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CONTENTS

Editorial

This issue is devoted to the Southern Baptist Convention's January Bible Study books, 1, 2, and 3 John. The articles contained in this volume are written to aid the busy pastor or teacher who will be leading in studies on these New Testament books.

Our guest contributor to this issue is Dr. Daniel L. Akin, President of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina. He is the author of numerous works, including a volume on 1, 2, and 3 John in the New American Commentary series. Akin contributes to this journal a sermon which models expository preaching. His message is entitled, "Four Men and Their Reputations," and is taken from 3 John 1-14.

Other contributors of articles to this issue include: Dr. Michael McMullen, Associate Professor of Church History at MBTS, who contributes a previously unpublished sermon from 1 John 4:19 preached by Jonathan Edwards. Dr. Terry Wilder, Associate Professor of NT and Greek at MBTS, also provides some teaching outlines and an annotated bibliography on 1, 2, and 3 John. This issue also contains several reviews by the 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 1, 2, and 3 John, please do not hesitate to contact us. We are more than happy to serve you.

To God's glory! Enjoy.

Terry L. Wilder, Editor
Midwestern Journal of Theology

Midwestern Journal of Theology 5.1 (Fall 2006): 3-10.

Four Men and Their Reputations
3 John 1-14

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Introduction

All of us share an invaluable possession. It goes with us wherever we go, but amazingly, it also goes where we do not go. Furthermore, what you think of this prized possession is not necessarily what others think of it. I speak of our reputation. Your reputation is the estimation or evaluation of your character, integrity, and standing as a person. It may be good or bad, positive or negative. But be assured of this: (1) We all have a reputation. (2) People will watch you and talk about you. Count on it! (3) You cannot escape or lose your reputation. It precedes you, goes with you and follows you all of your life and even beyond.

Charles Spurgeon, the great British Baptist preacher in London, knew the importance of our reputation, especially for the Christian. He said,

> The eagle-eyed world acts as a policeman for the church . . . [it] becomes a watch-dog over the sheep, barking furiously as soon as one goes astray. Be careful, be careful of your private lives . . . and I believe your public lives will be sure to be right; but remember that it is upon your public life that the verdict of the world will very much depend.

With that in mind let me raise 3 important questions for all of us to think about: (1) What do you think of yourself? (2) What do you believe others think about you? (3) What does God think about you? As we reflect upon these 3 questions let's examine the shortest book in the Bible, the letter of 3 John. Only 219 words, this postcard epistle has been too often neglected to the detriment of the church. Like 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon [and possibly 2 John], it is written to an individual, a man named Gaius. Written by John c. A.D. 80-95, Eusebius, the ancient church historian, says it was penned after John was released from the rock quarry island of Patmos in the Aegean Sea. If this is correct, 3 John may have been the last book written in the New Testament.

The book is similar in length and style to its twin sister 2 John, and yet there are some important differences as well. Third John revolves around 4 key men and their reputation. Second John mentions no one by name. In 2 John the problem was showing hospitality to the wrong visitors. In 3 John the problem is not showing hospitality to the right visitors. In 2 John the major concern was *truth*. In 3 John the major concern is *love*.

It is easy to outline the book biographically, around the 4 men of the letter. As we look at each one of them, continue to examine yourself and see if anyone here looks something like you.

I. Gaius is a Commendable Christian (vv. 1-8).

This letter begins in the same way as 2 John, identifying the author as the elder (*presbuteros*). The word originally meant an older man, but came to convey ideas of respect, authenticity and integrity. An elder is a man of authority rooted in his spiritual maturity. John was such a man and because he had a tender relationship with the elect lady (2 John) and Gaius (3 John) there was no need to assert his apostleship. John commends Gaius in four areas of his life, areas in which we also should seek to excel.

1. Live Spiritually (vv. 1-2).

Four times John will address Gaius, the recipient of this letter, as "beloved" (*agapētos*) or "dear friend" (NIV). It expresses deep, heart-felt love for this man. John loved this man and he told him so. He also knew his spiritual life was in good health and he told him this too.

Gaius was a common name in that day and 3 men by that name appear in the New Testament: Gaius of Corinth (Rom. 16:23); Macedonia (Acts 19:29); and Derbe (Acts 20:4). Gaius of 3 John is probably none of these. All we know of this Gaius we learn from this short letter, and what we learn is outstanding.

John's love for him is genuine; it is accompanied by "truth" (7 times). There is nothing false or superficial here. Note also the "I" is emphatic: Whom *I myself* love in truth. John is praying for Gaius to prosper in *all things* [fronted for emphasis] and to be in health as his soul prospers.

Gaius had a clean bill of health spiritually. Perhaps he was suffering some physical difficulty but his soul was "ship shape," in top condition.

Application:

What if I were to pray for you and ask God to bless you physically to the same degree you are healthy spiritually, and he answered my prayer? What would happen?! Would you be fit, in bed, or nearly dead? Would

we need to rush you to the emergency room of the hospital and have you ushered into the ICU or CCU? We must live spiritually. Gaius was "soul healthy." The same is God's expectation for us.

2. Walk Truthfully (vv. 3-4).

Living spiritually is intimately connected to walking truthfully. John could rejoice greatly (v. 3) and have no greater joy (v. 4) because of what others were telling him about Gaius.

In doctrine and deed, Gaius was commendable and praiseworthy. There was no contradiction between his profession (talk) and practice (walk).

"My children" may indicate John had led Gaius to Christ. John was fathering spiritual children into the kingdom of God and Gaius was a child of his in whom he took great delight. Spurgeon knew the importance of this calling for every child of God, but especially those called to the ministry. He said:

> You may view, dear friends, the text as specifying the pastor's greatest reward. "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth." The minister who is sent of God has spiritual children, they are as much his children as if they had literally been born in his house, for to their immortal nature he stands under God in the relationship of sire. No minister ought to be at rest unless he sees that his ministry does bring forth fruit, and men and women are born unto God by the preaching of the word. To this end we are sent to you, not to help you to spend your Sundays respectably, nor to quiet your consciences by conducting worship on your behalf. No, sirs, ministers are sent into the world for a higher purpose, and if your souls are not saved, we have labored in vain as far as you are concerned. If in the hands of God we are not made the means of your new birth, our sermons and instructions have been a mere waste of effort, and your hearing has been a mere waste of time to you, if not something worse. To see children born unto God, that is the grand thing. Hence every preacher longs to be able to talk about his spiritual sons and daughters.

3. Serve Faithfully (vv. 5-6).

"Beloved (3rd time) a faithful thing you do," John writes. What was Gaius doing? He was showing hospitality and entertaining brothers, traveling evangelists for Jesus sent from John who were strangers, persons he did not know. John knew of Gaius' service because on their return to John they reported ("borne witness") of his love before the church. John's response: Just keep on doing what you are doing (the gist of v. 6). Providing lodging, food, money, encouragement, and standing with them and for them in spite of their "stranger status," Gaius had

honored God, the gospel and John. Sensitive to the hospitality expectations of the Mediterranean/near Eastern world, John had received these traveling teachers into his home and honored the Lord and apostle who sent them. His faithful service would stand in striking contrast to the inhospitable Diotrephes.

4. Minister Generously (vv. 7-8).

These verses provide the reason why we should help those whom God has called and sent out. They went forth for his name's sake (the name of Jesus; cf. Acts 4:12; 5:40-41; 9:16; 15:26; 21:13; Phil. 2:9). This is the only mention of the Lord Jesus in 3 John.

They took nothing from the gentiles (e*thnikon*), pagans, unbelievers (Jew and Gentile alike). They did not attempt to finance God's work with the world's money. They depended, and rightly so, on the generosity and gifts of the church. In so doing they avoided the scandal of other peripatetic (traveling) teachers who prided themselves in fleecing the countryside.

"We (emphatic) ought" (moral imperative) to receive ("show hospitality," NIV) such in order that we may become fellow workers for the truth. We may not physically go where they go, but we can go with them by our support. Some give support. Some are sent. Both are essential as we cooperate together in the work of God.

Application:

There is no limit to how much good you can do if you do not care who gets the credit. "God multiply the sent. God multiply the supporters." Be a commendable Christian.

II. Diotrephes is a Conceited Christian (vv. 9-10).

Third John now takes a surprising and unexpected turn. If Gaius was a commendable Christian, a man by the name of Diotrephes was not. He was basically Gaius' alter-ego at every turn. Bottom line: He wanted to be "boss" in the church. With perverted ambition and a dominating spirit, he opposed the apostle John and set himself up as lord in the church. If anyone took exception to his actions, that person was censured and dismissed from the congregation. Carnality personified, Diotrephes is mirrored today by many in the church who exhibit a similar lust for power. Just as John commended Gaius in 4 areas, he condemns Diotrephes in 4 areas. His stern rebuke is instructive for us all.

1. Do Not Be Driven by Prideful Ambition (v. 9).

John wrote a letter now lost to us. Its reception met a problem in the person of Diotrephes (mentioned only here in the New Testament) who "loves to be first." The issue here was not a doctrinal problem but personal pride. He loved being first, number 1, the top dog, the head honcho, the captain of the ship, the CEO, the center of attraction. Colossians 1:18 says only Jesus is to have the preeminence. Amazingly, Diotrephes took for himself the position only Jesus should hold. Tragically many today take for themselves the position only Jesus should hold. It may be a pastor, minister of worship or students, a deacon, prominent layman, or a powerful and influential family. We do not know who Diotrephes was. We do know he was driven by prideful ambition.

2. Do Not Display Pompous Arrogance (v. 9).

Diotrephes would not receive ("have nothing to do with," NIV) John. Incredibly he felt the apostle had nothing to offer, nothing he needed! Such arrogance would have been culturally shameful. It is spiritually unbelievable.

Illustration:

Imagine you could hear John next Sunday, or one who had studied with him. Would you say, "Nah! We don't need to hear anything he has to say!" Diotrephes did.

3. Do Not Deliver Perverse Accusations (v. 10).

John did not fear personal and public confrontation when a situation demanded it. If he comes and the implication is he will (cf. v. 14), he will confront Diotrephes, beginning with his perverse accusations (cf.1 Tim. 5:20). "Prating against us" means "talking nonsense," "gossiping maliciously" (NIV). With vicious and wicked intent Diotrephes had lied about John and slandered him. Trying to stack the deck and win the day, he would stop at nothing to get his way, even if it meant lying and acting heavy handed.

4. Do Not Dominate with Profane Activity (v. 10).

There is a sick, sad digression to Diotrephes' behavior. Ambition→ Arrogance→ Accusations→ Actions. He acted exactly the opposite of Gaius but then went further. He slandered John, gave a cold-shoulder to these missionaries from John, stopped others who would have received them, and kicked out of the church anyone who attempted to help

them—all because he loved himself, his agenda, and had to have his way no matter what.

In a somewhat funny but all too tragic comment the great Greek scholar A. T. Robertson wrote,

> some . . . years ago I wrote an article on Diotrephes for a denominational paper. The editor told me that 25 deacons stopped the paper to show their resentment against being personally attacked in the paper.

"Be not like proud Diotrephes who loved to be the boss, for when we glorify ourselves, the Lord's church will suffer loss."

Prideful ambition: Watch your *motives*.

Pompous arrogance: Watch your *decisions*.

Perverse accusations: Watch you *tongue*.

Profane activity: Watch your *actions*.

III. Demetrius is a Consistent Christian (vv. 11-12).

In a wise rhetorical strategy John sandwiches evil Diotrephes between godly Gaius and good Demetrius. A man like Diotrephes can be impressive, build a following and gather supporters who admire, even idolize him. John knew we all imitate, try to be like someone. Be careful who you admire. Make sure it is someone like Demetrius.

1. Pursue a Godly Example (v. 11).

Do not imitate (mimic) what is evil. We must avoid what is evil (bad) but pursue what is good. Why? It provides evidence to whom you belong. Good reveals we are from God. Evil reveals we have not seen God. Wescott said, "He who does good proves by his action that his life springs from God . . ." Ultimately we should imitate Jesus (1 Cor. 11:1). He is our supreme example who will never fail us. Yet we need earthly, every day examples to imitate as well. We need men and women to whom we can point our sons and daughters, boys and girls and say go and live like him, like her! Be careful whom you watch! Be mindful of who watches you!

2. Possess a Good Testimony (v. 12).

Demetrius probably brought this letter to Gaius. The letter would also serve as his recommendation from John. A three-fold witness is put forward to commend him. He has a good testimony: from (1) all, (2) the truth, and (3) John and his community (cf. Deut. 17:6; 19:15). Over time people have watched this man Demetrius and found him to be a man of integrity and godliness. Everyone is amazed! It is doubtful everyone

agreed with Demetrius' commitment to Christ and convictions concerning Christian truth, but his life was above reproach and beyond question. He walked with God, studied his word, loved Jesus, and loved the lost. Here was a man to whom I could point my sons and say, "Be like him." Could I also point them to you?!

IV. John is a Caring Christian (vv. 13-14).

Throughout this letter John, through positive and negative examples, has painted a portrait of good, godly leadership. John would say to us:

LEADERSHIP

IS . . .	**IS NOT . . .**
THE ABILITY TO MAKE WISE DECISIONS.	THE ABILITY TO MAKE SNAP DECISIONS.
THE ABILITY TO INFLUENCE OUR FRIENDS TO DO WHAT IS RIGHT.	THE ABILITY TO MANIPULATE OUR FRIENDS TO DO WHAT WE WANT THEM TO DO.
THE ABILITY TO DISCERN THE HEART OF OUR LEADERS.	THE ABILITY TO JUDGE OTHER PEOPLE HARSHLY.
THE ABILITY TO ACT AFTER PRAYER.	THE ABILITY TO ACT WITHOUT PRAYER.
THE ABILITY TO HEAR THE VOICE OF GOD.	THE ABILITY TO SPEAK IN GOD'S PLACE
THE ABILITY TO BE FIRM.	THE ABILITY TO BE STUBBORN.
THE ABILITY TO ACT QUICKLY.	THE ABILITY TO ACT WITHOUT THOUGHT.
THE ABILITY TO WAIT ON GOD.	THE ABILITY TO PROCRASTINATE.
CONFIDENCE	COCKINESS
CALM	ERRATIC
DECISIVENESS	THE INABILITY TO CHANGE.
HEARING WISE COUNSEL	LISTENING TO ANYONE WITH AN OPINION.
PATIENT	STAGNANT
COMPASSIONATE	GIVING IN
CARING	CONTROLLING

This godly leader now brings his letter to a close in a manner similar to 2 John. What closing words of wisdom he leaves them!

1. Desire the Presence of Fellow Believers (v. 13).

With a full and burdened heart John longs to come to Gaius. He will embrace him and he will confront Diotrephes. Pen and ink are nice, but they are not enough. Talk of cyber-churches sounds intriguing, but they can never be a substitute for a personal touch.

2. Desire Peace for Fellow Believers (v. 14).

John hopes to come *soon* (not later). He wants a *face-to-face* (mouth-to-mouth) up close and personal time together. A letter or email is a poor substitute. He closes with an expression of peace, something the Diotrephes affair had robbed them of. Our friends greet you—this means they say hello. They know the situation with Diotrephes and they stand with John. This is the only place in the New Testament that believers are called "friends," perhaps reflecting John 15:13, where Jesus says, "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends." Finally, say hello to everyone one by one, name by name. God saves us one by one. We should love and care in the same manner: one by one.

Conclusion

"Christ says we are to take the lowest [spot], but we like to take the higher. And we have a lovely rationalization for doing so because every time we take a bigger place we say that we can have greater influence for Christ. But this is not the Lord's way. Leadership is not to be sought. Leadership is to be waited for . . . to the extent that we want power among men, to that extent we are in the flesh and the Holy Spirit has no place in us. To the extent that I demand leadership and want leadership, to that extent I am not ready for Christian leadership."[1]

James said, "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble" (James 4:6; cf. Prov. 3:34) Humility is the way of service. Humility is the key to a good and godly reputation.

[1] A 1971 quote from Francis Schaeffer cited in *Compass* (Summer 1997): 26.

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God is First in Love to His Saints

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Introduction

Following the theme of the journal, the Epistles of John, the following sermon is published here for the first time, having been transcribed from the unpublished manuscripts of Jonathan Edwards, held in the Beinecke Library at Yale University.

Though this sermon was not dated by Edwards, the researchers at Yale have been able, through a variety of means, to determine with accuracy, that it was one of his early sermons, preached in the period from August 1728 to February 1729. It is an early statement on the distinctions between the loves of benevolence and complacency. The love of benevolence Edwards regards as a general feeling of commiseration or pity, while the love of complacence is delight and pleasure in the object of love. What Edwards makes clear is that God has benevolence towards sinners, but not complacency, for he cannot abide any being that is contrary to him. In the application, Edwards stresses that anything the saint possesses, has come as the fruit or effect of God's love. We have done nothing in that regard. The sovereign God is the source of all good things to his children.

The original sermon manuscript consists of nine duodecimo leaves. What is clear from transcribing and reading the sermon, and then comparing it with many other sermons of his, is that much of it is undeveloped, almost in outline, as if he were either running short of time, or that it was a message he would certainly expand and develop in the pulpit itself.[1]

God is First in Love to His Saints

1 John 4:19—That God is First in Love to His Saints. We love him because he first loved us.

[1] Edwards' sermon is largely transcribed just as it was written in his manuscript. That is to say, little punctuation was added, but no considerable effort was made to make sentences out of sentence fragments, nor to add words to make his notes or statements read smoother, etc.

God and his Church are represented as mutual lovers. There is a near relation so there is mutual love; they are nearly united both in relation and love. 'Tis wonderful that it should be so. This love is more fully revealed and manifested in the Gospel. 'Tis this love is the subject the apostle is upon in this place. He here takes notice how love is a common thing between God and the saints or that in which they have communion, of both partaking of the same spirit of love, the saints dwell in love but God is love, verse 16, And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. And in the 17th and following verses he takes notice of a characteristic of the truth and perfection of the love of the saints. In the words I take notice,

1. Who are the two parties loving,
2. The order of this love,
    a. In God first, and
    b. God's love the foundation of ours.

Doctrine: That God is first in love to his saints.

Under this doctrine we shall,

1. First take notice of two or three things presupposed by the doctrine.
2. Explain with what love it is that God first loves.
3. How he is first in love to them.

