

## BOOK REVIEWS & SHORT NOTICES

Craig G. Bartholomew. *Introducing Biblical Hermeneutics: A Comprehensive Framework for Hearing God in Scripture*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015. Pp. xiv + 623. \$44.99 (cloth).

Craig Bartholomew is widely respected for his literary output, breadth, facility in both philosophy and biblical studies, and promotion of theological interpretation of Scripture. But as he has been long associated with the work and publications of the Scripture and Hermeneutics Seminar, it seemed only a matter of time until he wrote a complete hermeneutics text. Though many fine “how to” volumes have been published in the field of hermeneutics, Bartholomew has not simply retraced a well-worn path (416). *Introducing Biblical Hermeneutics: A Comprehensive Framework for Hearing God in Scripture* enters the contemporary interpretive milieu by re-imagining the whole enterprise of biblical studies. He exposes the methodological assumptions of the secular academy, and charts an intellectually rigorous way forward for Christian biblical scholars, one that takes seriously both the advances of biblical scholarship in recent years and also the implications of viewing Scripture as the authoritative “story of the world.”

Part 1 of this book is titled “Approaching Biblical Interpretation.” Chapter 1 explains and promotes a distinctly Trinitarian hermeneutic. Noting eight ways that the doctrine of the Trinity shapes biblical hermeneutics, he reminds interpreters that first and foremost they read Scripture *coram Deo*, an observation that directly challenges the autonomous stance of modern academic biblical studies. This thereby provides a venue for exploring even the questions raised by historical criticism, literary analysis, and postmodern interpretation: “A Trinitarian hermeneutics should not avoid any of these issues, but ... it provides the appropriate ring within which solutions may and should be found” (11).

Chapter 2 prescribes the act of *listening* as the most appropriate posture for receiving Scripture: “Academic work, including biblical studies and theology, concentrates on analysis; Scripture asks first to be *listened to* as God’s address” (18). Citing a number of valuable philosophical approaches to listening, Bartholomew (hereby building on the *coram Deo* character of chapter 1), explains that “listening is an extension of our being creaturely; it is a manifestation of creaturely humility” (22). Where the enlightenment elevated rational analysis with its primacy of sight and exaltation of method, a biblical hermeneutic will follow the model of the *Shema* (Deut. 6:4-9), respectful listening (24).

Chapters 3 and 4 comprise part 2 of the book (titled “Biblical Interpretation and Biblical Theology”) and move into the realms of worldview/story and biblical theology. In many ways, this section distills work Bartholomew has done elsewhere in more popular formats (see Michael W. Goheen and Craig G. Bartholomew, *Living at the Crossroads: An Introduction to Christian Worldview* [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008] and Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael W. Goheen, *The Drama of*

*Scripture: Finding Our Place in the Biblical Story*, 2nd ed [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014]). In these chapters, however, story and biblical theology are applied more specifically to hermeneutics (i.e., the chapters are not a “Cliff’s Notes” of his earlier books). Bartholomew observes that interpreters live within a narrative (or “storied”) existence as much modern philosophy and theology has suggested, but notes that this existence is ultimately shaped and normed by *the* story, the Bible’s own *authoritative* story of the world.

Part 3 of the book, “The Story of Biblical Interpretation,” recounts the history of exegesis in brief. Chapter 5 covers inner-biblical, patristic, and medieval exegetical methods, making explicit the Christian belief that the church’s exegetical method has precedent in Scripture itself (although Bartholomew does note that not *all* patristic and medieval exegesis has precedent in Scripture, e.g., allegory). Chapter 6 considers the history of Jewish biblical interpretation, noting not only its fanciful midrashic manifestations but also the more measured *peshat* exegesis, a method that Bartholomew suggests yields insights useful for Christian theological interpretation of Scripture. Chapter 7 summarizes the Reformation period, the Renaissance, the emergence of historical criticism (including the theological response of Barth and others), and the variety of literary and postmodern approaches that are now common in our own day. Though brief, these chapters sufficiently orient modern day interpreters in the broader story of exegesis, and demonstrate how many of the themes from chapter 3 (on worldview) have played out concretely at different points in history.

Also in part 3, Bartholomew discusses canon (chapter 8). Instead of the typical historical approach to the formation of the canon, as useful as that is, he accounts for the canon theologically, rooting its existence in God’s revelatory words and acts in history. Following John Webster, Bartholomew argues that the “native soil” of the canon of Scripture is “the saving economy of the triune God” (257). Thus he concludes: “Taking Sinai and the Christ event seriously reorients one’s view of canon from an obsession with the *terminus ad quem* to a reverse focus on the *terminus a quo*, the originating events” (277).

Part 4 “Biblical Interpretation and the Academic Disciplines” is the core of the volume wherein Bartholomew dissects philosophy and hermeneutics (chapter 9), a Christian vs. secular view of history (chapter 10), literature and the oft underutilized world of literary poetics (chapter 11), and theology (chapter 12), in an effort to show that these fields must be brought to bear on exegesis in careful ways. Recent years have witnessed a push to rewrite evangelical faith in light of the conclusions of historical critical studies (e.g., Kenton L. Sparks, *God’s Word in Human Words: An Evangelical Appropriation of Critical Biblical Scholarship* [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008]; Christopher M. Hays and Christopher B. Ansberry, eds., *Evangelical Faith and the Challenge of Historical Criticism* [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013]). But Bartholomew demonstrates that such proposals have naively and uncritically adopted fundamentally flawed philosophies, historiographies, literary methodologies, and the like. By close attention to the story of Scripture that charts life from creation to consummation, Christians can formulate interpretive approaches that do not self-destruct under closer scrutiny (as the history of philosophy, history, literature, and theology demonstrate), but instead provide the arena for a truly *believing-critical* approach to Scripture. Bartholomew then

articulates how a Trinitarian and biblical-theological hermeneutic will enable scholars to formulate a distinctively Christian approach to every discipline (e.g., biology, finance, education, economics, music, archaeology, etc.), one that avoids the common pitfalls of biblicism and dualism. This “ecology of Christian scholarship,” as Bartholomew terms it, flows naturally and convincingly from the recognition that the biblical story does indeed “provide a hermeneutic for understanding our world and our times” (480).

Bartholomew concludes *Introducing Biblical Hermeneutics* by applying his method to studying the book of Hebrews (chapter 14) and noting the value it has for Christian preaching (chapter 15). In the later chapter, he laments that most academic biblical studies and homiletics are connected via a one-way street: “In churches in which preaching is taken seriously, we expect ministers to draw on the commentaries and other works of biblical scholars. But would we regard exposure to – and perhaps even the practice of – preaching as an indispensable part of the formation of a biblical scholar? Doubtless in most departments of biblical studies nowadays, the very idea would go down like a lead balloon!” (524-25). A posture of *listening* to God’s word in biblical exegesis has direct relevance for preaching. Just as hermeneutics is not simply a tool for analysis but is a method for listening to the voice of God, so too preaching is not simply a tool for conveying information but is a means for ushering believers into the very presence of God (see 533, cf. 35). This chapter ably concludes a volume which proposes an “ecclesial context” as the *primary* context for hearing and interpreting God’s word.

Several strengths commend this volume to readers of this journal. Its breadth leaves no stone unturned and its approach reimagines the enterprise of biblical studies in fresh and compelling ways. It is no accident that Bartholomew was concurrently involved in the writing of a “manifesto” for theological interpretation of Scripture, an attempt to summon Christian scholars back toward a faith-informed study of Scripture (see Craig G. Bartholomew and Heath A. Thomas, eds., *A Manifesto for Theological Interpretation* [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016]). Whereas the source-laden, merely human-authored “academic Bible” has become the object of most academic biblical studies today, Bartholomew encourages Christian interpreters to reclaim the study of inspired *Scripture* and all the methodological implications such an object of study entails. Thus *Introducing Biblical Hermeneutics* rejuvenates “a healthy integration of ecclesial and academic interpretation” (46).

Yet Bartholomew is not suggesting a knee-jerk, fundamentalist biblicism that ignores developments in the academic biblical guild, but rather something more holistic: “This is not a proposal for the complete subservience of academic interpretation to ecclesial understandings. What should happen is an ongoing, healthy dialogue between these partners in the greater task of attending to God’s Word. But it is wrong ... to see academic interpretation as a correction to ecclesial. This is to buy into a nature-grace dichotomy that is profoundly unbiblical. *Wise* biblical interpretation will hold Word and world (academic interpretation) together” (46).

Furthermore, while apologetics is not Bartholomew’s aim, part 4 does issue a severe blow to proposed “evangelical appropriations” of historical critical studies (see the studies mentioned above; see too Peter Enns, *Inspiration and Incarnation:*

*Evangelicals and the Problem of the Old Testament*, 2nd ed.; [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015]). Believers engaged in academic biblical studies have often been given a false choice between capitulation to critical methods or naïve adherence to biblicistic and fundamentalistic approaches. More often than not, this choice leads Christians to concede more and more ground to the critics and affirm fewer and fewer tenets of the Christian faith. (The increased denial of the historicity of Adam among professing evangelicals in our day is a classic example of this trend.) This reviewer has found that many Christians in academic biblical studies are simply unaware of a way to engage in a rigorous methodology that does not conflict with orthodox belief. Bartholomew sounds a VanTillian note when he explains: “Critical tools are, however, never neutral, and their underpinnings may require reconfiguration in relation to the epistemic priority of the Trinity” (10). In *Introducing Biblical Hermeneutics*, interpreters are given a set of tools that will enable a robust yet discerning practice and utilization of academic biblical studies.

