls of Jerusalem. Whether or not the outline is successful in achieving this goal, a teacher of the book of Nehemiah must not abrogate the responsibility of placing the text correctly within the overall compositional unity it shares with Ezra.

#### *A Teaching Outline for Nehemiah*

- I. Zerubbabel's Return to Jerusalem (Ezra 1:1-2:70)
  - A. The Decree of Cyrus (1:1-4)
  - B. The Return of the Temple Vessels and other Gifts (1:5-11)
  - C. List of Returnees under Zerubbabel (2:1-70)
  
- II. Zerubbabel's Accomplishment: Rebuilding the Temple (Ezra 3:1-6:22)
  - A. Religious Celebration (3:1-6)
  - B. Rebuilding of the Temple Begins (3:7-13)
  - C. Hostile Letters of Opposition Stop the Work (4:1-24)
  - D. Haggai and Zechariah Encourage the People to Work (5:1-2)
  - C'. Hostile Letters of Opposition Fail to Stop the Work (5:3-6:12)
  - B'. Rebuilding of the Temple is Completed (6:13-15)
  - A'. Religious Celebration (6:16-22)
  
- III. Ezra's Return to Jerusalem (Ezra 7:1-8:36)

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 158. Much of the outline that follows is indebted to the structural analysis of Dorsey. Dorsey's parallel and chiasmic patterns are kept as much as possible.

- A. Ezra and Company Return to Jerusalem: Summary (7:1-10)
  - B. Decree of Artaxerxes concerning Gifts for the Temple (7:11-26)
    - C. Ezra Gathers the Leading Men to Return (7:27-28)
    - D. List of Returnees (8:1-14)
    - C'. Ezra Gathers the Levites to Return (8:15-20)
  - B'. Decree of Ezra concerning Gifts for the Temple (8:21-30)
  - A'. Ezra and Company Return to Jerusalem and Sacrifice (8:31-36)
- IV. Ezra's Accomplishment: Rebuilding the Covenant (Ezra 9:1-10:44)
- A. The Threat to the Covenant Introduced: Intermarriage (9:1-2)
  - B. The People Gather as Ezra Sits in Distress (9:3-4)
  - C. Ezra Kneels in Humble Prayer (9:5-15)
  - D. The People Repent and Agree to Solve the Problem (10:1-4)
  - C'. Ezra Arises from Humble Prayer (10:5-6)
  - B'. The People Gather at Jerusalem and Sit in Distress (10:7-15)
  - A'. The Threat to the Covenant is Resolved (10:16-44)
- V. Nehemiah's Return to Jerusalem (Neh. 1:1-2:20)
- A. Nehemiah Hears a Report on the Plight of Jerusalem (1:1-3)
    - i. There is Distress (*rā'â*)
    - ii. There is Reproach (*h<sup>er</sup>pâ*)
    - iii. The Walls are Broken Down
    - iv. The Gates are Burned with Fire
  - B. Nehemiah Sits, Mourns, and Prays for Many Days (1:4-11)
  - C. Nehemiah Requests that Artaxerxes Send Him to Jerusalem (2:1-5)
  - D. Artaxerxes Grants Nehemiah's Request (2:6)
  - C'. Nehemiah Requests that Artaxerxes Grant Him Letters of Passage (2:7-10)
  - B'. Nehemiah Arises, Arrives, and after Three Days Tours Jerusalem by Night (2:11-16)

- A'. Nehemiah Gives a Report on the Plight of Jerusalem; the People and Enemies Respond (2:17-20)
  - i. There is Distress (*rā 'ā*)
  - ii. Jerusalem Lies Waste
  - iii. The Gates are Burned with Fire
  - iv. Reproach (*hērpā*) will be Turned Away when the Wall is Built
  
- VI. Nehemiah's Accomplishment: Rebuilding the Walls of Jerusalem in the Midst of Opposition (Neh. 3:1-7:3)
  - A. The Community Begins to Rebuild the Walls (3:1-32)
    - i. Repairing the Northern and Western Walls (3:1-15)
    - ii. Repairing the Eastern Wall (3:16-32)
  - B. Verbal Opposition: Ridicule and Response (4:1-6)
    - i. Sanballat's Opposition and Tobiah's Ridicule (4:1-3)
    - ii. Nehemiah's Prayer (4:4-5)
    - iii. The People's Response (4:6)
  - C. The Plot to Kill the Workers (4:7-23)
    - i. Sanballat, Tobiah, and the Others Plot to Kill the Workers (4:7-12)
    - ii. Nehemiah's Solution: Prayer and the Sword (4:13-23)
  - D. Oppression from within the Community: Nehemiah helps the Poor (5:1-19)
    - i. Extortion in the Covenant Community (5:1-5)
    - ii. Nehemiah Rebukes the Nobles and Rulers (5:6-11)
    - iii. The Offenders Restore the Rights of the Poor (5:12-13)
    - iv. Nehemiah's Unselfish Leadership (5:14-19)
  - C'. The Plot to Kill Nehemiah: Five Messages from Sanballat (6:1-9)
  - B'. Verbal Opposition: Intimidation and Response (6:10-14)
    - i. Shemaiah's False Prophecy (6:10-13)
    - ii. Nehemiah's Prayer (6:14)
  - A'. The Community Completes the Walls (6:15-7:3)
    - i. The Walls are Finished in Fifty-Two days (6:15-16)



- ii. Opposition Continues by Intrigue (6:17-19)
  - iii. Jerusalem is Organized as A City (7:1-3)
- VII. Grand Finale: Rededication of the People of God (Neh. 7:4-13:31)
  - A. List of Returnees under Zerubbabel (7:4-73)
    - i. Nehemiah's Desire to Register the People (7:4-5)
    - ii. List of Returnees under Zerubbabel (7:6-73)
  - B. Ezra Assembles the People to Renew the Covenant (8:1-18)
    - i. Ezra Reads and Explains the Law before the Water Gate and Ephraim Gate (8:1-12)
    - ii. The People Celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles (8:13-18)
  - C. Covenant Renewal and Reforms (9:1-10:39)
    - i. A Solemn Assembly of Confession and Worship (9:1-3)
    - ii. The Prayer of Confession (9:4-37)
      - 1. Exaltation of Praise (9:4-5)
      - 2. The Creator and Savior (9:6-15)
      - 3. The Generous and Patient God (9:16-25)
      - 4. The God Who Warns and Disciplines (9:26-31)
      - 5. Confession of Sin and Call to God (9:32-37)
    - iii. The Solemn Sealing of the Covenant (9:38-10:37)
      - 1. Chief Leaders and Priests who sealed the Covenant (10:1-8)
      - 2. Levites who sealed the Covenant (10:9-13)
      - 3. Other Leaders who sealed the Covenant (10:14-27)
    - iv. The Solemn Promise (10:28-29)
    - v. Solemn Vows of the People (10:30-39)
      - 1. Marriage Purity (10:30)
      - 2. Sabbath Holiness (10:31)
      - 3. Support for the Temple (10:32-34)
      - 4. Tithes and Offerings (10:35-39)
  - D. List of the New Citizens of Jerusalem, the

- Holy City (11:1-36)
  - i. Choosing the Citizens by Lot (11:1-2)
  - ii. List of the Families of Jerusalem (11:3-9)
  - iii. Priests, Levites, and Gatekeepers in Jerusalem (11:10-24)
  - iv. The Cities in Judah and Benjamin Surrounding Jerusalem (11:25-36)
- A'. List of Priests and Levites Returning Under Zerubbabel (12:1-26)
- B'. Nehemiah Assembles the People to Dedicate the Wall (12:27-47)
  - i. Preparation for the Dedication (12:27-30)
  - ii. Procession of the Dedication Choirs along the Walls and Gates of Jerusalem (12:31-43)
  - iii. The Renewal of Worship in Jerusalem (12:44-47)
- C'. Final Covenant Renewal and Reforms (13:1-31)
  - i. Separation from Foreigners (13:1-3)
  - ii. Eliashib and Tobiah (13:4-9)
  - iii. The Levites's Portion (13:10-14)
  - iv. Keeping the Sabbath (13:15-22)
  - v. Marriage Purity (13:23-27)
  - vi. Threat to the Priesthood (13:28-29)
  - vii. Nehemiah's Final Appeal (13:30-31)

## **An Annotated Bibliography for Nehemiah**

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The following list was compiled to assist pastors who will be teaching the book of Nehemiah during the Southern Baptist Convention's January Bible Study emphasis in 2006. The works range from scholarly to devotional or application-oriented, and are grouped accordingly so that pastors or teachers can find materials suited to their needs and interests. The list is far from comprehensive. For a more complete bibliography, see one of the newer commentaries listed under the Exegetical Commentaries section below, particularly the works of Hugh G. M. Williamson in the *Word Commentary* and F. Charles Fensham in the *New International Commentary on the Old Testament* (NICOT).

### **Overviews of Nehemiah**

For an overview of Nehemiah (and Ezra), refer to the introductory sections of the newer commentaries listed in the commentary sections below.

The following articles provide good synopses of the book of Nehemiah:

Brand, Chad, Charles Draper, and Archie England. Gen. Eds. *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*. Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 1998.

This dictionary contains a concise overview article on the book of Nehemiah.

Laughlin, John C. H. "Nehemiah: His Life and Times." *Biblical Illustrator* 14 (Summer 1988): 37-39.

### **Addressing Critical Issues in the Study of Ezra/Nehemiah**

Mervin Breneman, in the *New American Commentary* (NAC), listed under Exegetical Commentaries, provides a clear and concise overview of the main debates surrounding Ezra and Nehemiah: 1) authorship (along with Chronicles), and 2) issues surrounding dates, including the date of Ezra's journey to Jerusalem. Other newer commentaries (e.g. Word and NICOT) also cover these issues.

For an in-depth scholarly overview of these issues, see Kyung-jin Min, *The Levitical Authorship of Ezra-Nehemiah*, Part I (listed in the Special Studies section below). Evangelical scholars may not agree with all of his conclusions, but one can follow his arguments.

The following articles address the question of the dating of Ezra and Nehemiah:

Demsky, Aaron. "Who Came First, Ezra or Nehemiah? The Synchronistic Approach." *Hebrew Union College Annual* 65.1 (1994): 1-19.

Demsky is a Jewish scholar. His article is detailed and contains good footnotes.

Kraemer, David. "On the Relationship of the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah." *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 59 (Sep 1993): 73-92.

Like the previous article, this one also comes from a Jewish scholar.

McFall, Leslie. "Was Nehemiah Contemporary with Ezra in 458 B.C.?" *Westminster Theological Journal* 53.2 (Fall 1991): 263-93.

This article is a good overview of the critical issues from an evangelical scholar's perspective. The footnotes are extensive. The article contains a timeline of Ezra/Nehemiah in chart form which can also be found online at the following URL: <http://www.btinternet.com/~lmf12/EzraChart.pdf> (accessed: September 1, 2005).

### **Background**

For comprehensive background information, refer to the newer commentaries, particularly the *Word Commentary*, NICOT, or NAC. These are listed under Exegetical Commentaries. The following articles contain background material with specialized emphases. In general,

*Biblical Illustrator* articles are informative, have good pictures and illustrations, and include limited footnotes for further study.

Anderson, William H. U. "Economics After the Return." *Biblical Illustrator* 22 (Fall 1995): 46-48.

Drinkard, Joel F. "Sanballat and Tobiah." *Biblical Illustrator* 12 (Spring 1986): 62-65.

Hockenhull, Brenda R. "The Feast of Booths." *Biblical Illustrator* 14 (Summer 1988): 51-54.

Hyatt, Leon. "Nehemiah as a Governor." *Biblical Illustrator* 22 (Fall 1995): 36-38.

Kent, Dan Gentry. "The Office of Cupbearer." *Biblical Illustrator* 12 (Spring 1986): 38-39.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Early Fifth-Century International Relations." *Biblical Illustrator* 22 (Fall 1995): 53-56.

Lee, Jerry W. "Enemies of Rebuilding Jerusalem." *Biblical Illustrator* 24 (Fall 1997): 64-67.

Matthews, E. LeBron. "The Purpose and Life Situation of Nehemiah." *Biblical Illustrator* 24 (Fall 1998): 50-53.

Redditt, Paul L. "A History of Jewish Beginnings." *Biblical Illustrator* 17 (Summer 1991): 54-59.

Register, M. Dean. "The Arabians." *Biblical Illustrator* 17 (Summer 1991): 23-26.

Tatum, Lynn W. "Nehemiah's Wall." *Biblical Illustrator* 17 (Summer 1991): 14-17.

Vardaman, Jerry. "Sanballat the Horonite." *Biblical Illustrator* 22 (Fall 1995): 63-64.

### **Exegetical Commentaries**

Batten, Loring W. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah*. International Critical Commentary. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1913, 1949.

This commentary from the International Critical Commentary series (ICC) is included for completeness. The ICC series in general is not written from a conservative perspective. The introductory sections are outdated, and Batten's conclusions can be dogmatic, but he addresses the text responsibly and includes good language notes.

Blenkinsopp, Joseph. *Ezra-Nehemiah, A Commentary*. The Old Testament Library. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1988.

Like many critical scholars, Blenkinsopp believes that the historical books in general are *idealized history* (i.e. not necessarily literal). His treatment of the text and his language notes are good. This volume also includes a large bibliography.

Breneman, Mervin. *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther*. New American Commentary, Vol. 10. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993.

This is a good commentary, particularly for pastors. Breneman interacts with the original languages but he does not presuppose a knowledge of Hebrew (and Aramaic for Ezra) on the part of his readers. The commentary does not include a bibliography (this may be the norm for the NAC series), but the footnotes are good and provide information on other sources.

Fensham, F. Charles. *The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah*. New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982.

Like many volumes in the NICOT series, this book is a good overall commentary. It contains technical notes on the original languages but is quite accessible to someone without knowledge of Hebrew. One drawback for the language student is the use of transliterated Hebrew rather than actual Hebrew characters.

Keil, C. F. *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament: The Books of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther*. Clark's Foreign Theological Library, 4th series, Vol. 38. translated by Sophia Taylor. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1873.

The Keil and Delitzsch commentaries have been used for over 100 years. Although outdated in terms of critical issues, they are conservative and scholarly, and have the advantage of being available online for free as

part of the e-sword Bible software package. For details visit: [www.e-sword.net](http://www.e-sword.net).

Williamson, H. G. M. *Ezra, Nehemiah*. Word Biblical Commentary 16. Waco, Texas: Word, 1985.

This is perhaps the best overall commentary in this list, and can be used profitably both by people with no language expertise as well as experts. It has an excellent introduction and in addition to providing commentary, the author addresses each section of the biblical text from the perspective of form and structure. As is typical with the Word series, Williamson has provided very good original language notes.

### **Expositional Commentaries**

The following commentaries generally deal with the English text of Nehemiah and Ezra.

Clines, D. J. *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther*. New Century Bible Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984.

Coggins, R. J. *The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah*. Cambridge Bible Commentary. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976.

Hamrick, Emmett Willard. "Ezra-Nehemiah." Pages 422-506 in *Broadman Bible Commentary*, Vol. 3. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1970.

Holmgren, Fredrick Carlson. *Israel Alive Again: A Commentary on the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah*. International Theological Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987.

Kidner, Derek. *Ezra and Nehemiah: An Introduction and Commentary*. Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries. Madison, WI: InterVarsity, 1979.

McConville, J. G. *Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther*. The Daily Study Bible Series. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1985.

Myers, Jacob M. *Ezra, Nehemiah*. Anchor Bible. Garden City: Doubleday, 1965.

Throntveit, Mark A. *Ezra-Nehemiah*. Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1989.

Throntveit approaches Ezra/Nehemiah from mainly a literary perspective, and this commentary provides good insights into the structure of the books. Although the author does not hold to the strict historicity of the Ezra and Nehemiah accounts, he chooses mainly to avoid historical issues and to focus on the received text.

### Homiletical

Redpath, Alan. *Victorious Christian Service: Studies in the Book of Nehemiah*. Westwood, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1994.

White, K. Owen. *Nehemiah Speaks Again*. Nashville: Broadman, 1964.

### Application/Devotional

Evers, Stan K. *Doing a Great Work: Ezra and Nehemiah Simply Explained*. Durham: Evangelical Press, 1996.

Getz, Gene A. *Nehemiah: Becoming a Disciplined Leader*. Men of Character, Vol. 4. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995.

Packer, J. I. *A Passion for Faithfulness: Wisdom from the Book of Nehemiah*. Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1995.

### Special Studies

Cartledge, Tony W. "Jewish Exclusivism." *Biblical Illustrator* 17 (Summer 1991): 31-33.

Clines, David J. A. "Nehemiah 10 as an Example of Early Jewish Biblical Exegesis." *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 21.1 (October 1981): 111-17.

Duggan, Michael W. *The Covenant Renewal in Ezra-Nehemiah (Neh. 7:72B-10:40): An Exegetical, Literary, and Theological Study*. Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series 164. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001.

McCarthy, Dennis J. "Covenant and Law in Chronicles-Nehemiah." *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 44.1 (Jan 1982): 25-44.



Min, Kyung-jin. *The Levitical Authorship of Ezra-Nehemiah*. Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 409. New York: T & T Clark International, 2004.

Throntveit, Mark A. "Linguistic Analysis and the Question of Authorship in Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah." *Vetus Testamentum* 32.2 (April 1982): 201-216.

## **Preaching from Nehemiah**

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Is leading the people of God something like pushing a piece of string? Or can God's ministers discover principles of leadership through a study of God's leaders as seen in Scripture? Nehemiah was a leader, a builder and a man of God. He cared for his ministry. He faced opposition. He led by influence and by word. He was used by God. Sound familiar? As you think through some of the preaching points below, I pray that you will hear God's voice calling you to learn, to share, and to do His work in your ministry setting.