I. Things presupposed.

1. The saints, as they are by nature do not love God. Man was made at first with a principle of love to God as his governing principle. But man sinned away that principle wholly out of his heart. The only principles which in his natural state influence him are self-love, etc. No distinction naturally between Elect and Reprobates. No marks. No distinction, not only in nature but life, except it be in those that are finally given up. Reprobates set after the world, so are Elect. Dreadful hard hearts, so the Elect. Profane, sensual idolaters, so the Elect. As many of the primitive Christians exceeding proud, malicious, persecutors etc., so Paul and some of them that crucified Christ. Not only don't love but hate enemies, Romans 8:7, Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

As the Elect have the very same sort of hearts naturally with Reprobates, so before their conversion they are liable to all sorts of wickedness, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the

kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

2. All the saints as soon as they become saints, do truly love God. That principle which was lost in the Fall is restored. In many love is very weak but 'tis true and unfeigned. Every saint has truly had a discovery of such an excellency in God as has convinced him that God is the Chief Good and such as does indeed draw the heart there off from all other enjoyments. There is a kind of natural tendency and inclination in the heart: the weight of the soul, the verticity. Such as will work by a choosing, delighting in him, longing after him, seeking his glory. Such as will infuse the same spirit, such will follow him and will serve him. The Spirit of God which is the Spirit of love, is poured upon their hearts and sheds abroad love like a sweet oil, Romans 5:5, And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. 'Tis charity is the great thing that distinguishes, 1 Corinthians 13 at the beginning.

3. The saints are very dear to God: Jewels, Malachi 3:17, "in the day when I make up my jewels." Beloved, Romans 1:7, "To all that be in Rome, beloved of God." Colossians 3:12, "as the elect of God, holy and beloved." The Church is called "the beloved city," Revelation 20:9. The angel says to Daniel, Daniel 10:11, "O Daniel, a man greatly beloved." We read abundance in the Scripture about the love of God to his people. The Scripture is full of declarations and instances. The Gospel is nothing else but the display of God's love to his people.

II. We proposed to show with what kind of love it is that God first loves his saints, and here we are to take notice that there is a love of benevolence and a love of complacency.

1. The love of benevolence or goodwill is an inclination of heart to the good and welfare. 'Tis a disposition to seek the good of the person beloved. Indeed one person may seek the good of another and yet have no love to him because he don't desire it as his good. That is not the reason why he seeks it because it is the good and benefit of the person that immediately enjoys, but because it is his own benefit. Or for some other end a person may seek the good of another from self ends. But that is pure love of benevolence that is an inclination of heart to another's good and welfare, as it is his welfare.

This sort of love will work by pity if the person beloved be in misery or want, and it exerts itself in bounty. If this love of benevolence be true, it will stir up the lover to lay out himself for the person loved, to entertain thoughts and desires of the good of the beloved at all times, and to use endeavors to procure his welfare in due time, and makes the lover, when the good of the beloved is enjoyed, to take pleasure and satisfaction in his enjoyment of it.

2. A love of complacency is when any one takes pleasure and delight in the person of the beloved. He has complacency in him for some excellency, some way belonging to him or that is inherent in him or imputed to him. 'Tis possible there may be a great deal of benevolence and yet not this love of complacence. A person may sincerely wish for and seek the good of another, and pity another exceedingly in misery and lay out himself very much for his welfare, and yet not have complacency or delight in him. A father may have a great deal more benevolence to a foolish and wicked son, than complacency and delight in him. He may greatly pity him and very much wish for his welfare and happiness, and be grieved at his heart for his folly and misery, and may have great disposition to seek and rejoice at his welfare, and yet have but little complacency in him.

And especially may it be so with God. And so it is the former of these kinds of love that is spoken of in the text and doctrine, even a love of benevolence. God loves his saints. He has an inclination of heart and inclination to seek their welfare and happiness. He greatly desires their happiness and pities them exceedingly in their misery, and lays out himself very much for their good and happiness before they have any love to him, yea while they are yet enemies.

But he does not love them with a love of complacency before they love him. He takes no delight and pleasure in them, or in their prayers, or in anything that they do while they are sinners, but he abhors them. They are an abomination to him. He is very angry with them until they close with Jesus Christ. The love of benevolence is not purchased by Christ, for it was that that moved God to send Christ into the world, but God's love of complacency was purchased by Christ, purchased by his merits. Christ has purchased that they should be received into God's favor, that they should be accepted of him, and that he should delight in them, John 16:27, "For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me". God is well pleased with us, has a complacency in us for the sake of Christ's righteousness, Ephesians 1:6, "To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us to be accepted in the beloved."

III. To show how God loves his saints first.

1. His love to them precedes their love to him in order of time. God loved them with this love of benevolence while they were in a natural condition though they were enemies unto him and lived a wicked life, etc. Yet he then entertained a gracious design of doing glorious things for them and had delightful thoughts of mercy to them, of bringing of them out of their wretched state. God loves sinners while they are all polluted in their blood, wallowing in their filthiness, Ezekiel 16:6, 8, "And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood [. . .] behold, thy time was the time of love." Every saint that knows that God loves him now he may know with equal certainty that God loves him when he was so vile, etc. He had no complacency or delight in him as he was then, but he has an exceeding benevolence, etc.

God loved his saints before ever they were born, or had done either good or evil, or were capable either of loving or hating him, Romans 9:11-13, "(For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil [. . .] It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." Yea, God loved them long before, while their birth was yet exceeding distant. He loved them before ever Adam the first father of mankind was made, yea before the foundation of the heavens and the earth were laid. There is no beginning of God's love to his saints. From all eternity God's heart entertained a love to his people, Jeremiah 31:3, "The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love." This appears in the things which God did for his people before they loved him.

1. He, before the foundation of the world, chose them to eternal life. He chose them to be his children and to enjoy his love, Ephesians 1:4, 5, "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world" [. . .] Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children." Christ's flock is but a little flock, and God picked and chose them out from the rest of the world. He chose here and there one to be his own whom he pleased. He fixed his love upon them and wrote their names in the Book of Life and resolved within himself that they should be eternally happy.

2. Christ died for them before they loved God. Indeed, with respect to the saints of the Old Testament, Christ did not actually die for them before they loved him, but yet God entered into a Covenant of Redemption with Jesus Christ and agreed with him that he should die for them before he did this from all eternity. God did not only choose them to life, but he did

also, before the world was, contrive a way how they might be brought to life. Jesus Christ was appointed by the Covenant of Redemption from all eternity to be their surety, to undertake to secure them from Divine justice and to pay down all that God's Law demanded in order to their happiness. And therefore, Christ did virtually die for the saints of the Old Testament before they loved him, for although he had not been actually slain yet he had undertaken the work of redeeming them and stood engaged for them before God the Father to suffer all that their sins deserved should be suffered. And as God's saints that lived in those days Christ has actually died for them before ever they loved him. God's love to them was so very wonderful that he sent his own Son, so dear to him, to die for them. Christ's love to them was so great!

It was not a vagrant, unfixed general love to mankind to some of them he did not know, who that moved him to come into the world, and that was so strong as to make his heart willing to go through such dismal sorrows. Christ knew who he loved, he knew his own. It was not a general respect only to some of mankind, but a particular respect to every saint, Galatians 2:20, "who loved me, and gave himself for me." Their names were written upon his heart. His heart glowed with love to every one of them when he stood before Pilate and when he hung upon the cross. So greatly did God love his saints before they loved him, Romans 5:6-8, "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

3. God made heaven for them in the beginning of the world. God made heaven out of love to his saints. He prepared it to be the everlasting abode of his Elect. When he built that beautiful and glorious city he did not only make it for the angels, but also for those he had chosen from among mankind. Matthew 25:34, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." So greatly did God love them before they were, God's love did as it were set his wisdom to work to contrive and form those bright and glorious mansions, those blessed abodes.

4. God first seeks their love. The elect, when they first come into the world, are in a state of enmity against God. There is not a reconciliation, but God is first in seeking a reconciliation. The sinners seek it not. God offers his love unasked for. He was stupid and senseless of misery, going on in the way to ruin and destruction. O! He loves his enmity to God, and goes on opposing and fighting against God until God seeks him, knocks

at the door of his heart. Christ comes while the sinner is in his state of enmity, and stands at the door and knocks, and entreats to be admitted. Revelations 3:20, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock”; and Canticles 5:2, “It is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to me, my love, my dove, my undefiled.” Christ, as he is first in love, so he doth as it were court the hearts of men. He earnestly sues for their love and affections while they as yet have no love to him, but continue to reject him and refuse the offers which he makes of himself. He woos them by the calls of the gospel that we have in God's Word. [He uses] arguments, and he sends forth his ministers in his name, to beseech men to be reconciled unto God. 2 Corinthians 5:20, “Now we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.” Appointed ordinances. And strivings of the Spirit. ‘Tis a fruit of his love, that he awakens them, etc.

Second. God’s love to them is first in the order of nature; and that as their love to God is but the fruit of God’s love to them, their regeneration, whereby they have a principle of love of God, is the fruit of God’s love to them. If God had not loved them, he would never have given so great a gift as love to himself. He loves them and not others, and that is the reason that he sends forth his Spirit into their hearts and sheds abroad his love there. Men are naturally dead in trespasses and sins. ‘Tis a fruit of God’s love to them that he infuses life into them by infusing divine love into them. Ezekiel 16:6-8, “And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood . . . behold, thy time was the time of love.” Jeremiah 31:3, “I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.” God draws us to love him because he already loves us.

Therefore God when he loved the saints before they actually love him it is not upon a sure sight of their love to him but his love to them is previous in the order of nature as well as time, so their love to him because their love is a fruit of his love. God could not foresee that they would love him any otherwise than he knew he intended to infuse his love into them and that intention is a fruit and effect of his love.

Application.
1. Hence learn the freeness and sovereignty of the grace of God in saving sinners and that it can’t be any way influenced by our own righteousness or good works. We are taught by the doctrine that God loves his people before ever they do anything from any gracious respect unto him, yea before ever they do anything at all, before they have so much as a being, yea from all eternity and before the foundation of the world.

Therefore God doesn't love them for their good works. Surely all that they do before they love God can have no influence to draw God's love, for how unreasonable is it to think that God's love should be drawn by what they do from no sort of respect at all to him. And what they do after they love God doesn't draw the love of God, doesn't at all the more incline God to be gracious to them, to forgive their sins and show and bestow any outward or spiritual mercy upon them, for their love is a fruit of God's love to them. All their good works be not the cause of God's love but the effect of it. God, in his infinite love, gives them grace to love him and enables them to do things of love to him. Their good works are God's gift to them and not their gifts to God. All that they do before conversion in order to it, is the fruit of God's love, and their conversion itself. And all those good works that follow it, all their gracious and holy affections in prayer, they don't incline God anything the more to show mercy to them, for they are the fruits of God's love.

How unreasonable then is it for men to expect to procure pardon and mercy upon the account of their works. And sinners are exceeding prone to imagine he has or should have good will to them. But God's good will is never begun nor procured by any thing that men do.

2. Hence we learn what great reason the saints have to love God, that he has loved them first. Thus the apostle says Christians do love God because they first loved him and well they may. How wonderful was it that God should love such a poor, little, infinitely inferior a worm at all, that there should be any love in the heart of the great God. And how much more wonderful that he should love such an one that had no love to him, that he should love one so vile. How great was God's goodness that he should entertain such Divine love to you: when Christ was upon earth, when the world was made. How wonderful that he should so distinguish you from others. What great reason here to admire at the love of God in first seeking reconciliation, [in] warning, awakening, striving by his Spirit. Remember how Christ knocked at your heart. How God's Spirit strove with you. Remember how sinful you were, how miserable when Christ came a-wooing of you and how much better your state is now.

Remember what God has wrought for you in converting you, in infusing his love into your heart, in enabling you to put your trust in Jesus Christ, John 15:16, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain." Consider how great God's love is to you now in preserving you. If God did not keep you, you would fall from grace; and in enabling you to do good works, to exercise love to him and gracious

affections. Every motion of God's Spirit is a glorious instance of grace. Every good work you do is a glorious gift of God to you for which you should love him. And consider what glorious things you believe and what God will do for you when you die, and the resurrection, in heaven forever. And consider, that those things were prepared for you from the foundation of the world, that Christ bought them for you when you were not in being.

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Teaching Outlines for 1, 2 and 3 John

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1 JOHN: ASSURANCE OF SALVATION

Author: John the Apostle

Provenance: 1 John does not identify a place of origin. Because church tradition indicates that John resided in Ephesus for a period of time, it is a likely place of origin as any.

Date: The traditional date of writing is c. A.D. 95/96, but a date around c. A.D. 90-95 is not unreasonable.

Recipients: The epistle does not tell us precisely who the recipients are. John simply refers to the readers as "my little children." This term of endearment means that they were Christians. If Ephesus is the correct place of writing, then John likely addressed Christians in Asia Minor in the vicinity of that city.

Occasion: The occasion of the epistle is twofold. First, put positively, John's purpose was to promote assurance of salvation (1 John 5:13)[1] for those who were christologically sound, i.e. those who believed the "right things" concerning the person and work of Jesus Christ, and for those who demonstrated a genuine love for God and for other believers in Christ, i.e. those whose lifestyle reflected a correct and orthodox theology.

[1] 1 John 5:13 ("These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.") is often and appropriately referred to as the letter's main purpose statement, but 1 John does contain other statements of purpose that should also be considered. For example, John writes: to promote Christian fellowship and joy in his life and in the lives of his readers (1:3-4); to keep these believers from committing sin (2:1); and to protect them from false teachers (2:26; 4:1-3). Citing D. Hiebert, Akin (*1, 2, 3 John*, 32) rightly notes, "The contents of the epistle . . . are most advantageously studied in the light of the writer's purpose as stated in 5:13."

Second, put negatively, John wanted to refute some heresies that were related to one another.[2] The growing movement of Gnosticism, which proved quite troublesome to Christianity, was fully-developed in the second century. But the framework which led to that fully-developed heresy was already in place in the first-century. John combats three different false teachings which seem to be part of an incipient or proto-Gnosticism. He refutes (1) an antinomian heresy, which many believe to be that of the Nicolaitans;[3] this antinomianism had to do with lawlessness, debauchery, licentiousness, and every kind of immorality. The antinomian heresy was closely related to early Gnosticism in that its advocates saw "the body as a mere envelope covering the human spirit, which . . . was inviolable"; others, according to Irenaeus, thought it possible to become truly "spiritual," where one progressed beyond the possibility of any defilement."[4] Accordingly, they thought that one could be righteous without practicing righteousness. But in his letter John emphasizes that God must be seen as holy and righteous, and thus he can require the same kind of holiness and righteousness from his creatures that would have fellowship with him. And this teaching would knock out the heresy which says that you can live like the devil, i.e. you can live an unholy, immoral, licentious, debauched life, and still have fellowship with God.

John also combats (2) a docetic Gnosticism which rejected the incarnation of Christ. Gnosticism gets its name from the Greek word *gnōsis* which means "knowledge," and it was an early heresy, the adherents of which claimed to have exclusive, super-knowledge concerning spiritual things, a knowledge far beyond that which the average person had and which was available only to those who submitted themselves to the rigors and initiation into the Gnostic order. They believed that matter is evil and spirit is good, an idea largely derived from ancient Greek philosophy. The outworking of this belief was that the material body, since it is a part of matter, is essentially evil. The soul, or the spirit, would be good. Therefore, applying this idea to Jesus Christ—and remember these people claimed to be Christians, and yet

[2] Scholars have found it very difficult to determine with utter certainty the nature of the false teachers in 1 John. The best approach here is to study the text of the letter itself and to consider statements found in the tradition of the early church. On the theological struggle and opponents in 1 John, see G. Burge, "Letters of John," *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments* (Eds. R. P. Martin and P.H. Davids; Downers Grove, IL.: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 590-93.

[3] Irenaeus connects such moral laxity with the Nicolaitans who originated from Nicolas (Acts 6:5; cf. Rev. 2:14-15); cited by Robert G. Gromacki, *New Testament Survey* (Des Plaines, IL.: Regular Baptist Press, 1974), 370.

[4] John R. W. Stott, *The Letters of John* (TNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 79.

they were caught up in this heresy—if matter is evil and spirit is good, then obviously it is impossible for the divine Christ to have had a material body because that would engage him in some way with that which is evil. So, they came up with a doctrine that today is called Docetism, or docetic Gnosticism. The word "docetic" is related to the Greek word *dokeō*, which means "to seem" or "to appear." And this doctrine said that Christ did not really have an actual material body; he just "seemed" to have it; it "appeared" that way. In other words, he was a spiritual phantom, not a real, genuine human being. Therefore, as John refutes this heresy, he emphasizes the reality of Jesus Christ as both God and man. The latter emphasis is very prominent in this epistle. Passages like the affirmation of Christ's incarnation in 1 John 4:1-3 could well have been directed against docetic Gnosticism.

Another Gnostic falsehood that John refutes came from (3) the teachings of Cerinthus,[5] who made a distinction between a divine Christ-spirit and the man Jesus who had a physical body. Cerinthus claimed that this divine Christ-spirit came upon the human Jesus at his baptism, and then left him just before his crucifixion. Consequently, Jesus the man, not the Son of God, died on the cross. First John 5:6 might have been marshaled against Cerinthian Gnosticism. John denies this heresy and affirms that the Jesus Christ who died was the same Jesus Christ who was baptized.

John instructs his readers that since God is holy, he requires that those who are in fellowship with him be holy also. He emphasizes the holiness and righteousness of God. If God is holy and righteous, light rather than darkness, and love rather than hate, then upright living should be reflected in those who are a part of his family, i.e. those who are genuinely related to him. Believers will not be infinitely holy as God is, but will insofar as it is possible for a human being to measure up in those areas. Thus, any person who is consistently unrighteous, unholy, or has a belligerent adversarial relationship toward his fellow Christians will automatically categorize himself as an unbeliever. Also, of course, those who do not have the proper view of the person and work of Christ will also be categorized as unbelievers. The epistle of 1 John essentially has to do with the criteria which determine the reality of Christian profession (5:13).

How do you know whether a person is really a Christian or whether he is an apostate, professing but not a genuine Christian? John answers this question in his letter, which has a tremendous application in our day.

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[5] Irenaeus says that John proclaimed his gospel in order to refute the errors of Cerinthus (*Adv. Haer*. 3.3.4; 3.11.1).

Purpose: Cf. 1 John 5:13. John provides assurance of salvation for those who measure up to the criteria: (1) orthodox belief (esp. in the Incarnation), (2) obedience/righteous living, and (3) love for other believers. These authenticating tests/criteria are discussed throughout the letter.