As a note of critique, this reviewer felt that Bartholomew’s proposed *lectio divina* is an unhelpful method for a prayerful and reflecting listening to God’s voice in Scripture. When applying this to study of Hebrews (chapter 14) it takes on an almost mystical tone. As an example, he suggests choosing a “prayer word” (Bartholomew suggests “Jesus”) and saying it repeatedly while breathing in and out in order to “open oneself up to God” (see 511, 521). While a prayerful and devotional reading of Scripture is indeed necessary, a better model would seem to come not from the medieval church, but from the Puritans and their “experiential” or “experimental” reading of God’s Word. This reading retains all the devotional character of *lectio divina*, but leaves aside its mystical overtones. For an example, see Joel R. Beeke’s approach to “applying the word” in *Living for God’s Glory: An Introduction to Calvinism* (Lake Mary, FL: Reformation Trust Publishing, 2008), 255-72.

In conclusion, Craig Bartholomew’s *Introducing Biblical Hermeneutics* is a welcome and highly recommended volume for anyone engaged in biblical studies. It is a must-read for those in the academy, although pastors and seminary students will also benefit from this text as it will improve their ability to utilize critical scholarship positively but discerningly. All readers will be better equipped to hear God’s voice in their study of his infallible word.

—R. Andrew Compton

James E Bradley and Richard A. Muller. *Church History: An Introduction to Research Methods and Resources*. Second edition. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2016. Pp. xxi + 293. \$30.00.

How fitting to have this highly respected and much-used volume in an updated, second edition. Bradley’s and Muller’s *Church History*, which as the subtitle indicates, introduces readers to research methods and resources for doing responsible and contextual historical research, contains a wealth of information for students seeking to learn the trade of this academic discipline. James E. Bradley is Geoffrey W. Bromiley Professor Emeritus and Senior Professor of Church History at Fuller Theological Seminary, while Richard A. Muller is P. J. Zondervan Professor

Emeritus of Historical Theology at Calvin Theological Seminary, and Senior Fellow, Junius Institute for Digital Reformation Research, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

The book consists of six chapters and one highly important appendix on “Online Resources and Sources in Microform.” The first chapter introduces the discipline of church history, along with an explanation of the methods and models that have given shape to it through the years. The next chapter offers a perspective on history itself and its meaning. This chapter includes materials that treat historical sources, their use and assessment, as well as the problem of objectivity in historical study. From here the book presents three chapters that deal with historical research, from initial stages and use of sources, to research into primary sources and the use of text databases, including materials in microform, and then taking students into the practice of research and the craft of writing. This includes such basic skills as taking and collating notes, surveying secondary literature, the writing process itself, and many related details to this process. For aspiring scholars and those who find themselves teaching in an academic setting, the sixth and final chapter deals with the practical matters of preparing lectures, preparing a dissertation for publication, and ongoing research.

All of the above-mentioned chapters are packed with information on the tools-of-the-trade, and these materials are carefully organized and presented according to distinct periods and fields of research in church history. In some ways, the appendix alone is worth the price of the book.

Although pastors might dismiss this book as being of value for scholars and professors, or those engaged in advanced theological studies, in fact anyone who is a serious student of church history and the discipline of theology will benefit from reading this work—in part, to be able to detect shoddy scholarship and the poor methods that often accompany such scholarship. Indeed, poor methodology has given us the over-simplified notion of Calvin against the Calvinists, or the idea that predestination forms the central-dogma of Reformed theology, or the oft-heard notion that covenant theology functions in opposition to a theology of divine election (to mention just a few perpetuated ideas).

The resources to which the Bradley/Muller volume point will be of interest to advanced students and scholars in church history and other theological disciplines that depend on church history and the history of doctrine. These resources will also serve pastors and theological students who wish to broaden their horizons and deepen their understanding of church and theological history. This fine book is most welcome, and is nicely updated in its second edition.

—J. Mark Beach

Wes Bredenhof. *To Win Our Neighbors for Christ: The Missology of the Three Forms of Unity*. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2015. Pp. 95. \$10.00.

The Protestant Reformation is often accused of lacking missionary zeal (ix). Such accusations often reflect modern views of what constitutes evangelism and missions more than the content of historic Reformed confessions. Bredenhof argues that the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and (to some degree) the Canons of Dort are missionary documents that should make our churches more missions-

minded. While the author overstates his case somewhat about the missionary aim of these documents, he shows admirably that the Reformed theology summarized in these standards should promote evangelistic zeal in our churches.

This study grew out of an earlier work by the author on the Belgic Confession regarding missions. This present volume summarizes his finding from the Belgic Confession and adds his treatment of the Canons of Dort and the Heidelberg Catechism. Bredenhof makes “no strict distinction” between missions and evangelism in this work (xiii). This effectively broadens the horizons of the subject. However, the author may broaden the meaning of “missions” too much by implying that any desire to see others come to Christ expresses a missionary thrust. He noted that part of the evangelistic thrust of the Belgic Confession was directed towards those previously under Roman Catholic teaching (8-9). It seems to this reviewer that most Protestant confessions, like the Belgic Confession, that contrasted themselves with Roman Catholicism, were apologetic rather than directly evangelistic. While Bredenhof anticipates this objection to his thesis, he does not adequately acknowledge that the evangelistic aim of confessions is indirect rather than direct. Authors such as Calvin did not so much expect to “win” (20) Catholic opponents to Christ as much as to stop their mouths.

This point applies equally to his treatment of the Heidelberg Catechism. Intending the catechism for the instruction of youth (37) does not entail that the catechism is a missionary document that looks outside of the church rather than merely within the church. The Heidelberg Catechism is more positive in tone than a mere apologetic for the Christian faith, but it still falls short of seeking “to win our neighbors for Christ” (50). The value of Bredenhof’s treatment lies primarily in the fact that the theology of this catechism should produce missionary zeal. He makes the vital point as well that we must communicate the gospel to the world both by word and by deed (48-51). He rightly challenges Reformed churches that are contented with transfers of membership rather than with fresh conversions (57-58).

The author’s conclusion that the Canons of Dort provide the theological foundation for missions rather than being a missionary document (76) applies equally to all Reformed confessions, including the Belgic Confession and Heidelberg Catechism. He admits that Dort is the least likely candidate for being considered as a missionary document and that no one on record has argued that it is such (68-69). However, he argues even here that since the Lord used the Canons to convert some people, then we should consider it a missionary document in some sense (71). Bredenhof rightly teaches that Reformed theology should produce missionary zeal. However, this is not the same thing as saying that Reformed confessions are missionary documents. This seems to give too much ground to contemporary assumptions about missions, which tend to make missions the foundation of theology rather than theology the foundation of missions.

Reformed theology is well-suited to make zealous missionaries and evangelists. In this reviewer’s opinion, the best way to use confessional documents evangelistically is to know them so well that they provide structure to how we present Christ and his gospel. Catechisms in particular help order our thinking and use of texts and topics even when we do not cite them directly. It is vital for us to reconnect our theology to our practices. Bredenhof does this rightly in a way that

should revitalize missions. His charge to the church is fresh, necessary, and welcome.

—Ryan M. McGraw

Charles C. Camosy. *Beyond the Abortion Wars: A Way Forward for a New Generation*. Foreword by Melinda Henneberger. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2015. Pp. xvi + 207. \$22.00 (cloth).

For anyone who wishes to gain ground in grappling with the unsettling question of abortion, especially as we face this issue in a pluralistic society of divided moorings, Camosy's book is must reading. This volume is easily one of the best books in handling this controversy relative to the public debate in North America and in proposing a way forward to our current cultural impasse. Indeed, Camosy proposes a new public policy regarding the sharply debated issue of abortion. His proposal I judge to be well-reasoned, morally sensitive, ethically balanced, and pro-life.

The book is divided into six chapters, bookended by an introduction and a conclusion. The introduction asks the question: "Is there anything left to say?" Obviously, there is much left to say! The conclusion addresses getting "beyond polarization," which requires new ways of thinking and speaking about abortion. Camosy considers, among other issues, how the political debate surrounding abortion needs to shift, even as he gets into questions about who or what is the fetus—Camosy generally opts for the language of "prenatal child." He also helps readers distinguish between aiming at death and ceasing to aid, direct and indirect abortion, and other matters that *matter* in facing ethical dilemmas relative to abortion—yes, issues like rape and the life and welfare of the mother.

