

BOOK REVIEWS & SHORT NOTICES

Darrell L. Bock, *Jesus according to Scripture: Restoring the Portrait from the Gospels*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002. Pp. 704. \$39.99 (cloth). ISBN 0-8010-2370-X

This work is a textbook designed for students and pastors (or studious pastors) who wish to study the Gospels or the life of Christ. The book's size can be explained by its origin: the content has served as teaching material in the classrooms of a number of evangelical seminaries, so it reflects the benefits of student-teacher interaction and development of thought. The guiding premise is that people need to know the structure and principal outline of Jesus' life as presented in the Gospels, in order then to understand the unified thematized narratives of each Gospel. The three-dimensional portrait supplied by the Gospels is the portrait of a single person whose life and work form the heart of Christianity and its gospel message.

The book's introductory table serves as an index of the author's treatment of some three hundred forty-five pericopes, beginning with Luke 1:1-4 and ending with John 21:1-15. The first two hundred ninety-four list the synoptic units, and the remaining units treat the Gospel of John.

The first chapter provides brief overviews and outlines of each Gospel, including introductory observations about the time, place, and recipients of each Gospel's writing.

In chapters 2-11 (Part 2) the author presents an arrangement of the synoptic portrait of Christ's life that honors the various narrative lines presented in each of the synoptic Gospels. He seeks to distinguish his work both from a harmony, which reconstructs the chronological flow of Jesus' ministry, and from a typical "life of Christ," which often relies on a chronological harmony. Bock's placement of events is directed by their location within the Gospel

accounts. This results in some inevitable redundancy, and some disruption in the canonical narrative sequence at points where material from one Gospel fills a gap left in another Gospel.

Though not ignoring the results of historical Jesus studies, the author concentrates on the canonical multi-dimensional portrait of Jesus supplied in the text of the Gospels, along with the message each writer is communicating through his narrative portrait.

Separate attention is devoted, in chapters 12-14 (Part 3), to the Gospel of John, an account of Jesus' life and ministry long recognized as unique. John 2-12 contains what is often called "the book of signs," John 13-20 is termed "the book of glory," and John 21 forms the epilogue. Bock clearly appreciates John's thematic emphasis that Jesus fulfills and surpasses the realization of Jewish institutions and imagery.

A useful concluding chapter synthesizes under several headings the themes of Jesus' teaching, offering the reader "A Theological Portrait of Jesus" (Part 4). Among the significant strands that Bock identifies are (1) the kingdom of God; (2) Jesus' self-revelation in his titles, actions, and teaching; (3) the nature of Jesus' new community and of discipleship; and (4) Jesus' promises relating to the future vindication of those who follow him.

The book is not intended as a commentary, but a pericope survey that cultivates a feel for the flow of Christ's life and for the unified thematized narratives of the Gospel writers. The author is textually careful and evenhanded (an example of the latter is his discussion of the temple cleansings in connection with John 2:13-25). However, the fact remains puzzling that Bock did not interact at all with the Baker publications of Jakob van Bruggen, *Christ on Earth: The Gospel Narratives as History* (1998) and *Jesus the Son of God: The Gospel Narratives as Message* (1999), a lacuna that extends to omitting any mention of them in both the bibliography (which includes a section on "Works on Jesus") and the index of modern authors.

We warmly recommend this attractively printed and biblically thorough volume as a tool for studying and teaching the Gospels in a way that honors their narrative diversity and integrity because it honors their Main Subject, the Lord Jesus Christ.