STUDY OUTLINE OF 1 JOHN[6]

I. Eyewitness Authentication of the Incarnation of Christ, Which Provides the Basis for Fellowship between God and Man (1:1-4)

II. The Criteria Which Determine the Reality of Christian Profession (1:5-5:13)

A. God is Light—Those in Fellowship with Him Walk in Purity Also (1:5-2:2).

B. True Christians Obey God (2:3-11).

1. The "new" [yet old] commandment is to love other Christians.

C. The Life of Fellowship is Available to All Age Groups (2:12-14).

D. True Christians Avoid "Worldliness" (2:15-17).

E. The Threat of False Teaching (2:18-27)

1. Unbelievers deny that Jesus is the Christ.

F. True Christians "Abide" in Christ, i.e. Keep His Word (2:28-3:3).

G. True Christians Do Not "Live in Sin" (3:4-10).

H. True Christians Love One Another, While Unbelievers Hate, Kill, Etc. (3:11-24).

[6] I am indebted to Dr. William E. Bell, Jr., formerly Senior Professor of Religion at Dallas Baptist University. Much of this article greatly reflects and is based on his excellent teaching on the letters of John.

I. True Christians Affirm That Jesus Christ Has Come in the Flesh (4:1-6).

J. True Christians Love God and One Another (4:7-12).
1. Because God himself is love.

K. Summary of Grounds for Christian Assurance (4:13-5:3)

1. Possession of Holy Spirit

2. Confession of Jesus as Son of God

3. Obedience to God, i.e. love for Christians

L. Reiteration of Absolute Necessity for Belief in God's Record of Christ's Person and Work (5:4-12)

M. Statement of John's Purpose in Writing (5:13)

1. Assurance of salvation for those who measure up to the criteria

III. Conclusion (5:14-21)

A. The Power of Prayer and the Sin to Death (5:14-17)

B. The Christian's Assurance in Christ vs. the Satanic World (5:18-20)

C. Final Warning Against Idolatry (5:21)

2 JOHN: DO NOT HOUSE OR SUPPORT FALSE TEACHERS

Author: The "Elder," i.e. John the Apostle. It was not uncommon for an apostle to call himself an elder (cf. 1 Peter 5:1). The term is particularly apropos for John to use to describe himself at this point in his life because he is an old man—the last of the apostles still alive!

Provenance: Likely written in Asia Minor in the vicinity of Ephesus

Date: The traditional date is again c. A.D. 95/96, but a date somewhere around A.D. 90-95 is not unreasonable, but likely later than 1 John.

Destination/Recipients: The "chosen/elect lady and her children," probably a local congregation or house-church in Asia Minor near Ephesus.

Purpose: In the light of the recent danger from false teachers, the Christians in this congregation or house church are urged by John to continue loving fellow believers and refuse any support or hospitality to false teachers who deny Jesus as the incarnate Christ.

OUTLINE OF 2 JOHN

I. Salutation (vv. 1-3)

II. Love Fellow Believers (vv. 4-6)

III. Refuse Support to False Teachers Who Reject Apostolic Doctrine (vv. 7-11)

IV. Closing (vv. 12-13)

3 JOHN: SHOW HOSPITALITY TO ITINERANT MISSIONARIES

Author: The "Elder," i.e. John the Apostle. It was not uncommon for an apostle to call himself an elder (cf. 1 Peter 5:1). The term is particularly apropos for John to use to describe himself at this point in his life because he is an old man—the last of the apostles still alive!

Provenance: Likely written in Asia Minor in the vicinity of Ephesus

Date: The traditional date is again c. A.D. 95/96, but a date somewhere around A.D. 90-95 is not unreasonable, but likely later than 2 John.

Destination/Recipients: Gaius, perhaps a convert of the apostle John. Where Gaius lived is unknown, but the location may be near Ephesus.

Purpose: Gaius is urged to continue his generous hospitality toward traveling Christian preachers, despite the refusal of such support by Diotrephes, a controlling and autocratic leader "who loves to be first."

OUTLINE OF 3 JOHN

I. Salutation (vv. 1-4)

II. Commendation of Gaius (vv. 5-8)

III. Warning Against Diotrephes (vv. 9-10)

IV. Commendation of Demetrius (vv. 11-12)

V. Closing (vv. 13-14)

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An Annotated Bibliography for 1, 2 & 3 John[1]

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Akin, Daniel. *1, 2 & 3 John*. New American Commentary 38. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2002.

Bray, Gerald Lewis and Thomas C. Oden, eds. *James, 1-2 Peter, 1-3 John, Jude*. Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament, 11. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000.

Following the pattern he set in this series' volumes on Romans and 1 and 2 Corinthians, Bray provides for each periscope in the Catholic Epistles the text in the Revised Standard Version, an overview of the patristic commentaries on it, quotations from the most important patristic expositions keyed to specific words and phrases, and brief notes below. Also included are a 14-page introduction to the Catholic Epistles, a list of early Christian writers and documents cited, and biographical sketches and short descriptions of select anonymous works.

Barker, Glenn W. "1, 2, 3 John." In *Expositor's Bible Commentary: with the New International Version of the Holy Bible*. Ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, et al. 12 vols. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976-1992. vol. 12: Pages 293-380.

Bray, Gerald Lewis and Thomas C. Oden, eds. *James, 1-2 Peter, 1-3 John, Jude*. Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament, 11. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000.

Brooke, Alan England. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Johannine Epistles*. International Critical Commentary. New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1912; repr. 1994.

[1] The information given under most entries was gleaned and taken from *New Testament Abstracts*.

Brown, Raymond Edward. *The Community of the Beloved Disciple.* New York: Paulist, 1979.

Brown, Raymond E. *The Epistles of John*. Anchor Bible, 30. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1982.

Bruce, F. F. *The Epistles of John: Introduction, Exposition, and Notes*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979.

Burge, Gary M. *The Anointed Community: The Holy Spirit in the Johannine Tradition*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987. [also on the Gospel]

Based on his PhD dissertation directed by noted NT scholar I. H. Marshall, Burge investigates the Johannine community's view of the Holy Spirit's role and contends that its pneumatology is first and foremost Christocentric. Burge surveys the research done on Johannine pneumatology, considers the Spirit as "Paraclete," and discusses the Holy Spirit in John's gospel and other Johannine writings under the following titles: (1) Spirit and Christiology, (2) Spirit and eschatology, (3) the Spirit and the sacraments, and (4) Spirit, mission, and anamnesis.

Burge, Gary M. *The Letters of John: From Biblical Text to Contemporary Life*. NIV Application Commentary. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996.

In an exposition of 1, 2, and 3 John Burge shows that the Johannine church struggled with the intellectual setting in that time and also with internal leadership matters, etc. He argues that the Johannine context can easily be bridged today to our culture because it too is struggling with the same sort of things. After an introduction of thirty pages, Burge follows the following outline: prologue (1:1-4); God is light—and we should walk accordingly (1:5-3:10); God is love—and we should walk accordingly (3:11-5:12); and conclusion (5:13-21). For 2 John the outline is: personal greetings (1-3); loving the family of God (4-6); protecting the family of God (7-11); and closing (12-13). Like all of the NIV Application Commentaries, the author is concerned with the original meaning of the text, bridging contexts, and contemporary application.

Charlesworth, James H., ed. *John and the Dead Sea Scrolls*. New York: Crossroad, 1990; enlarged ed. of Brown & Charlesworth, 1972.

Culy, Martin M. *1, 2, 3 John: A Handbook on the Greek Text*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2004.

Dodd, C. H. *The Johannine Epistles*. Moffat NT Commentary 19. London, Hodder & Stoughton; New York: Harper, 1946.

Edwards, Ruth B. *The Johannine Epistles*. NT Guides. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996.

Edwards first reflects on reasons why one should study 1, 2, and 3 John. Next, she discusses the form, style, and content of 2 and 3 John, and the form, style, sources, and background of 1 John. Then she deals with the authorship and date of these letters, along with a consideration of Christology and John's opponents. After sketching the main themes of 1 John, Edwards next discusses God's love and human response, sin, forgiveness, judgment, and eschatology.

Haas, C., Marinus de Jonge, and J. L. Swellengrebel. *A Translator's Handbook on the Letters of John*. London: United Bible Societies, 1972.

Hengel, Martin. *The Johannine Question*. London: SCM Press; Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1989.

Hengel argues that John's gospel and the Johannine letters are not the expression of a community, as many scholars believe, but rather that of a theologian, a towering figure who is the founder and head of the Johannine school. The book is divided into five chapters: (1) the Fourth Gospel in the second century A. D.; (2) John the Elder as the author of 2 and 3 John; (3) 1 John and the split in the school; (4) the author, his pupils, and the unity of the Gospel; and (5) John the Elder, his origin, and the historical setting of his school.

Houlden, J. L. *A Commentary on the Johannine Epistles*. Black's NT Commentaries. Rev. 2nd ed. London: A & C Black, 1994.

Johnson, Thomas Floyd. "The Antithesis of the Elder: A Study of the Dualistic Language of the Johannine Epistles." PhD dissertation: Duke University, 1979; (UMI microfilm, 1980).

Johnson, Thomas Floyd. *1, 2, and 3 John*. New International Biblical Commentary, 17. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993.

Kenney, Garrett C. *Leadership in John: An Analysis of the Situation and Strategy of the Gospel and the Epistles of John.* Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2000.

After a brief introduction Kenney reflects on Johannine Christianity (sources, authorship, date, milieu, location, origin, and development) and the nature of leadership (understood as "the means by which authority is made effective"). He investigates leadership in 2 John, 3 John, John's gospel, and 1 John, in that order, referring to five subjects: (1) adherents; (2) opponents; (3) legitimation; (4) strategy; and (5) leadership. He concludes that many of the problems faced in these letters are similar to those faced by Christian churches today.

Kenney, Garrett C. *The Relation of Christology to Ethics in the First Epistle of John.* Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2000.

Kenney discusses the authorship, historical setting, and structure of 1 John, and also provides an exegesis and commentary on each section of 1 John (1:1-4; 1:5-2:2; 2:3-11; 2:12-17; etc.). He investigates the relationship between Christology and ethics according to 1 John as gospel and command, and considers various elements of Christian spirituality: trinitarian, Christocentric, the Holy Spirit, Scripture-authority, ecclesiastical, etc.

Kruse, Colin G. *The Letters of John*. Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Leicester, England: Apollos, 2000.

In his introduction Kruse notes that in a sad time in the Johannine community's life, these letters make important contributions to the grounds for Christian assurance, the Holy Spirit's role in the community, Christian perfection, the meaning of *koinōnia*, the atonement, and Christology. For each letter he furnishes an introduction and exposition of the text. His outline for 1 John is as follows: a preface concerning the word of life (1:1-4); claims to know God tested by attitudes to sin (1:5-2:2) and by obedience (2:3-11); affirmation and exhortation for believers (2:12-17); etc. The outline of 2 John has these headings: opening greetings (1-3); walking in the truth (4-6); denial of the truth (7-9); do not receive those who deny the truth (10-11); and final greetings (12-13). Hi outline for 3 John is: opening greetings (1); rejoicing that Gaius walks in the truth (2-4); Gaius commended for his hospitality (5-8); Diotrephes' opposition to the elder (9-10); the elder's commendation of Demetrius (11-12); and final greetings (13-14). Kruse also includes notes on love

and hate in the Johannine community and an appendix on biblical and extrabiblical references to Cain.

Law, Robert. *The Tests of Life: A Study of the First Epistle of John*. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1909.

Lieu, Judith, and John Kenneth Riches. *The Second and Third Epistles of John: History and Background*. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1986.

Based on a PhD dissertation directed by F. M. Young, this book examines 2 and 3 John to consider their subject matter, origins, reception, and how they have been used. The book has five chapters and discusses their inclusion in the canon, genre, the presbyter and his letters, background, and the gospel in John's writings.

Lieu, Judith. *The Theology of the Johannine Epistles*. NT Theology. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

After an introduction to the historical and background settings of the Johannine epistles, Lieu discusses theology: the author and his community, confidence in the community's life (we know), the language of religious experience ("fellowship with him"), life's tests, Jesus in faith and tradition, God and the world, whether theology is present in these epistles. She also places the letters within the Johannine tradition and the New Testament, and considers their importance in the church.

Marshall, I. Howard. *The Epistles of John*. NICNT. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978.

Though somewhat dated now, this commentary by a noted British evangelical is well-done and quite helpful.

Maynard, Michael. *A History of the Debate over 1 John 5, 7-8: A Tracing of the Longevity of the Comma Johanneum, with Evaluations of Arguments against Its Authenticity*. Tempe: Comma, 1995.

After defining terms and introducing the text-critical problem known as the Johannine Comma, Maynard makes available the relevant evidence from each century regarding the debate over the authenticity or inauthenticity of 1 John 5:7-8. The work contains several quotations which run the gamut from various early church Fathers to many modern scholars up to 1995. The book includes fifteen appendices. Maynard

concludes that many of the arguments against the omission of the disputed text are lacking.

Painter, John. *The Quest for the Messiah: The History, Literature and Theology of the Johannine Community*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991.

Painter examines the Johannine community's history, literature, and theology from the viewpoint of its pursuit for Jesus the Messiah. Chapter subjects include: Johannine Christianity, Christology and history in the Prologue, quest stories in John 1-4, the paradigm of rejection, the Messiah and the bread of life, the hidden Messiah in John 7-8, the Son of Man as the light of the world, the enigmatic Son of Man, the Messiah as the good shepherd, the continued quest, eschatological faith redefining Messiahship, the Messiah's farewell, the opponents in 1 John, and the quest's fulfillment.

Phillips, John. *Exploring the Epistles of John: An Expository Commentary*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2003.

Rensberger, David K. *1 John, 2 John, 3 John*. Abingdon NT Commentaries. Nashville: Abingdon, 1997.

Richards, W. Larry. *The Classification of the Greek Manuscripts of the Johannine Epistles*. Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1977.

Written primarily for the textual critic, this work classifies the Greek manuscripts of the Johannine letters by considering at least three manuscripts of all known manuscript groups. After some chapters on materials and methods on selecting readings, the author considers various manuscripts and applies what is known as the Claremont Profile Method. He gives attention also to the methods used in NT textual criticism and points to the use of computers in processing data for this discipline. The book also contains appendices on units of variation and their support, the use of multiple readings, and the percentage agreement of P^{74} with the manuscripts selected for this study.

Schnackenburg, Rudolf. *The Johannine Epistles: Introduction and Commentary*. Trans. by Reginald & Ilse Fuller. New York: Crossroad, 1992.

This English translation of Schnackenburg's commentary is based on the seventh German edition, which was written in 1984. His lengthy

introduction to the Johannine letters and 1 John include discussions on form and genre, composition and style, the unity and structure of 1 John, the false teaching opposed, the letters' place in the history of religions, etc. The largest part of the commentary is a detailed exposition of 1 John with twelve excursuses. Then, after an introduction to 2 and 3 John, he provides an exegesis for each letter.

Segovia, Fernando F. *Love Relationships in the Johannine Tradition: agapē/agapan in I John and the Fourth Gospel.* Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982.

This work operates on the hypothesis that the author of 1 John was engaged in the redaction of the Fourth Gospel. After highlighting the state of research on several topics, Segovia examines the meaning of the words *agapē* and *agapan* in 1 John, the sections of Jesus' farewell discourse (John 15:1-17; 13:34-35; 15:18-16:15) that are assigned (by J. Becker) to a life setting like that found in 1 John, and in the other *agapē* passages in the Gospel of John. He concludes that the redactor working in the presupposed setting of 1 John sprinkled Jesus' farewell discourse with assertions of the centrality of Christ's death to the community, and also traced back the love command to Jesus himself as he prepared his disciples for his departure.

Sloyan, Gerard Stephen. *Walking in the Truth: Perseverers and Deserters: The First, Second, and Third Letters of John*. NT in Context. Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1995.

In his introduction to these letters, Sloyan points out their literary character and harshness in tone. In the exposition he aims to explain the letters when it is difficult to understand their meaning, and then make accessible that once-obscured message to the present-day church.

Smalley, Stephen S. *1, 2, 3 John*. Waco, TX: Word, 1984.

Considered one of the standard works to consult on John's letters, Smalley argues that these epistles were written by one author in the last decade of the first century A.D. He maintains that they reflect the emergent history of the Johannine community which led to John's gospel. After a bibliography and introduction he treats 1 John according to the following outline: preface—the word of life (1:1-4), living in the light (1:5-2:29), living as children of God (3:1-5:13), and conclusion—

confidence (5:14-21). For Smalley 2 John deals with living in truth and love, and 3 John is a plea for help.

Smith, D. Moody. *First, Second, and Third John*. Interpretation Commentary Series. Louisville: John Knox, 1991.

Stott, John R. W. *The Letters of John: An Introduction and Commentary*. 2nd ed. Tyndale NT Commentaries, 19. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 1988.

Pound-for-pound, Stott's commentary is probably the best commentary available on the Johannine letters. His work is probably best known for its examination of the various "tests" of assurance which spiral down through the letter: (1) orthodox belief, particularly in the incarnation of Jesus, (2) a lifestyle which obeys God, and (3) love for fellow believers.

Strecker, Georg. *The Johannine Letters: A Commentary on 1, 2, and 3 John*. Hermeneia Commentary Series. Trans. by Linda M. Maloney; ed. by Harold W. Attridge. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996.

Talbert, Charles H. *Reading John: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Fourth Gospel and the Johannine Epistles*. Reading the NT. New York: Crossroad, 1992.

This book aims to understand large thought units and their relationship to Johannine thinking as a whole. The book first treats the Johannine letters: getting oriented (2-3 John; 1 John 1:1-5), walking in the light (1 John 1:6-2:28), discerning the spirits (1 John 2:29-4:6), etc. The book next deals with John's gospel: a revealing and empowering presence (John 1:1-18), creator of a new community (John 1:19-2:12), proponent of a new birth (2:13-3:21), etc. An appendix is also offered on ascending-descending redeemer figures in the ancient Mediterranean world.

Thompson, Marianne Meye. *1-3 John*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992.

Vaughan, Curtis. *1, 2, 3 John*. A Study Guide. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970.

Wagner, Günter. *An Exegetical Bibliography of the New Testament: John and 1, 2, 3 John*. Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1987.

This bibliography on John's gospel and letters is written in a chapter-and-verse number format that lists the books and articles that have been written on each passage.

Other useful bibliographies/surveys which consider resources on the Johannine letters include:

D. A. Carson, *New Testament Commentary Survey*, 5th ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002).—soon to be published in a 6th edition (2007).

John Glynn, *Commentary and Reference Survey* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2003).

Book Reviews

Old Testament Turning Points: The Narratives That Shaped a Nation. By Victor H. Matthews. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005, 208 pp., $18.99.