Camosy, a Roman Catholic ethicist, is associate professor of theological and social ethics at Fordham University. This book puts on display the author's keen mind (Camosy discerns so clearly the cultural and personal motivations that govern the practice of abortion); the book also reveals Camosy's insight into the forces that govern or shape so-called "choice" and "freedom" in our current social-moral context. To his credit, Camosy is never shrill in arguing his position or in exposing the weaknesses in the positions of those either on the left or the right of the abortion debate. Yet, he remains intrepid, even gallant, in handling the complexity of issues that gum up the abortion discussion. Since Camosy comes to the abortion controversy well-armed with facts and statistics, as well as being in fine command of the Christian ethical tradition, he ably exhibits how one can be both pro-life and pro-women in ways not understood or appreciated in the current exchange of views.

In Chapter six, Camosy lays out his proposed "*Mother and Prenatal Child Protection Act*" (MPCPA). In many ways, this forms the heart of the book; and while this review will not explore this proposal, it (I think) offers a way forward and should be carefully considered by all belligerents on all sides of the controversy. Camosy shows how the issue of abortion requires that we address a network of social-moral questions that cannot escape the call of neighbor-love.

—J. Mark Beach

D. A. Carson, ed. *The Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2016. Pp. xvi + 1240. \$65.00 (cloth).

This massive volume presents a comprehensive analysis of biblical authority within the milieu of contemporary discussion, covering a wide range of issues associated with that topic. Inasmuch as biblical authority continues to be directly challenged or otherwise silently questioned from many quarters, this book aims to defend the authority of Scripture with renewed vigor, scholarly integrity, and intellectual depth. Thirty-seven evangelical scholars make contribution to this thick volume. Following D. A. Carson's introduction, "The Many Facets of the Current Discussion," the book is divided into historical topics, biblical and theological topics, philosophical and epistemological topics, comparative religions topics, and a section entitled "Thinking Holistically" which has a single article by Daniel M. Doriani, "Take, Read." The last chapter is by Carson where he fields common questions surrounding biblical authority, offering pithy, well-stated, and generally quite fair answers to the queries.

Naturally it is impossible to discuss all of the contributions of a book of this size and the diversity of topics covered. Thus, I will attempt to introduce some of its features and a few of the articles that I think are particularly well-executed. Under the "historical" section, we find articles that are designed to give an overview of the history of Christian thought on the authority of Scripture. The patristic period to Augustine is treated by Charles E. Hill. Robert Kolb takes up the Reformation and the period of Protestant Orthodoxy, which is stronger in its treatment of Lutheran than Reformed orthodoxy. In relation to biblical authority, other articles take up respectively seventeenth-century natural philosophy, German Pietism, Wesleyan theology, the Old Princetonians, Karl Barth, and more recent Roman Catholic views. There is also a chapter on the idea of accommodation as that idea has been considered through various phases of church history. To my mind (or interest), the article by Bradley N. Seeman on the Old Princetonians is to be commended for being more contextual and historically nuanced than is usually found in discussions surrounding these writers (his focus is on Charles Hodge). David Gibson does an admirable job capturing the strengths and weaknesses of Barth's view of Scripture, with its complexities, and what has been coined as Barth's doctrine of "dynamic infallibilism."

The articles under "biblical and theological" topics take up matters such as Old and New Testament canon, unity and diversity of the Old and New Testaments, Bart Ehrman's misapprehensions of biblical inerrancy, the double authorship of Scripture, history and myth in the Bible, biblical authority and diverse literary genres, biblical perspicuity, Jesus' view of the Old Testament, the problem of the New Testament use of the Old Testament, and moving from the biblical words to doctrinal formulation. The article by Henri A. G. Blocher is worthy of mention, treating the double authorship question, wherein he helpfully engages and interacts with, among others, Nicholas Wolterstorff, specifically his important book *Divine Discourse*.

The "philosophical" turn of this volume analyzes many important topics, including some key aspects of contemporary religious epistemology, non-foundationist epistemologies and the truth of Scripture (all of which, I think, is very important material), authority and truth, communities of interpretation, and science and Scripture (this last mentioned topic is sanely treated by Kirsten Birkett). Under



this heading of articles Paul Helm writes on “The Idea of Inerrancy.” He attempts a close analysis of the term, with the aim to bring clarity to the idea and to explore its implications. He argues that the term cannot be divorced from hermeneutics. This article moves from some conceptual remarks, to the grounding of inerrancy, then treats inerrancy, propositions, and speech-acts (a valuable section, I think), and next takes up inerrancy, the indexicality of speech-acts, and assertion. Essentially, Helm argues (rightly) that “it is plainly false, demonstrably false, to suppose that the idea of biblical inerrancy requires or implies that the Bible consists of nothing but propositions, and that only the propositions or assertions that we find in Scripture are important. There is, besides assertions, the *thought-ful* content of types of sentences that are usually used to make requests, to rebuke, to invite, as well as ... reports of wordless states of affairs” (911). Next follows inerrancy and time—i.e., why timeless truth is not a bogey; then inerrancy, convention, and falsifiability, which addresses “the relation between the intention of a speaker and the meaning of what he says, and then considers what would have to be the case for the doctrine of biblical inerrancy to be disproved” (916). This is directly tied to authorial intention and therefore to genre.

There are four articles devoted to the comparative religions topics. Here rival religious claims and the authoritative sacred books of other religions are examined in relation to the church’s belief in biblical authority; specifically, Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist views are scrutinized in comparison with the Christian Bible.

Not to be missed is the earlier-mentioned essay of Doriani entitled, “Take, Read.” Doriani begins by recounting the story of Augustine’s famed conversion. He notes that Augustine had already been studying the Bible for a decade whereupon, reaching a crisis in his life, he heard a child chanting, *Tolle, lege, Tolle, lege* (“Take, read, take read”). He knew the chant was part of a children’s game, but having the book of Romans with him, he randomly opened it and read: “Not in riots and drunken parties, not in eroticism and indecencies, not in strife and rivalry, but put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in its lusts” (Rom. 13:13, 14). This was the moment that marked Augustine’s conversion. Yet at this point in his life Augustine did not come to the Bible as a novice. Previous study had paid dividends. Doriani’s article comes to readers both as incentive to read and study the Bible—for what good is an authoritative Bible unopened, unread, and unheeded?—and as an account of “the way theologians, pastors, and scholars read the Scripture from a personal rather than a strictly academic perspective” (1120). In other words, what commitments and dispositions do we bring to reading the Bible? How do we hear or fail to hear the text of Scripture? And what effect does this have on teaching, preaching, and living? Doriani notes that reading the Bible takes sustained interest, and shows how Jesus critiques the misreading of Scripture. Our quest in reading Scripture includes the aim to find and appropriate the great themes of the Bible, which requires that we also read the world alongside the Bible. Doriani properly challenges readers of the Bible to do so under a method and discipline that promotes life, recognizing that we inherit or imbibe cultural baggage that needs to be critiqued or discarded. While we easily can place ourselves over the text of Scripture, or alongside of it (in which case we have the last word), even when we place ourselves under the text of Scripture, submission to it is not automatically accomplished. Exploring various models of reading the Bible, Doriani proposes a modification to

the familiar hermeneutical spiral, introducing the idea of attempted application of the text in this spiral process—i.e., as we bring our own pre-understanding to the text, the text encounters us so that we come to new understanding, and from there we attempt to apply the text. From this point we discover partial success and partial failure. In turn, we have more interaction with the text of the Bible, which likewise brings us to a renewed attempt to apply the text, producing further reading and application, *et cetera*. Without application, there is no genuine understanding of Scripture (1149). Doriani urges readers of the Bible to do so *expectantly*, that God will bless our lives through his Word. He closes his article by expounding James 1:18-25, for the “word of truth” is the path along which sanctification flourishes and the church is safeguarded. The message of the gospel is the power of God for salvation. Doriani pleads, in short, for both a technical and devotional reading of Scripture. Scripture as mirror calls us to turn to the Lord. “We should read to know him, love him, and follow him” (1154).

This is a big, beautiful volume. The scholarship is of higher caliber than other collections of this sort. It easily stands as the new “go-to reference” source treating a wide-span of topics concerning the inerrancy and authority of the Bible. Our hats off and warm commendations to all the contributors!

—J. Mark Beach

Scott Christensen. *What About Free Will? Reconciling Our Choices with God's Sovereignty*. Foreword by D. A. Carson. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1016. Pp. xiv + 284. \$17.99.

In the history of Christian theology, one of the most vexing questions that has troubled theologians is the compatibility of divine sovereignty and human responsibility. If the salvation of fallen sinners wholly rests upon God's sovereign will or election to save his people in Christ, (as Reformed theology affirms upon the basis of Scripture), doesn't this mitigate the responsibility of those who hear the gospel call to faith in Jesus Christ? If those whom God elects are effectually or irresistibly brought to faith and repentance, does not this deny that they possess the freedom to embrace or to resist the call of the gospel? In the historic debates between Calvinists and Arminians, one of the most common objections to the Calvinist position is that it constitutes a form of fatalism or determinism. From the perspective of historic Arminianism, the Calvinist view denies genuine human freedom on the part of the elect and non-elect alike. On the one hand, if a person is elect in Christ, he or she has no freedom to resist the gospel call. And on the other hand, if a person is not elect in Christ, he or she has no freedom to choose to believe in response to the gospel call. For the Arminian, the Calvinist view is incompatible with the kind of freedom that all human beings possess in response to the invitation of the gospel, namely, to choose to believe or not to believe in Jesus Christ.