### **1:1—The Comfort of God**

Biblical names are more than individual "handles." Sometimes they are reminders. Moses' name referred to being drawn out of the water. Jacob's name reminded people of the circumstances of his birth. Isaac's mother laughed, and his name related to her laughter of disbelief and her laughter of joy at his birth.

Nehemiah's name portended God's ministry through him. "Nehemiah" has two parts. The first is related to the Hebrew word *nacham* which means to comfort or to be sorry. The second part is a shortened form of Yahweh. People who heard the name Nehemiah heard "Yahweh comforts."<sup>1</sup> The remainder of the book describes the particular way in which God comforted his people, i.e. the restoration of Jerusalem and its population.

*Preaching point:* We do not choose our names. Often we do not know the meaning of our names. Still, as we live our lives people begin to associate qualities and behaviors with our names. In that sense, we determine what our name means, not the dictionary. What does your name mean on the job or in the community? That is, when folks hear your name, because of your testimony, do they think of ways God comforts or speaks or blesses?

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<sup>1</sup> Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2000), 637.

### **1:1-3—The Voice of God**

Scripture is full of accounts of God’s speaking to his people, his servants, and others. Sometimes he used direct speech or miracles, sometimes the testimonies of others. Nehemiah’s call to service came through the words of Hanani, “one of my brothers and some men from Judah” (v. 2). Their report (v. 3) does not sound like a call to service. Seemingly, they did not ask him to do anything. But the distress of the land and its people touched Nehemiah’s heart. As he thought about the troubles, he experienced God’s call through a coming together of his concern and his opportunity.

*Preaching point:* How has God “spoken” in your life? Perhaps looking back over your history with God you can see his use of feelings, circumstances, and even other people. God may bless us with a “still, small voice.” Perhaps just as often, he sends someone to tell us of a work that needs to be done, a ministry that we need to take up. We should not rely on the words of others as the only determinates in discovering God’s will, but God does use other folks to call to us. To whom and to what do we listen?

### **1:4-11—Passion in a Predicament**

Exilic and post-exilic material such as Chronicles, Daniel, Ezra and Nehemiah reveal God’s servants turning strongly to prayer. In these periods Israel had no political identity (except as a portion of another empire). People seem to have felt powerless to control their destinies or that of their nation. Thus, they turned ever more seriously to prayer. Nehemiah’s book begins with his turning to prayer, his seriousness and intensity shown by his tears and posture as he prayed and by his persistence. Nehemiah prayed, not as an alternative to action, but as a basis for all that would follow.

*Preaching point:* Often God’s call is a call to action. But to run off “half-cocked” without God’s direction and implementation is to put our ministry in jeopardy. Prayer such as Nehemiah’s is not something we do instead of leading, witnessing, giving, etc. More often humble, persistent prayer is the first step in following God’s call. Such prayer is most often sustained by our feelings and our faith, as was Nehemiah’s. That does not mean that we do need to create or to manipulate our feelings, but we need to be open to them. Can God tell, by listening to our prayer, that we care?

**1:4-11—Part of the Problem**

Scripture records the words of prayers for various reasons. Sometimes the reason is so that we can use the same or similar words in our prayers. Sometimes, as here, the reason may be to reveal the heart of God's human servant. These verses indicate that Nehemiah was not afraid to "own" the problem of Israel's sin. He began with "I" but quickly moved to "we." Did that mean he had committed the same sins as his forefathers? Probably not. Still, he saw himself as part of the nation or people. He embraced the fate of his contemporaries and "owned" the sin of his predecessors. He could not repent on behalf of those who had gone before him, but he could affirm the justice of God and the sin of God's people.

*Preaching point:* Americans treasure individualism. We pride ourselves in being our own persons. We sometimes exalt personal freedoms above corporate responsibilities. Individualistic or not, however, we know that we often share the fate of those around us. When our family is honored, we share in the honor. If our congregation suffers, we feel that suffering. When our nation is attacked, we feel we have been attacked as well. Do such corporate feelings serve to tie us to the sins of others? Are we guilty of sins we have not personally committed? God has put us into groups—families, congregations, nations, etc. When we recognize that part of our corporate identity and heritage is sin, then corporate confession is appropriate. True, we cannot repent of their sins for them. We can confess God's past goodness and his desire for us. We can beseech him for grace.

**2:1-10—Prepared to Act**

Nehemiah had the right motive for action, but he needed the right time and the right words. None of his skill and wisdom would count unless "the good hand of God was on [him]" (v. 8). In his wisdom, then, Nehemiah developed a strategy. Prayer was a part of it, so Nehemiah prayed for success (Neh. 1:11). Action was another part, so Nehemiah planned what he would do and say. He knew the officials he needed to contact, the documents he would need, the duration of his time away. Nehemiah's actions and words would not be the whim of a moment when he was allowed to speak. He chose his words carefully. The results show he chose his words wisely. All that planning strengthened his resolution to act so when the opportunity came he could "seize the moment."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See Fredrick C. Holmgren's comments on Nehemiah as a wise person in *Israel Alive Again* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 93-94.

*Preaching point:* Jesus asked if any man was foolish enough to begin a building project without estimating the cost (Luke 14:28-30). Our easy answer is “yes.” We know that if we begin a building project without plans, we are not likely to succeed. Do we approach our sermons, Bible lessons, or witnessing encounters in that fashion? Should we not pray-plan-perform (or act) in just that order so that our work for the Lord can be effective? Even for those blessed with a gift of spontaneity, preparation before the moment, before the “divine appointment” can result in more effective service.

### **2:11-20—A Vision Shared**

Nehemiah was neither a one-man army nor a one-man re-building crew. He was not a one-man anything. God had blessed him with a burden and a goal. However, the burden and goal were more than personal ones. And God would provide the means and the men to accomplish the goal. In order for those men to work with Nehemiah, though, they had to see and to hear his God-given vision. Before Nehemiah shared his vision, he looked at the task for himself. He needed to know the magnitude of the work needing to be done. Then he spoke honestly about the task. He did not “sugar coat” the magnitude of the work. He did not claim to be an expert. He did recount how God had been at work. That was Nehemiah’s way of motivating his hearers, telling his story; then, “they” claimed the vision and set to work.

*Preaching point:* Leaders typically are visionaries. But not every visionary is a leader. To be a leader means to be able to communicate the vision in such a way that people want to be involved in implementing the vision. Likewise, a vision is more than a view of what can be. It is a view of what ought to be and, in the church, a view of what God wants there to be. A vision must be honest, counting the cost, recognizing obstacles that will have to be overcome. In the end, though, people follow leaders, not visions or programs.

### **2:11-20—Common Cause and Criticism**

As the leader, Nehemiah was the “point man.” If Nehemiah’s opponents could undercut or discredit him, even destroy him, the task would not be done and the people might be discouraged from ever trying again. Thus, opponents naturally sought to mock, deride, and undermine Nehemiah the man and the legitimacy of his task. But Nehemiah knew the difference between “me” and “us,” “my” and “our.” The vision had been his, but now it belonged to those who shared it. Could Nehemiah say it’s “nothing personal”?

*Preaching point:* Many leaders cannot take criticism even though the criticism can be helpful. Sometimes critics are God’s tools to help us sharpen our thinking and planning and performance. Sometimes they are opponents and must be resisted. In either case, leaders must stay focused and not allow their response to be personal. God-given tasks are God’s tasks and are larger than either the leader or the followers (or the critics). Seen in this light, when the task is the issue, not the personalities, a wise leader can resist the mockery, derision, and “scare tactics” used against him or her.

### **3:1-32—Co-workers or Conscripts**

Nehemiah had God and the Persian emperor behind him and God’s vision before him. With all this spiritual and political power, Nehemiah could have used his authority to force the inhabitants of the city or province to work. Israelite kings had done so. But Nehemiah wanted cooperation not coercion. One way to move toward that goal was to involve many groups. This chapter lists about thirty-nine groups. More than a list of names, though, the chapter identifies those who worked and some who refused to work, people who risked and people who refused to risk. Some work groups were from as far away as Jericho; many lived in the city. Some built; others repaired. Priests and officials were involved, fathers and daughters. Some worked because this was Jerusalem; many worked on the wall because the wall was near their house.

*Preaching point:* Any one group may be made up of people with varying abilities, desires, and motivations. Incorporating this variety and making it work for the common goal is difficult but important. Even within a voluntary organization such as the local congregation, leaders have some power and can often push through a plan or a strategy, and members may do the work. But this does not seem to fit the picture of the church found throughout the New Testament, nor the model of servant leadership demonstrated by the Lord. Perhaps a move from “my members” to “my brothers and sisters” would help prevent seeing a congregation as conscripted labor.

### **4:1-6—Fighting Words**

Tobiah did not mean to start a fight with his words. Rather, by demeaning the work of Nehemiah and others, Tobiah meant to dishearten the workers and defenders. This was not an impotent strategy. Nehemiah knew that words could wound and discourage and that swords and spears were poor weapons against words. God’s leader, then, used his own “fighting words,” prayer words, to encourage and to support God’s task.

The prayer words sound harsh and vengeful to us, “Do not forgive their iniquity.” But the prayer called for God to respond to Tobiah’s “fighting words.” The task belonged to God. The fight belonged to God. The ones who opposed it were opposing God.

*Preaching point:* When attacked, we clench our fists, ready to fight, or seize a weapon. Verbal attacks, though, are hard to fight with fists and weapons. And using words against words may be ineffective, too. Authentic prayer is God’s tool, a summons, a cry, a testimony, and a weapon in the Christian’s armory. Old Testament saints believed that God cared about justice, about victims. Faced with injustice, oppression, and impossible odds, they cried out for God to intervene and to execute vengeance. Such prayers seem at odds with Jesus’ command to love one’s enemies. But Jesus modeled both “Father, forgive them” and “Woe” to those who attempted to undermine the kingdom of God.

#### **4:7-23—Multi-tasking**

Sanballat and others would not go away; indeed, their threats became bolder. The workers began to lose heart; the task was just too great. Jews who were not working lost heart and warned the workers of attacks to come, thus increasing the workers’ discouragement. Soon, they said, there would be an attack. Nehemiah needed to respond, but he could not simply work or defend. He had to do both. The job was superhuman, but he trusted and believed what he said, “God will fight for us.” Encouraged by his words and his example, the people discovered how to work and be ready at the same time. More than a good strategy Nehemiah knew the task was God’s and that he would carry it through.

*Preaching point:* Ministers today have a demanding role, expected to be and often seeking to be all things to all persons. Faithful ministers soon discover that they must be good at multi-tasking, working and praying, studying and visiting, leading and cooperating. Prayer should undergird such a demanding role. After all, work without prayer ignores the power and purposes of God. Prayer without work ignores the truth that God’s people need to be physically and mentally involved in the work of the kingdom. As the minister discovers how to integrate work and reliance on God, he can model that skill for his co-workers. Like Nehemiah, though, the minister must know that ultimately the task is God’s.

#### **5:1-13—The Wrong in Our Rights**

Not all of Nehemiah’s problems came from opponents or outsiders. Apparently, rebuilding the wall triggered economic problems. Workers

were on the wall instead of in the fields. Some may have neglected businesses to do the work. A famine had occurred or was imminent. As a result, three groups stood before the governor: landless workers, those who feared famine, and those who feared their inability to pay taxes demanded by the emperor. These groups feared and complained about fellow Jews, not godless opponents. As Nehemiah listened, he became angry, and appealed to those who were economically threatening their “brothers.” He appealed to their religion and to the image of God reflected in the callous treatment of their brothers (v. 9). Nehemiah’s passion ruled and the offending lenders canceled the debts and their liens on the property of the fearful ones.

*Preaching point:* How do church members view the economic problems of fellow Christians? In congregations *koinonia* too often refers mostly to hugs, fellowship meals, or conversation. Economic disparity within congregations or between one congregation and another is an opportunity to show love to a world that treasures money. Americans earnestly defend our right to make and save money. Unfortunately, as we do, we can privatize poverty, i.e. “that’s their problem.” When Christians or Christian churches ignore the needs of believers within the same city or neighborhood, God’s name can be defamed. The world knows how we treasure our rights, even when those rights cause us to do wrong.

### **6:1-14—Reasonable Requests**

Mockery and threat had not stopped the rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem, but Nehemiah’s opponents had others tricks. They invited Nehemiah to talk with them, but the place of their choosing, the plain of Ono, was thirty miles from Jerusalem. What mischief did they intend in Jerusalem while Nehemiah attended their conference? Failing that, the opponents used a “prophet” to encourage the governor to take refuge in the Temple. Though a seemingly reasonable suggestion, Nehemiah knew it would open him to a charge of cowardice. Moreover, how long could he stay in the Temple—the rest of his time as governor?<sup>3</sup> Somehow Nehemiah “perceived” that the prophet who suggested this flight was not a prophet of God, but a hired man. The request was logical, but did not fit with the task of governing to which God had called Nehemiah.

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<sup>3</sup> H. G. M. Williamson viewed this request as an attempt to get Nehemiah to go into the Temple’s Holy Place, a place reserved for priests, and thus to violate sacred space to save himself (*Ezra-Nehemiah*, Word Biblical Commentary 16 [Waco: Word Publishing, 1985], 258f.).



*Preaching point:* Most of us need help when dealing with reasonable temptations. Our love for logic and rationality, our appreciation for the mind God has given each of us, though, can be a trap. When we have decisions to make we want to use the best thought process possible. But we need to think spiritually, too. We want to match the opportunities laid before us with the task to which God has called us. We want to learn to recognize (with the help of others) the voice of God. Not everyone who says “Thus saith the Lord” actually speaks for God. Practice at listening to and obeying God’s voice can help us recognize the counterfeit sound of Satan.

### **6:15-7:73a—Completed But Continuing**

In less than two months, God’s willing workers had rebuilt Jerusalem’s wall. It was the opponents’ turn to be discouraged by events. But evil never gives up and Tobiah and others continued their psychological warfare. Nehemiah knew, too, that walls do not secure a city, people do. Jerusalem needed more than a strong wall. It needed vigilant guards and citizens committed to standing fast. Whom could Nehemiah trust with the task of securing the city? Who would be a better commander than the very man who first touched Nehemiah’s heart with Jerusalem’s plight? Guards were enlisted, a regimen for opening and closing the city was established, and a numbering of the people was begun in order to again know who had come back and who would have a place in city and Temple.

*Preaching point:* Whatever victories we celebrate in our congregations, temptations and undercutting will not go away. The evil one is persistent. Thus, in the congregation as in our nation, eternal vigilance is the price of freedom. The community of faith, not just the leaders and workers, is responsible for that vigilance. To be vigilant, the people of God need a leader who can lead, but who also fears God. Such a leader can enlist, encourage, and enable the people of God.

### **7:73b-8:1-8—The Regular Reading**

After completing the work, but before dedicating the wall, in the seventh month (v. 73b), Nehemiah and Ezra gathered the people for a reading of the Book of the Law. The seventh month was special, beginning with the Feast of Trumpets followed by the Day of Atonement then the Feast of Tabernacles. Deuteronomy envisioned a reading of the Law during this Feast every seventh year. But this was a special time in Israel’s history. Moreover, people were there to give the sense of the reading (vv. 7, 8). Undoubtedly many of those there that day had heard the book read

before. Had they understood it? Probably many were no longer fluent in biblical Hebrew. Helping them understand made the reading more than a superstitious religious ritual. They truly heard the word.

*Preaching point:* The Bible envisions an “educated” people hearing the word with understanding. Anything less could be seen as a superstitious exaltation of a holy book and the error of bibliolatry. While in our land we bemoan the loss of a biblical perspective, even a loss of exposure to biblical concepts, one of the tasks of the minister of God is to enable God’s people to hear with understanding. But how much Scripture do our fellow worshippers hear, a paragraph or less for a text, a few select verses in a Bible study that assumes members can read the rest with understanding? We rightly emphasize the preaching of the word of God. Are we as serious about enabling people to hear the word read?

### **8:9-18—A Responsive Reading**

Nehemiah did not record what Ezra read. He did report how the people responded. As they heard with understanding, they began to weep, undoubtedly out of conviction over sin. Some, too, perhaps wept out of joy, not having heard a public reading of the Torah in a long time. As they listened, their response showed they heard and understood. When they wept, though, God’s leaders reminded the hearers of the joy of the Lord, a joy to be shared with others. If they truly heard, they would share what they had in this feast time. The pattern was that God’s people would first rejoice in the Lord, celebrating him and his goodness, then would come a time for mourning and repentance. The people obeyed as they began the Feast of Booths. Apparently, the people had lost the practice of living in booths to celebrate God’s care for their fathers in the wilderness (v. 17). Properly instructed from the Torah, they built their booths and the reading of the word of God went forward.

*Preaching point:* Our land and time has more Bible translations, commentaries, and study helps than any other generation—and perhaps less authentic understanding of the word. Preachers and teachers may expound, but do folks understand? Or are hearers so taken with the speaker and her or his style that the word of God is not heard? Do we dare evaluate our preaching, teaching, and worship by the changes they produce in the lives of the hearers? Can we say that those who hear truly understand the word if the only response is “see you next week,” with no sharing, no grief, no joy evidenced? Do those of us who preach have a real response to the reading of Scripture when we open it before God? Does God’s word still stir us? If not, are we aware of what handicaps us?

### 9:1-38—Conviction, Confession, Commitment

The minds of the Jews in Jerusalem must have turned back to their history as they celebrated the Feast of Booths, a history of God’s grace and his people’s sinfulness. Instead of denying their parentage, though, they recognized the sinfulness of previous generations. Yet they began the prayer here by affirming and praising God’s character and nature. After a time in the prayer, the words of the prayer changed from “they” (referring to their fathers) to “we” and “us.” Confession turned to commitment and they made an agreement among themselves, a commitment to make their own history different in the land God had given them anew.