The writers of the Old Testament re-used themes, re-visited subjects, and repeated language. They did so in order to carry to a new generation those historical-theological messages God had revealed in the past. Most modern seminary graduates and any number of today's Bible readers recognize this biblical strategy. Unfortunately, Victor Matthews' book does not present much that is new for modern Bible readers who are aware of this "repetition" of material in scripture.

The subtitle of Matthews' volume is his thesis. Old Testament writers recognized that certain events, according to Matthews, marked Israel as a people of the covenant. These events were preserved in historical narrative. Later, addressing new audiences and new settings, biblical writers re-used elements of those historical narratives (themes, language, theological message, etc.) to keep alive and to renew the idea that Israel was a covenant people. These basic narratives are seen in the volume under review as the "narratives that shaped a nation." Matthews' point is, then, that the shaping and re-shaping of the nation went on primarily through the re-use of the stories. Dr. Matthews illuminates the process using eight narratives but does not insist that these eight are the only ones re-used or the only ones which contributed to Israel's continuing identification.

The eight narratives discussed in this volume are: the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Eden, Yahweh's establishing a covenant with Abraham (including material from Genesis 12, 15, and 17), Moses leading the people out of Egypt (material from Exodus 2-20), David's selection of Jerusalem as his capital (extending through 2 Samuel 7), Jeroboam and the Northern Kingdom's secession, Samaria's fall, Nebuchadnezzar's destruction of Jerusalem and the subsequent exile, and Cyrus' victory over Babylon and the Exiles' return (including the work of Ezra and Nehemiah). Recognizing the inherent significance of the narratives chosen, few readers would fault Matthews for his choices. With the possible exception of the Garden of Eden account, each of the event-clusters is theologically significant and surfaces repeatedly in the Old Testament material. (This review does not quarrel with the theological significance of the Genesis 3 material. But one can question how often the narrative and its themes recur or are re-used in the Old Testament. In my estimation the Genesis 3 material is used or referred to more often in the New Testament.)

Professor Matthews has written extensively on Old Testament history and on Israel's setting in the ancient Near East. Consequently, the reader expects a thorough presentation of the historical events behind the biblical narrative and is

not disappointed. More, the author provides occasional side-bar references to extra-biblical literature to show the historical and intellectual context of God's Old Testament people. This presentation of history and culture may be the greatest strength of this small volume, but it is not the author's purpose. He wants to key on the audiences' "insider information" which the prophet or biblical writer can assume (i.e., what the audience already knows about the story). Also, Matthew wants to find the "echoes" of the narratives in later writings, re-used themes or elements which the biblical writer used with later audiences to make an earlier message relevant. Matthews believes insider information and echoes constitute a "cultural portfolio," a portfolio which includes the terms of Israel's covenant with Yahweh, reflections of the ethical character of Yahweh, and the justification of Yahweh's punishment of covenant-breakers (7-8).

Chapter six of *Old Testament Turning Points* discusses the narrative of Samaria's fall and demonstrates Matthews' method. Initially, Matthews refers to questions raised by the destruction of the northern kingdom, a portion of the people of God, questions about Yahweh's activity and character, and about the religious implications for Judah. Then the author presents the "Historical Overview," a quite good description of the northern kingdom's fall. Then he ranges back and forth through 1 and 2 Kings to identify the "Deuteronomic historian's" rationale for God's judgment on Israel. But Matthews does not make the "insider viewpoint," what later readers (those reading after 722 B.C. and even after the exile) knew or remembered. (By assuming the books of Kings and especially 2 Kings 17 are heavily edited after the exile, Matthews creates some difficulties for most readers of this journal.) Matthews believes the final form of Amos and Hosea date to a time after Samaria's fall and believes they were edited in part to provide justification for Yahweh's judgment. Isaiah 9 and Rabshakeh's speech in Isaiah 36, along with Psalm 78 (also argued to be post-exilic), echo the narrative of Samaria's fall as a testimony to Yahweh's judgment according to Matthews.

Any proposal describing how biblical writers used events and themes must deal with the dating of the various materials. But the gulf between critical scholars, of which Matthews is one, and conservative scholars is often broad on this issue. This small volume does an acceptable job of describing the prophets', poets', and biblical historians' use of past events to make their points about God's activity. But the question of whether or not 2 Kings 17-19, the edited books of Amos and Hosea, etc. reflect a post-exilic perspective is a difficult one. Conservative scholars generally question even the existence of a Deuteronomist or a Deuteronomistic History. Still, this volume offers something to the reader regardless of theological stance.

Matthews is a careful historian who knows the ancient Near Eastern world and the modern scholarly world. There is much to be learned here even if the reader disagrees with Matthews' developmental scheme. The author's twelve pages of "Works Cited" is a good reading list for Old Testament history. Moreover, the author provides a brief, but helpful, glossary of terms, defining terms such as "utopia," "reflection story," and "hegemony." A biblical index and

subject index make the book more user-friendly, too. Still, the book is not for the biblical neophyte.

Albert F. Bean
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Johann Sebastian Bach: His Life in Pictures and Documents. By Hans Conrad Fischer. Translated by Silvia Lutz. Holzgerlingon, Germany: Hänssler Verlag, 2000, 188 pp., CD–Rom., no price listed.

At first glance this handsome volume appears to be only an attractive book which would grace the coffee table of any well-appointed home. But an examination of this work written by the respected German biographer, Hans Conrad Fischer, reveals not only an extremely well-written life story of this revered Baroque composer, but much more. It is the material in the sub-title, *His Life in Pictures and Documents*, which really sets it apart. The author's utilization of reproductions of period pictures, manuscripts, and other documents gives visual credence to the entire text. Included are 73 full-page pictures and 49 smaller ones. This is impressive.

Fischer begins with a discussion of Bach's legacy. His research is commendable, though a bit overdone. He lists 53 Bach family members (12-15) from Vitas Bach, a 16th century Hungarian baker, through J. S. Bach's youngest grandson, including biographical sketches. (Bach was number 24.)

The first 38 years of Bach's life are covered rapidly (1-79), with the remainder dealing with his life and amazing composition production at Leipzig where he spent his last 27. Orphaned at age 10, Bach went to live with an older brother. At 15, because of his beautiful voice, he was accepted as a student at the Lyceum of St. Michael Monastery in Lüneburg. When his voice broke, he switched to the violin. Leaving grammar school, he worked for awhile in minor musical positions until, at age 18, he was appointed organist at Arnstadt. After 4 years there, he moved to another organist position at Mülhausen. There he wed his second cousin, Maria Barbara Bach, who was the mother of his first 7 children. After a short time he became court Kapellmeister in the court of Duke Wilhelm Ernst at Weimar, serving 9 years.

Bach's next position was as court Kapellmeister at Cöthen. In that six-year period, sadness came to the family in the death of his wife, Maria Barbara, who died at 35. Two years later, he married Anna Magadalena Wilck, a trained soprano, who was the mother of 13 more children. Of his 20 children, several were respected musicians.

Although Bach was musically fulfilled at Weimar and Cöthen, he "had a desire to commit himself to church music." This opportunity came when the position of Cantor of St. Thomas in Leipzig opened in 1723. Bach was desirous of the post but the city council showed little interest. They unsuccessfully tried to hire two well-known composers, Teleman and Graupner before turning to their third choice, Bach. Fischer includes the famous quotation by the senior mayor of Leipzig which expressed their frustration: "Since we cannot get the best, we have to make do with a mediocrity."

Eventually Bach was hired. Bach's duties at Leipzig were overwhelming. Fischer states, "The cantor of St. Thomas's was the musical director of the city; and was also responsible for music at the main city church, at two other churches, and at the university." The administration of these positions rested with the city council, not the church board. This was a challenge for Bach, bringing about many heated discussions. The Leipzig years produced most of Bach's church compositions. The amount is staggering! The requirements were high for the amount of choral music performed. An estimated 55-60 cantatas, mostly Bach's, were done in a year's span. His total sacred works include 250 cantatas, 280 organ compositions, the great Passions, oratorios, and masses. Added to this were over 200 secular cantatas and enduring masterpieces.

In *Johann Sebastian Bach*, three features stand out: (1) Fischer consistently magnifies the life and Lutheran faith of the man, wisely avoiding the technical complexities of his music. (2) As mentioned before, the pictures and other visual enhancements make the engrossing text become even more alive. Occasionally, this is overdone. Example: the four-page spread of the portraits of 14 civic leaders of Leipzig. (3) The final feature is a bonus—an accompanying CD containing 17 key samples of Bach's best-known pieces from various periods of his life.

Fischer's closing chapter emphasizes Bach's Christian commitment in the following quotation, " 'SDG'—(*Soli Deo Gloria*; for the glory of God alone) is written at the end of many partitas by Bach; and at their beginning we can read 'JJ'—(*Jesu juva*; Jesus help)."

And a direct Bach quotation from one of his students illustrates Bach's spiritual demands in his teaching. "In the end, the final purpose of all the music, is to be only for the glory of God and the soul's enjoyment. Wherever this is not taken into consideration, there cannot really be music."

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Experiencing the Word New Testament. Holman Christian Standard Bible. Nashville: TN; Holman Bible, 2001, 591 pp., $17.99 hardcover.

The Gift (the New Testament for New Believers with Psalms and Proverbs). Holman Christian Standard Bible. Nashville: TN; Holman Bible, 2002, 592 pp., $9.99 paper.

New Testament with Psalms and Proverbs-Ultratrim. Holman Christian Standard Bible. Nashville, TN: Holman Bible, 2002, 684 pp., $5.00 paper.

Holman Bible Publishers has released several special editions of their increasingly popular Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB) translation. The New Testament text was first published in 2000. The methodology for this translation is the optimal equivalence approach that seeks to translate the original meaning of the language while maintaining the best possible accuracy.

This translation is faithful to the original manuscripts while maintaining a high level of readability. Even in comparison to other modern translations, the HCSB generally excels in keeping the renderings of difficult words and passages easy to understand.

This book review is intended to evaluate and analyze three of the various specialty editions that have been published using the HCSB translation as the Biblical text. The intent is to give a snapshot of the features, plus the strengths and weaknesses of each edition. When possible, an assessment will be made on how each edition compares to similar volumes in the field.

The *Experiencing the Word* edition is designed for a maturing Christian with a desire to move beyond the cursory reading of passages and delve deeper into the roots and origins of Scripture. This edition accomplishes this by featuring almost two hundred Greek word studies placed in the margin. These notes open the door for the reader to have a deeper understanding of many of the key words used in the New Testament. Each word study gives the original transliteration along with numerous passages where the word is used. The additional cross-references will not be sufficient for the student that desires to do in-depth studies from the original languages. More academic reference works would be recommended for the more serious student.

In addition, the margins contain several hundred spiritual insights from noted author, speaker and theologian Henry Blackaby. These insights are poignant nuggets of truth that offer applications of the biblical text for daily Christian living. These thoughts do a good job of personalizing many of the highlighted passages for the reader.

The introductory materials for this edition include two particularly helpful features. The first is a guide of seven principles for experiencing the Word through the New Testament. This four-page feature highlights hundreds of relevant scripture passages with corresponding page numbers. The second feature is an index of the Greek word studies that are found along the margins throughout the text. Each translation reference includes the Greek word and the reference page.

The greatest weakness of the *Experiencing the Word* edition is its lack of a topical concordance. For any serious Bible student, an index of words and passages is an essential tool for exploring cross references to a multitude of topics and passages. Adding a concordance would greatly improve this volume. Visually, this edition is superior to many comparable versions on the market. A variety of fonts, sizes and colors are used to highlight and complement features of the text, marginal notes and references.

The HCSB edition for new Christians is called *The Gift (the New Testament for New Believers with Psalms and Proverbs).* With almost two hundred in-text study notes, this edition is designed to encourage the new believer. The study notes are written in conversational style with the intent of assisting the reader in understanding spiritual truths in simple language. Also inserted into the Biblical text are numerous quotes from several dozen notable Christian authors and leaders. These insights will stimulate a new believer's focus on their own personal growth as a new Christian.

In the front of this Bible edition are ninety days of daily devotions. These devotions walk a new Christian through many of the important spiritual issues that a believer needs to address for early spiritual growth. These devotions also feature Biblical references at the bottom of the devotions with page numbers that will be a functional help to a new Christian.

The book jacket states that this version also includes a plan of salvation to assist a new believer in sharing their faith. There is no printed presentation of the plan of salvation in this edition. It would have been a worthwhile addition.

Two additional features to this edition that are worth noting are the bullet notes and the concordance. The eight pages of bullet notes explain words and terms that are marked in the biblical text with a bullet. These notes will be valuable in expanding the understanding of a new believer. The concise topical concordance is an extensive ten page listing of words from the text that will assist a new Christian in cross-referencing topics and words for further exploration.

The Ultratrim edition of the HCSB is a narrow size version that is extremely convenient to carry into a variety of situations. This Bible is approximately the size of a pocket calendar so it can easily fit into a suit jacket, purse, briefcase or even a young person's backpack or lunch box.

Similar to other HCSB editions, this Ultratrim version includes a presentation page, the words of Christ in red, and a special introduction to the HCSB translation. Also featured are helpful footnotes, which clarify many issues that are raised in the text. Also included are seven pages of the popular HCSB Bullet Notes and eighteen pages of a Concise Topical Concordance.

This paperback version is very affordable as compared to similar sized versions of other translations. It is an ideal size for the Christian to carry with them to read during a break at work or school. It is perfect for witnessing situations where an individual does not want to carry a large Bible that may appear overbearing.

Bobby Gilstrap
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Kevin J. Vanhoozer: *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2005. Pp. xi + 488. $39.95, paper.

Over a generation ago Dorothy Sayers argued against the misperception of doctrine as stale and uninspiring claiming that, rather than some inventive philosophy or one's individual creativity, "the dogma is the drama" (*Creed or Chaos*, Methuen: London, 1947). In the present text Kevin Vanhoozer articulates how doctrine is the dramatic, animating force missing from the twenty-first century church. Where the church is the "theater of the gospel," it is doctrine which leads individuals and congregations to live within the drama of God making all things new in Jesus Christ.

Vanhoozer takes as his starting point George Lindbeck's thesis that the criteria of Christian identity resides in Spirit-led church practices—the cultural-linguistic approach to theology (*The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age*, Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984). The "*canonical*-linguistic approach to be put forward in the present book," Vanhoozer asserts, "has much in common with its cultural-linguistic cousin. Both agree that meaning and truth are crucially related to language use; however, the canonical-linguistic approach maintains that the normative use is ultimately not that of ecclesial *culture* but of the biblical *canon*" (16). In other words, Vanhoozer reacts to Lindbeck by relocating the norm for Christian doctrine from the community to the canon. And thus, *The Drama of Doctrine* sets forth a postconservitave, canonical-linguistic theology attempting to anchor church doctrine firmly in the ground of Scripture while preserving Lindbeck's emphasis on practice.

As he constructs his canonical-linguistic theology, Vanhoozer sets out a series of controlling metaphors for theology (dramaturgy), Scripture (the script), biblical interpretation (performance), the church (the company), and the pastor (director). And appropriately the *Drama* proceeds in the typical four act play: "the drama" (chapters 1-3), "the script" (chapters 4-7), "the dramaturge" (chapters 8-10), and finally "the performance" (chapters 11-12).

Act one "brings all the elements that go into theology—God, Scripture, doctrine, the church—onstage and coordinates them via the leading metaphor of the *theo-drama*" (35). Here Vanhoozer argues that theology is dramatic. The church's doctrines are not merely lists of things to believe; rather as God has revealed himself in and through the story of redemption, theology is, for Vanhoozer, properly dramatic: "*Drama thus offers an integrative perspective within which to relate propositions, experiences, and narrative*" (101, emphasis original). Thus, rather than merely "religious experience" (Protestant liberalism) or mere propositionalism, "[d]octrine is direction for the fitting participation of individuals and communities in the drama of redemption" (102).

In act two Vanhoozer gives an "account of why the canonical Scriptures ought to be the supreme norm for Christian doctrine and how they so function" (113). Again, in dialogue with Lindbeck, Vanhoozer argues against most contemporary accounts which locate Scripture's authority in the context of its use by the community in favor of a rehabilitated notion of *sola scriptura*. Yet, he is quick to caution against confusing *sola scriptura* with "solo" *scriptura*—the denial of any tradition in favor of individualistic interpretation of Scripture. Rather, *sola scriptura* is a churchly practice where believers, in community, read the "script" with an eye toward performance. Vanhoozer summarizes, "The purpose…of the whole of part 2, has been to rehabilitate the notion of *sola scriptura* in light of a Scripture principle that views the Bible as an authoritative script that calls not merely for intellectual assent but for *live performance*… To practice *sola scriptura* means reading the Bible as a unified book in which the divine author takes up a plurality of human words and literary forms as a means of instructing and engaging his covenant people" (236). Thus Vanhoozer concludes, "[t]heology is faith seeking theo-dramatic understanding, where

understanding is a matter of grasping, and then participating in the field and flow of divine action" (237).

With a dramatic doctrine guided by an authoritative script, Vanhoozer next turns his attention to the means by which the modern church may know whether it is giving an apt performance. Act three: enter the dramaturge. Though rarely employed in the United States, the dramaturge is a traditional position in a theater who assists the director in producing a faithful, historically accurate play which is not only fitting for the play's contemporary audience, but that also takes into consideration previous performances as well. Vanhoozer likens the job of the dramaturge to that of a theologian precisely because the dramaturge's responsibility is to "study the playscript and prepare it for performances that truthfully realize its truth" (247). Thus the theologian/dramaturge is the "*theological* conscience of the church, whose job is to keep asking not only '*Why does God say and do that*?' but '*How can we fit into the theo-dramatic action?*'" (247). The church's fitting performance of its authoritative script calls not only for information (*scientia*, or the technical analysis of the script), but also for formation of the sensibilities (*sapientia*, or the development of canonical wisdom). The final act of *The Drama of Doctrine* takes up the performance itself. Traditionally dramatists have debated whether the essence of the play lies in the script or its performance. Vanhoozer brings this debate together with the question of the church, namely whether the essence of Christianity is located in a system of beliefs or in the life of the church. "Biblical script without ecclesial performance is empty; ecclesial performance without biblical script is blind. Doctrine serves the church by unfolding the canonical logic of the theo-drama and by offering dramaturgical direction as to how Christians today may participate in and continue the evangelical action in new situations" (361-2).