Though the question of divine sovereignty and human responsibility is a daunting one, Scott Christensen tackles it in this volume in an admirable fashion. Unlike many of the more dense and philosophical treatments of the question in recent literature, Christensen writes from the standpoint of a seasoned pastor who has wrestled with the question, not only in its theoretical or academic form but also in its implications for the ministry of the gospel. Christensen, who is the pastor of the Summit Lake Community Church in Marcos, Colorado, acknowledges in his

preface that it “was never his intention to write this book” (xi). However, in the course of his own struggle with embracing the biblical teaching regarding God’s purpose of election, he slowly came to be convinced that God’s sovereignty, especially in the salvation of the elect, is clearly taught in Scripture. With this conviction, he was also convinced that God’s sovereignty in providence and election was not in conflict with the “other side” of biblical teaching, “the human act of willing, desiring, purposeful choosing” (xii). His aim in this book, as he describes it, is “to make this conundrum [God’s sovereignty and human responsibility] a little more comprehensible—first for myself and maybe for a few others as well” (xii).

Christensen opens his book with a chapter that delineates what he calls the “free-will problem.” Because human freedom and divine sovereignty seem to be at odds with each other, some Christians limit the reach of God’s sovereignty in order to provide room for human freedom or free will. Other Christians choose to limit human freedom in order to maintain God’s sovereign control over all things, including human choices. The first of these options seems to diminish God’s sovereign grace, the second seems to lead to fatalism. In modern debates regarding free will, two views of human freedom have been formulated to solve this problem: “libertarianism” and “compatibilism.” Libertarianism, which is the common view of Arminian theologians, claims that genuine human freedom is incompatible with divine determinism or “God’s meticulous decreeing of all things” (6). To the extent that any human decision is determined by God or any other prior factors, it is not a free decision in the libertarian understanding. Compatibilism by contrast affirms that “there is a dual explanation for every choice that humans make. God determines the choices of every person, yet every person freely makes his or her own choices” (6). In the compatibilist understanding, a human choice is free when the person voluntarily chooses what they find most desirable and is not hindered or coerced in making this choice. According to Christensen, compatibilism “says that our choices proceed from the most compelling motives and desires we have, which in turn is conditioned on our base nature, whether good or evil” (6). The compatibilist view affirms what might be called a “freedom of inclination,” because it views human choices within the matrix of what particular human beings are inclined to do by virtue of who they are.

After delineating what he calls the “free will problem,” Christensen devotes four chapters to a careful exposition of the main features of the libertarian and compatibilist views of human freedom. In the libertarian view of human freedom, human beings are always fully capable of making choices that are contrary to the actual choices that they make. For this reason, libertarianism is sometimes referred to as the “power of contrary choice.” Additionally, libertarianism insists that the actual choices humans make are never finally determined by factors that lie outside of us. Though there may be many circumstances and reasons external to the person who makes a free choice, these circumstances do not compel or determine a person to make a specific choice rather than another. Otherwise, the choice would not be a genuinely free one. Even in the choice that sinners are called upon to make in response to the gospel call, God’s grace, though necessary, is not a sufficient explanation for the particular choice to believe that some make and others do not.

In his exposition of the libertarian view, Christensen rightly argues that it raises a problem regarding God’s foreknowledge of the future choices of human beings

who enjoy libertarian freedom. Even though classic Arminianism affirms God's exhaustive foreknowledge of such choices (God's "simple foreknowledge" or pre-cognition of the choice to believe or not to believe), it can provide no explanation for how can God foreknow them. Since such choices are indeterminate and the person who believes always possesses the power to choose to the contrary, even God, as contemporary "open theists" argue, cannot know what choices free human beings will make. If God knows these choices beforehand, the actual choices we make would be certain to occur and we would no longer be free to do the contrary.

In his summary of the compatibilist view of human freedom, Christensen begins with an overview of the Scripture's teaching that God sovereignly governs all things that occur throughout history, including the choices and actions of human beings who bear his image. Within the framework of a biblical view of God's sovereignty, compatibilism maintains that human choices always have a dual explanation: "One cause is divine and the other is human. The divine cause is *primary* but *remote*. The human cause is *secondary* but *proximate* (i.e., the near cause)" (78, emphasis Christensen's). This dual explanation for human choices is often termed "concurrency," since the divine will and the human will are understood to concur in the choice. Though human beings make choices according to their desires and inclinations, they do so in a way that fulfills God's purpose and will. These choices are genuine, representing what the human actor wants to do without any external coercion or hindrance, but they are not made without God's prior determination and concurrence. As Christensen summarizes this view, "compatibilism holds that there is a dual explanation for human acts of choosing. God determines the choices of every person, yet every person freely makes his or her own choices. People are free when they voluntarily choose what they most want to choose, as long as the choices are made in an unhindered way" (88).

While Christensen acknowledges that the Scriptures do not provide a technical or theological account of human freedom or responsibility, they do confirm the compatibilist understanding of the relation between God's sovereignty and human responsibility. This is evident, to use Christensen's language, in the way the Scriptures provide a dual explanation for "why good stuff happens" and "why bad stuff happens" in the course of God's sovereign governance of history. Though God works all things according to his will (cf. Eph. 1:11), even those things that are contrary to his "revealed will," he does so in such a way as to realize his good purposes without being the author of sin and evil. And he does so in a way, however mysterious to us, that does not diminish the responsibility of human actors who play their role on the stage of history, so to speak.

The heart of Christensen's treatment of the issue of divine sovereignty and human responsibility comes in chapters 7-11, which unpack carefully the way in which fallen human beings make choices and respond to the overtures of the gospel to believe and repent. In these chapters, Christensen zeroes in on the core issue, namely, how God sovereignly saves his people according to his purpose of election, but does so in a way that is non-coercive and consistent with a compatibilist view of human freedom. Christensen also offers a thorough critique of the problems inherent in a libertarian view of human freedom, particularly its claim that God's grace only makes the choice to believe possible but not certain.

Christensen begins this section of his book with three chapters that aim to unpack the way human beings make choices. Utilizing the analogy of an onion, he endeavors to peel away the various layers or reasons why people make the choices they do, and to uncover what he calls the “core source of choosing.” In his exploration of the layers of explanation for the choices human beings make, Christensen notes that his special interest lies not in the mundane choices we make (e.g., will I choose to have Wheaties for breakfast?) but in the moral and spiritual choices we make (e.g., will I obey God’s commandments or embrace the gospel promise in faith?). His argument throughout these chapters is that “The Bible teaches that the sin nature from which humans suffer constrains their ability to act with moral and spiritual freedom. Until we are free from sin, we are never truly free” (136).

In his analysis of the various layers of human freedom, Christensen starts with what he calls the “outside layer.” This layer of human freedom concerns the way human choices are always made in accordance with what we most desire or find to be agreeable to our self-interest. As long as external constraints (natural inabilities, external circumstances, and moral constraints) do not hinder us, we always choose to act in the way that we want to act. Human beings are free when they are able to do what they want to do. However, this layer of human freedom raises the obvious question, namely, what “specific desires, motives, inclinations, passions, preferences, and so on” direct concrete human beings to make the choices they make. When we seek an answer to this question, we find that a person’s “internal dispositions” play a decisive role in determining their choices. Such dispositions are a second, more important dimension of human freedom. Though these dispositions are complex, and even include contrary or competing desires, they conspire together in such a way that “in the end the most persuasive or prevailing desire inevitably determines the choices that one makes” (172). Human beings are responsible or free when they choose voluntarily and intentionally to do what they are convinced is most desirable.

The third layer of human freedom that Christensen unpacks lies at the core of our human nature as fallen sinners. In a compelling chapter, “A Tale of Two Natures,” Christensen explores the biblical portrait of fallen human beings who are dead in trespasses and sins, whose innermost dispositions are hostile to God and the things of God, and who are unable, because unwilling, to seek after and to love God. In this chapter, Christensen argues that, until and unless human beings are powerfully enlivened by the Spirit of Christ (regeneration in the narrow sense), they will remain willfully and noncoercively hostile to God and unbelieving in their response to the gracious call of the gospel. According to Christensen’s summary of the condition of fallen human beings, “The heart of the naturally disposed sinful person remains indifferent at best to God’s offer of salvation. But when God calls his chosen ones to himself, it is all a work of sweet, irresistible grace, melting hearts with a divine love never encountered before” (190). By the grace of sovereign regeneration and conversion, which God authors by his Spirit and Word, sinners are brought to embrace freely and willingly what God offers to them in Christ.

Christensen concludes his book with a chapter on what he calls “absolute freedom.” In this chapter, he notes that the Arminian view of libertarian freedom raises insoluble problems for our understanding of the final state. Contrary to

libertarian freedom, which elevates the freedom of human beings to do the contrary to the highest degree, the biblical view of human freedom magnifies the perfect liberty that believers will enjoy in the new heavens and earth. When God's gracious work reaches its *telos* in the perfection or glorification of believers, they will enjoy true liberty. Such liberty consists in a perfect delight in and desire to do what pleases God and serves others in his name. According to Christensen, "True freedom consists in knowing the best and right choices, in being unhindered in making them, and in experiencing the greatest joy when we do make them." (225). The problem with the libertarian view is that it can never account for the kind of absolute freedom believers will enjoy in the future, when God's work in them has reached its consummation. If true freedom consists in the power of contrary choice, as the libertarian view insists, then the possibility that God's work of grace will be frustrated remains even in respect to the future.