*Preaching point:* While we recognize Adam’s sin scarred our nature, a scarring that has resulted in millennia of sin, we typically confess only our own sins. Sometimes the sin of our physical or spiritual fathers is so great it prompts us to make public confession (as in the confessing the sin associated with slavery). But families, cities, congregations, and nations sin, too. God teaches us that reality so we can more deeply appreciate his grace, not so we will be burdened with guilt. Indeed, awareness of the sin which so easily besets groups as well as individuals can lead us to commitment that by God’s grace we will move forward and create a new history.

### 10:1-39—The Specifics of Holiness

A thousand years had passed since Moses articulated God’s commands. Nehemiah and his fellow Jews lived in a different time and culture. They needed to update the application of God’s eternal truths and requirements. All who could understand and had separated themselves unto God (v. 28) joined in the process and in the oath to walk before the Lord. Because of the needs of the day, they dealt specifically with intermarriage, sabbath-keeping, and support of the Temple. They created new ways to keep God’s law, took on new requirements based on precedents in the Torah, integrated several laws into principles they could follow, and allotted Temple responsibilities. No one imposed this *halakah* (lifestyle) on them. As God’s people, they chose to be separate, to be fair and honest, and to be faithful in their religious obligations.<sup>4</sup>

*Preaching point:* Commitments to be godly often break down because of a lack of specifics. God does not change; neither do his concerns and expectations nor his demands. But the human setting in which we live

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<sup>4</sup> See Williamson’s commentary for a good discussion of this “updating” of the Torah requirements.

out our commitment to him does change. We need specifics on how God's concerns and his leading are to be lived out. Thus, God's servants have a responsibility to study God's law in order to discover God's concerns and interests and purposes reflected in the ancient setting. As we begin to study his law in this light, discovering that we are to be separate and pure, embrace economic justice, and worship by giving him time and other resources, we see new ways in these new days to live and teach God's law. Scripture is the anchor and the rock to which we return repeatedly in changing times.

### **11:1-12:26—People Power**

Jerusalem was once the economic center of the land of Israel, as well as the political and religious center. Although the Temple had been rebuilt almost seventy-five years earlier, the city still suffered. Nehemiah and others had built the wall, but who and what would build the city? Jerusalem needed people and one tenth of the community was chosen to live in Jerusalem, a privilege but a task, too. Many preferred life in the villages where they could support themselves more easily. But they came as called, some as valiant warriors (v. 14), many as servants of the house of God. Other folks returned to the places of their fathers.

*Preaching point:* Pioneering sounds glamorous—until we try it. Going places where no one has gone, and doing things no one has done is hard work. A new church start is work. Initiating a gospel witness in a land far from home is lonely, demanding, and sometimes dangerous. But pioneers are needed. In the local congregation we refer to “charter members” and honor those who were part of the beginning work. Sometimes we even listen to their stories of how tough things were. Sometimes we hear God calling us to pioneer a ministry while others will live in their own place. If the kingdom is to develop as God intends, he will need pioneers.

### **12:27-47—The Final Act?**

Several chapters after Nehemiah described the completion of Jerusalem's wall (Neh. 6:15), he described its dedication. The intervening events were the real story of re-establishing Jerusalem, worship, confession, commitment, and people to guard the walls, fill the streets and shops, and carry on the work of the Temple. Still, “prayer walking” (or “praise walking”) atop the walls around the city made a point. The job was finished. As the two choirs came together in the Temple, foes and friends alike knew that God had done the work using the hearts and heads and hands of his people. But Nehemiah had more to write because “it's not over until it's over.”

*Preaching point:* Public celebration of a milestone in a congregation's life can go a long way toward proclaiming the gospel. We recognize that God uses evangelists and pastors, teachers and deacons, builders and bankers to provide a concrete image of his presence in a city or neighborhood. Friends and foes of the church need to be able to see that God is at work right before their eyes. Still, while chapter twelve is the climax of Nehemiah's book, it is not the end. Dedicating a building, or proclaiming a new ministry may be the climax of the moment, but it is not the end. The work will have to go on.

### **13:1-31—Biblical Realism**

Some time after the celebration described in chapter twelve, Nehemiah returned to the king's court (v. 6). Soon, though, he came back to Jerusalem and found that the community had failed in each and every commitment it had made (chapter 10). Opponents of the people of God had infiltrated the Temple; tithes for the support of the Temple were unpaid; the sabbath was ignored, and the people mingled with non-Jews through intermarriage. Nehemiah, leader that he was, turned the situation around, but not without much personal effort.

*Preaching point:* Individuals who recommit themselves to the Lord often must do that again. Congregations that experience revival do not stay revived. The simple duration and "everydayness" of life has a way of wearing down our commitment to what is pure and right and holy. So Nehemiah ends not in a moment of celebrative accomplishment but in a more realistic struggle to establish godliness and to keep godliness in the life of the people of God. We are not to be discouraged by our fall from the heights of our enthusiasm. Neither are we to think we can always live on high. We can, though, *always* trust the one who was tempted like we are and yet did not sin (Heb. 2:18). He will, he has, and he does come to our aid.

### **13:1-31—Remember**

Four times in this chapter Nehemiah called on God to remember (vv. 14, 22, 29, 31). The man of God did not think he worshiped an absent-minded deity; rather his plea was a call for God to act in light of the situation (similar to the psalmist's plea in Psalm 89:50). Three times Nehemiah called for God to remember, he seemed to be congratulating himself for good things he had done. In verse 29, he called God to remember the sin of those who defiled the priesthood. In all these Nehemiah was putting his future and that of the community in God's hands. "Remember" was a call for God to respond as God determined he

should respond. Nehemiah trusted God to respond to faithfulness and goodness with blessing and to respond to sin with judgment.

*Preaching point:* Although God has revealed to us that heaven awaits his children, we are still people of the earth. We long to see immediate results from faithful service. We want immediate judgment for those who defile and destroy. Sometimes God grants our desires. We see evident blessing and judgment. Whether or not we see the immediate results of godliness or sin, however, as God's children we commit life itself into God's hands saying "remember me" and "remember them," trusting God to do what is right according to his loving will. Is Nehemiah "blowing his own horn"? Or is he saying that God knows and he trusts God's determination?

**Thanksgiving and Prayer to God:  
A Sermon on Nehemiah 11:17  
by Scottish Baptist Preacher,  
Peter Grant *of the Songs***

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**Introduction**

Though I teach New Testament I also have a passion for preaching and a lifelong love of history. Because of the latter affections I have transcribed and edited numerous sermons of the Scottish Baptist, Peter Grant *of the Songs*, a hymn-writer,<sup>1</sup> pastor and preacher in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland for about sixty years.<sup>2</sup> The sermon brief you will read below is one of these transcribed sermons.

In January 2001 I was on a mission trip in Grantown-on-Spey, Scotland, with some students from Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. At that time, we met with Mark Baker, then pastor of the Grantown Baptist Church, where Peter Grant used to be pastor. Mark introduced me to Margaret Cumming, one of Grant's descendants. She had in her possession the only extant sermon manuscripts of her ancestor. I mentioned to her that the sermons had research value and that someone should transcribe, edit, and publish them. To my delight, she graciously entrusted them to my care for a period of time so that they could be transcribed and published to enable others to learn more of Grant and his preaching.

Grant was born in Ballintua, Strathspey, Scotland in 1783 and died in 1867. He had a considerable ministry, as Donald E. Meek, Professor of Celtic Studies at the University of Edinburgh, shows in the following description of Grant's life.

Baptist pastor and celebrated Gaelic evangelical poet. Born of small-farming stock, Grant became the precentor in the local parish church

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<sup>1</sup> Grant was known as Peter Grant *of the Songs*, no doubt because of his popularity as a songwriter.

<sup>2</sup> These sermons will appear in a book titled, *The Highland Herald: Sermons of Scottish Baptist Preacher, Peter Grant of the Songs* (Joshua Press).

when the Haldane movement was beginning to affect certain parts of the Highlands. He was later converted under the preaching of Lachlan Mackintosh, the founder and first pastor of the Baptist church at Grantown-on-Spey. He then became an itinerant missionary. When Mackintosh left Grantown in 1826, Grant succeeded him as pastor of the church, and was formally ordained in 1829. He possessed considerable evangelistic gifts. Under his ministry and that of his son, William, the church achieved a membership of almost 300, and experienced intermittent revivals.

Grant's hymns owe some themes to Dugald Buchanan, but are noticeably different in style and content. Their main focus is the "pilgrim's progress" in the life of faith. The Christian pilgrimage is followed from conversion until the believer's arrival in heaven. Grant extols the efficacy of Christ's blood, emphasises the inevitability of death, and anticipates the joy of the eternal home. The world is depicted as a cold place, a vale of tears; the Christian Hope compensates for the sorrow of believer's parting with loved ones. The experiential emphasis is reminiscent of Methodist hymnology. Set to well-known tunes, Grant's compositions became extremely popular in the Highlands, and helped establish an enduring trend in Gaelic hymnology.<sup>3</sup>

Grant was a faithful man of God. My prayer is that the publication of his sermons will lead to more people knowing about his life and ministry and in some way contribute to revival amongst present-day Scottish Baptists.

### Sermon

#### "Thanksgiving and Prayer to God"

3 December 1851  
Thanksgiving Day, Afternoon

Mr. Grant  
Nehemiah 11:17

And Mattaniah the son of Micha, the son of Zabdi, the son of Asaph, *was* the principal to begin the thanksgiving in prayer: and Bakbukiah the second among his brethren, and Abda the son of Shammua, the son of Galal, the son of Jeduthun (KJV).

The Jews were so guilty of idolatry that nothing but captivity could cure. But it did cure it most effectually. Nehemiah was among the children of the captivity. He was cupbearer at Jerusalem which was no small or low office. But he was raised up by God to be so in favor with the king as to get his request. The opening he gave to the temple after the captivity was

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<sup>3</sup> Donald E. Meek, "Grant, Peter" in *Dictionary of Evangelical Biography, 1730-1860*, 2 vols. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), I: 467.



thanksgiving and prayer. And they could praise the Lord for the great deliverance they got.

*1. Thanksgiving is a part of the public worship of God.*

It is His plan. This answer is quite conclusive. Private thanksgiving is not enough. It must be public. Some say there should be no public Sabbath. They say we ought to live every day as a Sabbath. Is it from any glory to God? No, it is to do away with the Sabbath. Some will say this is the ceremonial Law, and what have we to do with it? It waxeth old. Take care it is the mere symbol that is part away true. There is no offering of sacrifices because He offered Himself once for all. Noah, after leaving the ark, gave a public thanksgiving to God for his preservation. His sacrifice was submatal of Christ's sacrifice which indeed appeared in the cloud. We see it is a part of the public worship of God.

*2. That thanksgiving is due to God for all His mercies.*

Prayer is a confession of our sins and thankfulness of His mercies. Some people's wealth comes all made of oppression. What they ought to have given to God's cause is kept to witness against them. Injustice ought to be engraved on their tombstone! If God claimed your heart or mine, is it not His own? And where He asks your substance or mine, is it not His own? When He sends sinners to Hell, is He not just? And when He acquits His own people, is He not righteous in all His ways because Christ paid the price? Although we have lost all power of obeying God, that does not take away God's claim.

*3. The nature of thanksgiving.*

If we mistake the nature, that is sad, for God may claim one thing and we may give another. We ought to know what it is. First, it arises from a true sense of our unworthiness, that we do not deserve it. What we deserve we will not thank a man for. Israel knew, owing to their former idolatry, that they did not deserve this deliverance to His own house and worship. Second, we are assured in our minds that we cannot pay God. It is a breathing of gratitude to the person who paid the price which we cannot pay. Paul said, "Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift!" And what could any person give to God for His own Son but true thanks and gratitude? Third, it arises from a state of reconciliation with God. If not reconciled to God, he cannot be thankful. It is impossible. It is a Christian indeed that has the heart to be thankful. Fourth, it is a part of the Spirit of God and if we have not the Spirit it is impossible to be thankful in prayer to God. It is not so easily obtained as many think. It is indeed easy for the followers of the Saviour.

*4. The way this duty ought to be discharged.*

What is the way? It is to be discharged on our knees at the throne of grace. It is from the seat of prayer we obtain mercies, and it is by prayer they must be acknowledged, and for the sake of Him that sitteth upon the throne He will accept it. The man that never thanks God is an object of pity and this congregation ought to pray for such. If God claimed from you or me anything for His cause and we not give it, it will be a black shame. If God's ordinances were out of the world, His church and His name, God will then set fire to the world. "Ye are My friends if you do whatsoever I command you." Support the poor of God. What shall I say to the man that never inquires for the poor of God? It will be dreadful to hear Him who sitteth upon the throne say, "I was a hungered and ye gave me no meat," and so on; "inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of one of these, my brethren, you did it not to me."

*Conclusion*

To observe the Lord's hand in every mercy is a bounden duty. After many days ye shall reap the benefit of lending to the Lord. Many give their young days to the devil, and their old age and diseases to God. Will God accept such? Yes, He says at the eleventh hour He will receive them graciously and love them freely.

## **What's Going On in Salt Lake City?**

R. Philip Roberts

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The excitement began in the fall of 2004. For the first time in over a century since D. L. Moody spoke there, the story line ran, a leading evangelical was asked by representatives of the LDS Church to address an assembly of religious leaders and assorted members of the general public in the historic LDS Tabernacle in Salt Lake City.<sup>1</sup> On a Sunday evening in November, Ravi Zacharias took the podium in the famed venue to speak on the particularly appropriate topic of the exclusivity of Jesus Christ. This unique event was the brainchild of “Standing Together”—an ad hoc ecumenical Mormon-evangelical alliance led by former LDS member and Baptist pastor, Greg Johnson, and BYU religion professor, Robert L. Millet. Millet and Johnson have been traveling the country together for some few years hosting town hall meetings and listening sessions together with LDS and evangelical audiences. Their stated purpose has been to increase understanding between the two groups and aid in improving relationships.

The big evening came in Salt Lake City. Ravi Zacharias, his usual articulate and passionate self, made a presentation on Christ’s uniqueness which was apparently well-received with a large number of evangelicals in the audience urging him on. If anything, however, it appears that his presentation avoided the particulars of just how and in what ways the Jesus Christ of evangelical thought differed or contrasted with the Jesus of Latter-Day reckoning. But in the context, others argued, it was the best that could be done without appearing inflammatory and overly provocative. Perhaps so.

The real headliner for the event, however, was stolen by Richard Mouw, President of Fuller Theological Seminary. Prior to Zacharias’ presentation, Mouw came to the podium to make a surprise statement. He proceeded to apologize and offer lamentations on how Mormons and the teaching of Mormonism had been abused, misrepresented and caricatured by evangelicals, particularly those involved in counter-cult ministries. The cat was in among the pigeons now with varied responses,

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<sup>1</sup> A similar article by Roberts appeared in *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 9, no. 2 (2005): 72-76.

expressed by numerous evangelicals, ranging from mild approbation to hurt, disappointment and rage. On further reflection, Mouw issued a statement of clarification stating that he knew of only two persons that he had in mind when he apologized and those were the late Walter Martin, author of *The Kingdom of the Cults*, and Dave Hunt, Christian apologist and author.

The *LDS Church News*, when reporting the event, however, gave almost its entire attention to Mouw's comments while largely ignoring those of Zacharias. It appears that an apology for apologetics by a leading evangelical seminary president was more important news than a presentation of the Christian gospel.

So just what's going on in Salt Lake City? Are Mormons coming to their theological senses? Is there a doctrinal seismic shift afoot akin to what occurred with the Worldwide Church of God just a few years ago when that group renounced its heretical views and embraced evangelical theology? In this writer's opinion, while hoping in some sense that he is wrong, that is hardly the case.

In a highly centralized, bureaucratic and secretive religious structure like the LDS Church, Robert Millet is a very long way from the levers of power and influence. While the Church is obviously in some ways supportive of his efforts and values the public relations spin-off of a leading evangelical seminary president's apology, the purpose for its support is probably purely public relations and not due to a serious search and desire for theological truth. This *modus operandi* falls in line with the entire approach taken by the Church over the last 25 years to lower the "cult" profile of the movement while working hard to gain a measure of acceptance and recognition among Christians generally and evangelicals particularly. It is probably believed by the LDS leadership that the recasting of their image will greatly assist in their proselytizing efforts.

Other signs tell us that nothing much has changed in Salt Lake City. Here are a few considerations:

First, there are no substantive doctrinal changes in any official LDS publication. "Well," someone might say, "What about the publication of Robert Millet's most recent book, *A Different Jesus? The Christ of the Latter-Day Saints?* Interestingly, this tome was released by William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company and contains endorsements by several evangelicals including Craig Blomberg of Denver Seminary, David Neff of *Christianity Today* and Craig Hazen of Biola University, as well as both a foreword and afterword by Mouw. It is heralded as a breakthrough volume signaling, if not a shift, then perhaps an opening to a consideration of a shift by the Mormon Church.

A bit further reflection, however, calls for less effusiveness. In fact, it is just the kind of volume the LDS public relations moguls love to see surface. Why? Because it provides just enough public relations credibility for the LDS Church to begin to be thought of in more mainstream, even distantly evangelical, terms without giving away anything of substance. Millet toys enough with familiar evangelical terms and concepts to sound convincing to the uninformed. Without being an official publication of the Church, it also allows church leadership plausible deniability if what Millet writes rankles some church members or causes a crisis of faith among the less stable.