—Nelson D. Kloosterman

Thomas Boston, *The Crook in the Lot: The Sovereignty and Wisdom of God Displayed in the Afflictions of Men*, edited by Don Kistler, with an introduction, outline, and study guide by Maureen Bradley. Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 2001. Pp. 168. \$17.95 (cloth). ISBN 1-57358-137-2

This treatise by the renowned Scottish Presbyterian pastor Thomas Boston (1676-1732) considers how one is to respond to adversity in life, when there is a “crook” in one’s lot. A capable Hebrew scholar who studied at the University of Edinburgh, Boston served as a pastor in the rural parish churches of Simprin and later in 1707 moved to Etterick. He was no stranger to adversity. For many years he served the poor parish of Simprin and in spite of his erudition and piety was largely ignored by the gentry who were at that time far more influential in administrative circles in the Church of Scotland. He and his wife Katherine were the parents of ten children, only four of whom survived. His most popular work was *The Fourfold State*, a series of sermons on man’s state of innocence, his state of guilt, his state of grace, and his state of glory.

Some years ago Rabbi Harold Kushner wrote a best selling book entitled *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*. In it he notes that he has abandoned the notion that God is omnipotent for the notion that God is good. Having abandoned the idea of the sovereignty of God (while still trying to preserve the goodness of God), he concludes that although God does not cause suffering, he is also unable to prevent it. So religion or prayer is asking God for strength of character to accept our misfortune. Kushner should have read Thomas Boston. In this book, which is a series of sermons, Boston argues, first, that it is God who brings adversity into our lives; second, if it is God’s doing, ultimately we can not mend it; and third, that if we view these trials as God’s work we must recognize that it is his purpose to bring us to behave rightly under adversity. The sovereign God is not a helpless bystander but an active participant in our lives.

This book would have been made more appealing if Boston’s turgid seventeenth-century prose had been edited or revised using more contemporary language. Even the title, *The Crook in the Lot*, needs defining to the modern reader. The outline and the eight-lesson study guide are helpful but a revision of the text itself would have made it even more useful. Certainly the subject is important to

every generation. Like Calvin, who discusses “cross-bearing” in Book III of his *Institutes*, Boston is not afraid to tackle the difficult questions of how we may find the mercy and providence of a good and gracious God in the crucible of adversity. The dust cover of the book has an arresting picture of the twin towers of the World Trade Center. Devotional material such as this can help in developing a biblical understanding of the sovereign Lord whose thoughts are not our thoughts and whose ways are not our ways. Boston reminds us that those who humble themselves before the Lord and submit to his will, whatever may be the “crook in their lot,” will be lifted up. For any believer encouragement like that is always welcome.

—Richard J. Blauw

John S. Feinberg, *No One Like Him: The Doctrine of God*. Foundations of Evangelical Theology. John S. Feinberg, general editor. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2001. Pp. 879. \$35.00. ISBN 1-58134-275-6

In this massive treatment of the doctrine of God, the author, John S. Feinberg, Chairman and Professor of Biblical and Systematic Theology at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, offers a reconstructed vision of the classical idea of God, engaging the contemporary philosophical discussion, while rejecting process theism and open theism alike. Thus Feinberg gives us a portrait of God who is not only a sovereign king, but a “king who cares!” As he states, “The God I present is absolutely sovereign, but he is no tyrant, nor is he the remote and unrelated God of classical theism” (p. 32).

In short, Feinberg sets for himself the task of crafting a fresh doctrine of God that avoids the pitfalls (as he perceives them) of classical theism, while simultaneously refusing the routes taken by open theism advocates and process thinkers. His book unfolds in three parts, with a prior introductory chapter devoted to examining the very “idea” of God. What sort of reality is God? Or what sort of reality does God have? Is God a Feuerbachian/Freudian mental projection? Is he, along Tillichian lines, “being-itself”? If God is a being, is he an immaterial or a material being? Other questions and issues Feinberg explores include the role(s) God plays in the universe. He also presents, in outline, various “models” of Christian theism: the classical model, the process model, and the openness

model. This is followed by a discussion on language about God—a topic that evangelicals have seldom addressed directly.