Despite the difficulty of his subject, Christensen's book does achieve his purpose to provide a comprehensible explanation (to the extent possible) of the perennial issue of God's sovereignty and human responsibility. Though there is a place for a more analytical, even philosophical, treatment of this issue, Christensen's study is exceptional for the way it clearly treats the issue of human freedom. Throughout the book, Christensen employs concrete illustrations and analogies that make otherwise obscure topics clear. He also writes as a pastor who understands the sorts of practical questions and challenges that his topic raises. Among the helpful features of the book are the bibliographies at the end of each chapter that invite the reader to pursue the topic further, as well as the discussion questions that could be used in a group study of the topic. Christensen also provides his readers with glossaries of the key terms or concepts that are necessary to an informed understanding of the debates regarding libertarian and compatibilist views of human freedom.

Because Christensen chooses to forego engagement with more recent studies of a more analytical and philosophical nature, he does not alert his readers to recent debates among a number of Reformed scholars whose specialty lies in the area of Reformed orthodoxy. For example, he does not interact with a recent volume, *Reformed Thought on Freedom: the Concept of Free Choice in Early Modern Reformed Theology* (edited by Willem J. van Asselt, J. Martin, Bac, and Roelf T. te Velde [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010]). This volume and other studies of the treatment of the freedom of the will in the period of Reformed orthodoxy suggest that the modern debates, which are governed by the categories and nomenclature of "compatibilism" and "incompatibilism," do not fully capture the complexity of classic Reformed theology on this issue.

However, when Christensen's book is judged according to his stated goal, I understand why D. A. Carson commends it as highly as he does in the Foreword. I concur wholeheartedly with Carson's identification of the book's two great strengths, its accessibility to a general readership and its fairness in presenting and evaluating alternative views. For anyone interested in the topic, I would certainly recommend this book as an excellent introduction.

—Cornelis P. Venema

Johannes Cocceius. *The Doctrine of the Covenant and Testament of God*. Translated by Casey Carmichael. Introduced by Willem J. van Asselt. Classic Reformed Theology, vol. 3. General editor, R. Scott Clark. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2016. Pp. xxxviii + 408. \$50.00 (cloth).

This volume, the third in the series in Classic Reformed Theology, is a most welcome addition to the growing literature of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Reformed theology that is being translated into English, which affords new opportunities to explore the history of Reformed theology, its development, and nuances of views, even as it opens up new vistas of theological thought that have lain buried in the Latin tongue. Cocceius's *Summa Doctrinae de Foedere et Testamento Dei* (1660) is justly regarded as a classic work in federal theology. Although Cocceius (1603-1669) was not the father of federal theology as an earlier generation of scholars claimed, he was a towering figure in seventeenth-century theology and an important contributor to the covenant theology that came to mark the Reformed movement, giving important definition to that arm of Reformed thinking—even if it constituted one side or construal of how covenant theology ought to be conceived.

The late Dr. Willem J. van Asselt, an elite post-Reformation scholar and an expert in Cocceius's theology, wrote the introductory essay for this volume. He provides the reader with a helpful sketch of Cocceius's life, education, and background, along with an overview of the chief theological themes and accents of this work. Although Cocceius's famed book had been translated into Dutch in the seventeenth century, with a modern Dutch translation appearing in 1990, this is the first English translation of this work.

The most distinct feature of Cocceius's covenant theology was his doctrine of abrogations—that is, his view that the covenant of works was not abrogated altogether and at once, but that it was gradually—and increasingly—abrogated through various stages of redemptive history. “This work,” notes van Asselt, “describes all of biblical history after the fall as a series of events by which this original covenant of works was canceled and abrogated step by step” (xxxix). The decisive events that usher in a new stage in the history of the covenant of grace are five in number: (1) the fall; (2) the divine decision to establish the covenant of grace after the fall, with the promise of this new covenant—this runs as a thread through the whole of the Old Testament and is fulfilled in the New Testament; (3) the believer undergoing sanctification, throwing off the old self and coming to life of the new self; (4) the physical death of the believer; and, finally (5) the believer's resurrection from the dead. Thus, the doctrine of abrogations runs like a thread through redemptive history, from the period of the fall into sin to the believer's complete victory, when all traces of the curse are overcome in the resurrection of the body. As such, the doctrine describes how the effects of Adam's transgression of the covenant of works, with its negative sanctions, are steadily and progressively erased or canceled. It also opens a positive perspective toward the future, for as the consequences of violation of the covenant of works are overcome, the blessings of the covenant of grace amplify and grow—salvation is on the rise.

The most controversial feature of Cocceius's covenant theology was his teaching on the forgiveness of Old Testament saints, namely that actual remission of

sins for Old Testament believers had to await Christ's atoning work on the cross. Romans 3:25 is the pivotal text in this regard: "*whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins*" (ESV). The "passing over" (πάρεσις), argues Cocceius, corresponds to a future "remission" (ἄφεσις), meaning that the sins of Old Testament believers were "passed over" until Christ propitiated for their sins—forgiveness was anticipated but not accomplished until Golgotha (see esp. 228-230). This met with criticism by various Reformed theologians, including Francis Turretin. But none was more vigorously opposed to this idea than the Dutch Reformed theologian Melchior Leydekker (1642-1721) (also see WLC, Q/A 34). Related to this issue was the question whether Christ's suretiship was that of an *expromissor* or a *fidejussor* (see xxix-xxx). Cocceius embraced the latter concept, whereas others argued for the former idea. Another feature of Cocceius's teaching centered on his doctrine of the Sabbath, which caused Voetians so much consternation (see xx).

Those who have an interest in Reformed federal theology, or are curious to read a premier scholar of his age, or simply wish to study Cocceius as an important historical figure and theologian, will welcome this significant volume in the history of Reformed thinking.

—J. Mark Beach

Oliver D. Crisp. *Jonathan Edwards among the Theologians*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2015. Pp. xx + 198. \$25.00.

Oliver Crisp has quickly gained a reputation as a leading modern interpreter of Jonathan Edwards's works, engaging historical theology with a view to modern discussions and theological formulation. This book brings together a number of essays that Crisp has printed in other venues, along with some new contributions. Crisp is professor of Systematic Theology at Fuller Theological Seminary.

The nine chapters of this volume are bookended by first treating "Edwards and Reformed Theology" and concluding with "On the Orthodoxy of Jonathan Edwards." Among topics considered, usually in the form of Edwards in relation to other theologians, are the doctrine of God, the Trinity, creation, free will, original sin, atonement, and preaching. Given my interests, I found the chapters on free will and original sin most significant, along with the last chapter on Edwards's orthodoxy. In fact, these chapters, dealing with free will and original sin, are, I think, worth the price of the book. Crisp convincingly demonstrates that the usual depiction of Edwards as the Reformed standard-bearer on free will should be challenged—a claim that is of more recent vintage. Specifically, contrasting Edwards's ideas with those of the southern Presbyterian, John Girardeau (1825-1898), Crisp takes readers through a crop of interrelated ideas, and engages original source materials from Reformed orthodoxy and modern scholars of that tradition in order to argue that Edwards's views are given to novelty, even though he sought to defend Reformed orthodoxy on this issue as he understood it.

Crisp is perhaps even more insightful in his chapter expounding Edwards's doctrine of original sin. As those who have worked through Edwards's major treatise on this topic know, Edwards presents not only the main biblical arguments relative



to this topic, he also offers his innovative philosophical doctrine of “identity” in support of this doctrine. Edwards’s doctrine of identity teaches that God, in the way of continual creation, constitutes and reconstitutes a person’s identity through time, so that he or she is one and the same person from one moment to the next. Likewise, in the same manner, God constitutes Adam’s progeny as having a singular identity with Adam, even though Adam is long deceased and his descendants are born at different moments in history. God’s own work constitutes an identity of Adam with his posterity, which accounts for his descendants being guilty and depraved in Adam. That is, God regards Adam and his descendants as one entity, and he does so in order that Adam’s sin may be rightly transmitted to those who are one entity with him. It is difficult to tell whether this is a strict “realist” take on the doctrine of original sin or whether Edwards holds to a doctrine of federal headship—but the thrust of his argument points to the former.

The problems inherent in Edwards’s teaching include a misunderstanding of the Reformed idea of continuing creation—which does not entail humans and things being created, only to fall out of being and then recreated anew micro-second to micro-second. Edwards’s teaching sets forth a radical form of occasionalism (i.e., God is the sole causal agent in the world, creatures being merely the occasion for his actions); and it is plagued with all the attendant problems attached to occasionalism. Moreover, Edwards’s doctrine of identity doesn’t answer the question why Adam’s race is constituted as one entity with him—why they deserve that—or how his view, in saying that God is the agent who constitutes a singular identity between Adam and his descendants, may be assessed with a different criticism than that aimed at the federal headship model, or how the answer to that criticism can be other than that God was pleased to do so according to his wisdom and justice. But if that is the answer, Edwards’s “identity” proposal offers little progress forward; and given that it seems to be an extreme form of occasionalism—God appearing to be the only real actor in history, and the first cause of everything, sin included—that is hardly an acceptable path to take.