Allow me to risk being termed “hard core” and “abrasive” by saying that at least some of what Millet says has the appearance of actually misleading the reader. For instance, when he discusses that Jesus and Jesus alone “saves,” and nothing else, he fails totally in elucidating the point that, in fact, salvation or “immortality” in Mormon thought is provided for all in either the terrestrial or telestial kingdoms except for murderers, apostates from the LDS Church, the devil and his angels. An evangelical might think that Millet is speaking of salvation as an evangelical does—that a Christian gets it all, receives the “fullness” of salvation through, by and because of the work of Christ alone. Not so. It is only through the “ordinances and rituals” of the “fullness” of the Gospel provided by latter-day revelation and the “latter-day,” i.e. Mormon, restoration that all of salvation is possible. In other words, except for those who were baptized by proxy after death, only “Temple-worthy” Mormons will enter the celestial kingdom and become gods. They will be the only ones to experience the fullness of salvation. It is omissions like these which make Millet’s book such a possibly misleading dynamic in the supposed rapprochement of evangelical-Mormon relations. After all, remember that, in addition to being a religion professor at BYU, Millet is also manager of Outreach and Interfaith for the LDS Church and as such serves in its public affairs office.

Other such basic and missionary-appropriate tools like *Gospel Principles*, which contain the essence of what a new or potentially new convert to Mormonism will learn about Mormonism, are left unchanged. These works are the official publications of the Mormon Church. More importantly, the primary sources of Mormonism, *The Book of Mormon*, *The Pearl of Great Price* and *Doctrine and Covenants*, are left unchanged. Only when change appears in the canonized authorities or even official proselytizing, indoctrinating sources can one be assured that something more substantive than public relations spin is afoot.

Notably, the latest edition of the LDS missionary manual—2004—contains all of the “same old, same old,” including the notions of the

great apostasy, i.e. all forms of Christianity are corrupted, the concept that God is confined to a physical body and that the “fullness of salvation” is finally revealed in latter-day Mormon revelation. Additionally, missionaries are encouraged to be less than forthcoming, one might even say disingenuous, about the teachings of the Church. On the doctrine of the “Fall” they are instructed, “When first teaching this doctrine, do not teach everything you know about it.”<sup>2</sup> It appears that the official, sanctioned representatives of the Church to the world, the missionaries, have not changed either their style or substance.

Other issues might excite some persons, including a recent change in the LDS Temple ceremony. Nothing in the spoken content of the ceremony has been altered, however. The only adjustment is that the initiated no longer wear a poncho with open sides for their anointing. Rather, it is a covering with a zip-up front that is enrobed. Word had it that there was a high level of discomfort by initiates with being anointed near sensitive parts of the body by Temple workers. Consequently, a candidate is now just anointed on the forehead in order to receive their priestly, endowed blessing.

Further sense of a loosening of the reins by Church hierarchy was believed farfetched when Mormon author Grant H. Palmer was disfellowshipped early in 2005 for the publication of his work, *An Insider's View of Mormon Origins*. This volume seriously questioned the historicity of Mormon and *The Book of Mormon* origins. Parker has a year to reconsider his position and presumably withdraw his book before being excommunicated.

Do any of these developments carry the hope of possible change? Not at all. Remember that repentance and redirection in the Worldwide Church of God basically started at the top. Robert Millet, Stephen Robinson and company at BYU just aren't there. The LDS is a highly centralized, profit-driven religious entity which delights in doing all it can to bring in and develop Temple-worthy and tithing members of the Church. Its leadership is a totally atheological group of corporate administrators. Unless they are motivated to change with influences from a more practical direction, change will be impossible. LDS Church leadership doubtlessly is desirous, however, to see impressions altered. And one major change that they have worked hard on and spent substantial funding for is the hope of acceptance by mainstream Christianity. Dialogue and discussion to this end they welcome.

In June 1998, on the occasion of the meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in Salt Lake City, the Mormon President, Gordon B.

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<sup>2</sup> *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service*, 50.

Hinckley, was quoted in the LDS *Church Times* as saying that Latter-Day Saints

do not believe in the traditional Christ. No I don't. The traditional Christ of whom they speak is not the Christ of whom I speak. For the Christ of whom I speak has been revealed in this the Dispensation of the Fullness of Times. He, together with His Father, appeared to the boy Joseph Smith in the year 1820, and when Joseph Smith left the grove that day, he knew more of the nature of God than all the learned ministers of the gospel of the ages.<sup>3</sup>

I encouraged Dr. Paige Patterson, then President of the Southern Baptist Convention, to write President Hinckley. With a bit of my involvement, he did so speedily and enthusiastically. In his letter, among other points, Dr. Patterson stated the following:

I appreciate your acknowledgement of a point most evangelical theologians have been stating for some time and that is: that traditional Christians (including Baptists) and Mormons do not believe in the same Jesus. Many of your church's spokesmen in recent years have sought to minimize that distinction. Your candor is refreshing. In my opinion, that enhances your credibility and the fact that traditional Christians and Mormons believe in two different and distinctive views of Christ.

President Hinckley, the issue of who Jesus is, as well as that of the nature of His work, is absolutely critical. If one does not have their faith in the genuine, biblical Christ then we must acknowledge that they are not Christian. Sadly and regrettably, on this most critical issue our two respective confessional communities disagree.

Nonetheless, I appreciate your forthrightness in expressing your church's views. In my opinion, true dialogue among faiths begins with honest expression of both agreements and disagreements in doctrinal and practical issues. Regarding our disagreements about Jesus Christ, President Hinckley, I would be happy to meet with you for a respectful and personal conversation in a private setting at any time and place of your choosing.

Patterson concluded with an invitation for Hinckley and his counselors to be his guests at Southeastern Seminary if they wished. To the date of the writing of this column, Dr. Patterson has not heard back from President Hinckley.

In my opinion, Hinckley's response, or lack thereof, to Patterson's open-ended invitation says far more about the state of substantive

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<sup>3</sup> LDS *Church News*, June 20, 1998.

meaningful dialogue between Mormons and evangelicals than anything currently going on in Salt Lake City.



## Book Reviews

*Handbook on the Pentateuch*. 2d ed. By Victor P. Hamilton. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005. 468 pp. \$32.99.

Baker Academic has released a second edition of Victor P. Hamilton's venerable *Handbook on the Pentateuch*. Hamilton, Professor of Bible and Theology at Asbury College for over thirty years, first published this work in 1982. Since that time the Handbook has been a popular text in undergraduate and graduate educational institutions around the world. The first edition has gone through twenty printings, has been translated into Russian, and has a Korean version in process also.

Hamilton claims that this second edition is substantially revised. That is, it is not a mere reprint with minor typographic corrections. Hamilton first states that he has updated the bibliographies (13). Updating bibliographies and footnotes is a common feature of second editions. But it can be said that Hamilton truly "substantially" updates the bibliographies in the *Handbook*. In the first edition, for example, the bibliography on Genesis 1-3 contains 70 entries classified in two sections. The same bibliography in the second edition contains four sections with over 200 citations. Hamilton updates all of the bibliographies in the same fashion offering a wealth of information to the student.

Hamilton also rewrote many of the sections: "substantially adding to or revising what I wrote back in the early 1980s" (13). This is very important because Hamilton notes that the second edition has now been strengthened by his own "developed and developing thoughts on passages within the Pentateuch, informed and enriched greatly by interaction with scholarly colleagues in the Old Testament part of the biblical academy" (13). Hamilton means is that the second edition benefits from the maturing development of his own thoughts and interaction with the text of the Pentateuch over twenty-some years since the publication of the first edition. This is also helpful for the reader because the second edition of the *Handbook*, like that of the first, remains more a reflection on the purpose and meaning of the text of the Pentateuch than a regurgitation of scholarly "who said what."

An example of Hamilton's careful reflection is found in the additions to the discussion of the fratricide recorded in Genesis 4 (58-60). Hamilton includes in the second edition two new paragraphs on a possible alternative explanation of why God rejected Cain's offering (59) and the nature of Cain's mark (60). Both new paragraphs provide updated research on the subject and further reflection on the significance and meaning of the situations discussed.

For this reason also the second edition, like the first, continues to be an excellent exposition that is "as devotional as it is scholarly" (16). Hamilton had hoped that the first edition would be "as usable in the pastor's study as it is in the classroom" (16). I think that he has accomplished this goal for the second edition as well. The *Handbook* remains an excellent tool for introducing the Pentateuch to students and interested readers. This book will be a first-rate

purchase for the library of anyone who desires not only to be a scholar of God's Word, but also a proclaimer of that Word.

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*The Science and Archaeology of Materials: An Investigation of Inorganic Materials.* By Julian Henderson. London: Routledge, 2000, xvii + 334 pp., \$32.95, paper.

*Conservation and Restoration of Ceramics.* By Susan Buys and Victoria Oakley. Butterworth-Heinemann Series in Conservation and Museology. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann, 1999, ix + 243 pp., \$77.95.

Much of the world falsely conceives of the archaeological endeavor in visions of Indiana Jones characters hunting for treasure in exotic far-off locations. Even those who are better informed tend to romanticize the fieldwork aspect of archeology a bit more than necessary. In fact, fieldwork is only one small part of the archaeological endeavor.

After the recovery phase, the archaeologist must address the classification, conservation, and interpretation of the archaeological data uncovered. It is an unwritten truism that even a short six week season of excavation at a Syro-Palestinian site can produce more material than can be processed and classified in the year following. This is why field reports lag behind in publication, and why budgets of archaeological institutions skyrocket. In modern archaeological research more and more attention must be given to the long and arduous tasks conducted in the archaeological laboratory after the fieldwork season is ended.

That is why these two books are important for archaeologists in general and biblical archaeologists specifically. The biblical archaeologist cannot give up the work of conservation and classification to the secularist. Knowledge of and participation in all phases of the archaeological endeavor is required for all who wish to understand the mounting significance of past, current, and future archeological data.

In *The Science and Archaeology of Materials*, Julian Henderson, Professor of Archaeological Science at Nottingham University, provides an excellent introduction to the various types of inorganic materials recovered from an archaeological excavation. These include glass, pottery (ceramics), metals, and stone artifacts. With an abundance of photographs and illustrations, Henderson discusses the ways each material was exploited, modified, and manufactured in antiquity.

Henderson maintains that the techniques of scientific analysis of the physical sciences can make a major contribution to the archaeologist attempting to understand "the life cycle of the surviving artifacts from the procurement and processing of the raw materials, through the fabrication and decoration of the artifacts, to their distribution, use, reuse and discard" (xv). Understanding this

process, this *chaîne opératoire*, provides the informed field archaeologist better insight into the artifacts recovered and quickly facilitates their classification and conservation.

Henderson starts with a summary of the various methods of analysis and then applies these techniques to the materials listed above in the four following chapters. The last chapter in the book discusses the prospects for this type of archaeological research. Obviously, some of the book is technical and detailed. However, a number of case studies are offered. Particularly important for the Near Eastern archaeologist are the studies on the early copper metallurgy in the Wadi Feinan, Jordan, and the impact of the introduction of the wheel on pottery technology.

In *Conservation and Restoration of Ceramics*, Buys and Oakley focus on the ubiquitous pottery shard found in so archaeological excavations. Susan Buys is the former Head of Ceramics and Glass Conservation at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, and Victoria Oakley is the current holder of that position. Buys and Oakley divide the work into four parts.

Part One describes the technology of ceramic ware, its deterioration, and preventive care. This part supplements the excellent chapter on ceramics in Henderson, particularly focusing in on the types of deterioration to which pottery is subject. Part Two looks at the cleaning, reinforcement and replacement of lost material, bonding, and retouching necessary in conserving and restoring ceramic items and vessels. Part Three discusses the basic needs and minimum equipment of a well-stocked and organized restoration and conservation laboratory. Finally, the last part considers non-intrusive techniques for displaying and mounting ceramics for public enjoyment, as well as emergency procedures should such be needed. Several appendices, an extensive bibliography, and an index round out the book.

Both of these books should be must reads for the field archaeologist and the biblical archaeologist. An informed knowledge of the types of artifacts likely to be discovered, their inherent properties, the scientific techniques necessary for their proper analysis, and the problems associated with their restoration and conservation must proceed the first spadework of any excavation. Fieldwork may be the romantic side of archaeology, but understanding the full nature of the scientific analysis and conservation requirements of the broader archaeological enterprise gives archaeology its depth and high stature as a scientific endeavor.

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*All Possible Worlds: A History of Geographical Ideas*. 4th ed. By Geoffrey J. Martin. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, xvi + 605 pp, \$80.00.

Understanding the geography of the lands mentioned in the Bible is a crucial ingredient in correct biblical interpretation. If God prepared those lands with as much care as he prepared his chosen people, then acquiring the necessary skills to tell which way one travels from Dan to arrive at Beersheba becomes critically imperative for the pastor, teacher, and student. The careful study of the historical

geography of the Bible must, therefore, become one of the more important tools in the exegete's toolbox.

Unfortunately, historical geography courses tend to be long on history and weak on physical geography. Methods and principles of modern geographical analysis are not often studied, much less evaluated. Not many books are written on the subject of the physical geography of the Holy Land, and students interested in investigating the scientific and philosophical principles underlying the modern geological and geographical study of Palestine have nowhere to turn. This type of information must be gleaned from other sources.

Works like Geoffrey J. Martin's *All Possible Worlds* can help students of the historical geography of the Bible learn how the discipline of geography proper has been recognized, perceived, and evaluated in the secular scholarly world. First appearing in 1972, *All Possible Worlds* has become an indispensable reference text for courses in the history and philosophy of geographical thought. The fourth edition has been thoroughly updated and revised to include recent developments in theory, bibliographical additions, new photographs and illustrations, and expanded name and subject indexes.

After an introductory chapter, Martin, Professor Emeritus of Southern Connecticut State University, divides the book into two parts. The first focuses upon the "Classical" period, extending from the beginnings to Alexander von Humboldt and Carl Ritter. The second part examines the "Modern" period, beginning from the establishment of geography departments with qualified professional teachers in the German Universities in the late 1800's until today. The focus of the modern geography Martin terms "new geography," and he proceeds to summarize the development of the discipline in Germany, France, Great Britain, Russia, Canada, Sweden, and Japan. The development of geographical thought in the United States is surveyed in three extensive chapters. The second part ends with chapters on methods of observation and analysis and future prospects for discipline.

The average student of the historical geography of the Bible will not likely purchase this work. This is so not only because of the price of the book, but also because of its understandably secular outlook and its emphasis on modern geographical studies. To be honest, the stated purpose of the book in no way implies that it has an interest in the lands of the Bible.

It is unfortunate, however, that Martin assumes that intellectual ferment first took place in ancient Greece and that they developed "the procedures we describe as the scientific method" (6). He also states: "Geography as a field of learning in the Western world had its beginnings among the scholars of ancient Greece" (13). This bold assumption ignores a good bit of data from Babylonia, Assyria, and Egypt.

Likewise, Martin fails to recognize the contribution of pilgrims traveling to the Holy Land in developing an interest in geographical studies. He does not mention the scientific expedition that went along with Napoleon's invasion of Egypt, the American expedition to chart the Jordan river, or the Survey of Western Palestine conducted by the British. Martin recognizes George Adam Smith, author of *The Historical Geography of the Holy Land* (1894), in the

Index of Names, but fails to notice any modern practitioners of the discipline, including Yohanan Aharoni, author of *The Land of the Bible: A Historical Geography* (Westminster John Knox Press, 1980).

Still there is value to this book for the student interested in understanding the physical geography of the Bible. The first part on the classical period contains among many things excellent information on the development of navigation and cartography and the extent of geographical studies in the Greco-Roman and Muslim worlds. Likewise, the last two chapters summarizing the development and application of new technologies within the modern geographical endeavor are essential reading. Clearly, satellite imagery and global positioning systems will change the way geography is conceived and taught. This will be no less true for world geography as it is also for the physical and historical geography of the Bible.

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*Pseudonymity, the New Testament, and Deception: an Inquiry into Intention and Reception.* By Terry L. Wilder. Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 2004, xii + 296 pp., \$41.00, paper.

Terry Wilder has provided New Testament studies a crucial monograph on the thorny question of pseudonymity in the New Testament. Well researched and engagingly written, this monograph sheds light on a difficult and complex subject. Do pseudonymous letters exist in the New Testament, and if so, what was the motivation of their writers? How did such pseudonymous letters come to find a place in the canon? Would the early church have knowingly accepted such works into the canon of Scripture? These and related questions are tackled from a base of solid research by Wilder. How one answers such questions obviously has impact upon canonicity, exegesis and theology.

Wilder, who teaches New Testament and Greek at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, originally produced this work as a doctoral dissertation under Brian S. Rosner and I. H. Marshall at the University of Aberdeen. The present monograph is a revision of this dissertation. The work is comprised of seven chapters, the first and last of which are respectively introduction and summary and conclusion. A twenty-two page bibliography of works cited is followed by a name and subject index.

In the introduction, Wilder notes that many have addressed the issue of how pseudonymous works could or could not exist in the New Testament canon. His intention is not primarily to address the issue of pseudonymity and canonicity. Rather he focuses on the question "If pseudonymous works exist in the NT, what can be said about their intention and reception?" After a brief but helpful survey of scholarship on the pseudonymity question, Wilder lays out his strategy for the remaining chapters.

Chapter two takes up the notion of literary/intellectual property in the ancient world and seeks to clarify whether writers of that era had scruples with regard to literary property or not, and if so, were these operative within the

Christian community of the first century. Wilder concludes that the answer to the former question is “yes” and that there is ample evidence within the New Testament to show that these concerns were indeed operative in the Christian community. Although some documents in the Greco-Roman era were written with no intention to deceive, this is no warrant to assume that every writing in that period was so produced, and certainly not that such was the case within the Christian community.