The Drama of Doctrine constitutes the most sustained treatment of postliberalism from a conservative evangelical perspective. Without a doubt the importance of Vanhoozer's project is his direct critique of the cultural-linguistic turn in theology and his positive *canonical*-linguistic proposal. His ability to retain Lindbeck's emphasis upon practice and community while insisting upon the authoritative norm of Scripture is fruitful indeed. It remains to be seen how Vanhoozer's work will be received, but his proposal could constitute quite a revolution among what may be called a growing number of "post-conservatives." For a growing number of conservative evangelicals aware of the problems associated with propositionalism Vanhoozer's work will be most welcome.

The major shortcoming of the book is its size and competing trajectories. Whereas *The Drama of Doctrine* was intended to be a short manifesto for the "postconservative" agenda, Vanhoozer admits that the subject matter proved unwilling of such a short treatment. Because Vanhoozer gives such detailed attention to the relationship between, for example, Scripture and tradition, he requires his readers to hold on to his argument through a significant amount of text. Yet in spite of this the work is worth the effort. *The Drama of Doctrine* will be an important theological contribution for years to come.

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A More Radical Gospel: Essays on Eschatology, Authority, Atonement, and Ecumenism. By Gerhard O. Forde. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004, 223 pp., $22.00.

As I begin this review, a mere four weeks separates me from Gerhard O. Forde's passing. After almost four decades of teaching, this revered Professor of Systematic Theology at Luther Seminary in St. Paul succumbed to pneumonia after a long struggle with Parkinson's disease on August 9, 2006. Personal gratitude for the help I have received across the years from Forde's writings combined with an instinct to protect and propagate his legacy tempts me to abandon the review in favor of eulogy. Happily, this particular collection of essays provides an excellent entrée into Forde's major contributions to the church. Academics, ministers, or students looking for an introduction to Forde's thinking will find *A More Radical Gospel* representative of the themes that dominated his interest, the impressive incisiveness of his theological vision and the special humor that endeared him to many. Those seeking more in-depth engagement with Forde's thinking should look to his more comprehensive monographs. While this volume fairly represents Forde's thinking, the lack of indices and dearth of footnotes does not facilitate the kind of scholarly engagement the impressive content tends to invite.

Lutheran Fundamentalist

At his retirement in 1998 Forde expressed the aim that had sustained him for so long as a minister and a teacher in this way: "I have tried through the years to present the integrity and truth of the tradition, especially as found in Martin Luther, in a way that is interesting, compelling, and exciting." Forde assumed the role of prophet within his own Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, calling her back to her own roots, to the radical apprehension of the only gospel worthy of the name by Martin Luther.

Certainly radical Lutheranism can boast no more clear and persistent advocate than Forde. The essays included in the atonement section rehearse in bold and penetrating fashion Luther's own insistence upon a declarative, imputed righteousness enjoyed by faith together with the concomitant relegation of the law to the negative role of accuser. No third use of the law for Forde. Only grace through faith produces works pleasing to the God who died for sinners. Box-checking holiness programs begone!

Starting All Over Again

Several essays revisit a contemporary fixation precious to many contemporary Christians that Forde loved to despise—progressive sanctification. Luther once said that sanctification is just beginning again with justification, with the gospel; with the proclamation that one's sins are forgiven. Forde defined sanctification as "the art of getting used to justification."

Like Luther, Forde understood that the slightest drop of works righteousness mixed with the pure gospel of grace poisons the whole pot. Next thing you know

forgiven sinners turn away from the gospel toward their own navels where they gaze and gesticulate in the quest to achieve and earn what they once received as a gift—membership in the family of God and the hope of eternal life. For Forde, preoccupation with some traceable increase in personal holiness amounts to an abandonment of the gospel Paul identified among the Galatians and undercuts the attractiveness of Paul's desire to "be found in [Christ] not having a righteousness of [his] own." Perhaps no one in recent memory has expressed more pointedly and with such humor as Forde the ironic impotency of the law to produce what it demands.

Substitutionary Atonement Gone Wild

Forde was less a creative theological constructionist but more the flamboyant defender of the traditions. If he contributed something new to the theological lexicon it may be his notion of the "continuously existing subject" wrongly imagined by non-Lutheran construers of the Christian life. Forde is referring to the "old man," the "man of the flesh" who has been crucified with Christ. "I no longer live," Paul could say. Some falsely imagine that the buried man lives. He died. God has not fixed us so that we can get on with getting better. Instead, as Forde reminds us, God kills us, buries us with Christ and raises us up to new life. Walking by the Spirit continues to be a walk apart from the law (Galatians). Our lives continue to be hidden in Christ. Christ's substitutionary role extends beyond the cross and defines the character of the Christian life, not just entry into that life.

Persnickety Contrarian

Forde's utter commitment to the radical Lutheran heritage he believed had been abandoned by its rightful heirs sometimes resulted in his identification as a bit of a contrarian. Just as Lutheran chins began to quiver with that peculiar happiness only ecumenical activity produces, there was Forde to rain on everyone's parade. The essays included under the ecumenical section provide adequate exposure to Forde's instinct for confessional faithfulness in the face of the mirage of unity purchased by compromise. Forde shines his search light on how thin is the payoff when ecumenical activity attracts those least committed to the distinctive convictions of the traditions they would ostensibly represent at the negotiating table. Only confessional loyalists are equipped to identify where bases for unity appear and where the ways must part.

Pillar of Fire

Not unlike Luther, Forde's unique contribution is not a broad and systematizing grasp of many things, but a clear, penetrating vision of a few things, vital things without which the character of the whole faith would be endangered. Forde is the man who saw a narrow pillar of fire descending from heaven to earth. Its name is justification by grace through faith alone. It is enough for this one man to stand guardian of what he can no longer pretend he has not beheld rather than venture out into things less certain and perhaps less essential. *A More Radical Gospel* offers a platform from which to observe this gospel guardian at work.

Mark DeVine
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

Church Administration: Creating Efficiency for Effective Ministry. By Robert Welch. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2005, 384 pp, $34.99.

Church Administration has quickly become the standard administration text for a new generation of seminary students. In this book, Robert Welch blends twenty years of military leadership to his role as Dean of the School of Educational Ministries at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary to bring to life a subject that is often perceived as "duty" not "ministry." To encourage confidence to achieve the goal of the subtitle, *Creating Efficiency for Effective Ministry*, Welch has filled the pages of *Church Administration* with solid scriptural foundations, applicable antidotes, and practical helps for a myriad of administrative tasks. Churches would do well to have a copy available for committees and ministry leaders. For the pastor or church leader, *Church Administration* will likely become a welcome and oft referred to addition to their personal library.

Students enrolled in Midwestern Seminary's Education Administration class were the first to use *Church Administration* as a required text. In the course of their studies, students were required to write a review. Twenty four of twenty-six reviews referred to the "reference" quality of this text. Comments included:

". . . one of a handful of textbooks that I will read after I graduate from seminary."

"I didn't know how much I didn't know. I will refer to this book often."

"The things in this book would have prevented me from making several mistakes that have caused problems in my church."

"(Welch) will be within reach of my desk from now on."

"Once I was past the first couple of chapters, the book was a goldmine of practical information. I actually look forward to my next business meeting."

"I wish I would have had this book last year. I will refer to it often in my work as a youth pastor, and someday, as pastor."

Reasons to buy and read *Church Administration* are many. Although most of the issues addressed by Welch are timeless, the book is contemporary enough for pastors and churches regardless of their age. The practical helps and suggestions cover the spectrum of administrative issues, from job descriptions and personnel policies to administering programs of evangelism. The reader can turn to almost any page and find gems of relevance.

Shortcomings, although few, should be mentioned. At times the author goes into too much detail. For example, the "housekeeping survey needs projection summary" uses a formula that breaks down tasks, such as cleaning the "Kitchen/fellowship hall," down to 16.03 hours per week. The formulas are helpful, but I found the table for determining how much time it would take to buff or spray buff a floor using 175-RPM machine, 300-RPM machine, 1000-RPM machine and 2000-RPM machines to be overkill. The short section on the use of PDA's and other electronic devices will become dated.

The index, although useful, is slightly limited for what would otherwise serve as a comprehensive resource. Many of the many tables used by the author are printed in what appears to be a size 6 font, making the text a challenge to read for people like myself who find the text of "large print" bibles far too small.

The reality of ministry is that most pastors and staff spend more time doing administration tasks than any other aspect of ministry. Church Administration is a book that can help ministers become more effective in their administrative tasks, thus freeing them up for other ministerial activities.

Rodney A. Harrison
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

The Word of God in English: Criteria for Excellence in Bible Translation. By Leland Ryken. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, January 2003, 336 pp, $15.99.

The past three decades have been a fruitful period for English Bible translators. Prior to 1970, churches in America generally used the King James Bible, also called the Authorized Version (AV) or, less frequently, the Revised Standard Version (RSV) of 1957. Although a handful of other translations were available for the English reader (such as the American Standard Version of 1901, or the moderately popular Revised Version used in England since 1885), for most Americans the King James Version was king in terms of popularity and acceptance.

Between 1970 and 1990, translators provided English readers with a proliferation of Bible options. The most significant in terms of popularity or impact were the New American Standard (NASB) first published in 1971, the Good News Bible, also called Today's English Version in 1976, the New International Version (NIV) of 1978 and the New Living Translation of 1990. Others, such as the New King James Version and the New Revised Standard were actually fresh translations using distinctively different philosophies of translation than their namesakes. Paraphrases, such as the Living Bible and a host of lesser known versions also entered the market during this period. The 1990's also brought an updated version of the NASB and a gender-inclusive version of the NIV. However, the first totally new translation of the new millennium was the English Standard Version (ESV) of 2001 and most recently the Holman Christian Standard Bible completed in 2003.

For many individuals, choosing a Bible has become a tedious and often daunting task. Should one chose a version based on its popularity (if so, the NIV would be king today)? Or, should one use the Bible used by the pastor on Sunday (a decision that regrettably could result in frequent changes)? Or should one chose a Bible based on personal preference and familiarity (a decision that would favor the Bible one grew up reading)?

I often hear the jest, "If the King James Version was good enough for Paul, it should be good enough for us today." The reality is that the AV was in itself a revision of previous translations. That the preface to the AV attests to this fact might come as a surprise to some uninformed church members.

In this book, Ryken employees his experience as a literary stylist at Wheaton College. Using this expertise, he addresses these and other questions as they relate to the art, science and challenges of English Bible translation. His hill-to-die on is that Bible translators are not coauthors or editors (31). For those who

hold a high view of the Word of God, this book will provide hours of interesting and relevant reading.

The Word of God in English is written in five parts. Each part builds upon the preceding one, and often the reader may experience a feeling of *deja vu* as he proceeds through the later parts of the book as Ryken tends to restate his key arguments in each section. However, this does allow each part to stand alone. Although most readers will want to read the book from front to back, the table of contents, appendix and index are sufficient to use *The Word of God* as a study and research tool.

In part one, Ryken explores the development of what he calls a "seismic shift in translation theory and practice" in the previous century (13). In this unit, he explains the dynamic equivalent method (popularized by the Living Bible and NIV) and demonstrates how these translations have failed to follow the accepted rules of literary style and theory. Ryken then overviews the history of English translation, beginning with work of Wycliffe through the ESV. Twice since reading this book I have found myself turning to the later pages of this unit for information.

In part 2, Ryken addresses what he calls "Common Fallacies of Translation," including five fallacies about the Bible, seven fallacies about translation and eight fallacies about Bible Readers. In this unit, Ryken compares translations, a process that allows the reader to experience the flavor (and quality) of various translations.

In part 3, the theological, ethical and hermeneutical issues of translation are raised. Although only 30 pages in length, Ryken provides readers, especially those who need to brush up on the theories of inspiration, a solid lesson in the theological, ethical and hermeneutical issues of Bible translation.

Part 4 focuses on the problems associated with modern translations and the solutions needed to resolve such. As one might expect, Ryken provides here his own personal insights and preferences. At the end of this unit, readers will know Ryken's preferred translations—and why they are to be preferred.

In the fifth part, Ryken shares his conviction that the proliferation of new English translation has destabilized the biblical text, at least in the minds of the readers, who go after new translations much as one would a new model of an automobile. But since Ryken is aware that proliferation of new translations will continue, he provides sound guidelines for both future translators and Bible readers contemplating the latest English translation. In this unit, he covers the literary genre. His concluding chapter, "What Makes the Best Bible Translation" would make an excellent study for the local church or a small group.

The Word of God in English is not without its faults. First, Ryken noticeably shows his preference for literal word-for-word translations such as the ESV, on whose translation team he served as a member. This preference is to be expected, as *The Word of God in English* and the ESV are both products of Crossway Books. Secondly, for Southern Baptists, the fact that the author or publisher chose to go to press just prior to the release of the HCSB is unfortunate. In Ryken's one reference to the HCSB he notes that the preface to the HCSB states that it "seeks to provide a translation as close to the words of the Hebrew and Greek texts as possible" and that the translation had not yet

gone to press. Although the New Testament was available in 2001, the full text was not publicly available until 2003. That millions of Christians use the HCSB for daily devotions, Sunday School lessons and study would have seemed to have been adequate reason to include the HCSB in this critique.

The Word of God in English is a comprehensive resource for the pastor or teacher interested in knowing more about the English Bible they use for their preaching and teaching ministry. Although Ryken does not provide the entertaining antidotal material a reader would find in Alister McGrath's excellent book, *In the Beginning: The Story of the King James Bible and How it Changed a Nation, a Language and a Culture* (New York: Anchor Books, 2002), he does provide the reader with a well written text that will almost assuredly cause the reader to reexamine their translation choices and recommendations. On that basis alone, I would recommend this book to almost every reader of this journal.

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From Cells to Souls—and Beyond. Edited by Malcolm Jeeves. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004, xiv + 252 pp., $29.00, paper.

Last year, many of us watched closely as the legal debates over teaching evolution in public schools reignited a century-long controversy. According to national headlines and syndicated columnists, Darwin was "on trial" in Dover, PA. But, the journalists appear to have inverted the truth: on trial was the place of philosophical and theological inquiry in public discourse, not the cultural dominance of Darwin's theory. While most Americans view the Dover trial as yet another skirmish in the "culture wars," many who hold to a biblical worldview find the philosophical naturalism of Darwin reductionistic and tautological—an affront to their confession of faith in "One Creator, maker of heaven and earth..." Although a majority of Americans accept metaphysical propositions about life's origins and human nature, science is often portrayed as antagonistic to theological considerations—until recently.

Despite the common perception of *Religion v. Science,* believers can derive hope from recent Christian scholarship. Over the past few years, an increasing number of academic publications have depicted a fruitful relationship between theology and science. A recent compendium, edited by internationally-renowned neuro-psychologist Sir Malcolm Jeeves, is an outstanding synthesis of Christian faith and scientific research, which aims to inform the interested non-specialist. (This reviewer successfully used the text in an undergraduate course on theories of human nature.) Jeeves has assembled a dozen leading thinkers—from the fields of medicine, neurobiology, psychiatry, philosophy, biblical studies, and theology—whose Christian commitment is tightly woven with their scientific accomplishments: cutting-edge science united with ancient revelation.

As the subtitle suggests, scientific discoveries concerning human beings have generated "Changing Portraits of Human Nature." The mapping of the

human genome, the capacity to clone animals, the development of psychotropic therapies, and other neuro-biological techniques have brought us to a new frontier, where long-standing definitions of human nature are challenged by scientific data. Surveying the latest scholarship in the field, each contributor to this volume addresses one of the current questions concerning human nature: genetic mapping and engineering; defining personhood at both ends of the life-continuum; the relationship between brain activity and religious experiences; coping with identity-altering brain diseases; and biblical and theological considerations of personhood.

A poignant example from Glenn Weaver's chapter, "Embodied Spirituality," describes the soul-darkening experiences of a Presbyterian minister suffering from Alzheimer's who recorded the "total blackness" and "absurd fears" that accompanied his brain-destroying disease (91). Combining clinical descriptions with personal memoirs, Weaver deftly blends spiritual counsel and psychiatric analysis into a profoundly Christian and completely scientific interpretation of neurological illness. For those in pastoral or lay ministry, such chapters provide helpful medical and psychiatric analysis—with an emphasis on the neurobiological characteristics of various pathologies—urging readers to exercise informed compassion.

Many of the contributors skillfully explain the historical developments and trends that have brought us to our contemporary crossroads—the place where scientific knowledge claims to dispel ancient mysteries of personhood. As several of the authors argue, the Catch-22 of contemporary materialism—either reject the spirit or redefine the soul—is a false dichotomy built upon a flawed philosophical foundation. Cartesian dualism is a relatively recent phenomenon in Western thought, not the singular vision of Greek philosophy, neo-Platonic interpreters like Augustine notwithstanding. As biblical scholar Joel B. Green reminds the reader, "the mind-body split [of Descartes] is alien to Scripture" (185).

By contrast, Green elaborates on the Hebrew monistic conception of human nature, recognizable in the implicit metaphor of the common word for "soul," *nepheš* (used nearly 800 times in the Old Testament), which may be translated into English as "throat." Clearly, the Hebrew imagery unites body with mind as an integrated whole. Neurophysiologist Warren S. Brown elaborates on this point by confirming that the spiritual aspects of human beings—sin, guilt, a sense of the transcendent, loving relationships—are all intimately united with the physical experiences of being human. And, while sensory experience can often be mapped with technological apparatus, agency (i.e., the will to choose to act in the body) cannot be explained by physical models, to which Brown and his colleagues specifically propose a version of monism termed "nonreductive physicalism" (63). Such an outlook defines human life as a bodily experience, while *not* reducing the conscious decisions of the spirit to physical determinants. Simply put, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

Being human is more than bodily, animal existence; yet humans are bodies, first and foremost—a spiritual embodiment. On this point, Green believes that "the biblical scholar is likely to side more with the neurobiologist than with the major, well-known voices of the Christian tradition," for persons are a unified

whole, created in the image of God as incarnate bodies (182). Moreover, the resurrection *of the body* is our eternal destiny—by God's revealed design.

Such purposeful, God-ordained design remains antithetical to the Darwinian model, with its purposeless, random acts of natural selection. As theologian Alan J. Torrance explains, "Darwin's work presented theological anthropology with a challenge [that identified] God's creative activity…with the mechanism of survival of the fittest" (212). By conflating the definitions of nature (how things are) and redemption (how things ought to be), we are led to accept a fatalistic concept of grace—i.e., whatever is, God wills. Torrance continues, leading the reader in a discussion of theology and anthropology, ranging through Boethius, MacMurray, Barth, Zizioulas, and Pannenberg—concluding that Christians "cannot allow [their] agenda and suppositions to be determined by current theories of mind or brain any more than prevalent sociological, philosophical, or cultural analyses of personhood" (213). Instead, Torrance exhorts Christians to begin with an epistemology firmly rooted in the Incarnation.