Among other traits, the chapter that treats Edwards’s orthodoxy helpfully, though sympathetically, depicts Edwards’s proclivity to champion a form of panentheism. This also comes out in the chapter that treats Arminius and Edwards on the doctrine of creation, where Arminius, not Edwards, is the more traditional Reformed thinker. Edwards, as Crisp shows, renders the divine life as spilling out and issuing forth in a way suggestive of emanation. This presents problems relative to God’s freedom, and renders creation not so much a divine decision as a divine necessity. God being God could not do otherwise. That is not Reformed orthodoxy. But this is not to censure Edwards unjustly or even harshly. Reading Crisp helps one grasp why American Reformed theologians like Charles Hodge, among others, respected Edwards but regarded aspects of his teaching as strange fire kindled in the Reformed camp. Indeed, as Crisp shows, Edwardsian metaphysics is not that of traditional Reformed orthodoxy.

Crisp is a keen thinker; and he has given us an insightful book on the keen mind of Jonathan Edwards.

—J. Mark Beach

Steven J. Duby, *Divine Simplicity: A Dogmatic Account*. T&T Clark Studies in Systematic Theology, vol. 30. Edited by John Webster, Ian A. McFarland, and Ivor Davidson. New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016. Pp. x + 260. \$120.00.

“The distance between God and the creature is so great,” observes the Westminster Confession of Faith (7.2), that reasonable creatures “could never have any fruition of him as their blessedness and reward, but by some voluntary condescension on God’s part.” Another consequence of said distance is the perpetual difficulty of thinking about God. Because the divine nature inevitably eludes our comprehension, it is singularly easy to slip into inadequate conceptions of God.

One of the clarifying teachings which prevents error about God from metastasizing, is the doctrine of divine simplicity. This is handily expressed by the Westminster Confession of Faith in its denial that God has parts (2.1). In expounding and defending this doctrine, Steven Duby draws heavily on Reformed Orthodox sources, theological and metaphysical.

After a brief introduction orienting the reader to the flow and purpose of the book, the argument is divided into five chapters. The first gives an historical overview of the doctrine of divine simplicity from patristic affirmations, through medieval developments, to Protestant reaffirmations. Duby also surveys objections from theologians and analytic philosophers.

The second chapter explains the methodology of the argumentation. Duby maintains that dogmatics cannot be separated from exegesis, and in fact in one sense is just “exegesis carried out in a certain elaborative manner” (56). Moreover it is not ultimately possible to engage in extended exegesis without reference to metaphysics. The close of this chapter provides a very valuable “cartography of divine simplicity” (80) with ten points to set out the boundaries of the doctrine (80–87).

The following two chapters make an “Exegetical-Dogmatic Case” for divine simplicity. The argument unfolds in a simple structure. First, there is a survey of Biblical teaching on a particular aspect of the doctrine of God. Second, the way that facet of theology proper entails simplicity is explained. Thus God’s simplicity is affirmed as a necessary correlate of his singularity, aseity, immutability, infinity, and role as Creator.

While some objections were handled in the process of the argument, the final chapter is devoted to a detailed analysis of objections to the doctrine of divine simplicity from the plurality of God’s attributes, the nature of God’s freedom, and the doctrine of the Trinity.

Several features of the book are especially to be commended. Though the topic is dense and difficult, clear exposition and valuable summaries make the argument easy to follow. A glossary of Latin terms might be a useful addition in a second printing, but in general this does not detract from the clarity of the argument. Indeed, lucidity of conception and expression are perhaps the most notable features of a volume with so much metaphysical discussion. For instance, it would be hard to improve upon the remark that divine attributes “while referentially identical are still denotatively diverse” (190). A careful use of sources enables Duby to rebut misunderstandings and tread sure-footedly on confusing ground. A particularly good example of this is the delineation of modal vs. relative distinctions (231).

My final commendation doubles as a criticism: this book leaves one wanting more. It would not have hurt to have some additional detail in the exegetical arguments, and one very much hopes to see more of this kind of thing. More from Duby himself, who has proven himself a formidable scholar; and more books that with similar learning, skill, and deftness explain the Biblical basis and logical coherence of classical Christian theism.

—Ruben Zartman

Sinclair B. Ferguson. *The Whole Christ: Legalism, Antinomianism, and Gospel Assurance—Why the Marrow Controversy Still Matters*. Foreword by Tim Keller. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016. Pp. 256. \$24.99 (cloth).

In the history of Christian theology and practice, no question has piqued more interest (or wreaked more havoc) than that of the relation between works and grace, the law and the gospel. If the believer's salvation is wholly by grace alone through faith in Christ alone, then it would seem that good works are no longer necessary for salvation. To echo the apostle Paul's language in Romans 6, why not sin then that grace may abound? In the traditional language of theology, this is the danger of antinomianism, which rejects the law and its obligations. On the other hand, if we emphasize that true faith always is accompanied by good works, and that such works are an indispensable component of the believer's response to the gospel of Jesus Christ, do we not raise the specter of legalism or moralism, the teaching that good works constitute a partial basis for our salvation? Furthermore, will we not undermine the believer's gospel assurance? After all, who can know whether such works are sufficient to confirm that a believer's faith in Christ is genuine and non-hypocritical?

In this recent work by Sinclair Ferguson, these issues of legalism, antinomianism, and gospel assurance are addressed within the context of the Marrow Controversy that arose within the Church of Scotland in the early eighteenth century. Ferguson treats this controversy in the opening section of the book, and then considers how the debate provides a helpful entry point for articulating the gospel of Jesus Christ in a way that avoids the pitfalls of legalism on the one hand and antinomianism on the other. His major thesis is that an answer to the ongoing debates regarding the relation between works and grace, the law and the gospel, lies in an understanding of the "whole Christ" whom believers embrace by faith. When believers embrace the whole Christ in the way of faith, they enjoy the benefits of his saving work in a way that overcomes the apparent tension between affirming salvation by grace alone and acknowledging the role of works in the Christian life. By faith in the whole Christ, believers are also able to enjoy a fulsome gospel assurance of salvation that rests in the gracious work of Christ alone for their salvation.

After an introductory chapter, which outlines the plan of the book and the occasion for its publication, Ferguson begins with a summary of the Marrow Controversy. The Marrow Controversy had its roots in a debate in the Auchterarder Presbytery that arose in 1717 when William Craig, a candidate for the ministry, was asked to agree with the following statement: "I believe that it is not sound and

orthodox to teach that we forsake sin in order to our coming to Christ, and instating us in covenant with God” (28). When Craig hesitated to express his agreement with the statement, his licensure was revoked by the Presbytery. When an appeal against this action of Presbytery was brought to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, the General Assembly condemned the Auchterarder Creed and declared its “abhorrence of the foresaid proposition as unsound and most detestable doctrine, as it stands, and was offered by the said Presbytery to the said Mr. William Craig” (28-29). This statement raised a number of questions regarding how the offer of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ is to be presented to fallen sinners. In particular, it raised the specter of a kind of legalism which required that certain conditions be met on the part of fallen sinners before they were authorized to embrace the gospel promise in Christ. The prevailing opinion at the time within the Scottish church was that the gospel offer must include the demand that its recipients first “forsake sin,” and that they must do so as a pre-condition to their coming to Christ in faith.

Subsequent to the debate that emerged in the Auchterarder Presbytery and the General Assembly in 1717, the General Assembly in 1720 confirmed that this was the prevalent opinion regarding the gospel offer in the Scottish church, The General Assembly did so by opposing the teaching and influence of *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, adopting an act that prohibited ministers from recommending the book in their preaching or writing. *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, likely authored by Edward Fisher, was published in two parts (part 1 in 1645, part 2 in 1648), and consists of a series of dialogues between *Neophytus*, a young Christian troubled by questions regarding the gospel; *Evangelista*, the pastor who counsels him; *Nomista*, a legalist; and *Antinomista*, an antinomian. In the estimation of the General Assembly, *The Marrow's* emphasis upon the free offer of the gospel was antinomian in its implications, and also reflected a subtle form of universal redemption. According to *The Marrow's* exposition of the gospel, all sinners should be freely and graciously summoned to come to Christ in faith, and this summons ought not be hedged about with requirements that must be met in order to their believing response to the gospel promise. In the estimation of those sympathetic to *The Marrow*, the Scottish church was plagued with a kind of moralism, which required believers to discern in themselves signs of repentance that confirmed their election and gave them warrant for believing that the gospel promise was for them.

After setting forth the main features of the Marrow Controversy, Ferguson turns in the remainder of his book to four key doctrinal and pastoral issues raised by it: 1) the gospel of the grace of God and its offer to all; 2) the gospel and legalism; 3) the gospel and antinomianism; and 4) the gospel and assurance of salvation (37). For the purpose of this review, I will offer a short summary of his treatment of each of these issues.