In chapter three, the author proceeds to investigate possible analogues to the disputed Pauline epistles in other Greco-Roman and Jewish pseudepigraphical literature. Although much less so for Jewish pseudepigrapha, the Pauline letters do share some affinity with Greco-Roman pseudepigraphical epistles. Wilder does a good job of even-handedly considering the evidence, concluding in this chapter that “non-deceptive pseudonymity for the disputed Pauline letters, if pseudonymous, is in principle possible” in the light of the above evidence (111).

In chapter four, Wilder considers how the early church responded to the practice of “apostolic pseudonymity,” and concludes that the evidence suggests that a work known to be pseudonymous was rejected and excluded from the canon. The early church did not knowingly allow pseudo-apostolic works to be read in the churches. There is no evidence that the apostolic church had a “convention of pseudonymity” and the early Christians were not ambivalent with regard to the fictive use of an author’s name. Wilder also notes: “The fact that the second-century church onwards rejected pseudonymous documents does not favor the view that they were written with no intention to deceive their readers” (147).

Wilder then moves to consider in chapter five the nature of apostolic authority and its bearing upon the question at hand. The New Testament evidence supports the notion that apostles were viewed as New Testament counterparts to Old Testament prophets, possessing unique and normative authority. This is born out in several examples examined from the Pauline epistles. In light of this, and for numerous other reasons, Wilder concludes that the early church probably would have rejected pseudonymous writings written in the name of the apostles.

From these findings, the author considers in chapter six the question of whether the authors of pseudonymous epistles in the New Testament, if such existed, intended to deceive or not. Wilder wisely assumes for the sake of argument that the Pastoral Epistles, Ephesians, Colossians, and 2 Thessalonians are pseudonymous. Although he himself clearly views all the Pauline epistles to be genuine (rightly in my view), in an effort to approach the issue as objectively as possible, Wilder makes the assumption that some are pseudonymous in an effort to determine whether such were written with a purpose of deception or not. He concludes that in fact the author of these epistles “expended great effort to create verisimilitude for their works, sometimes going well out of their way to do so” (235). Based on evidence from 1 Timothy, 2 Thessalonians, and Colossians, and assuming their pseudonymity, Wilder concludes that clear evidence exists they were written to deceive their readers into thinking they were actually the works of the apostle Paul.

In chapter seven, Wilder's conclusion may be summarized by his statement on page 250: "If pseudonymous letters are in the NT, they were written with the intention to deceive their readers, and their presence in the NT is *prima facie* evidence that the authors succeeded." He then teases out the implications of all this for matters of exegesis and canonicity. Wilder's work shows that the ancient world did not regard the ascription of literary works to a person other than their actual author as a legitimate enterprise. He further concludes that the early church would not knowingly have accepted such works into the canon of Scripture. Wilder rejects pseudonymity on four grounds: historical, theological, ethical, and psychological.

Early prints of this work are only slightly marred by a needed correction on page 19, last paragraph, and line 3, where the word "succeeded" should be replaced with the words "but did not succeed." But this mistake has now been corrected. Though narrow in its specific focus, this work makes a significant contribution to the immediate question of pseudonymity as well as the broader implications of that question in hermeneutics, exegesis, theology and homiletics.

Particularly important are pages 252-55 where Wilder discusses the question: "Should pseudonymous works, if written with the intention to deceive, be retained in the canon?" He considers the question from the ethical standpoint and then from the theological standpoint of one's view of the nature of biblical revelation and one's view of Scripture. He concludes that if the following four propositions are true: 1) apostolic pseudepigrapha were written to deceive; 2) a deontological view of ethics is correct; 3) Scripture is divine revelation; and 4) the canon is a binding norm of truth, then the answer to the above question should be "either drop any pseudonymous letters from the canon, or seriously reconsider that such works indeed do not exist in the NT" (254-55).

This is an essential reference work on this topic for all who wish to delve into the issue. It is an irenic piece, cogently and clearly argued, seeking to examine the issue from all sides. The argument is well footnoted and further reading for those interested can be found in the bibliography of works cited. Take up and read!

David L. Allen  
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*First Timothy*. By Deborah Krause. Readings: A New Biblical Commentary. New York: T & T Clark, 2004, 164 pp., \$49.95, paper.

Deborah Krause is the Academic Dean and Associate Professor of New Testament at Eden Theological Seminary in St. Louis, a school affiliated with the United Church of Christ. Krause holds a Ph.D. from Emory University (1996) and is an ordained minister in the United Church of Christ. Her recent commentary, *First Timothy* in the *Readings* series, gives one a good idea of where modern feminist scholarship leads.

Krause's primary thesis is that First Timothy was written in the late first century or early second century by an unknown author. According to Krause, the letter was not written by Paul and was not sent to Timothy. Instead, Krause

claims the author of First Timothy was engaged in a power struggle in the early church and “grappled to re-engage the wisdom and authority of Paul” (1). As such, she views the various injunctions in First Timothy to women, children, and slaves as one person’s opinion during a contentious period of church history rather than being a compelling statement for church life. Krause says, “This commentary reads First Timothy as a rhetorical construction that seeks to shape thinking about who Paul is and what the church is” (xii). Krause’s hermeneutical approach is to read the text in order “to challenge its coherence and to reveal its construction,” an approach she says is necessarily antagonistic (15).

From Krause’s perspective, First Timothy has been wrongly used to oppress women, with specific reference to the Southern Baptist Convention (25). She also alleges that Andrea Yates’ murder of her five children is connected to First Timothy 2:9-15 (25). Krause fails to mention that the real influence on Andrea Yates was a traveling “preacher” and false teacher named Michael Woroniecki. But by placing her reference to the SBC on the same page as Andrea Yates’ name, Krause blurs the distinction between evangelical beliefs and the evil teachings of a cult-type leader.

While Krause contends that the “real” Paul expressed a positive view of feminine sexuality in First Corinthians, she also asserts that the unknown author of First Timothy sees women as “dangerously transgressive and transforms their role in sanctification from one of agent to one of recipient” (64). In contrast to First Timothy’s supposedly negative vision of women, Krause proposes that women embrace the approach of Eve Ensler in *The Vagina Monologues*. Furthermore, the instructions to widows in First Timothy 5:3-16 reflect the author of First Timothy’s belief that “women are women only when they occupy a very specific and prescribed place in the social world; otherwise they are monsters. As monsters they are to be hated, but also feared” (105). Thus, Krause reads First Timothy as a message of oppression.

Krause also argues that the condemnation of homosexuality in 1 Timothy 1:10 has been “used historically to discredit the full participation of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered persons in the life of the church” and is a key verse in the “stockpile of homophobic weaponry” (27).

What is one to make of Krause’s commentary? One should note well that Krause’s rejection of First Timothy’s authority flows from her rejection of Pauline authorship. Like many other liberal scholars, she also raises afresh the issue of canonicity. Engaging in selective use of evidence, Krause is quick to point out that the Pastoral Epistles are not included in codex Vaticanus, but fails to mention the importance of codex Sinaiticus which includes our entire New Testament canon.

Perhaps Krause’s most telling statement is her hope that re-reading First Timothy will challenge our own contemporary assumptions of what is “considered ‘orthodox’ and what is deemed ‘heretical’” (17). Simply put, modern feminist scholarship rejects the notion of an established body of truth which can be identified as uniquely Christian. With this in mind, Krause advocates Elaine Pagels’ early dates for the Gnostic Gospels without noting that



most of Pagels' claims are considered quite controversial by more sober scholarship (123).

Much like Elaine Pagels, Krause wants the church to accept a variety of unorthodox beliefs. Though she claims tolerance and openness, it is not clear that Krause would allow conservative evangelical convictions into her broad spectrum of acceptable beliefs. In this way, Krause, along with other feminist theologians, advocates her own brand of exclusive orthodoxy. Deborah Krause's commentary on First Timothy is hopelessly flawed in the historical premises she asserts and the hermeneutic she utilizes.

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*A History of Biblical Interpretation: Volume 1. The Ancient Period.* Edited by Alan J. Hauser and Duane F. Watson. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003, v + 536 pp., \$45.00.

This text represents the first volume of a projected four volume endeavor entitled *A History of Biblical Interpretation* to be published by Eerdmans. This initial volume, *The Ancient Period*, casts an extremely wide net, aiming to discuss the interpreters and methods of interpretation which span from the earliest stages of the formation of the biblical traditions to the time when the Jewish and Christian canons gained general acceptance. However, the broad range and long history covered in the text is balanced by the excellent contributors selected by the editors.

Each chapter has been composed by a leading scholar in the field. For example, P. R. Davis offers an insightful discussion regarding biblical interpretation in the Dead Sea Scrolls, J. A. Sanders considers the stabilization of the Tanak, J. H. Charlesworth takes up biblical interpretation in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, F. Young contributes an excellent piece considering Alexandrian and Antiochene exegesis, and C. A. Evans rounds out the collection by focusing on the interpretation of scripture in the New Testament Apocrypha and Gnostic writings. And every essay provides a helpful, well-researched introduction to a particular aspect of biblical interpretation in the ancient period.

The book itself is broken into two broad sections. Following an extended introductory chapter, which offers an overview of the issues and individuals (or groups) constituent of early biblical interpretation, the first part of the text (chapters 2-9) focuses on the use of the Scriptures within Judaism. Successive chapters take up inner-biblical exegesis in the Tanak, the formation of the Septuagint, the exegetical method of Philo of Alexandria, biblical interpretation in the Dead Sea Scrolls, and the Targumim, the character of rabbinic midrash, the final stabilization of the Tanak, and the interpretation of the Tanak in Jewish Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha.

The second half of the book (chapters 10-16) concentrates on the Christian interpretation of the biblical texts. Here various scholars consider how Israel's Scriptures were used in the New Testament, the interpretive methods found in

the Apostolic Fathers and the Apologists, an analysis of the Alexandrian and Antiochene schools of exegesis, the exegetical legacy of Jerome and Augustine, the formation of the New Testament canon, and the interpretation of Scripture in the New Testament Apocrypha and Gnostic writings. Each essay provides an introduction to an area of biblical interpretation, and all argue a specific thesis as well. Particularly the essay by Young argues for a new understanding of the Alexandrian school of exegesis (and allegorical interpretation along with it), while the essays provided by Davis, Charlesworth, and the helpful introduction offered by Hauser and Watson make the text an especially valuable contribution to our understanding of the history of interpretation.

Despite the strength of the chapters noted above, the editors have made some crucial omissions, perhaps as a consequence of the broad range of issues and scope of time covered. In a work taking up biblical interpretation of the ancient period the exegetical method and range of commentary offered by Origen deserves independent discussion. Though the editors defend their choice to omit such a chapter in the preface, it seems that failing to consider Origen on his own terms constitutes a lacuna in the present text. Furthermore, one could object to the inclusion of Augustine in the “ancient period” because of his foundational influence upon Medieval exegesis. But perhaps Augustine’s pivotal role between the ancient and Medieval periods will be highlighted in the second installment of the series.

In the end, this volume succeeds in its goal of providing an accessible yet thorough introduction to the context and development of early biblical interpretation. While the level of scholarship is of the highest standard, the style and format is conducive for one who has not read in the history of biblical interpretation. Each chapter begins with a serviceable overview of the subject at hand and concludes with a bibliography for further research. And the text includes several helpful indices which allow for finding information regarding a specific interpreter or exegetical method. That such a project has been suggested and now has seen its inaugural volume published is a positive sign that there is renewed interest in wrestling with how the Scriptures have been interpreted among various communities and individuals throughout the history of the Church.

Recent monographs have taken up and illustrate the theological importance of coming to grips with biblical interpretation. Two works in particular, F. Watson’s *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith* (2004) and R. Hays’ *The Conversion of the Imagination: Paul As Interpreter of Israel’s Scripture* (2005), have explored how Paul’s exegetical method lead him to reach certain theological conclusions based upon his reading of Israel’s scripture. Thus casting our gaze toward the history of biblical interpretation helps illuminate a path forward in understanding the Scriptures afresh in our own day and time, as well as instills a beneficial humility that we are not the only ones to approach this text with the desire to understand and live faithfully according to it. Such volumes dedicated to the history of biblical interpretation are like a well-attended banquet where we come to sit with the great readers of Scripture down

through the ages of the Church and labor along with them to hear the Word of God, in order that we may hear and believe.

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*BibleWorks 6*. Norfolk, VA: BibleWorks, LLC, 2003, \$299.95.

I have been using Bible software—mainly an old version of Logos—for almost 10 years, and I have become used to the convenience of navigating quickly through the Bible and associated reference works. Being satisfied with what I had, I had never bothered to check out advances in Bible software, particularly since the number of programs on the market—and their claims to be the “latest and greatest”—have seemingly multiplied. Thus, when I began using BibleWorks 5.0 in a seminary library and version 6.0 at home, I was literally astonished at the power it brought to bear on Bible research. In general, the appropriate Bible software obviously depends on an individual's needs, but for serious Bible study in the original languages with sophisticated search capabilities, BibleWorks is a clear leader. Rather than catalogue the large number of databases and features in BibleWorks 6.0 (many have been added since version 5.0, and these can be referenced at [www.bibleworks.com](http://www.bibleworks.com)) I will briefly describe what I think is particularly useful for research, teaching, and preaching.

First, the search capabilities of BibleWorks in both English versions and the original languages are extremely powerful, flexible, and quick. One can search on phrases, words or parts of words, or for the presence of two or more words in a verse or even across verses. For example, I can easily find all places where any form of “love” (loves, loving, etc.) and “God” appear within 4 words of each other. I can also find all places in the Greek New Testament (or the Septuagint, or the Works of Josephus for that matter) where any form of the Greek verb  $\alpha\theta\gamma\alpha\pi\alpha/w$  (*agapaō*) appears. If a form of the word is already being displayed, then a search on that word (or its lemma) can be accomplished with a right click. When I was doing a research project on uses of the Aramaic verb, I was able to do scores of searches on particular verb classes and forms and quickly see their surrounding verses and contexts. I cannot imagine having completed this research without BibleWorks.

If one is not familiar with Greek or Hebrew but knows how to use a Strong's concordance, then he can perform searches using a Strong's number. For example, a pastor may have heard the oft quoted “fact” that the Greek word  $\alpha\theta\gamma\alpha\pi\alpha/w$  (*agapaō*) refers to God's love but that the word  $\phi\iota\lambda\epsilon\omega/w$  (*phileō*) refers to brotherly love. BibleWorks automatically gives the Strong's number when the cursor is passed over a word. By searching on all forms of the word “love” associated with the Strong's number for *phileō* (5368) one finds that the word can also be used for God the Father's love for the Son (John 5:20) and God's love for his people (John 16:27).

Searches can also be done of reference works. So if I want to find all the places in Bauer's Lexicon (BDAG) where military terms are associated with the book of Philippians, I can construct a relatively easy search command to do this

(although I may have to sort through some extraneous entries). Space does not allow further examples, including the added power of the Advanced Search Engine (ASE) which uses a graphic interface to allow searches that are truly mind-boggling.

At about \$300, BibleWorks 6.0 comes with a large number of resources built in, including the Lidell-Scott Greek lexicon and the Brown, Driver, and Briggs Hebrew lexicon. Two add-on modules that are valuable for the language scholar are BDAG and the Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament (HALOT). A combined package of the two is available for about \$200, which is cheaper than copies of the books separately. For serious study, Bible students should have hard copies of these works, but I appreciate the convenience of seeing a reference instantly and of searching the available lexicons. One particularly useful feature is the ability with a right click, when viewing a word in a particular verse, to search for that word in a lexicon, and then when the entry appears, to have the current verse highlighted wherever it appears in the lexicon entry. Those who have struggled through paragraphs or columns of small print in a lexicon straining to find a verse reference will be tempted to cheer the first time they use this feature.

At first sight, the user interface to BibleWorks with its large number of buttons and abbreviations can seem a bit intimidating. Perhaps this is the inevitable result of having a large number of features and options. The three user modes (beginner, intermediate and power user) can soften the learning curve, and allow a person to get useful results quickly. However, to employ the full power of BibleWorks, one should learn how to navigate the tool bar, and particularly, to enter search commands. I found the command line relatively straightforward, particularly since it has context sensitive help at each step (however, I was a computer programmer for seven years, dealing with exotic computer languages and interfaces, so perhaps I am not the most objective judge). However, the user manual is excellent as is the online "Help" facility. In addition the BibleWorks package comes with a built-in and catalogued library of "User Demo" videos.

How does BibleWorks compare with other Bible software, particularly the latest version of the Libronix based Logos? I am not an expert judge of this, as my version of Logos is pre-Libronix. A good comparison of BibleWorks 5.0 with Logos has been published by H. Van Dyke Parunak ("Bible Study Software 2004," *JETS* 48:2 (2005): 366-368. A copy of this is available online at: [www.bibleworks.com/downloads/LibBwkDec2004.pdf](http://www.bibleworks.com/downloads/LibBwkDec2004.pdf)). My own experience with more recent versions of Logos is that searches and lexicon lookups are more cumbersome than with BibleWorks. Logos has more extra-biblical resource works available, but often at a price. BibleWorks continues to add other reference works, but as they themselves state, they have tried to stay out of the "module frenzy," particularly because no electronic publishing standard yet exists, and so these reference works could become obsolete (*BibleWorks 6 User Manual*, 5). One nice feature of BibleWorks for research in Greek is the ability to link automatically to the Perseus Digital Library (at [www.perseus.org](http://www.perseus.org)) which has a library of hundreds of Greek works. In summary, for the scholar, pastor,

teacher or student who wants learn what is in the Bible, BibleWorks is an excellent tool.

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*The Essential IVP Reference Collection. The Complete Electronic Bible Study Resource* Windows Version 2.0. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2003, \$180.00.