Much like the early ecumenical councils that wrestled to understand and explicate the divine-human nature of Jesus, Christians of the 21st century must struggle to answer Darwin's challenge by defining human personhood, beginning with divine revelation and ending with a compelling spiritual vision of theological anthropology. Regardless of Dover's outcome, answering Darwin must be a top priority for discerning Christians. Jeeves' volume provides sound Christian counsel to that end.

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The Complete Evangelism Guidebook: Expert Advice on Reaching Others for Christ. Edited by Scott Dawson. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006, 394 pp. $16.99.

The Complete Evangelism Guidebook gathers practical advice from over 60 practitioners in evangelism. In this way it gives an overview of practical advice to reaching various kinds of people. The 70 chapters in the book are organized into two main sections: Part 1, Sharing Your Faith, and Part 2, Ordinary People. Under each section are several subsections. The four subsections in Part 1 are: Defining Your Faith, Demonstrating Your Faith, Declaring Your Faith, and Defending Your Faith. Part 2, which includes seventy percent of the book, includes seven subsections: Ordinary People by Relationship Group, Ordinary People by Age Group, Ordinary People by Vocation, Ordinary People by Religion, Ordinary People by Race, Ordinary People by Life Situation, and Ordinary People by Gender or Sexual Orientation. A cursory look at the book provides the reader with the practical emphasis of the material.

One strength of *The Complete Evangelism Guidebook* is its encyclopedic arrangement of prospects for the Gospel. While R. A. Torrey's *How to Work for Christ* [1901] arranged prospects according to their spiritual need as regards the Gospel, Dawson has arranged his *Guidebook* by sociological grouping. He then

has found practitioners in reaching each of the 53 sociological groupings, and given them just under five pages to highlight how best to reach that type of person. Those interested in reaching one or more unreached persons will therefore find this book as an excellent starting place to begin exploring ways to reach them. While brief, each chapter contains practical gems quarried from the deep mines of practical experience in the field.

Yet if Dawson's *Guidebook* is helpful in describing ways to reach sociological groupings, perhaps its greatest weakness is its emphasis on *praxis* to the detriment of biblical content. Under Part 1, one would expect to find biblical material on the evangelism mandate. However, 14 of the 17 chapters in this section are primarily contextual topics. They provide the context from which the evangelist can share his message, ways of demonstrating the message of the Gospel, and ways of defending the faith.

Only three chapters in the first section deal primarily with the biblical material. Luis Palau's chapter titled "What Is Faith," provides a three-page summary on faith, good works, and growing in faith. Likewise, Larry Robertson and Floyd Schneider are to be congratulated for their skill in dealing with the topics "Gospel Presentation" and "The Scriptures" in less than nine pages combined. It would seem that either the Bible does not have much to say about the presentation of the Gospel, or *Complete Evangelism Guidebook* is lacking some material. Similarly, either the Bible has little to say about the Scriptures in evangelism, or Schneider was extremely skillful in covering this topic in four pages.

Scott Dawson in his *Complete Evangelism Guidebook* has provided his readers an important sourcebook on the practice of evangelism. This author recommends its use for seminars on the evangelism of particular peoples, and as a practical resource for personal evangelism classes.

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Richard Bauckham. *Bible and Mission: Christian Witness in a Postmodern World*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003, 112 pp., $15.00.

In a postmodern, post-9/11 world is the Christian mission to reach the whole world with the gospel of Jesus Christ audacious? Many today would argue that the real problem with our world is anyone or any religion that would boast of possessing universal truth and that would force that universal truth on people of other cultures and faiths; one only needs to look to the Twin Towers for proof. Real progress, they would say, is marked by embracing diversity, recognizing that the one universal God is expressed differently in the particular religions of the world—and that this universal God rather prefers it as such.

If this perspective is part of our cultural milieu, and it seems to be, how are we to respond? In *Bible and Mission* Richard Bauckham argues that before we can respond adequately to postmodernism's critiques, we must read the Bible in a way that allows us correctly to understand *what* the Christian mission is and

the *means* by which it is to be executed. In the process of better understanding the missionary direction of the Bible, formidable critiques of postmodernism will then emerge.

In chapter 1, Bauckham proposes his program for correctly reading the Bible; it must be read canonically and as a narrative. In other words, the entire Bible must be taken into consideration, and the reader must seek to understand the story of the Bible that narrates the whole of reality. When read in this way, a pattern emerges in the Bible from the particular to the universal. This movement from the local to the global contains three dimensions. There is a *temporal* dimension of the biblical narrative that moves from creation to the eschatological future. There is also a *spatial* dimension that moves from one place to everyplace, from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth. And finally, there is a *social* dimension, a mission that is always being joined by others. One key feature of this narrative movement is that it is never presented as a finished work in the Bible. In fact, it seems to "stop short at the point where we come in" (23). If we take seriously the narrative nature of the Bible, then, we find ourselves in the midst of a story that is reaching towards its universal goal, but that is yet to be completed; we are called with urgency to partake of the mission in our particular, local setting so that we may participate in God's universal goal for the world.

In chapter 2, Bauckham models what it looks like to read the Bible canonically and as a narrative. Along the way he draws attention to four strands within the Biblical narrative that all demonstrate the overall narrative movement of the Bible from the particular to the universal. In the first strand, we see God choosing a particular person, Abraham, for the purpose of blessing all the families of the earth (Gen 12:1-3). In the second strand, since the good of God's creatures requires that He be known, God chooses to reveal Himself to all the nations of the world through the singular nation of Israel (Exod 9:16). King David makes up the third strand; through this one king, God intends to extend His kingdom to reach to all the nations. In the fourth and final strand, God moves through a particular kind of people for the sake of the rest of the world. Starting in 1 Corinthians, and then moving backwards and forward in the narrative, Bauckham argues that God singles out the poor and powerless to extend his universal mission, never to exclude the rich and powerful, but for their own sake, so that the message of the kingdom can never be used or confused for political power or personal agendas. This fourth strand is exemplified by Jesus. As all the Gospels reveal, God is now "to be encountered and salvation found in a crucified man—stripped of all status and honor, dehumanized, the lowest of the low." Jesus also assumes the narrative trajectory of the other three strands; He was a descendant of Abraham, assumed Israel's identity as a light to the nations, and as David's son, is the ideal embodiment of God's rule.

In "Geography—Sacred and Symbolic" (ch. 3) Bauckham creatively explores what geography has to tell us about God's universal mission. In the Old Testament, seven nations where often joined together in a list to represent the entire world (see. Gen 10, Ezek 25-32; Isa 66:18-19). Through this use of the number seven, God's lordship is seen as reaching the ends of the earth through

the representative nations, each whose particularity is never denied. In the Old Testament, the center of the world is Jerusalem, Mt. Zion. In the New Testament, this center is lost; the people of God, wherever they meet, become the "here" of the Old Testament. Bauckham argues that Jesus seems to fulfill the prophecies that center in Zion (78). This loss of a geographical center, leads to another New Testament geographical image found in the New Testament—the people of God as exiles among the nations. This means that Christianity, in its essence, is "a counter-cultural movement, living for a different God in a different way and with a different future in view" (80).

After tracing the trajectory of the biblical narrative, Bauckham responds to postmodernism's critique of all metanarratives. In chapter 4, Bauckham points out that the biblical story is not like other metanarratives—oppressive and hostile to particular cultures and peoples. Instead, it is a narrative that critiques both (a) totalitarian metanarratives (like fundamentalist Islam or global capitalism) and (b) relativism or the idea that all particular religions point to the same universal God. The climax of the Christian story proclaims that God has revealed Himself as a crucified man victimized by an oppressive (Roman) metanarrative, suffering injustice in order to serve and save the entire world from its sins. Thus, in God calling us to fulfill His mission, we are called to do so in the same way our Savior did, in humility and selflessness, often through suffering, never through force or coercion, simply bearing witness to the truth, and allowing the truth, lived out as much as proclaimed, to persuade others.

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The Lost Letters of Pergamum. By Bruce W. Longenecker, with excerpts from Ben Witherington III. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003, 192 pp., $ 16.99

The Lost Letters of Pergamum shares two principal aims of just about any introduction to the background of the New Testament: to help the reader better appreciate the historical context of the early Christian writings and to mentor the reader in developing "sharper instincts for understanding" these writings in light of their socio-religio-political milieu. What is unique about *The Lost Letters of Pergamum*, then, is not its aim, but rather its method for hitting the target.

Whereas most books develop the context of the early Christian writings by surveying the various components that make up the world of the New Testament—for example, Greco-roman religions, Greco-roman philosophies, Jewish society and culture, honor and shame in the Greco-roman world, parties and sects of Judaism, etc.—*Lost Letters* uses the genre of historical fiction to "enlighten by means of ethos" (10). This narrative approach proves to be very successful, perhaps *doing* more than any textbook can to get the reader into the world in which Christianity and the New Testament were born.

This creative introduction to the NT world is based on the fictional archaeological discovery of three lead casements, ensconced in a house in

Pergamum. Inside the casements we learn of an intriguing series of letters exchanged around 92 A.D. between Luke (the author of the Gospel that bears his name and the Acts of the Apostles) and Antipas, a Roman businessman residing in Pergamum. The English translation and chronological ordering of their correspondence (along with occasional editorial notes) make up the bulk of *Lost Letters of Pergamum*.

The letter collection concerns itself primarily with Luke's monograph on the life of Jesus (The Gospel According to Luke). In the story, Antipas, a man who has lived his entire life promoting the Roman way of life, finds himself both disturbed and intrigued by Jesus' teachings and way of life. As we eavesdrop in on their conversation, we experience second-hand how Jesus' message confronts the Greco-Roman honor/shame system, and how honor is tied to loyalty to the emperor and the Roman way of life. We also witness what happens to those who decide to break from the Roman way of life in order to give their allegiance to another Lord and Savior, namely Jesus.

Along with the aforementioned *leitmotifs* of honor and shame and Christianity's confrontation with imperial ideology, *Lost Letters* covers a wide range of topics found in most backgrounds treatments—Greco-roman festivals, gladiator competitions, the patron-client system, John the Baptist and the Essenes, the Samaritans, Pilate, Galilean peasant life, Sepphoris, Antioch (Syria), the Zealots and Sicarri, demons, Cynic and Stoic philosophies, and travel in the ancient world just to name a few. Also weaved into the narrative is some of the most recent scholarship regarding Luke's Gospel.

What emerges from this fictional letter collection is a true-to-life, moving picture of how Christianity probably took root in Asia Minor at the turn of the first century. Of note in Longenecker's portrayal of Christianity's growth is how the early Church community was, as Lesslie Newbigin would say, "the hermeneutic of the Gospel." Antipas is drawn to and understands Jesus' love and vision for life only as he participates in the corporate gatherings with Christians who faithfully embody His love and vision for life.

Lost Letters of Pergamum is an excellent and much needed resource to complement traditional New Testament backgrounds textbooks for courses in Bible colleges and seminaries. One of its many advantages over other available resources is that its narrative creates a shared experience for the entire class from which the professor can draw illustrations on topics covered in the textbooks. While this book is well-suited for formal theological education, it is nevertheless quite accessible to anyone who is interested in finding an entertaining and reliable guide to better understand the historical, social, and political context of Christianity in the first century. Whether read in Bible courses, along side the Gospel of Luke, or in a Sunday school class, all readers will not only be well-informed, but also challenged, much like Antipas was, to evaluate their own loyalties in light of the message concerning Jesus.

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Exploring the History and Philosophy of Christian Education: Principles for the Twenty-first Century. By Michael J. Anthony and Warren S. Benson. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2003, 443 pp., $22.99.

Michael J. Anthony is professor of Christian Education at Biola University/Talbot School of Theology and former president of the North American Professors of Christian Education. He holds a Ph.D. in Developmental Psychology from Claremont Graduate School and a Ph.D. in Educational Administration from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He has edited or authored many other works including the *Evangelical Dictionary of Christian Education* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001) and *Introducing Christian Education: Foundations of Ministry for the Twenty-first Century* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001). The late Dr. Warren Benson was called home to be with the Lord during the writing of this book. He was professor emeritus at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and also served at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary as senior professor of Christian Education and Leadership.

Shortly after *Christian Education: Its History and Philosophy* by Kenneth Gangel and Warren Benson (Chicago: Moody Press, 1983) ceased to be printed, some writers began to separate the two elements of history and philosophy. The resulting works, despite their high quality, produced a curriculum for students of Christian education that lacked continuity. *Exploring the History and Philosophy of Christian Education* is the fruit of Anthony's passionate attempt to regain the lost perspective of educational philosophy in its historical context.

Each chapter contains three common elements. The first is a section entitled, "What in the World?" Here the authors highlight the significant historical events of the world for each time period. Second, text boxes are used throughout the book to restate or clarify primary subjects. Third, each chapter concludes with a section entitled, "So What? Lessons from the Past for Twenty-first century Christian Education." This is where principles are extracted and relevance is transferred for use in the various situations modern readers face.

The content of the book is organized chronologically beginning with the "Hebrew Origins of Christian Education," and ending with "Christian Education in the Twentieth Century." This journey describes Hebrew education as it is outlined in the Old Testament and the influences of Greek and Roman philosophies. It also tracks the progress of education from the early church to modern times, paying close attention to the beginnings of modern Christian education and the advent of the Sunday School. Chapter thirteen revisits the various educational philosophies essentially providing a summary of the book from a different vantage point. It speaks of the three aspects common to each philosophy: metaphysics, epistemology, and axiology. A profile including a definition and explanation of educational context is then given for essentialism, perennialism, progressivism, existentialism, and postmodernism. The final chapter outlines the necessary steps for "Developing a Personal Philosophy of Ministry."

Even a cursory reading of the opening pages of this book will reveal that Michael Anthony and Warren Benson are quality educators. They should be commended for their sensitivity to the needs of students and their willingness to

develop a text that will help them to succeed. *Exploring the History and Philosophy of Christian Education* was designed for the purpose of integrating educational philosophies and historical context so beginners are better able to grasp the big picture of the foundations of Christian education. That goal has certainly been achieved. However, for more advanced students, a deeper and more thorough investigation will be necessary, especially regarding educational philosophies. The logic that drove the writing of this book is significant and should not to be discounted, but neither should the ongoing need for books like *A History of Christian Education* by James Reed and Ronnie Prevost (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1993) or *Philosophy and Education: An Introduction in Christian Perspective* by George Knight (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1998).

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Counted Righteous in Christ: Should We Abandon the Imputation of Christ's Righteousness? By John Piper. Wheaton: Crossway, 2002, 141 pp.

Protestant theologians have routinely taught that Jesus Christ secures our justification by representing us forensically in two senses. First, he suffers the righteous wrath of God against sin. By his stripes we are, in that sense, healed. But secondly, Jesus represents us in his active obedience to the law: he never fails, and the Father reckons Christ's moral perfection to our account. It is, to use the received term, "imputed" to us, just as we also inherited the guilt of Adam's original sin. The first man enslaved the rest of us to sin as our representative head. All of that would be standard theological fare, a widely-accepted account of what Christ has accomplished for us. However, John Piper has sensed a movement away from this second point—in unexpected places—and he means to stop it cold with *Counted Righteous in Christ* (*CRIC*).

According to Robert Gundry, the list of "imputoskeptics" would include Mark Seifrid, Tom Wright, and James Dunn, along with a host of lesser-known; but Piper concentrates almost entirely upon Gundry himself and, more specifically, two of the latter's articles that appear in *Books and Culture* (January/February, 2001 and March/April, 2001). The intent is not to let Gundry feel all of the critical pain, but rather to interact with the one who, in Piper's view, states his views most clearly and cooperatively (45). Gundry also amplified his views by email with Piper, and this material also comes into *CRIC*. *CRIC* treats this debate briefly and selectively, with the intent to reach interested laymen rather than specialists; and we shall consider its merits, along with Gundry's own case, strictly on that basis.

Both sides agree that Christ's substitutionary death on the cross entails some reckoning of our sins to him. He cannot suffer in our stead without this transference. However, Gundry and Piper differ on two specific points, both of which concern any positive interchange that might also have occurred. Let us

suppose that we sinners wear black robes and Jesus, being the only perfect law-keeper, wears white. With this image in mind, the contrasting views appear as follows. Gundry affirms that our black robes are thrown over Christ as he suffers for us on the cross. However, he denies that believers are over-clothed in the white robe of Christ, being seen as perfect law-keepers because of their relationship to Him. Gundry writes, the "doctrine that Christ's righteousness is imputed to believing sinners needs to be abandoned" (44). Secondly, Gundry argues that God counts *faith itself* as righteousness, a state of mind which contrasts with all efforts to prove oneself worthy of divine favor (46). These two claims depart from what appears in standard systematic theologies, and Piper regards them as seriously in error.

Piper offers several pragmatic reasons why we must affirm traditional view of justification: imputed righteousness gives hope to parents, a basis for counseling, and renewed passion for evangelism and church planting. However, his main points are exegetical, and properly so. Certain texts will have to be dealt with plausibly, whatever their practical outcomes, and they include sections from Romans 3, 4, 5, and 6, along with 2 Corinthians 5 and Philippians 3, all of which have been taken to clinch the traditional view. Brief analyses of these passages—along with a handful of other less significant ones for the present debate—constitute the main substance of *CRIC*.

Romans 4:3 comes first in this line, because it invites us to ask how God responds to Abraham's faith. The traditional view holds that God reckons to Abraham an alien righteousness because of Abraham's trust regarding an heir, the latter gift presupposing the former as its foundation. This text serves Paul's purposes, one might have thought, by showing that not even Abraham ascended to God by trying harder vis-à-vis the law or any particular command. On the contrary, God himself makes a way for Abraham to receive promised benefits, righteousness being above and before all else. But Piper provides quotations from Gundry in which the latter reinterprets this text in a subtle way. Instead of being an instrument whereby one obtains righteousness, Gundry argues that Abraham's faith itself becomes the basis for his acquittal. Faith is the acceptable substitute for law-keeping, what one can offer instead of the latter.