In his consideration of the first of these issues, the gospel of God and its offer to all, Ferguson maintains that the Marrow Controversy exposed a subtle error in the way many view the gospel offer. Rather than freely and graciously inviting all sinners to believe in Jesus Christ for salvation, the gospel offer is qualified by an insistence that certain subjective conditions be met prior to coming to Christ. Since the benefits of Christ's saving work include repentance or turning from sin, the recipients of the gospel are required to look for such repentance in themselves as a warrant for coming to Christ. As Ferguson puts it, “The fallacy here? The subtle

movement from seeing forsaking sin as the fruit of grace that is rooted in election, to making the forsaking of sin the necessary precursor for experiencing that grace. Repentance, which is the fruit of grace, thus becomes a qualification for grace” (43). The free offer of the gospel, however, is made to all fallen sinners, and not exclusively to those who are righteous or repentant. The gospel offer calls sinners to embrace the whole Christ, and in embracing Christ to receive all the inseparable benefits (traditionally distinguished in the so-called *ordo salutis* or the “order of salvation”) that are granted through faith-union with Christ. However, when those who hear the gospel are told to look for evidence in themselves of Christ’s work as a preparation for, or pre-condition to, their coming to him, they are made to look within themselves for a warrant to believe in Christ. When that happens, the gospel is no longer good news but a species of legalism.

With respect to the second issue, the gospel and legalism, Ferguson argues that legalism can take many forms, and that it often takes the subtle form of divorcing the law from God whose law it is and whose purpose in giving the law is not opposed to his goodness and grace. Legalism is not simply the idea that sinners can obtain or secure favor with God by doing what the law obliges. Legalism in all of its forms begins with our sinful tendency to separate God’s goodness and benevolence from his law, which reveals to us what pleases him and leads to human flourishing and well-being in his presence. According to Ferguson, such legalism always begins with “a divorce between God’s revealed will and his gracious, generous character” (82). Once such a divorce occurs, it is impossible to appreciate how God in his grace can restore sinners to favor with himself and invite them through the law to show forth their gratitude to him by renewed obedience. However, the gospel is not ultimately contrary to the law. The gospel of Jesus Christ invites fallen sinners to receive God’s gracious pardon, and to live out of their new-found freedom in obedience to his commandments. Such freedom is not burdened by the law’s requirements, as though obedience were the basis for God’s free acceptance of his people in Christ. Rather, the gospel frees believers to live in grateful devotion to God, which is always born out of a solid conviction of his steadfast love and mercy in Christ.

In his treatment of the third issue, the gospel and antinomianism, Ferguson offers an excellent exposition of the distinct, yet inseparable, relation between justification and sanctification in the salvation of believers through union with Christ. In the history of Reformed theology and practice, the doctrine of the *ordo salutis*, which aims to articulate the distinct benefits of Christ’s work of salvation in their inter-relations, has often been plagued by a failure to recognize that these benefits find their basis in the “whole Christ.” When the benefits of salvation, especially justification and sanctification, are separated from Christ, they tend to be viewed in isolation from each other. In order to preserve the truth of free justification, sanctification is viewed as a separate benefit that does not simultaneously and immediately begin in the life of the believer by the renewing work of Christ’s spirit. When justification and sanctification are juxtaposed in this manner, it is easy to slide into a kind of antinomianism that, for the sake of maintaining justification by grace alone, denies the necessity of sanctification in the life of the believer. Because justification is not based upon any works that the believer performs, but upon the work of Christ alone, an emphasis upon the necessity of sanctification seems to imperil the gospel in its distinction from the law.

However, this antinomian temptation also gives rise to a different error, the error of legalism or moralism. For fear of separating sanctification from justification, and diminishing the importance of Christian obedience, some emphasize the necessity of sanctification in a way that makes the believer's obedience an instrument of salvation and a partial ground for justification. For Ferguson, the remedy to these errors of antinomianism as well as legalism lies in the recognition that, when faith lays hold of the whole Christ, justification and sanctification are simultaneously granted to the believer as inseparable benefits of his saving work.

Perhaps the most helpful aspect of Ferguson's book, however, is his concluding treatment of the pastoral issue of the gospel and the assurance of salvation. In this treatment, Ferguson provides an excellent account of the way the assurance of salvation can be undermined by an improper view of the gospel offer and the work of the whole Christ. At the time of the Marrow Controversy, the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland's condemnation of *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* was based in part upon the judgment that it taught that assurance was of the essence of true faith in a way that conflicted with the teaching of the Westminster Standards. In Ferguson's judgment, the action of the General Assembly wrongly assumed that the Westminster Standards significantly diverged from the earlier emphasis of Calvin and the Reformers that faith always includes a robust assurance of salvation. As he describes it, "Calvin and the [Westminster] Divines focus on two distinct but related loci. They come at the topic of assurance from two different perspectives. But at the end of the day they meet in the middle" (191). In support of this claim, Ferguson observes that Calvin's view of assurance included a distinction between what belongs to faith normatively or "ideally," and what is true in the actual experience of believers who often experience seasons of doubt or struggle with the question of assurance. Whereas Calvin gives special emphasis to the assurance that properly belongs to faith as a "direct act" of faith in Christ, the Westminster Divines and some later Puritans focused especially upon the "reflex act of faith" (186). This distinction is equivalent to the difference between a believer acknowledging that "Christ is able to save" and a believer acknowledging that "I am someone who has been saved through faith in Christ." This distinction allows us to recognize that the issue of assurance is complex. Even though believers ought to have assurance (and are obliged to cultivate such assurance by their use of the means of grace), there are often occasions in the experience of believers in which such assurance is diminished or attenuated.

In the concluding chapters of the book, Ferguson outlines how believers ought to have and grow in the assurance of their salvation. Such assurance does not depend upon a "special revelation" from God. Nor is it founded upon the experience/s of believers. It rests in Christ, and in a proper acknowledgment that he is able to save all who come to him in faith. When the believer looks to Christ and the gospel promise, he or she is assured and comforted. For this reason, a proper understanding of the gospel of free grace fuels the believer's assurance. The principal means whereby such assurance is cultivated are (in order of priority) the Word and sacraments, the testimony of the Spirit with our spirits that we are God's children, and the confirmation of the work of Christ in us by his indwelling Spirit. One of the most helpful features of Ferguson's exposition of the assurance of salvation is his pastorally sensitive and insightful identification of the "hindrances" to assurance that

are “strewn” in the believer’s way. Among such hindrances, Ferguson identifies the following: a failure to appreciate that salvation is by grace alone for the greatest of sinners; inconsistency in the Christian life of obedience; affliction and trial, or God’s “frowning providence”; neglect of a proper use of the means of grace; the devil’s strategies for undermining the promises of God’s grace in Christ, and the like.

I hope that this summary of Ferguson’s book will serve to encourage readers to purchase and read it for themselves. Although Ferguson’s study is not an exercise in academic theology in the narrow sense of the term, it displays a wonderful balance of theological insight and pastoral sensitivity. Readers of this book will not only receive a history lesson in the Marrow Controversy, but also enjoy the keen instruction of a seasoned pastor-theologian, who has clearly thought deeply about the gospel and its gracious invitation to all sinners to believe in Jesus Christ as the one who alone can meet their deepest need. On the topic of the *ordo salutis*, Ferguson gets it just right. All of the spiritual blessings that find their source in the person and work of Christ are communicated to those who are joined to Christ by faith. These blessings are not parceled out in isolation from each other, but belong inseparably to the work of “the whole Christ” to whom believers are freely invited to come.

Most importantly, Ferguson echoes the sentiment of *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, namely, that sinners should be encouraged to come to Christ quickly and promptly, unhindered by obstacles and hindrances that are often put in their way. As Ferguson puts it,

It is not a denial of the work of the Spirit of God in bringing men to a sense of the conviction of their sin. But neither conviction nor the forsaking of sin constitute the warrant for the gospel offer. Christ himself is the warrant, since he is able to save all who come to him. He is offered without conditions. We are to go straight to him! It is not necessary to have any money in order to be able to buy Christ! (59-60)

—Cornelis P. Venema

R. Kent Hughes. *The Pastor’s Book: A Comprehensive and Practical Guide to Pastoral Ministry*. Douglas Sean O’Donnell, contributing editor. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015. Pp. 592. \$45.00 (cloth).

This is a well-conceived and nicely put together book. It divides into three parts. Part one treats Christian gatherings—Sunday worship, annual services, weddings, and funerals. Part two considers the parts of the worship service—principally: public prayers, the historic Christian creeds (the Apostles’, Nicene, Athanasian, and the Westminster Confession of Faith), hymns and songs, along with baptism, and communion. And part three takes up ministerial duties—pastoral counseling and hospital visitation. The book includes, too, an appendix that offers sample wedding services from a variety of churches; and there is also a bibliography for further reading and downloadable resources.

R. Kent Hughes is the chief author of this volume, with Douglas Sean O’Donnell covering the chapters on “Sunday Worship,” “The Historic Christian Creeds,” and “Hymns and Songs,” and also half the chapter on baptism, as well as

other editorial contributions. In various ways, as Hughes indicates, many other individuals rendered contributions to this book as well.