The digital era and its progeny never cease to astonish. The capacity to consolidate data in ever smaller and more convenient formats will continue to challenge the use and perhaps even the viability of the classical book format. A case in point is *The Essential IVP Reference Collection*. On a single CD-ROM, the Libronix Digital Library System provides the same data contained in over 12,000 pages of theological reference material. This equals an entire shelf of heavy tomes totaling more than 25 pounds reduced to the size of a compact disk of a couple of ounces. For the targeted audience, the increasingly mobile generation of laymen and pastors, students, and professors in the field of theology, this feature alone is sufficient to stimulate interest in this product. Noteworthy also is a similar, albeit not as spectacular, price reduction for the electronic format, which has a price tag of just over a third of the retail price of the printed books. The physical and economic aspects, however, are only the more obvious of a whole range of qualities that make this product worth considering, two of which deserve further attention.

First, there is the content of the disk. While this review primarily focuses on the format of the collection and not its content, it is still important to acknowledge the outstanding value of the theological reference materials collected in these titles. This is not another one of those CD collections that offer dozens of titles, most of which will remain unopened. To the contrary, on this disk there are some of the best reference materials in biblical studies which the evangelical scholarship has produced or revised in the last decade, ranging from the award-winning IVP dictionaries of the New Testament (*Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments*, and *Dictionary of the New Testament Background*), through the classic IVP quartet (*New Dictionary of Theology*, *New Bible Dictionary*, *New Bible Commentary*, and *New Bible Atlas*) and the tandem background sources (*IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* and *IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*), to some of the lesser known but equally valuable reference sources, such as *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* and *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*. The latter volume is regarded by this reviewer to be the finest one-volume resource available for biblical studies.

Four pocket dictionaries (*Pocket Dictionary of the Study of New Testament Greek*, *Pocket Dictionary of Apologetics and Philosophy of Religion*, *Pocket Dictionary of Biblical Studies*, and *Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms*) are a welcome addition for those interested in a quick reference on a wide spectrum

of theological issues. Several English Bibles (King James Version, New Revised Standard Version, and New Living Translation), as well as the well-known volume *Hard Sayings of the Bible* complete the series. Two other English Bibles (New American Standard Bible and Revised Standard Version), and the pair *Complete Works of Philo* (C. D. Yonge) and *Complete Works of Josephus* (W. Whiston) can be unlocked for an additional fee. When compared with the content of other digital theological resources, *The Essential IVP Reference Collection* stands head and shoulders above similar collections.

The second aspect is the digital format in which this valuable collection is offered. Its powerful and versatile platform, the Libronix Digital Library System, is the system which makes *The Essential IVP Reference Collection* much more than a mere reduction in size, weight and cost of the corresponding printed titles. The Libronix Digital Library System is a generic platform for electronic books which offers an open system of managing electronic books and libraries with unequalled efficiency.

The system offers multiple language support, versatile note taking capabilities and compatible word processor support. It features a search engine that handles words, phrases, and topics, supported by several Boolean operators. While the searching capacity is not the most powerful or the fastest in the market, it still delivers reasonable results.

One of the most impressive feature is its extensibility, ensuring seamless compatibility with other sources built on the same platform. Needless to say, the corresponding dictionaries of the Old Testament, which are currently in progress, are eagerly awaited. Since Libronix is a subsidiary of the Logos Research Systems, the leading publisher of Bible software and electronic digital libraries, the customer will be interested to know that there is an ever-expanding series of excellent titles ready to be added to and integrated with *The Essential IVP Reference Collection*, if desired. A complete list can be found on either one of the two web sites, [www.libronix.com](http://www.libronix.com) and [www.logos.com](http://www.logos.com).

The system requirements are situated at the lower-end of the spectrum: Windows 98 and beyond, Pentium 133MHz processor, 64 MB RAM, 60 MB hard drive capacity, CD-ROM drive, 800 x 600 or higher screen resolution. A Macintosh version of the same collection is available, at the same price.

One particular aspect of the collection seems disappointing to this reviewer. There is a relatively small number of Bibles in English in the database: NRSV, KJV, and NLT. As stated earlier, two other translations NASB and RSV can be unlocked for a fee of \$49.99 each, but this appears to be a rather high price tag in today's market. Regardless of the publisher's reasons for this limitation, whether copyright considerations or the availability of multiple translations in other Logos products (anyone of their six standard packages), I believe that the addition of several mainstream translations and perhaps even of the biblical text in the original languages would be a salutary enhancement of this product, especially for customers either unfamiliar with the Logos system, or unwilling to switch to a Logos platform for their main Bible analysis system.

On a more technical note, I should mention that the CD became inactive after a period of several weeks of no use, for unknown reasons. There were no

changes made in the computer's configuration during that time and the registration process, mandatory during the first 45 days after the installation, had been successfully accomplished. A reinstallation of the program resumed the normal performance of the CD.

While the Gutenberg legacy will maintain its presence in our bookstores and libraries, it seems that products of the caliber of *The Essential IVP Reference Collection* have the potential of becoming the way of the future. Handling one CD, with all its advantages of data consolidation, cross-referencing data, search capabilities, quick access, synoptic and parallel research, will be attractive to a growing number of users, especially in the case of such quality collections. Naturally, the final verdict on these matters rests with each customer; as for this reviewer, he will conclude by acknowledging that the digital revolution has just won over another convert.

Radu Gheorghiiță  
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

*The Book That Breathes New Life: Scriptural Authority and Biblical Theology.* By Walter Brueggemann. Edited by Patrick Miller. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005, xix + 238 pp., \$35.00.

Brueggemann maintains that necessary and important words such as “inspired,” “inerrant,” and “authoritative” are not the final word on scripture for those who believe the Bible. For him, they are not enough. What do these words mean in terms of believers' practice? What meaning do they have in the face of the “tricky hermeneutical issues” found in particular texts about which antagonistic pockets of interpreters gather? What do these words reflect concerning preachers' and teachers' “ideology”? (Brueggemann defines ideology as the “self-deceiving practice of taking a part of the whole, of taking ‘my truth’ for *the* truth...”) This collection of some of Walter Brueggemann's work raises these questions and seeks to address them by calling us to stand in front of the mirror of scripture.

*The Book That Breathes New Life* is a densely-packed collection of essays that is important for those who take the Bible seriously. Brueggemann's words are not new, each of the thirteen articles has already appeared in print. The articles are relatively recent although one was published in 1986. Brought together, though, they form an important work for students of the Old Testament, especially Old Testament Theology.

Still, the work is not primarily for academics. Brueggemann is a pastor's Old Testament theologian. As such, he keeps calling preachers (and teachers) back to the practical issue of “so what?” What does it mean to say the Bible is authoritative? What does an ancient text mean today? Scripture reflects and records history, but are historical questions the primary questions? As we study the theological testimony of God's Old Testament people based on their experience of His history, what do we confess about God today based on that same history?

Brueggemann's first three chapters are subsumed under the title "Biblical Authority." He addresses the issue in the current Post-critical period, in his own life, and then in terms of the Church's task. His "Biblical Authority in the Post-critical Period" goes beyond simply affirming scripture's authority. He speaks of scripture's authorization of believing communities. The Bible authorizes, even requires, communities of faith to hope, to envision a new reality that is present already.

In the second essay, Brueggemann reveals some of his own spiritual pilgrimage as he affirms the place of scripture in his life. (Missourians especially will appreciate the fact that "something good" can come out a little Missouri river town.) In "Biblical Authority and the Church's Task of Interpretation" the author shows a reverence for the task, a task not to be done stridently or with too much confidence, but humbly, in the presence of Jesus Christ.

Walter Brueggemann is an Old Testament theologian. Appropriately, then, most of this book deals with that subject. More than half of the volume deals with "Old Testament Theology in the Twentieth Century," and another forty pages is given to "A Conversation with Other Theologians."

The section on twentieth-century Old Testament theology begins with a quick survey which is generally-speaking too brief to be helpful to one who has not studied the field. But the end of the first essay in this section does deal with such issues as the revitalization of the discipline due to Brevard Child's work. Brueggemann also notes the increased interest in modern Jewish interpretation which may be confessional, not simply academic and objective. (Brueggemann has a passion for his discipline which appropriately criticizes those who deal with scripture in a cold, objective fashion.)

No survey can ignore von Rad; thus, the book has the required chapter on von Rad's work, a chapter entitled "Biblical Faith as Narrative, Recital, Confession." Other well-known Old Testament theologians are mentioned in the discussion of "The Loss and Recovery of Creation in Old Testament Theology" which is more than simply an argument for the place of creation in Old Testament studies. Rather, it touches on topics such as wisdom and masculine dominance of the disciplines of interpretation.

For students who have been out of school for a time, "The ABCs of Old Testament in the United States" will introduce or re-acquaint them with the importance of A(nderson), B(arr), and C(hilds). Brueggemann's article "Contemporary Old Testament Theology," published in 1999, begins with the late twentieth-century "unraveling" of a historical synthesis due to the development of new approaches. The synthesis was tied to the dominant (Christian) tradition. The result of the unraveling has been eruption of "felt crises," crises which are addressed in passionate, polemical tones, e.g., responses to the "minimalist" perspective and its impact on the theological voice of the Old Testament. Brueggemann leads us through a short gallery of modernist, premodernist, and postmodernist perspectives which are the cause and effect of the crises.



The third section of this work is dialogical. The first essay serves as a *apologia* for Brueggemann's own approach to Old Testament theology in which he focuses on the process of the development of the Old Testament's testimony. This writing is followed by three responses to the work of others (the third of which is Brueggemann's response to Childs' review of *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy*). As usual in such articles as these, their helpfulness is dependent on the reader's familiarity with the works discussed. Again it may be that only the serious student will be willing to work through this point-counterpoint of scholastic debate.

For the most part, this book is not for the generalist. Having said that, however, at least the first set of three essays in this volume should be read by every minister who believes in the authority of scripture. These essays will not shake a person's faith. Instead, they will encourage believers even as they challenge the reader to understand what it means to say scripture is authoritative.

Though not addressed to a Southern Baptist audience, Brueggemann's writings are truly evangelical. The second section is less for the weekly proclaimer of truth than for the reader committed to tracking how we understand the Old Testament testimony. For those who enjoyed (or will enjoy) their seminary Old Testament Survey and Old Testament Theology courses, this longer section will bring them up to date and prime them for reading twenty-first-century works in the discipline.

A final testimony, years ago, while serving as a pastor in Missouri, I first heard Walter Brueggemann speak. He spoke to pastors. His comments demonstrated understanding and appreciation for the task of bringing the Word into modern lives. His words, then, encouraged me to study scripture, believe it, and apply it and they do so today.

Albert F. Bean  
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

*Beyond Belief: The Secret Gospel of Thomas*. By Elaine Pagels. New York: Vintage Books, 2003, 257 pp., \$13.00.

Elaine Pagels is the Harrington Spear Paine Professor of Religion at Princeton University. A noted devotee of the Gnostic gospels, Pagels earned her Ph.D. at Harvard where she studied under Helmut Koester, a man who himself has a great passion for Gnosticism. Pagels' latest book *Beyond Belief: The Secret Gospel of Thomas* is in reality an "evangelistic" work written to persuade people to accept Thomas as a true approach to life.

*Beyond Belief* is Pagels' most autobiographical work to date. She begins by recounting the tragic story of her young son's death from a rare lung disease in the early 1980s. Soon after learning the sad news of her son's diagnosis, Pagels went for a Sunday morning jog and wound up stepping into the Episcopal Church of the Heavenly Rest in New York City. Pagels admits that prior to this particular Sunday morning she had not been in church for a long time. Yet, as she faced the impending death of her own son, Pagels discovered that the people in the church had something she needed in the face of terminal illness: "As I

stood watching [the worship service], a thought came to me: Here is a family that knows how to face death” (3). Pagels continued to attend this particular church and found strength and support for the trial her family was undergoing: “In that church I gathered new energy, and resolved, over and over, to face whatever awaited us as constructively as possible for Mark [her son]” (5).

The support and encouragement Pagels received through this local congregation did not lead her to orthodox Christianity. Instead, Pagels recounts a trajectory away from orthodox confessions, beginning at a young age. Interestingly, Pagels claims she joined an “evangelical Christian church” at age fourteen (30). However, she left this church soon thereafter when leaders there claimed one of her friends who had died in a car accident was “eternally damned” because he was not “born again” (31). Eventually, Pagels finished college and entered the Harvard doctoral program. At Harvard, she was introduced to the Gnostic Gospels by Helmut Koester and George McCrae. According to Pagels, “When my fellow students and I investigated these sources, we found that they revealed diversity within the Christian movement that later, “official” versions of Christian history had suppressed so effectively that only now, in the Harvard graduate school, did we hear about them” (32).

Of particular interest to Pagels is the Gospel of Thomas. She contends that Thomas is a late first century composition and, furthermore, claims the Gospel of John was written as a response to the gospel of Thomas. She says, “John probably knew what the Gospel of Thomas taught – if not its actual text” (39). If John and Thomas were indeed written during the same period of time and in “competition” for allegiance, how did John emerge as the champion? According to Pagels, the Gospel of John emerged as the “orthodox” version of Jesus due to the work of Irenaeus. It was Irenaeus who unfairly demonized the Gnostics and their alternate spirituality. Pagels says, “For what [Irenaeus] did, with remarkable success, was convince Christians that his reading of John’s gospel – or any gospel, for that matter – was the only correct reading, and that his approach was the “canonical” scriptural interpretation” (117). Later, Constantine enshrined Irenaeus’ version of Christianity as the orthodox one.

Central to Pagels’ devotion to Thomas is her preference for the worldview of saying 70 of Thomas:

Jesus said: “If you bring forth what is within you, what you bring forth will save you. If you do not bring forth what is within you, what you do not bring forth will destroy you.”

Pagels adds her own personal commentary on this passage and says, “The strength of this saying is that it does not tell us what to believe but challenges us to discover what lies hidden within ourselves; and, with a shock of recognition, I realized that this perspective seemed to me self-evidently true” (32). Thus, Pagels prefers the Gnostic approach of “self-discovery” as opposed to the “orthodox” approach which defines truth and then excludes countering positions. She finds historical kinship for her approach in the Jewish “kabbalah” tradition of mystical interpretation. She states, “Like other Jews, kabbalists

interpret the Scriptures; but in their hands the Scriptures become the language of spiritual exploration” (94).

The most significant fallacy in Pagels’ argument is her selective use of evidence. Perhaps the most glaring example of this occurs in her theory that the Gospel of John was written in response to the Gospel of Thomas. This theory makes Thomas a first century document. What Pagels *does not* tell the reader is that this is a highly debatable claim, one in fact which is rejected by more sober scholarship. Yet, she does not cite one scholar who disagrees with her. In this way, she is actually *more narrow minded* than Irenaeus! By Pagels’ own admission, Irenaeus cited his opponents extensively, something Pagels herself never does. In fact, if one were to read Pagels alone, one would leave with the impression that there is no debate about her “first-century” date for Thomas.

Another theme in Thomas that Pagels overlooks is androgyny. For example, the Gospel of Thomas ends with this purported saying from Jesus:

Simon Peter said to them: ‘Let Mary go away from us, for women are not worthy of life.’ Jesus said, ‘Lo, I shall lead her, so that I may make her male, that she too may become a living spirit, resembling you males. For every woman who makes herself male will enter the kingdom of heaven.

What did the Gnostics mean by this bizarre statement? Essentially, it is a rejection of creation-based gender differentiation. Pagels avoids this theme and in so doing attempts to do what the Gnostics themselves would not have appreciated: accept parts of their system while rejecting other aspects.

Contrary to Elaine Pagels, the Gnostic “gospels” were not rejected by the church out of a secret agenda to consolidate power. The Gnostic gospels were rejected because they are not true. They are forgeries that include just enough real data from the life of Jesus to dupe the uninformed. In this sense, *Beyond Belief* is definitely Gnostic! Pagels fails to address the wide debate surrounding the origin and date of composition for the Gospel of Thomas. In so doing, she asserts as fact theories which are rejected by wide spectrums of modern scholarship. As such, the work will probably convince some of the uninformed and frustrate those familiar with early church history.

J. Alan Branch  
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

*The Predicament of Postmodern Theology: Radical Orthodoxy or Nihilist Textualism?* By Gavin Hyman. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press: 2001, 198 pp., \$24.95.

The stated aim of this book is to provide a critique of the major theological responses to the postmodern predicament. For the reader equipped with a good dictionary and determination, Hyman has provided a useful look into the limitations and problems of some of the extreme theological responses to the so-called postmodern worldview. The author, Gavin Hyman, a Lecturer in Religious Studies at the University of Lancaster, England, developed this work

through the assistance of a scholarship. His approach is to dissect primarily the postmodern theological extremes of "Radical Orthodoxy" as promoted by John Milbank and the "Nihilist Textualism" of Don Cupitt. In contrast, Hyman ultimately supports, along with other theologians, a middle road, or "third way."

One immediate limitation for many readers on this side of the Atlantic is a lack of awareness of the theologians Hyman explores. Don Cupitt is an ordained priest in the Church of England. Theologically, he describes himself as a liberal. He rejects all ideas of gaining salvation by escaping from this world through life beyond our current, natural existence. "All this is all there is," according to Cupitt's website at [www.doncupitt.com](http://www.doncupitt.com). Cupitt became interested in the ideas of Derrida and French postmodernism in the eighties. His current interests lie outside of western Christianity and are focused upon Buddhism.

John Milbank has served on the theology faculty at Cambridge, the University of Virginia, and currently at Nottingham University. His "radical orthodoxy" is a conservative response to the postmodern death of the metanarrative (such as the Biblical story) which has found proponents in evangelical and reformed traditions. As a Christian socialist, Milbank sees the Christian story as the best story, one of peace, beauty and truth.