The trouble here, then, is that we seem thusly to have marginalized the cross of Christ: if faith itself makes the grade in Abraham's case, it could do so at any time for anyone, ourselves included, quite apart from anything Jesus might offer. Gundry himself denies that faith is a work in this sense, but Paul's either/or argument in Romans 4 places faith—so understood by Gundry—on the achievement side. If having faith constitutes righteousness, the believer has something to boast of before God; he has managed to please God in a way that others have not. Piper brings this out by noting the central paradox of the Apostle's soteriology, viz., that God justifies the *ungodly*, not the one who, because of his trust, qualifies as godly (57-58). Obviously, even construed as a work, faith would not compare directly to loving one's neighbor and keeping the Sabbath; and Gundry's view should benefit from that nuance. Nevertheless, as Gundry interprets it, faith becomes more like a meritorious work of the law than not, and this change accounts for Piper's alarm.

Less satisfying in response to Gundry is Piper's view of Romans 3:20-22, in which the manifested "righteousness of God" becomes, once again, an alien right-standing imputed to believers. No doubt some of Piper's texts actually have such a transaction in mind, but not all of them do; and Romans 3:20-22 would be a case in point. Paul's argument in these early chapters would dwell, rather, on God's righteousness understood as his demonstrated impartiality toward all sinners. He condemns all of the guilty and would acquit all of the innocent, if there were any. Paul certainly does get around to saying that we inherit the righteousness of Christ because of our faith-union with him, but this is not the text to use for that point. Others would lend themselves more readily to Piper's aims.

Three of the best cases found in *CRIC* would be Romans 9:30-10.4; 2 Corinthians 5:21; and Philippians 3:9. Verse 3 of Romans 9:30-10:4 brings out the contrast on which Piper's case depends, and the same holds true of Philippians 3:8-9. Both texts present two kinds of righteousness: one of them has God as its source, while the other results (ideally, not actually) from keeping Torah. Something from God is being given to us in Christ, a position or standing before him. The conclusion can hardly be avoided. Likewise, then, in the case of 2 Corinthians 5:21, Piper adopts the traditional understanding of this interchange, i.e., that it goes both ways. Christ gets our sin—God imputes it to us—and we get his righteousness. At least, we know that God would have to reckon our sins to Christ's account in some mysterious way, if he is to suffer for us. But does Paul's final clause, "so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" imply that the complementary action occurs, i.e., that in Christ we receive his righteousness, understood as an alien sinlesness? Piper quotes Gundry as observing that the righteousness of Christ does not come up here, only the righteousness *of God*; and that is a fair point. The imputation view is an inference based on v. 21, not something that we can read off directly from the text; however, Paul traces our righteousness from God back to our abiding 'in him," and this relationship would seem to imply a transference of his righteousness to us.

As it stands, 2 Corinthians 5:21 would probably settle the issue in any case, since it affirms what is, after all, the really controversial point, viz., that one person's sins (and therefore also his innocence) can be reckoned to someone else's account. If God's justice permits the one to occur, nothing would stop him from causing the other as well. Piper takes up Romans 5:12-21 to make a similar point, though his treatment of this text strays into some distracting speculation about the identity of those who, between Eden and Sinai, died like all the rest. Piper's larger discussion of Romans 5:12-21 captures Paul's essential point: we know that one man can act on behalf of the many, according to the OT, because Adam did that very thing. He sinned on pain of death, and his descendants died even though they did not transgress a law with a death penalty expressly attached to it. So it can be no argument against Paul's gospel that it involves one man bringing life to all who believe. The divine justice which permits the one can permit the other. However, Piper also identifies the sinners of interest between Adam and Moses as being children especially, as opposed to a series of generations (96). The trouble here is that Paul could have referred directly to

children, had his focus been so narrow. As it stands, one does better to think in terms of a broader reference.

As a subordinate theme of *CRIC*, Piper objects to the merging of justification and sanctification that he detects among proponents of the New Perspective on Paul—roughly, the view which downplays the merit-theology of First Century Judaism, forcing a re-identification of Paul's opponents in, e.g., Galatians and Romans. If Paul's adversaries are not legalists, their use of the Torah must be perverse in some other way. This adjustment also coordinates with a denial that God imputes the righteousness of Christ to believers, since the contrast between an alien righteousness would be one's own satisfactory performance—the pursuit of which is exactly what the New Perspective does not wish to ascribe to Paul's opponents. Whether Gundry would rank himself entirely with the New Perspective is another point, however, and Piper cannot settle all of that in *CRIC*. But *CRIC* does contain a comparatively long section on texts from Romans 5, 6, and 8.

For an exceptionally brief work, *CRIC* ranges widely. Some of Piper's readers will no doubt conclude that the work fails because it devotes too few words to too large a subject. One might also worry that by interacting with Gundry's brief articles and emails, Piper does not allow his adversaries to make their best case. Gundry permits the use of these sources, but he may well have expressed himself more precisely had he foreseen their appearance in a book like *CRIC*. This work can certainly be recommended to the interested layman, but with this qualification: more than most, CRIC is a starting point rather than a one-stop treatment of justification—and not surprisingly so, if justification by faith is indeed the doctrine upon which the church stands or falls.

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Hebrew Bible: History of Interpretation. Edited by John H. Hayes. Nashville: Abingdon, 2004. xx1v + 366 pp.

In 1999, the two volume *Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation* (*DBI*), edited by John H. Hayes, was published by Abingdon. The work contains a wide range of articles by authors from many different faith and interpretive traditions and focuses on three main areas: 1) the history of interpretation of canonical, deutero-canonical, and some pseudepigraphical works as approached by various faith traditions; 2) biographies of interpreters of these works, mainly before 1930; and 3) major interpretive schools and methods. The present volume, *Hebrew Bible: History of Interpretation*, contains the full articles from *DBI* on all the books of the canonical Hebrew Bible as well as five additional articles from *DBI* on the Decalogue, Deuteronomistic history, Pentateuchal criticism, poetry, and prophecy. Unlike other Bible dictionaries and encyclopedias that focus mainly on the contents, main themes, and etc. of biblical books, this work concentrates on their historical interpretation. Each article also has an extensive bibliography for those who want to do further study.

In the section on the Pentateuch, the authors present the Jewish and Christian interpretive histories of these books. For the Pentateuchal books, Jewish interpretation includes (where applicable) Halakhic, Haggadic and later Rabbinic traditions, Hellenistic and later Medieval Jewish interpretation and more recent trends. Christian interpretation includes the main views on each book from earliest Christian times through the Reformation to the modern era, with relatively extensive coverage of modern critics and critical movements (e.g., Wellhausen, Gunkel, etc.). Briefer summaries of Muslim views are also sometimes included.

The discussions in the section on the Former Prophets (Joshua – 2 Kings) are less extensive. The Joshua article is mainly modern, and both articles for Joshua and Judges are predominately Christian. Perhaps not-so-surprisingly, the entire pre-modern interpretive history of 1 and 2 Samuel is covered in only one half page, and does not include any of the Qumran data or Rabbinic interpretations. Similarly, the article on 1 and 2 Kings includes one fourth of a page on interpretation before the Patristic period. In addition, the articles for both 1 and 2 Samuel and 1 and 2 Kings cover mainly Christian interpretation.

The articles on the Writings (1 Chronicles through Song of Songs) give relatively more attention to Jewish interpretation than the articles on the Former Prophets. In addition, the discussion on Job contains material on literary and psychological interpretations from such individuals as Franz Kafka, Archibald Macleish and Carl Jung. Although interesting, such discussions are perhaps more useful to theologians and ethicists than to biblical scholars.

In the section entitled "The Latter Prophets: Major" the articles cover both Jewish and Christian interpretations from ancient to modern times. Worthy of note are two articles on Jeremiah. The first article covers interpretation of Jeremiah through the 19th century and the second the 20th and 21st centuries.

Finally, the section entitled "The Latter Prophets: Minor" contains a mixed set articles in terms of the extent of their historical coverage. For example, while the article on Hosea provides a section on the relation of the divine in Hosea and Ugaritic writings, no Jewish interpretations of Hosea are discussed, and the discussion centers mainly on modern Christian views. Given the immense amount of material the authors had to summarize, readers will undoubtedly question their selection process in various instances. However, overall, the articles remain valuable resources for students and scholars who are not familiar with the interpretive histories of particular books.

One other book containing extracts of *DBI* has appeared covering articles on New Testament books. Both the Old Testament and New Testament compilations would be valuable for introductory college or seminary classes in Old or New Testament. However, the price of the full two-volume *Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation* is low enough now (I recently found the complete *DBI* for less than $70 on the Internet) that if one is interested in anything beyond the limits of either of these shorter books, he or she might be better served by buying the full set.

Any serious student of the Bible will benefit from understanding the interpretive histories of books of the Bible. Such perspectives allow us to see the strengths and shortcomings of various interpreters and interpretive traditions and

serves to warn us that we also might be approaching Scripture with our own blinders. Both books—*Hebrew Bible: History of Interpretation* and the larger *Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation*—are valuable tools for helping gain that kind of understanding.

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A God Entranced Vision of All Things: The Legacy of Jonathan Edwards. Edited by John Piper and Justin Taylor. Wheaton: Crossway, 2004, 287 pp. $17.99 paper.

Jonathan Edwards once said, "Useful men are some of the greatest blessings of a people. To have many such is more for a people's happiness than almost anything, unless it be God's own gracious, spiritual presence amongst them; they are precious gifts of heaven." This quote is reproduced on the cover of this valuable collection of papers on the man. Actually, this volume is composed of essays that were originally presentations given at an October 2003 conference on Jonathan Edwards. The Conference was held at the Church where John Piper is Pastor, namely the Bethlehem Baptist Church, Minneapolis, MN.

This volume is actually only a very small part of what was produced to commemorate and celebrate the tercentenary of the birth of Edwards. John Piper, an acknowledged authority on the life and ministry of Jonathan Edwards, is a prolific author and Pastor for Preaching at the above mentioned Church, where he also heads Desiring God Ministries. Justin Taylor is Director of Theology and Executive Editor for Desiring God Ministries.

The theme of the Conference was Edwards' understanding of the centrality of God in all things, and that was what Piper himself opens with and develops in the opening chapter entitled, "A God-entranced Vision of All Things: Why We Need Jonathan Edwards 300 Later." The book is divided into three sections, sections which could be categorized as dealing firstly with biographical issues, then practical and ministerial ones, and then lastly, scholarly. The first three chapters, including Piper's essay, focus on biographical and historical accounts of Edwards's life and ministry. They also include a biographical summary by Stephen Nichols of the Lancaster Bible College and Graduate school, and an article about Edwards's marriage and family by Noel Piper. Piper builds on Dodds's earlier work on the subject *Marriage to a Difficult Man: The Uncommon Union of Jonathan and Sarah Edwards* (reprinted 2003).

The next four essays examine teachings from Edwards that are seen as being especially relevant today. J. I. Packer's "The Glory of God and the Reviving of Religion: A Study in the Mind of Jonathan Edwards" attempts to define the characteristics of a genuine divine visitation among God's people. Building on his own expertise in spiritual disciplines, Don Whitney from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, examines the spirituality of Edwards as an example in "Pursuing a Passion for God Through Spiritual disciplines: Learning from Jonathan Edwards." Mark Dever, Senior Pastor of the Capitol Hill Baptist

Church, Washington DC, looks at a very timely and practical issue in "How Jonathan Edwards Got Fired and Why It's Important For Us Today."

This section concludes with an essay by Sherard Burns, an African-American pastor and theologian, who contributed a remarkable piece entitled, "Trusting the Theology of a Slave Owner." Burns examines the question of why Edwards never applied his own theology to the question of personal slave-owning. What one discovers is that while Edwards himself owned at least four salves, and while he did defend the institution of slavery as an economic necessity, he is on record as denouncing the slave trade itself. He also admitted slaves into full membership of his Northampton Church.

The third section concludes with detailed analyses of three of Edwards's most significant and influential works. First, Paul Helm of Regent College discusses *The Great Doctrine of Original Sin*. This is followed by an examination of *Freedom of the Will* by Sam Storms, President of Enjoying God Ministries. Finally, Mark Talbot of Wheaton analyses Edwards's *Religious Affections*.

The volume concludes with two appendices. The first is by Piper, who includes and writes a very informative introduction to one of Edwards's own sermons, "A Divine and Supernatural Light," which Piper actually preached at the conclusion of the Conference. Appendix two is a well-written, valuable guide by Justin Taylor on "Reading Jonathan Edwards: Objections and Recommendations," where he details a number of resources for further reading or research on Edwards.

I am certain that this volume will be beneficial to a wide range of audiences, from those who "know little more than what is printed in American history textbooks" (cf. rear cover) to those who want to know some of the most scholarly, current research on Edwards. The promotional material for the book states that it is, "Ideal for church leaders, academia, all Christians interested in Edwards and the lessons of his life." I would wholeheartedly agree. While it is true that there is clearly no lack of material available on Edwards, especially since 2003 when another flood appeared, the fact is that here in a relatively brief treatment, interested readers are introduced to many well-written and fairly easily read pieces covering a wide spectrum on the life and legacy of Edwards.

I believe that the book achieves well its primary aim as stated on the rear cover: "This book's contributors investigate the character and teachings of the man who preached from a deep concern for the unsaved and a passionate desire for God." But this volume is far from a theoretical study of Edwards, and it is the hope and prayer of the present reviewer that it will achieve its other goal: that by "Studying the life and works of this dynamic Great Awakening figure," Christians will be roused, "prompting them to view the world through Edwards's God-centered lens." And along this same vein, what a revolutionary change would exist in the Church, if Christians generally were, "God-*centered*, God-*focused*, God-*intoxicated*, and God-*entranced*," as J. I. Packer noted Edwards has been described as being (86).

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This Day in Baptist History, Volumes I and II. David L. Cummins and E. Wayne Thompson. Greenville, SC: BJU Press, 1993, 2000, 573 pp., 742 pp., $29.95 per volume.

It might be seen as somewhat unusual for books that have been available for some time to still merit being reviewed. But the opportunity is being taken to review these two volumes, partly because they really have no competition, and partly because I suspect that they have not received the exposure I believe they deserve. I do not know that to be the case, I only know from experience that volumes dealing with the history of the Church, do not always appear at the top of a Christian's list of books they are desperate to read. More is the pity, especially with reference to these two unusual and valuable volumes. I say unusual, because it was surely something of a risk to produce not one but two large volumes, that seek to make events within Baptist history appeal to an audience seeking devotional material.

The compilers, David Cummins and E. Wayne Thompson, have selected 366 events and stories from Baptist history, one for each day of the year, to exemplify what it means to be a Baptist. After a lifetime of pastoral experience, David Cummins has served for several years as Deputation Director for Baptist World Mission; E. Wayne Thompson has served as moderator of both the historic Ketocton Association of Regular Baptists and the Virginia Assembly of Independent Baptists. He now has his own itinerant ministry, holding evangelistic meetings as well as Bible, missionary and Baptist history conferences.

I am convinced that those who will commit themselves to more than simply perusing these books will be encouraged anew with the stories of the likes of John Bunyan, Charles Spurgeon, William Carey, the Judsons, and John Leland. There will be fresh challenges in the stories of Baptist martyrs: those who endured persecution through beatings, torture and imprisonment simply for claiming the name "Baptist," and those who suffered in the cause of pursuing religious liberty. You will be richly rewarded as you are follow the myriad of calls to emulate the examples of pioneer missionaries, translators, and the lives of those who simply believed the Bible and who would not compromise Scripture's demands either in their own lives, or in the message they faithfully preached. There are also devotions that recount the lives and labors of clearly non-Baptist figures, including for example, Jonathan Edwards, Martin Luther, D. L. Moody, George Muller, John Wesley, George Whitefield, and William Wilberforce.

To whet one's appetite of what these books contain, I give these following examples. There is the inspiring record of missionary heroics during World War II, as illustrated in the life, labors and miraculous rescue of Florence Almen, a missionary to French Equatorial Africa. There is also the incredible account of an English Seventeenth Century preacher called Samuel Oates, who was charged with murder, after one of the hundreds of the converts he baptised, died soon after, and Oates' baptism of her was maliciously made out to be the cause. Also the story of William McClannahan is challenging, one of the boldest and most enterprising early Baptist preachers in the South, who not only spent time

in a Virginia prison simply for being a Baptist, but who also raised one of the companies of the Culpeper minutemen for the Revolutionary Army. These troops were principally Baptists, and he would lead them not only into battle, but also in prayer, preaching to them regularly.

One of the primary reasons I would recommend these collections, is that they are not compilations of unattributed, undocumented anecdotes, as some previous vintage books have been, for here each daily devotion has detailed footnotes with sources where available. This aspect makes much of what is presented useable with integrity for illustrations in a variety of situations, whether that be sermons, Sunday School classes, or even family devotional times where the volumes might be used for example, on an occasional basis. But what also makes these two volumes especially valuable, is the surprising inclusion of an index in each volume, together with very useful bibliographies for those who wish to do further reading or research on many of the individuals or events mentioned in the text. The volumes are attractively presented, and each devotion begins with the day's date, together with an interesting summary title, as well as a Scripture text. I did appreciate the larger font size more in the first volume. The font size was reduced in the subsequent volume, for that volume is also many hundreds of pages longer and yet still has only 366 devotions. Clearly, that means one is receiving lengthier, more detailed information in volume 2.

As mentioned earlier, these volumes do not have any real competition, and do deserve to be given at least a chance to be of encouragement in one's spiritual walk. That being said, it must be noted, that not everyone will be happy with all aspects of the theological or historical views presented in the books. Actually, this statement is obviously quite redundant when one is considering any work on Baptist history or theology, for we Baptists have always taken full advantage of the freedom that is ours as Baptists, to disagree one with another. That notwithstanding, certain concepts that do appear here, such as Baptist secessionism, will be problematical for some, and as such is noted here as a caveat to be aware of.

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Be Fruitful and Multiply: Embracing God's Heart for Church Multiplication. By Robert E. Logan. St. Charles, IL: Church Smart Resources, 2006, 180 pp., $12.00.

In this easy-to-read work, Logan compiles years of ministry, research, coaching, and church consultation into addressing his passion, church multiplication. His purpose for writing this book is two-fold. First, Logan writes to convince the unconvinced that it is God's will for every Christian to be involved in a church multiplication movement. Second, he writes to offer a basic framework to assist readers in getting involved in such a movement.

The book is divided into two sections. Section one discusses the biblical roots of church multiplication, issues of contextualization, principles of church multiplication, and suggests different ways people can be involved in multiplication movements. The second section addresses ten essential areas of multiplication movements (spiritual dynamics, shared vision, planning, mobilizing church planters, assessing church planters, coaching church planters, planting new churches, developing multiplying networks, funding) and introduces the reader to action steps and additional resources.