What we are given in this volume, then, is a book that handles various aspects of Christian worship, along with the rudiments of the Church calendar or Christian year (Christmas, Good Friday, and Easter)—this is the stuff of liturgics. It also treats a variety of matters that compose other pastoral duties, forming aspects of pastoral care, such as *weddings* and *funerals*. The topic of weddings includes premarital counseling, planning and designing a Christ-exalting wedding service, and the wedding homily. The topic of funerals includes initial pastoral care, i.e., immediate visits with the bereaved, as well as preparation for the funeral, the visitation service, the funeral service proper, and the burial service, with additional discussion of the funeral homily and follow-up visitation after the funeral.

The book's interest in liturgy and corporate worship, explains why much attention is given to the often neglected topic of public prayer in worship. This section consists of more than fifty pages of material, offering various samples of congregational prayers. The secondary author, O'Donnell, gives careful and wise attention to the matter of church music, bewailing silly Christians, with silly pastors, and silly worship leaders singing silly songs from silly songwriters. The author of this chapter takes time to explain the purpose of church music, sets forth guidelines for congregational songs and principles for lyrics, and also principles for music. Next he takes up principles for pastors leading in worship and the importance of a quality hymnbook. This chapter closes with a discussion of shepherding through song and personal devotions, with a section devoted to additional resources.

The sections that treat baptism and the Lord's Supper are less convincing for those of Reformed persuasion. To be sure, the authors are clearly Calvinistic but not robustly covenantal in perspective. Consequently, the material on baptism and the Lord's Supper are not a comfortable fit for those who are explicitly and devoutly of Reformed commitments.

Under ministerial duties the material on pastoral counseling and hospital visitation should not be neglected, offering a cogent refresher course on the basics of these respective responsibilities.

One wishes that this handsome volume (which is geared more for those who embrace a broad, evangelical tradition, and who may be described as modestly confessional) sounded clearer Reformed notes. That this book does not come under an unequivocal *Reformed* brand is no fault of the authors. They have produced a work that reflects their own tradition and theological convictions, which is to be expected. However, a book of this sort, with the same pastoral maturity and breath of insight, bearing the Reformed trademark is a waiting project.

In spite of the above-mentioned shortcomings, this is a valuable volume and presents itself as a fine resource for busy pastors.

—J. Mark Beach



Donald John MacLean. *James Durham (1622-1658) and the Gospel Offer in Its Seventeenth-Century Context*. Vol. 31, Reformed Historical Theology. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015. Pp. 317. \$100.00 (cloth).

It is far too easy to mistake the perceived logical consequences of a person's views for the views held by that person. In light of this fact, some have always asserted that the Reformed doctrine of election is inconsistent with preaching the free grace and compassion of God indiscriminately to all who hear the gospel. This work demonstrates how Reformed theology attempted to harmonize God's sovereign work in election with his free and genuine gospel offer to all. MacLean usefully helps readers understand a vital aspect of Reformed thought that has continued to be a matter of debate to the present day.

MacLean establishes the British theological context of Durham's thought. He uses Durham as a window into the trajectory of the Reformed orthodox tradition in relation to divine intent in the gospel offer. His contribution is particularly valuable in its examination of this topic in relation to the Westminster Confession and Catechisms (14). Such connections are one of the primary reasons the author wrote this work, which make it a valuable contribution to understanding better a document that is both historical and contemporary in relation to many Reformed churches today. In many respects, MacLean appears more concerned to focus on Westminster than on Durham (e.g. 55, 270, and especially chapter four where his choice of contemporary authors is based entirely on their relation to the Westminster Standards; 173). His in-depth reading in the works of Obadiah Sedgwick, Thomas Manton, Samuel Rutherford (Westminster divines) is impressive, and also of David Dickson. The only major deficiency in his examination of Durham's theological context is the absence of continental Latin theological works, since this represented the primary literature of this kind from the time period.

MacLean proves his case clearly and abundantly that most Reformed theologians taught a free offer of the gospel in which God expressed a general love to all mankind. He proves his case so well that after the first sixty pages, the conclusions of the rest of the book seem almost inevitable. This might make his research seem superfluous if the free offer of the gospel in Reformed theology had not continued to be hotly contested both in historical and systematic theology (which the author traces from the eighteenth through the twentieth centuries in chapter 5). MacLean wisely connected the question of the free offer of the gospel to concepts such as God's general love to man as a creature and his special love to the elect, archetypal and ectypal theology, and the differences and relationship between God's secret and revealed will. He contends that mainstream Reformed theology taught that the gospel offer reflected genuine divine compassion in relation to his commands without prying into his decrees. MacLean also effectively corrects other recent studies on hypothetical universalism, which assume that asserting a genuine gospel offer from God implies some form of universal atonement.

MacLean's book admits of some minor corrections. The author blurs the historical context to some extent by using recent authors, such as John Murray (139, 148, 171), to frame his questions. Such comparisons have value, but they are placed better in a conclusion in which the author attempts to show historical trajectories beyond his subject. This avoids the danger of reading contemporary debates into

historical theology. While historical theology provides vital input for contemporary issues, we must first examine a subject in its own context before it is brought to bear on the present. He also slightly misconstrues the distinction between archetypal and ectypal theology by treating archetypal theology as referring to theological truths that are above reason, such as the Trinity (96). Yet historically, archetypal theology referred to all theological truth as known by God himself, which was virtually synonymous with the attribute of divine wisdom. Ectypal theology referred to theology as understood by rational creatures. The purpose of this distinction was not to divide theological truths into those that transcended reason and those that did not, but rather to show the qualitative difference between God's theological knowledge and man's theological knowledge.

Reformed authors such as James Durham had a faith like Abraham's. God obligated Abraham simultaneously to believe the promise that Isaac would be his heir and to obey the command to sacrifice his son on the altar. While there was ultimately no contradiction between God's promise and his command, Abraham was obliged to hold fast to both regardless of how well he was able to reconcile them. MacLean shows well that while Reformed authors could explain the relationship between the decree of election and the free offer of the gospel to a point, the driving factor in their thought was ultimately loyalty to the plain teaching of Scripture. This study not only helps readers better to understand the context of the Westminster Standards, but it helps them better to remember the Reformed way of doing theology.

—Ryan M. McGraw

David J. Randall. *A Sad Departure: Why We Could Not Stay in the Church of Scotland*. Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2003. Pp. 198. \$15.00.

Here is an all too familiar story in the history of Christ's church: A broader assembly making decisions that compromise the Word of God, forcing Bible-believing Christians to make a difficult choice to leave or to stay. Either decision comes at great cost.

*A Sad Departure* tells this story as it played out in the last few years in the Church of Scotland. In November 2008 a congregation in Aberdeen issued a call to a minister "who was not only divorced from his wife (with whom he had a daughter), but who was also living in an openly homosexual relationship with another man" (23). After the call was approved by the Presbytery of Aberdeen, it was appealed to the General Assembly. On 23 May 2009, after a four-hour debate, the General Assembly voted to uphold the decision of the Aberdeen Presbytery. The *Guardian* newspaper reported the response of some evangelical pastors who said: "We deeply regret the decision of the General Assembly, which has brought great shame on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and his church by publically proclaiming as holy what God, the Bible, and orthodox Christianity all down the ages, and all over the world, unambiguously call sin. This is about far more than just sexuality. The very nature of the Christian gospel is at stake" (24). At the 2011 General Assembly, the issue was again discussed and the Assembly set up a Theological Commission to advise the church on how to move forward and was also given "the task of preparing

liturgies for the blessing of civil partnerships” (28). This effectively set the trajectory towards the acceptance of practicing homosexuals. It was during the discussion of the Theological Commission’s report in 2013 that a compromising motion was made that dismayed Evangelicals even further. The self-contradictory motion was made that the General Assembly should “affirm the Church’s historic and current doctrine and practice in relation to human sexuality; nonetheless permit those Kirk Sessions who wish to depart from that doctrine and practice to do so” (29). After a long debate the Assembly accepted the motion “for the peace and unity of the Church” (in the words of the Principal Clerk) (30). Rev. Andrew Randall described the decision of the Assembly as:

- misguided in its aims—setting aside truth in the interest of false unity
- dishonest in its effect—claiming to stand for one thing, while implementing the opposite
- and disastrous in its outcome—propelling the church further down the path of liberalization which will be its destruction (31).

These are the circumstances which brought before evangelicals a hard choice: will they leave a church that so openly and flagrantly departed from the Word of God; or will they remain in the hope of doing some good?

*A Sad Departure* tells the story of those who decided to leave the Church of Scotland, because the church departed from the Word of God. In a very thoughtful and clear narrative David J. Randall explains the problems in the Church of Scotland and the reasons for the exit of many evangelical ministers and churches. The value of this book is its compelling call to faithfulness to God’s infallible Word in spite of the cost. This is brought out especially in the stories and testimonies of those churches and pastors who have left. The book also shows the tremendous pressure that believers are facing at the moment as Western secular society is embracing the LGBT agenda. I highly recommend this book as an encouragement to Christ’s people to continue to pursue faithfulness in spite of the pressure to adopt and capitulate to the values of the world.

—Jacques Roets