According to Hyman, Milbank argues for a return to a pre-modern mode of thought, specifically, theological thought. For Milbanks, postmodernism is nihilistic. Cupitt champions a post-Christian form of religious practice. Cupitt frames postmodernity's beginning with the death of God, thus an association with Friedrich Nietzsche is easily seen. For Cupitt, theology must adapt itself to culture. Thus one finds far more evolution (devolution?) in Cupitt's thought than one finds in Milbanks during the same period.

For the reader who seeks definitive answers, the ambiguousness of Cupitt and Milbanks is frustrating. For example, Hyman makes note of Cupitt's, ". . . embracing of a metanarrative that proclaims the end of metanarratives" (25). Likewise, of Milbanks Hyman writes, "John Milbanks welcomes the advent of postmodernism insofar as it entrails the end of modernity" (27). Milbanks is quoted as saying, "The end of modernity, which is not accomplished, yet continues to arrive, means the end of a single system of truth based on universal reason" (27).

The reviewer feels that the author expounds upon these incongruities in order to promote a favored alternative, "fictional nihilism." This alternative to the extremes of Cupitt and Milbanks embraces what Hyman calls a *dual movement* that is characterized by a *commitment to* the theological narratives and a *taking leave of* them. His handling of this is consistent with the paradoxical characteristic of postmodernism.

Hyman's inclusion of a comprehensive bibliography and an adequate index add worth to this book. As a resource for those conducting research in the areas of applied or contemporary theology, Hyman provides a wealth of material. Pastors and staff looking for easily accessed information on postmodern theology may be better served by spending an hour surfing the World Wide Web.

The quest of many church leaders to “understand post-modernity” does not appear to be waning. In a paper on postmodern spirituality written for Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in 1998, this reviewer found just over 11,000 “hits” following a web search of the words “spiritual” and “postmodern.” Today, that number has swelled to 422,000 websites. Ironically, this is during a period when some scholars are conceding Postmodernity to the pages of history.

Like Edgar Allan Poe’s Signora Psyche Zenobia in his work, “A Predicament,” Hyman’s book may be “caught in time.” Since the publication of *The Predicament of Postmodern Theology*, two key voices of the movement, Jean-François Lyotard and Jacques Derrida have passed on. With the death of these two champions of the postmodern, many, including this reviewer, are ready to leave the paradox and contradictions of the postmodern era to the historians. Hyman has done a thorough job of exploring some of the theological extremes of postmodernism; however, his middle road is still too far removed from classical orthodoxy for the evangelical pastor and missionary.

Rodney Harrison  
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

*Dictionary of Evangelical Biography 1730-1860*. 2 Volumes. Edited By Donald M. Lewis. Peabody: Hendrickson, 2004, 1296 pp.

The two volumes which together make up the *Dictionary of Evangelical Biography 1730-1860*, with their 3,570 entries contributed by 344 historians from across the world, are nothing short of a treasure trove to anyone with an interest in evangelicals who lived within the first 130 years of the evangelical movement. The preface is very helpful in clearly defining the aim of the dictionary, that of providing biographical treatment of figures of historical, literary or religious significance who flourished in the stated time period and were associated with the evangelical movement in the English-speaking world, together with an indication of the sources for further study of them. An aim that the current reviewer believes has been fully met.

Those elements which have suggested the need for such a work are clearly stated, elements which prove beyond a doubt that this dictionary was very much needed. These include the fact that there was previously a lack of a single source of information that dealt with this period and focus, a gap that this work has more than filled; the acknowledgement that evangelicalism in North America was the leading religious influence in this period, and that in Britain, it had an impact both within and without the established churches and outside the religious world altogether, even on British society itself, and therefore such a significance demands such a treatment as this new work; the evident interest in the movement that exists across many disciplines, including history, social science, church history, theology, an interest that dictated that such a work needed to be produced; and lastly, the quantity and quality of recent scholarly work which has been devoted to the movement, but to which no index or guide has previously been available. All of these factors called for the creation of this invaluable tool.

The introductory pages then provide a detailed statement of why the specific period covered by the dictionary was chosen. Two issues played a part here. A reasonable limit was obviously part of that choice, otherwise as they judged quite rightly, an impossible task would have been before the editors. They also believed that such parameters would also correctly, reduce the difficulties of terminology. So for example, the English-speaking world was to be the area in which such evangelicals should have lived or ministered, which have been identified in the work as including Great Britain and all of Ireland, and Britain's colonial holdings: the American colonies (and subsequently the United States), Canada, Australia, New Zealand, parts of the South Seas, the Africana and West Indian territories and British India. However, a number of key continental evangelicals have been included because of the important links that they had to the above world.

There then follows a relatively brief but nevertheless, very useful excursus into the issue of who the evangelicals of that period were. The argument being made that there are certain distinctive features which mark off evangelicalism of this period, from the rest of the landscape around it, features which are clearly defined in this section. The introduction concludes with a detailed account of the background to the work, including its original conception in the mind of Andrew Walls whilst lecturing in Africa in the 1960's. In the following decade, Professor Walls, then of Aberdeen University (one of the current reviewer's own Professors), was able to give the idea the attention it badly needed. What is made very clear from the details given, is that the completed work is thankfully, much expanded from the original idea. The dictionary concludes with an index of subjects arranged by country and denomination, together with helpful resources for further study of individuals associated with the movement and period covered by the dictionary.

Among the strengths of these volumes is one which stems from one of the stated aims of the dictionary, and that was to concentrate particularly on more minor evangelical figures, providing more detailed treatments of them, especially those who have previously been neglected by other works, and briefer entries on more well known individuals, those whose work has already drawn attention to them. The result being that these 2 volumes then, contain a number of biographical entries that are to be found in no other modern collection. In fact, entries take us from the genesis of evangelicalism and onward through its growing development both in Britain and in Colonial America, and include representatives from an incredibly broad array of denominations from Adventist to Wesleyan and many in between: Anglican, Baptist, Brethren, Catholic, Church of Scotland, Congregational, Dutch reformed, Episcopal, Free, Lutheran, Mennonite, Methodist, Methodist Episcopal, Moravian, Presbyterian, Primitive Methodist, Quaker, Reformed, Scottish relief Church, Seceders, Wesleyan, and more.

These volumes, which were previously published in two volumes as *The Blackwell Dictionary of Evangelical Biography, 1730-1860*, by Blackwell of Oxford in 1995, have very little in the way of serious competition, either in Britain or America, and certainly there are very few volumes that can rival the

comprehensiveness and sheer quality of these works. The editor, Donald M. Lewis, is a specialist in the history of evangelicalism in Victorian Britain. He holds the position of Professor of Church History and Dean of the Faculty at Regent College, Vancouver BC, Canada. These volumes represent such an achievement, that they should be seen as an indispensable resource in the library of anyone who has any degree of interest in the history of the Church or in the area of historical theology.

Michael D. McMullen  
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

*Travel with William Grimshaw: The Man Who Saw God Visit Haworth.* By Fred Perry. Leominster, England: Day One, 2004, 128 pp.

Don't let the size or appearance of this volume fool you, this is by no means a simple or usual travel guide. This relatively brief (though not superficial), pocket-sized volume is actually 1 in a series of 8 similar inspirational and informative volumes, that Day One are to be congratulated on producing. Currently along with Grimshaw, the series covers William Booth, John Bunyan, William Carey, John Knox, Martin Lloyd Jones, The Martyrs of Mary Tudor, and Charles H. Spurgeon, with the promise of more forthcoming. These books combine both well-written biography and detailed guides to geographical locations associated with the subject. It is filled with more than 130 attractive photographs and charts, the vast majority of which are in color, and there is an abundance of material that will assist anyone to plan a rewarding visit to Haworth and the surrounding area in the northern English County of Yorkshire.

Haworth is not a totally previously unknown village, having been the residence of Charlotte, Emily and Anne Brontë. But what is not so well known, is that Haworth is also the place where almost a century earlier, God moved in mighty power through the ministry of William Grimshaw. In fact, Patrick Brontë and his family were actually drawn to the village because of the village's fame due to Grimshaw's ministry, which lasted from 1742-1763. But who exactly was this "Mad Grimshaw" as he has been referred to.

Grimshaw came to Haworth in 1742 as the new parish minister, and found a congregation of a mere 12 communicants. But God worked through this man to such an extent, that the congregation would regularly number more than a thousand. John Wesley himself hoped that Grimshaw would become his successor, commenting that, "a few such as him would make a nation tremble" (5). That was not to be however, for Wesley outlived a burned-out Grimshaw by 30 years.

One needs to know however, how much of a miracle that really was, for Grimshaw began his ministerial life as a swearing drunkard. Things were never the same however, after Grimshaw experienced an evangelical conversion upon reading John Owen's *The Doctrine of Justification by Faith*. That is when God took over Grimshaw's life and ministry, and things would never be the same. In an "idle week" he would still preach 14 times, and in his busier weeks no less than 28 times. This book is filled with so many other wonderful amusing and

challenging anecdotes. Some might be concerned about the lack of sources to support many of the stories presented, but a reference volume this isn't, what we are given is an interesting introduction to the life and ministry of a colorful man of God.

It is in that introduction, that we learn for example, that Grimshaw would use a horse whip to drive his parishioners out of the pub and into the church; that not only would he exercise very little tact, but that he would act the full part of a natural Yorkshireman, and readily speak his mind on most occasions, including the incident when on one occasion, he saw people in church reaching for their hats during the benediction, and he shouted out: "Let your hearts alone, they'll stay if you let them!"; that he fell into periods of very deep depression with the death of his wife whom he loved so much, in only the fifth year of their marriage, a depression and anger against God, that drove him very close to real insanity; and that less than 6 months after arriving in Haworth there was a very wonderful outpouring of God's Spirit on that place. As Perry tells us, "it was an act of sovereign grace, so much so that the church that only had 12 communicants in June 1742, was within a year crowded with over 900 people and many more standing outside. Hundreds from other parishes trudged miles across the bleak moors to satisfy their curiosity or renew the blessing they had already received" (36). In fact, Dan Taylor, an ex-Methodist, who founded the New Connexion of General Baptists, expressed the thought that God might have removed Grimshaw somewhat prematurely, because people had tended to "forget the Lord and idolize the saint."

Perry's carefully written biography of Grimshaw is of a very high quality, and one which is not only interesting to read, but tempts the reader to undertake a visit to the area which saw God move in such a mighty way. However, one of the real values of this book, is that one does not need to travel to Haworth to be encouraged and challenged by this volume, because it is not primarily the story of Grimshaw, but of what God did and still can do through lives submitted to and spent for Him. It should come as no surprise to learn that Grimshaw's simple formula was that "a praying Christian is a growing Christian." John Wesley's comments about Grimshaw are, in the light of what we discover in the volume, also very understandable: "He carries fire wherever he goes."

Michael D. McMullen  
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*Forgotten Heroes of Revival: Great Men of the 18th Century Evangelical Awakening.* By Tim Shenton. Leominster, England: Day One, 2004, 197 pp.

This attractively presented volume is as the title tells us, an examination of some of the lesser known, even forgotten, heroes involved in one way or another, in the great outpouring of God's Spirit in the 18th Century, usually referred to as the Evangelical awakening. Five individuals from that period are the focus of this well-researched and challenging book. The author has been able to present



interesting, and detailed, yet concise, biographies, which will both challenge and encourage anyone who makes the effort to read here about their lives, ministries, and writings.

Many of us may well be familiar with some of the great names of the period: George Whitefield, John and Charles Wesley, John Newton, Howell Harris, Charles Simeon, and Rowland Hill. But how many of us would recognise the names or even know the contributions individuals such as George Thomson, a young Anglican minister in Cornwall, catalyzed out of his careless lifestyle by a dream in which he was to be summoned before the judgment seat of Christ, and subsequently called, “the predecessor of all the evangelical fathers in England” (8)? Or James Rouquet, a friend of John Wesley and the Countess of Huntingdon, who exercised a remarkable ministry of compassion amongst prisoners? Or Captain Jonathan Scott, a military officer, whose life was characterized by dissipation and vice until his conversion, and whose life subsequently made a great impact first on his fellow soldiers and then, later, many others in civilian life? Or David Simpson, who, even as a child, felt compelled by a voice from heaven to be trained for the ministry, and whose evangelical preaching cut powerfully through the social ills of his time, bringing both conviction and conversion? Or Thomas Pentycross, a bright student who made rapid progress at school, a gifted actor and orator, who, after his conversion, had a long and controversial ministry in preaching and in establishing a church school?

But a big part of the genius of this book, is that these are not five isolated biographies. Shenton produces a relatively comprehensive picture of the Evangelical Revival, complete with the contributions of some of the more well known figures previously referred to, and then places all five of his chosen characters into that concise picture. One other value of this book, is that the author greatly seeks to encourage his readers to undertake further study into the general period of evangelicalism covered here, and into the particular figures he has introduced.

This book should have a wide readership, for whilst it is true that on the surface, this is clearly a book about British evangelicals, Evangelicalism was certainly not limited in its influence to just Britain. It was a movement that in the 18th and 19th centuries impacted much of the English-speaking world. Therefore, this volume will be of value to those who have an interest in the history of early Evangelicalism. It should also be read by any who are encouraged and challenged by inspirational biography. It is also a welcome addition to the ever growing library of writings on true revival.

What will we learn from such a book as this? That according to Shenton, each of the five men here, “loved Jesus, they knew what he had done for them and had been gripped and challenged by the message of salvation – that was the motivation behind their ministries and why they discharged their callings so faithfully.” They were also prepared whatever the cost, “to obey the command of their captain to ‘go and make disciples of all nations,’ and to ‘spend and be spent’ for the benefit of others” (6) This commitment is that which should be found in all who claim the name of Christ, especially for those who claim a divine calling on their lives to ministry.

The book is well illustrated, though it is a shame that all of them are in black and white. There is also a useful index. Each of the 5 chapters do carry endnotes, and there is sufficient resources referred to, to encourage further study of the figures being described. Tim Shenton is the headmaster of St. Martin's School in Bournemouth, England, where he has taught for more than 20 years. He is the author of several books, and is also an elder at Landsdowne Baptist Church.

Michael D. McMullen  
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*A Texas Baptist History Sourcebook: A Companion to McBeth's Texas Baptists.* By Joseph E. Early, Jr. Denton, TX: University of North Texas Press, 2004, 676 pp., \$29.99.

*A Handbook of Texas Baptist Biography.* By Joseph E. Early, Jr. Author House, 2004, 238 pp., \$17.75.

Both of these volumes are by Joseph E. Early, Jr., Assistant Professor of Religion at Cumberland College in Williamsburg, Kentucky. Since they deal with very similar aspects of the history of Baptists in Texas, I am reviewing them together. As for the first volume, there have been previous histories of Baptists in Texas produced, and there have obviously been collections of Baptist primary documents before, but Early has done something quite different, and that is to compile a list of primary documents that concentrate on a single state. As a professor who recognizes the inestimable value of primary source documents for the study of any branch of history, especially Baptist history, Early's unique compilation would seem to be one to which I would particularly be drawn.

This work probably will become a much consulted volume, for it is unrivalled in the breadth of important sources for the study of Texas Baptist history. The sources available in this volume include church minutes, state and association convention records, denominational newspaper articles, records of Baptist universities, letters and other documents held in Seminary archives, previously published biographies and histories, and a host of other resources detailing 150 years of Baptist life in Texas.

Early has clearly followed on the earlier work of Leon McBeth, namely his *Sourcebook for Baptist Heritage*, and that prompts something of a slight criticism in itself, for Early has included a number of documents that already appeared in McBeth's collection, such as, G.W. Truett's message, "Baptists and Religious Liberty," which he delivered on the steps of the Capitol in Washington D.C. Nevertheless, Early has produced what he hopes will be regarded as a companion volume to Harry Leon McBeth's, *Texas Baptists: A Sesquicentennial History* (Eakin Press, 1999), following as he does McBeth's chapters and topical arrangement. McBeth, Distinguished Professor of Baptist History at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, even contributed the

foreward to Early's work. The book includes a section of oral memoirs, and there is also a good index.

I would make one other slight criticism, that of the lack of a complete bibliography at the conclusion of the work. That would have helped save the researcher the trouble of having to go through chapter by chapter, to get a complete survey of all the sources consulted and available. But that lack will probably not detract serious students of Texas Baptist history from making this volume one of their must-have sources. As McBeth states in the foreword, "Any student of Baptist history will find this a fascinating and utterly indispensable source of information for anything relating to Baptists in the state" (xvii).

As for the second volume, even though Early titles it a handbook, this is really an encyclopedia of 250 biographical entries, illustrating the life and development of Baptists in Texas. To be included, Early decided that the individual must either have been born in the state, or have made a significant contribution to Baptist life there and have lived a major part of their lives there too. The entries have been arranged alphabetically, and include biographical data on the person, some wonderful anecdotes, brief helpful bibliographies on each, and dates if known.

There are the expected entries, such as those on J. Frank Norris, and George W. Truett, but there are also entries on much lesser well known individuals too, including several pastors and Baptist women. One criticism that could be made here, is the neglect of some Hispanic leaders, which seems somewhat of a sad oversight. A charge could be made against the author, that some of the anecdotes, which are at times somewhat controversial, do not seem to have been completely sourced or verified themselves. Nevertheless, some of them remain very interesting.

For example, Henry Hurley, a 19th century founding pastor of several Texas Baptist churches, was asked to baptize a friend's son, but it seems the individual went insane, fatally shot Hurley, and then beat one of Hurley's children to death with a rock. Then also, there is the tragic story of George W. Carroll, who, through oil and lumber, became one of the richest men in Texas by 1900, and was able financially to support Baylor University. Along with his many philanthropic projects, he was also the founder and first president of the Beaumont YMCA, even paying for the erection of a new YMCA building there. In fact, the tragedy was that he gave away so much of his money, that he died penniless whilst living in that same Beaumont YMCA building. This is both a valuable and interesting book, and I would not be surprised to see it appear again from an established publisher, together with other similar volumes from additional states.