There are a number of strong points in this work. For example, Logan's emphasis that church multiplication is clearly supported by biblical teachings is to be commended. He advocates that multiplication movements must be empowered by God, culturally relevant, and consist of reproducible methods that will empower "ordinary people to do extraordinary things" (31). A great importance is placed upon indigenous leadership. Much is written about the role of prayer in multiplication movements. Also, Logan peppers this work with numerous global illustrations, revealing examples and principles from both Western and non-Western church planting practices.

One limitation that I find in this work is that Logan's systems approach appears too structured to result in church multiplication movements. Much of the book is written for well established churches and denominations desiring to be involved in such movements. Though I believe that Logan's paradigm is needed and will be well received by many groups and will result in the planting of numerous churches, it is a "top-down" approach to multiplication. Though grassroots approaches are discussed, the book seems to advocate the perpetuation of systems that are inherently contra-movement.

I strongly encourage missionaries and denominational leaders to read this work. I know of no other person who has had such a wonderful influence on church planting as Bob Logan. If you desire guidance in creating a healthy atmosphere for church planting in your church or denomination, this book is a must-read. Logan's passion for multiplying disciples, leaders, and churches is evident throughout this work. May this book be read, digested, and especially applied.

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Preaching: an Essential Guide. By Ronald J. Allen. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002, 135 pp., $16.00.

Ronald Allen is the Nettie Sweeney and Hugh Th. Miller Professor of Preaching and New Testament at Christian Theological Seminary in Indiana where he has taught since 1982. His formal training includes a Ph.D. from Drew University and an M.Div. from Union Theological Seminary. He was also a co-pastor of a Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Nebraska for 6 years. He has written over 100 articles and 30 books.

Preaching: an Essential Guide is a culmination of his thinking designed for those who are just beginning to preach. His stated intention is that the book serves as both a handbook and a model for feedback sessions. Its format fits that purpose very well. He begins with a sample sermon and moves through a set of evaluation questions to consider when developing a sermon. As a result his ideas are clear and easy to grasp. Each chapter unpacks one of the evaluation questions using his model sermon as an example. A more concise summary of his suggested process is found in a helpful appendix for later use. The concept and layout of this book does in fact provide an excellent model for teaching about preaching.

The seven evaluation questions that begin each chapter are the heart of the work. The questions that he rightly asserts every preacher should ask are:

What is the good news from God in the sermon?
Does the sermon honor the integrity of the Bible or the topic?
Is the sermon theologically adequate?
Does the sermon relate the text or topic to the congregation in a responsible way?
What is the significance of the sermon for the congregation?
Does the sermon move in a way that is easy to follow?
Does the preacher embody the sermon in an engaging way?

On the surface these are excellent questions to consider. However, *MJT* readers should be aware that Dr. Allen is not coming from a theologically conservative perspective. This becomes evident early in the work. For Allen, the purpose of preaching is "to bring good news from God to the congregation" (19). He defines the parameters of that good news as the love and justice of God. The trouble is that this fuzzy criterion, along with others, becomes a measuring stick for the text of the Bible itself. The reader must wrestle with the concept of what legitimate basis he has for evaluating the text. Allen does not fully explain this, but rather assumes the student will understand how to do this. He notes on page 52 that he evaluates all text through the "double lens of God's unconditional love for all, and God's call for justice for all." On that same page he asserts that the sermon "needs to clarify why the text is not appropriate." He adds, "The sermon cannot stop with calling attention to the deficiencies of the text, but needs to press ahead to show how the gospel itself offers a more adequate interpretation of the situation" (52-53). At this point, the reader should be asking, "how do I know and define the gospel apart from God's revelation?" If parts of the Bible are deficient, how do I recognize them and how do I formulate a gospel with any confidence that can stand in judgment on other texts?

To his credit, he admonishes the preacher to make sure to understand the message of the text (30). Yet he goes on to explain that a next step is to evaluate the truthfulness of the text itself (31). Using his sample sermon to illustrate he writes "In the sermon proper I identify the claims of the text, and then indicate the points at which I, and many in the congregation, do not share the convictions of the text." He then notes, "We do not have to believe that the end of the world

is coming right away in order to appreciate Mark's message" (31). As that chapter unfolds, it becomes clear that his understanding of biblical authority, exegesis and hermeneutics is quite different from that which most evangelicals hold.

In the end, the book assumes that the experience, background and assumptions of the preacher and congregation should stand as the authority over the biblical text itself. Where it matches the reader's beliefs it is to be affirmed. Where it does not it must be skillfully explained and reinterpreted. This is not a problem for Allen who believes that there is no one meaning of a text but rather a plurality of meanings (31). It is clear that he embraces a much wider theological pluralism than those who believe in the inerrancy of the Bible (54).

I would not however recommend this book to those who believe the Bible to be the authoritative Word of God without any mixture of error. However, those who desire an understanding of how many mainline pastors think about preaching would benefit from exposure to it. Ultimately, this book demonstrates how a potentially good process, with polluted assumptions brings a dangerous result.

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Theology after Ricoeur: New Directions in Hermeneutical Theology. By Dan R. Stiver. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001, 257 pp., $39.95 hardcover.

Dan Stiver's book attempts to trace the implications of Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutical philosophy for the reconstruction of a contemporary, post-modern theology. Its title, alluding to Fergus Kerr's *Theology after Wittgenstein* (London: SPCK, 1997), reflects Paul Ricoeur's contribution to theology in the twentieth century and after. For Stiver, Ricoeur is important not only as a (Christian) philosopher but also because of his contribution to theology and especially to exegesis and biblical interpretation. Therefore, the relationship between philosophy and theology in Paul Ricoeur's thought becomes of primary importance in Stiver's argument, and he proves to be a skilful guide through the complex territory of his work. Stiver examines some of the most important themes of Ricoeur's thought, "the hermeneutical arc," "the surplus of meaning," "the hermeneutics of trust and suspicion," "metaphor and narrative," "oneself as another," etc.

A good introduction to the broader contemporary context with the emergence of post-modernism, seen as a time of troubles, serves as a necessary starting point for engaging with Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutical philosophy. Postmodernism as a broader movement reflects a paradigm shift both in philosophy and theology and, in Stiver's view, the hermeneutical philosophy of Ricoeur together with that of Hans-Georg Gadamer are postmodern (5). Alongside postmodernism, issues of plurality and praxis also pose challenges to

modern theologians and Ricoeur's significance consists in the fact that he confronted these in a productive way as well. The introduction continues with a sketch of Paul Ricoeur's life and work.

Stiver outlines the historical development of hermeneutical philosophy from regional hermeneutics to general hermeneutics, pointing to the model of the text that undergirds the hermeneutical tradition behind Ricoeur's work (ch. 1). Then the writer explores the hermeneutical arc with its three temporal stages: first, or naïve understanding, followed by explanation and then post-critical understanding or appropriation (ch. 2). To this scheme Stiver adds the mimetic arc, advanced in Ricoeur's later work, which also contains three movements: prefiguration, configuration and refiguration.

What is the relationship between the arcs? Stiver's solution is "to 'fold' the later arc into the earlier, resulting in one threefold arc in which each moment of the hermeneutical arc includes a mimetic arc" (74). Thus we have a refigured arc which brings a holistic understanding and has the potential to overcome the Continental split between explanation and understanding.

Chapter 3 is devoted to the surplus of meaning, a central aspect of the interpretation of texts and of a non-foundationalist hermeneutic that accepts pluralism and biblical criticism. After a survey of Premodern, Conservative and Liberal Hermeneutics, Stiver argues that Ricoeur's hermeneutical arc avoids the modern dichotomy between objectivism and relativism while at the same time it opens the door for interpretation not only of religious texts but also of religious experiences and actions.

Ricoeur's creative approach to metaphor and narrative is dealt with in chapter 4. Stiver highlights Ricoeur's contribution to the understanding of various forms of discourse found in the biblical texts. The next two chapters are dedicated to two important themes of Ricoeur's approach: "the hermeneutic of suspicion" and "oneself as another." The former represents the critical moment of the arc as "the knowledge we attain is itself permanently under the sign of suspicion" (147). We live in a desert of criticism and no one can escape verification. Thus, this pattern of affirmation and critique seems to be Ricoeur's dialectic since it runs through scripture and Christian history.

Ricoeur's exploration of oneself as another refers to the embodied self, the narrative self, the interpersonal self and the social self. All these dimensions represent a truly postmodern view of the self, consistent with a biblical view of self. The relevance of Ricoeur's anthropological and ontological theory of the self for theology is twofold: it recovers the social image of God in Genesis and the social view of the Trinity, more prominent in Eastern theology than in Western. Finally, there is a chapter on "Truth and Attestation" in which Stiver brings together various aspects of Ricoeur's contribution to an epistemology situated somewhere between relativism and objectivism. Stiver concludes the book with some reflections on the relationship between theology and philosophy.

This is a well-written, clearly argued book providing a comprehensive introduction not only to Ricoeur's work but also to contemporary philosophical and hermeneutical discussions on various aspects of post-modernity (self, truth, narrative, symbolism, faith, etc.). One of the strong points of the book is the fact

that Stiver is neutral in his presentation, and at times he is able to distance himself from Ricoeur. With a few exceptions, as when Stiver reflects on Ricoeur's theology, there seems to be little interaction with the relationship between Ricoeur's philosophy and the interpretation of particular biblical texts. However, Stiver's clear presentation offers very good reasons for any theologian to appropriate Ricoeur's philosophy.

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The Salvation of Souls: Nine Previously Unpublished Sermons on the Call of Ministry and the Gospel by Jonathan Edwards. Edited by Richard A. Bailey and Gregory A. Wills. Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2002, 190 pp, $19.99.

Richard A. Bailey is currently completing his Ph.D. at the University of Kentucky studying religion and society in colonial America and the early republic. He holds degrees from the University of Mobile (B.A) and the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (M.Div.). Gregory A. Wills was appointed to the faculty of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1997 where he serves as Associate Professor of Church History. He holds degrees from Duke University (B.S., Th.M.), Gordon-Cornwell Theological Seminary (M.Div.), and Emory University (Ph.D.) and has contributed to several theological journals.

Jonathan Edwards (1703-17580) had a sensitive grasp of the work of the minister and ministry. He saw the primary work of the minister as being the saving of sinners from an eternity in hell. As he presented these messages they were preached in such a way that no one could miss his point in the calling of the minister to perform his work with a purpose to the saving of souls. Bailey and Wills chose in include nine sermons of Jonathan Edwards on this specific theme, but despite the subtitle of the book, only eight were previously unpublished. One of the nine sermons, "Ministers to Preach Not Their Own Wisdom but the Word of God," was already published in the *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* in the summer of 1999.

In "The Death of Faithful Ministers A Sign of God's Displeasure," Edwards uses the text of Isaiah 3:1-2 to proclaim the message as it was applied to the recent passing of three pillars of the city, who were faithful within God's church. Edwards went to great pains to deliver this message in a manner that would get the attention of the people for the purpose of bringing about repentance of the church and community at North Hampton.

In the next sermon, "Ministers Need The Power Of God," Edwards gives the church at North Hampton (where he had been called after the death of Solomon Stoddard his grandfather) a charge for the people to pray for his ministry among them, that God might bless it as He had Solomon Stoddard's ministry. He uses the text of 2 Corinthians 4:7 as the basis for this message demonstrating God's use of "earthen vessels" for His glory, and to accomplish His will.

Edwards used Micah 2:11 as the text for "The Kind Of Preaching People Want." He desired to demonstrate to the people that what they wanted and what God desired for them were opposites. God would not bless preaching that did not honor His Word. In this sermon Edwards was compelled to challenge the excesses of the young people of his day, especially as they disregarded Sunday. Edwards certainly saw his calling fulfilled in preaching the displeasures of God and admonishment of those who refused to follow God's statutes. He accomplished his purposes with this sermon as change was indeed reflected in the lives of the young people of the church. He challenged the people by showing them what God required of the minister in the exercises of his office to preach His displeasure of sin. Edwards was not going to allow them to continue to follow the vices of the world without a strict warning from scripture to change their ways.

In "The Minister Before The Judgment Seat Of Christ," Edwards preached that the people would understand his responsibility to fulfill his ministry as one who would give account. He considered work in the harvest a requirement of every minister of the gospel. He believed that the minister would be joyous at seeing the Lord and they would rejoice in the work he had performed on Christ's behalf. He believed those who were unfaithful in fulfilling this part of their ministry would be disappointed at Christ's appearing.

Edwards preached "Deacons To Care For The Body, Ministers For The Soul" using as his text Romans 12: 4-8, on a day when the church was ordaining deacons. This sermon not only discusses the responsibility of deacons but also those of a minister. Throughout the sermon he makes great distinction between the two offices and the joy had in faithfully serving in both offices.

"Ministers To Preach Not Their Own Wisdom But The Wisdom of God" was delivered at the ordination of Edward Billing to the pastoral ministry of the Cold Spring Church (now Belchertown, Massachusetts). Edwards used as his text 1 Corinthians 2:11-13 and spoke a warning about what the enlightenment was doing within the culture of his day and time to those charged with the preaching of God's word. He identifies how those who had been impacted by the ideas of the enlightenment were guilty of allowing reason to control their interpretation of scripture.

Another ordination sermon, "Pastor and People Must Look To God," was given to the people of the church at Hadley, Massachusetts on the occasion of the ordination of their new Pastor, Chester Williams. In this message Edwards used as his text Acts 14:23 making it very plain the expectations that God places upon a congregation to adequately provide for pastor. He made his points in strong support of their new pastor, demonstrating to the congregation how they were not to cause undue grief to him because of his charge to care for their souls. He called upon the congregation to pray for and labor with their new pastor in his calling and charge over them.

Edwards took "Preaching The Gospel Brings Poor Sinners To Christ" from Acts 16:9. In this sermon he compels the people to adhere to the principles of no longer living as controlled by the sin of the flesh as was the case before conversion. He made certain that the people understood that to continue living as one lived before receiving the Gospel would be vain.

Finally, "The Work Of The Ministry Is Saving Sinners" encapsulates the title and understanding of the great theme of *The Salvation of Souls*. Based upon Acts 20:28, Edwards goes to great length in developing this sermon to show the primary calling of the minister to be the salvation of souls. He develops his ideas to the point of showing that Christ is the one who sows the seed and the minister is the one to harvest what has been sown.

This work provides encouragement to any who are in the ministry or are considering the calling of the ministry in their lives. It certainly helps in the development of priorities in ministry in these days. This book is a tremendous addition to those works that have already preceded it by others in recent years on Edwards' ministry.

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Speaking Truth in Love: Counsel in Community. By David Powlison. Winston-Salem, NC: Punch Press, 2005. 193 pp., paperback, $17.99.

David Powlison is a lecturer in practical theology at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia. He also is a lecturer and counselor at the Christian Counseling and Education Foundation in Glenside, Pennsylvania. In addition, Powlison serves as the editor for the *Journal of Biblical Counseling* (*JBC*). Besides contributing articles to *JBC*, Powlison is the author of *Seeing with New Eyes: Counseling and the Human Condition through the Lens of Scripture* (Winston-Salem, NC: Punch Press, 2004), *Power Encounters: Reclaiming Spiritual Warfare* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995), and a contributor to *Psychology and Christianity: Four Views* (Stanton L. Jones and Eric L. Johnson, eds. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000).

Speaking Truth in Love is the second of a three-part series by David Powlison. While *Seeing with New Eyes* was concerned with the content of biblical counseling, this latest installment addresses the actual practice of counseling biblically. In essence, Powlison offers reflections from Ephesians 4 in matters pertaining to the care of souls.

In part 1 of *Speaking Truth in Love*, Powlison teaches principles and methods for effective biblical counseling. Chapters in the first section address such issues as having a more expansive understanding in the application of the gospel, allowing adequate preparation time before a counseling session, deciding what questions to ask in a session, and how to talk with counselees who are immersed in psychological theories and trends. Each section offers sage advice for the topic of discussion in prose that is winsome, engaging, and creative. Some of the more insightful chapters include the gospel in counseling and the time spent in preparation for a counseling session.

Chapter 3, "Hearing the Music of the Gospel" highlights a theme that has been neglected within evangelical circles. The popular evangelical understanding of the gospel is often simplified in terms reminiscent of the four spiritual laws. Christians ask, "We already know the gospel, now what do we

do?" This reveals a startling lack of depth in realizing the power of the gospel. Powlison addresses this issue, noting that the true power for change in the lives of counselees is the gospel of Jesus Christ applied to specific problems of people, bringing them into conformity with Jesus Christ.

The next chapter, "How Healthy is Your Preparation?" concerns another issue rarely covered in biblical counseling textbooks. Biblical counselors should be preparing for their sessions ahead of time engaged in prayer, Scripture reading, and in studying the counselee notes. A greater sensitivity to the concerns of the counselee and an enhanced receptivity to the Holy Spirit in the counseling session should result.

Part 2 is concerned with how counseling can be more effective within the local church. Chapter 10 answers the question "What is ministry of the Word?" and responds with the emphasis on biblical counseling in a variety of contexts. The next chapter stresses the counseling imperative endemic to the local church and the individual members comprising it. Other sections address such issues as whether or not to refer cases, the impact of women functioning as counselors, and why seminary should be the first bit of education to receive for aspiring professional counselors. Chapter 17, "Affirmations and Denials," is a republished article from the 2000 issue of *JBC* that seeks to establish parameters that define what true biblical counseling upholds and rejects.

Chapter 17 is a needed section from Powlison. The term "biblical counseling" has become a diluted concept of late. Here Powlison defines what biblical counseling actually is. Critics of biblical counseling have often attacked a caricature of biblical counseling. The statement of denials rejects the stereotypes often attributed to biblical counseling.

Without question, David Powlison is one of the most gifted writers contributing to the field of biblical counseling. Powlison's style is engaging, winsome, and filled with wisdom coming from a man who has taught biblical counseling for over twenty-five years at Westminster Seminary. *Speaking Truth in Love* does not disappoint in its breadth of coverage or in its depth of insight from one of biblical counseling's shining stars.

Yet Powlison's greatest strength can also be one of his greatest weaknesses. One would expect a more comprehensive, systematic treatment for an introduction to biblical counseling. Yet the series Powlison presents is more like Kierkegaard's *Philosophical Fragments*—lots of little nuggets of truth but lacking comprehensiveness. One can only hope that Powlison may eventually offer the equivalent of *Unscientific Postscript* and treat the topic in a broader, more comprehensive fashion than what is presented. Nevertheless, readers will benefit from the nuggets of advice Powlison offers. *Speaking the Truth in Love* is recommended reading for everyone involved in biblical counseling, for pastors, even for lay people concerned about granting thoughtful, biblical wisdom for everyday life struggles or even tragedies.

S. Trevor Yoakum
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