With part one of his three part plan Feinberg embarks upon an examination of the multiplicity of “concepts for God” that appear on the horizon of contemporary theology and philosophy, treating both modern and postmodern notions. A representative variety of authors and their programs are described. Under the rubric of the modern mindset, Feinberg treats theologians or theologies such as: Kant, Hegel, Schleiermacher, Kierkegaard, Barth, Tillich, logical positivism and the early Wittgenstein, and death of God theologies. Theologians or theologies that are dealt with under the mindset of the postmodern heading include: the narrative theology of George Lindbeck, liberation and feminist theology, new age theologies, and process theology. In fact, in a separate chapter, Feinberg offers a thorough presentation and assessment of process thinking. He appreciates its concern to accent God’s relatedness to the world and relevance in the lives of human beings; he also acknowledges the service process theology has performed in forcing evangelicalism to re-evaluate its own theological paradigms and assumptions. However, Feinberg finds process theism wanting in several important ways as well, not least of which is that “process theology offers us a God who is either nothing/nonexistent or is the God of pantheism after all, despite claims to the contrary” (p. 172). Ultimately Feinberg judges process theism to offer a “religiously inadequate God,” for its representation of God is not a God human beings can live with and worship (p. 178).

The second part of Feinberg’s study takes up “the being and nature of God.” Here the author treats the theistic proofs, evaluating modern criticisms and alternative formulations of the traditional arguments for God’s existence, and judging them to be valuable inasmuch as believers do not wish to say that it is irrational to affirm God’s existence. Of greater import is Feinberg’s exposition of the divine attributes. He classifies God’s attributes between non-moral and moral attributes. Among God’s non-moral attributes are aseity, infinity, immensity and omnipresence, eternity, and immutability, as well as omnipotence, sovereignty, omniscience, wisdom, unity, and simplicity.

Feinberg labors to engage the vast philosophical literature on divine attributes, generally aiming to defend a “Calvinist” idea of God’s sovereignty and independence, but also ready to re-work features of the classical portrait of God to fit more consistently with

the biblical materials as he understands them. Thus Feinberg believes that the doctrine of God's immutability needs revision. He is convinced that the classical view of the Christian tradition gives us a static view of God. What is needed, in order to do justice to Scripture, is an understanding of God as "neither totally static nor totally in flux" (p. 266). However, after providing the reader a fairly lengthy discussion of eight types of mutability, it is not clear that Feinberg's view ends up in a different place than the classical model on this score. He affirms that God does not change with respect to "his divine person, will, purposes, decree and ethical norms" (p. 276). As for the manner in which it can be said that God does change—such as, he can change his disposition toward a repentant sinner from one of displeasure to one of favor, or he can undergo so-called "Cambridge" changes—Feinberg's position hardly can be said to constitute a revision of the classical tradition.

Where his position requires further reflection and might possibly involve a revision to classical theism concerns the matter of indexical propositions. Since Feinberg believes that the Bible does not provide an answer regarding whether "God's eternity is temporal or atemporal in nature" (p. 264), God, *if he is eternally temporal*, undergoes changes in knowledge of the truth of "indexical propositions"—that is, God's knowledge regarding the "nowness" of events is mutable. For indexical reference is "reference to times, places, events, objects, or persons by means of demonstrative pronouns [that, here, there, now, later] or adverbs [currently, presently, previously]," and it would seem that by definition indexical propositions are temporally relative and changing. Feinberg does not believe that God, *if he is eternally atemporal*, can know indexical propositions, for such knowledge requires that God can experience temporal succession and location.

As for divine omniscience, Feinberg's treatment turns in a peculiar direction, for he seeks to wed a Calvinist notion of divine sovereignty and compatibilistic free will with middle knowledge. This is peculiar since middle knowledge is typically tied to Molinist and Arminian notions of divine sovereignty and libertarian freedom. As it turns out, Feinberg wrongly defines and consequently misinterprets middle knowledge.

Since I believe Feinberg's discussion here is likely to create some confusion, we take a brief detour to examine his view more closely. Consider the following statements: "By God's natural knowledge, he knows all possibilities, and somewhere in those

possibilities is the future that will be actual. But God knows more than this. God knows what we would freely do in every situation in which we might find ourselves. Somewhere in those conditionals is the set which describes the future that actually will occur once God decides to create a particular possible world" (p. 749).