Michael D. McMullen  
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

*Columns: Glimpses of a Seminary under Assault.* By Russell H. Dilday. Macon, Georgia: Smyth & Helwys, 2004, 346 pp., \$18.00.

I was one of the players in the drama which Russell Dilday interprets in his book *Columns*. I became a student at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (SWBTS) in 1978, earning my Masters of Divinity in 1981. I was accepted into the Ph.D. program, but decided instead to do a PhD at the University of Texas at Arlington majoring in Linguistics and taking a minor in Philosophy (with a focus in philosophical hermeneutics). At the Southern Baptist Convention in 1992 I was elected to fill an unexpired term on the Board of Trustees for SWBTS and then served two full terms for a total of twelve years. My service on the Board ended in the spring of 2004, and at that meeting I was elected as the Dean of the School of Theology at SWBTS. Throughout my years as a pastor in the Dallas area (1982-2005), I frequently had staff members and church members who were students at SWBTS. Thus, I have knowledge of many of the events which are discussed in the book.

Anyone reading *Columns*, regardless of their SBC political leanings, would have to wonder “Did it really happen like this? Surely there must be another side to the story.” Speaking as one who was there, at least for a part of the territory covered in this book, let me say at the outset: “It’s a mighty thin pancake that only has one side.”

The front cover of the book is a harbinger of what is to come. The full title, couched in military language, is *Columns: Glimpses of a Seminary under Assault*. For 346 pages, Dilday chronologically reminisces about his tenure as SWBTS president from 1978 through his termination in 1994, expressing throughout his strong and at times strident disagreement with what was happening in the Southern Baptist Convention. The layout of this book is interesting. The chapters are listed by year and a short title. Following a brief three or four paragraph introduction, Dilday lists under the heading “Key Events,” the month and day, followed by such bullet-point items as “Opened Recreation Aerobics Center...,” “Preached at First Baptist, Wichita Falls,” “Southern Baptist Convention met in Houston,” “Adrian Rogers...elected president over Robert Naylor, Duke McCall, Bill Self, Doug Watterson, Ed Price, 51.36 percent, with Jimmy Allen presiding.”

Usually these chronological notations are comment free, but occasionally Dilday can’t resist the urge to editorialize particularly on something a conservative did or said. For example, under June 13, 1984, he lists a number of bullet points, including items like “Charles Stanley was elected even though he said he had never had time to be involved in the denomination!” (91), and “Fundamentalists now have floor managers—one for motions and another for resolutions. See quote in the *Dallas Times Herald* story about the convention. ‘Floor lieutenants were stationed throughout Kansas City’s huge, football field shaped auditorium. Patterson or another leader standing near the platform signaled the party preference for the vote.’” Actually, neither of these comments is accurate; the former is taken out of context and the later is patently false.

Following “Key Events” and comprising the bulk of each chapter is a printing of the various monthly columns Dilday wrote for the *Southwestern News* for that year, hence the title of the book. Prior to 1984, these columns are non-political and generally cover issues concerning the seminary. A marked shift occurs in 1984. That was the year the president of SWBTS came out swinging against the conservative resurgence taking place in the convention.

It began with his convention sermon “Higher Ground,” where he opined: “an incipient Orwellian mentality” threatens to drag the convention down to “forced uniformity.” This sermon was a blatant attack on the conservatives as well as their motives. On the heels of this sermon came the July/August column entitled “It is Now Clear,” a vitriolic attack on the conservative movement. Over the next ten years, many of these columns were given over to issues concerning the division within the convention, each one critical of conservative leaders and each with an overt or covert effort to encourage the Southwestern family to oppose the conservative movement.

The book culminates with chapters describing the situation surrounding the termination and dismissal of the president, followed by a concluding sermon of sorts based upon II Corinthians 4:1-18 and an appendix including a hodge-podge of items such as the seminary’s annual reports from 1978-1995, the seminary’s response to the Peace Committee’s visit in 1987, a transcript of the press conference with Board officers following the termination, and two letters, one from the trustees sent to the SBC churches and one from the “Friends of Southwestern” sent in response to the previously mentioned letter.

I begin with a few comments about publication and format issues. First, a plethora of misprints mar the book, including missing quotation marks (for example, page 230), grammatical mistakes (for example, “Young tried to justified...” and “and ye’t” (315), several cases of redundancy where information in the “Key Events” section is repeated elsewhere in the same chapter (for example, pages 26, 27 and 107, 110) or where instead of “Patterson/Pressler” one reads “Patterson/Patterson.” These may all be editorial gaffs on the part of Smyth & Helwys, but they make for a somewhat clumsy style and annoy the reader.

Second, there is not a single footnote in the book. While it is not necessary to footnote each of the 146 President’s Column articles as they are listed each year in order of appearance in each chapter, some of the incidents to which Dilday speaks were covered thoroughly in the press, both Baptist, religious and secular. In addition, several books chronicling the convention controversy, including events involving Dilday, are readily available. Most of these works present quite a different picture of the convention controversy as well as of Dilday’s involvement. In the interest of objectivity, it would have been helpful had Dilday cited some sources along the way, and also it would have made his treatment more objective had he included, at least in a footnote or two, other perspectives on what happened. The interested reader might want to consult James Hefley, *Truth in Crisis*, 5 volumes; Paul Pressler, *A Hill on Which to Die*; and Jerry Sutton’s *The Baptist Reformation*, among others.

With respect to the content of the book, there are also problems. Even upon a cursory reading, one comes across a host of factual errors and inaccuracies in the book. I will list a few examples. On page 179, it is stated in 1989: “Professor

Russ Bush accepted position with Paige Patterson at Southeastern.” This would come as some surprise to Paige Patterson, who did not go to Southeastern as president until 1992. However, Russ Bush did become a professor at SEBTS that year. Another error occurs on page 225 where it is stated David Allen chaired the presidential search committee that brought Paige Patterson to SWBTS as president. In fact, Denny Autry was the chairman of the search committee. I was chairman of the Board of Trustees. Another factual inaccuracy occurs on page 266 where it is claimed “Professional security guards – not our seminary security officers---armed and in uniform---were stationed at strategic points.” This is simply not the case. I was there when the firing took place and the only security guards present were Southwestern security guards. Mike Marshall, trustee from the Washington D.C area, was serving on the board at the time. Marshall was an Administrative Sergeant for the Training Division of Capitol Police in Washington D.C. and has confirmed what I already knew to be true: no outside security was ever brought in by the board.

Another factual error is the claim that W. A. Criswell told Paige Patterson not to be involved in convention politics anymore. As Patterson put it: “Anyone who knows Dr. Criswell knows that he would not do that; and anyone who knows me knows that I would have resigned [as president of the Criswell College] if he had. As Joel Gregory once said, accurately, Dr. Criswell’s pronouns often lacked antecedents, making it difficult to pin him down when he did not want to be pinned down.”

Some of the inaccuracies in the book are due to a combination of two factors: 1) faded memory such that details are often forgotten or confused, and 2) the author’s own perspective which invariably puts something of a “slant” or “spin” on the events. For example, on page 225 Dilday refers to an incident involving myself as a board member and a conversation between himself, Bruce Corley and me that occurred at the Monday “Trustee Forum,” an informal gathering of the board with the President and his officers to discuss things prior to the official meeting of the board. “Before the forum, Allen asked to meet with Corley and me....” Actually, the event in question occurred after the forum and Dilday and Corley approached me. I had come late to the forum because I had been meeting with a faculty member in his office to discuss the fact that the Ethics department had banned Richard Land, President of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, from speaking on campus. [In the past, the president of this organization was regularly on campus.]

I walked into the forum and discovered that this issue was being discussed. Other trustees, knowing I had been to see a member of the Ethics department to discuss the matter, asked me about the meeting. After I gave a report of the meeting, Dilday, who was unaware I had been meeting with the faculty member, proceeded to dress me down in front of the trustees about how we as trustees should not be speaking to faculty without his knowledge or permission. After the forum, Dilday and Bruce Corley approached me. I was accused, again falsely, of always trying to find out something wrong with the Seminary instead of working constructively as a board member.

What Dr. Dilday often failed to appreciate was that we as board members had a responsibility to govern the seminary and to address issues and problems when they arose. I had been contacted by a number of people outside the seminary about this specific problem, as had many board members, and we were merely attempting to solve what was a problem. Although denied by Dilday and Corley, it was in fact true that Richard Land had been banned in an unofficial manner by the Ethics department.

This example serves to give some perspective on the entire book. Those who read the book and who are unhappy with what has taken place in the Southern Baptist Convention will find themselves agreeing with Dilday, while those conservatives, especially those who played a role in the events discussed, will see Dilday's interpretation of many of the events as problematic. In fact, many who are referenced in the book dispute Dilday's version of the events he describes.

The book also suffers from unnecessary examples of strident language such as found on page 3: "...such a great school could be captured and pillaged," as if conservatives were a horde of marauding Huns. Dilday noted on page 7 when he was elected president in 1977 that Southwestern's trustees were "diverse but cooperative" and included pastors, church staff members, educators, bankers, pastors, musicians, missionaries, business owners and physicians. Four pages later he asserted, falsely, that the trustees placed on the board by the "fundamentalists Patterson and Pressler" were "inexperienced, anti-institution, even anti-education."

I spent twelve years on the board, serving with men and women from each one of the groups named above and then some, and although any trustee never having previously served on a board of trustees lacks certain experience, not one of them could be called "anti-institution" or "anti-education." It will not be lost upon the reader that Dilday, ironically, insults and ridicules many of his own trustees, calling them "conspirators" and other such epithets. One example is the following statement on page 16: "It seemed the fundamentalist appointments to our board were sometimes chosen from the lowest levels of Baptist life: morally, ethically, spiritually, theologically, and competently." (16) What anecdotal evidence he does present in an attempt to bolster this claim suffers from a one-sided perspective that doesn't capture the whole story.

Nevertheless, despite these problems, the book is valuable in a number of ways. First, having the columns that Dilday wrote during his presidency all collected in one place is a valuable historical resource that provides insight and information about what was happening on campus during these years. Second, as a chronicle of Dilday's presidency, and his involvement in the convention controversy during his presidency, the book has merit. Third, the last two chapters which cover in some detail the events surrounding the termination of Dilday, provide valuable historical information even when it is understood that the perspective lacks a certain objectivity. Fourth, no trustee I know who was involved in the events of the Dilday termination does not now, with hindsight, regret some of the manner in which the whole thing was carried out. Mistakes were made and some things could and should have been done differently. To put it bluntly, there is no good way to fire a president.

In this case, the grounds for termination were clear and the trigger had to be pulled. In short, given the mandate of the Southern Baptist Convention regarding the doctrinal integrity of the seminaries, Dilday's termination was a necessity. Such an event, however, cannot occur without things being said and done along the way on both sides that could and should have been handled differently. Once events are set in motion, these trigger other events which no one can foresee. People may act with every bit of integrity, convinced that what was done had to be done, and yet make mistakes in the process. Dilday's book highlights those mistakes.

On the whole, however, the book suffers from the fact that it is so incredibly one-sided. Much of Dilday's evidence for the claims he makes is anecdotal, with the attendant problems that such evidence possesses. He conveniently leaves out the ugliness of moderate leaders in the convention controversy, including his own, during the time he was president at Southwestern. His vitriolic attack on Charles Stanley during a session of the Peace Committee in the mid 1980's, although generally unknown to the larger public, is captured in the recorded session where he spoke to the committee. These tapes have recently been unsealed and can be listened to by anyone interested. After the tirade, upon Dilday's leaving the room, a liberal member of the committee was so dumbfounded by the verbal attack that he put his head in his hands and remarked that he would never have believed it had he not seen and heard it himself. Finally, if this book is any indication, Dilday accepts no blame for his termination whatsoever. There is not one scrap or scintilla of a statement that he might have been in any way at fault in the events leading up to his termination.

This being said, for those interested in an inside look at Southwestern from 1978 to 1994, and especially Dr. Dilday's involvement in the convention controversy up to and including his termination as president of Southwestern, I recommend this book. Read it—with a grain of salt—but read it.

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*Experiencing God Together.* By Henry T. Blackaby and Melvin D. Blackaby. Nashville: Broadman & Holman: 2002, 302 pp., \$19.99.

In the fifteen years since Henry Blackaby and Claude King wrote *Experiencing God: Knowing and Doing the Will of God*, millions of lives have been touched by this popular study. Since that time, Henry Blackaby has become a household name among Southern Baptists and other evangelicals. Following the success of the original, Blackaby and King wrote *Fresh Encounter: God's Pattern for Revival and Spiritual Awakening* in 1993. Many, including this reviewer, looked to *Fresh Encounter* to be a follow-up to the original *Experiencing God* but were disappointed to find *Fresh Encounter* was not the hoped for "spiritual successor" to the original. For those who have been waiting for a worthy sequel,



Henry and Mel Blackaby in this latest *Experiencing God* resource have put together a book that incorporates the feel, approach, and punch of the original.

In this book, Henry is joined by his third son, Mel, who serves as a pastor in Cochrane, Canada. Mel contributes many of the illustrative stories that bring home the points his father makes. Like the original, this book is a prophetic call to holiness and obedience.

There is, however, one notable change from the original. As noted in the introduction, *Experiencing God Together* seeks to help believers make the transition from knowing and doing the will of God as individuals to knowing and doing the will of God within a corporate body of believers. To accomplish this objective, the book is divided into four sections of three chapters each: God's Great Salvation; God's Salvation in the Church; God's Salvation through the Church; and God's Salvation and the Kingdom. Blackaby notes that each section was designed to both "stand along" and "build upon one another."

Although the section and chapter headings read more like sermon titles, each section and chapter is rich with insights and challenges for the reader. At the end of each chapter, study questions for reflection and response are provided for the reader. And unlike some study books that wane in content after the first few chapters, those who liked the original *Experiencing God* will find *Experiencing God Together* well written from cover to cover.

Since this book does not include an index, the reader will likely not use this as a reference tool until after the first reading. My personal copy now includes a handwritten "index" in the front cover. There I noted Blackaby's insights with the corresponding page numbers for topics such as spiritual warfare, evangelism, missions, the confusion between church and Kingdom, cooperation, sponsorship, the "Invisible Church" and business meetings. Readers will find *Experiencing God Together* to be a wealth of practical ideas and insights.

The philosophy of this book can be compared to the two schools of counseling. Many counselors—especially those using humanistic approaches—subscribe to a school of thought that problems which took years to manifest will take years of professional counseling to resolve. Other therapists—including many Christian counselors—subscribe to an approach that incorporates a biblical approach to the problem and seeks to bring about resolution over a period of weeks or months, not years. A recurring strength of this book is the practical application of biblical approaches to common fellowship problems. For example, the segment on business meetings covers just over a page, and yet has more relevancy than some books devoted solely to this subject.

The authors note in the introduction that this book will address significant theological questions, such as "What did God have in mind when He chose to save us" and "What is the corporate nature of God's great salvation?" Even though these questions are addressed, however, the average reader would not likely recognize the answers unless they were actively searching for the question. Later in the book, in the short segment on evangelism, Henry writes, "Over the last few decades, the focus has shifted away from God's people to evangelism and the lost. However, significant evangelism is a by-product of what God does with his people." Mel goes on to write, "Evangelism was a by-product of a people in love with their God." The reader will have to decide in the context of their ministry and church if these statements are merited. My

concern is that some might draw the wrong conclusion from the statements that the evangelization of the lost is a non-essential or secondary discipline of the believer.

At a time when apathy among many so-called believers is high, Blackaby reminds the reader, "To lose the fear of God is to lose the fear of sin." At a time when Gallop polls show a majority of Americans claim to be "believers" Blackaby writes, "God is a person to love, not an idea to be accepted." Throughout the book, the reader is called upon to examine his or her relationship with God and with His church.

The book is not without shortcomings. The enumerated lists and proposed solutions to fellowship problems can be misapplied if taken out of context. Some readers may be tempted to use the straightforward solutions inappropriately when addressing complex problems. The section and chapter titles fail to provide the reader with an accurate depiction of the chapters, thus rendering the book of limited use without a full reading despite the "stand alone" statement of the authors. The lack of a topical index and list of Scriptural references (and there are many) is frustrating. Church leaders seeking to use this book as the foundation for a church study will find the lack of a study guide along the lines of the original *Experiencing God* resource disappointing.

Despite these limitations, *Experiencing God Together* is a recommended devotional book for clergy and laity alike. The book succeeds in its objective to bring the reader to a biblical understanding of life in the Body of Christ. For church leaders who struggle with the dilemma of inactive or invisible church members, *Experiencing God Together* will challenge them to personal growth and provide them with the resource needed to promote instruction and encouragement. For the church member, the book will be a fresh reminder of the centrality of service through the local church.

Rodney Harrison  
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Augsburgh Fortress Press, P. O. Box 1209, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55440-1209, (800) 328-4648

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Eerdmans Publishing Co, 255 Jefferson Ave. SE, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49503, (800) 253-7521

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Random House, 1745 Broadway/23-D04, New York, New York 10019, (800) 733-3000

Smyth & Helwys, 6316 Peake Rd., Macon, Georgia 31210-3960, (800) 747-3016

T & T Clark, 15 East 26th St., Ste 1703, New York, New York 10010, (212) 953-5858

University of North Texas Press, P.O. Box 311336, Denton, Texas 76203-1336, (940) 565-2142

University Press of America, 4720 Boston Way, Lanham, Maryland 20706 (800) 452-6420

Westminster John Knox Press, Presbyterian Publishing Corporation, 100 Witherspoon Street, Louisville, Kentucky 40204, (800) 227-2872

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