Feinberg wrongly distinguishes "conditionals" here from "possibilities" inasmuch as the conditionals he describes are in fact comprehended under the divine knowledge of possibilities and all concatenation of events in all possible worlds. Classic middle knowledge (against which Calvinism has historically stood opposed) is supposed to be a form of divine knowledge that comes neither under the realm of God's natural knowledge nor under the scope of God's free knowledge. In fact, Luis de Molina (1535-1600), who developed middle knowledge, called it such because it was a form of divine knowing that stood between God's necessary or natural knowledge (his knowledge of simple intelligence) and God's free knowledge (or knowledge of vision). By God's necessary knowledge he knows infallibly, indefinitely, and uncompoundedly all possibilities, all possible worlds and the full concatenation of events in every possible world. By God's free knowledge he knows all actualities, for this is knowledge consequent on his divine decree, or his will to actualize one of the possible worlds from the realm of possibility. So with God's necessary knowledge he knows all possibilities in all possible worlds—what *can* be. With his free knowledge he knows the actual world—what *was*, what *is*, and what *will* be (because he decreed it). But between these two forms of divine knowing, Molina posited a third category of divine knowing, namely *media scientia*. This is supposed to be God's knowledge of all future contingencies *apart from his willing*. It represents a super-cognitive ability on God's part to know *subjunctives*, that is, conditional future actualities that he did not decree. For example, a fellow, Delmar, might choose x in a given set of circumstances. But, then again, Delmar instead might have chosen y in that identical set of circumstances. According to middle knowledge, God knows what Delmar's decision will be (Delmar being "free" in the sense of libertarian freedom), whether he chooses x or y .

In this form of divine knowing, then, God is supposed to possess a knowledge of subjunctives, the hypothetical actions of agents with libertarian freedom apart from the divine decree. As such, middle knowledge is a conditioned and consequent knowledge of future contingents by which God knows of the free choice of a

human being because of its occurrence. In this way the aim of middle knowledge is to permit an arena for libertarian freedom to exist, prior to God's efficacious operations of grace, so that God's acts are consequent upon human choices that exist apart from his decree. This means that God saves individuals whom he knows, via *media scientia*, have freely chosen to accept the offer of the gospel with its promises in Christ, and as a result divine election is turned into an effect. For in this scheme election is made to rest upon God's knowledge of future contingents that are consequent on and conditioned by the contingents themselves, that is, events that lie outside of the divine will. In this way middle knowledge serves a synergistic soteriology.

Feinberg, however, does not seem adequately to grasp the above observations. The Reformed orthodox rejected middle knowledge, arguing that God's natural and free knowledge encompasses all knowable things. No *actual* future conditional thing is knowable *prior to God's decree*, for the object of middle knowledge is unknowable, namely the indifference of the will in the way of libertarian freedom. The Reformed orthodox also believed that middle knowledge renders human action independent of divine providence; and coupled with that, it supposes that free acts are antecedent to God's decree and forfeits God's dominion over human activity. In this way, history unfolds according to human choices rather than God's decree. God, in turn, is cast into a reactive role, acting in reaction to human choices, and his knowledge becomes discursive rather than simple. Moreover, middle knowledge denies a proper role to divine concurrence in God's providence, for it doesn't permit God's concurrence in human willing; rather, God's concurrence only functions in the effects of human choices. Finally, classical Reformed writers argued that middle knowledge assigns the reason or cause of predestination not to God but to man, rendering grace not a cause of salvation but a companion.

In Feinberg's treatment of this topic, however, terms and classical categories are muddled. Ultimately he rejects, with the Calvinistic tradition, middle knowledge *if* it means that God knows what humans would freely do *in the libertarian sense* (but of course that is exactly what it means). Nonetheless, Feinberg believes middle knowledge is a legitimate category of divine knowing if one holds, as he does, to some form of determinism. Thus he says that "there is no reason to deny that God has middle knowledge of what

humans would do (compatibilistically) freely” (p. 752). Given his earlier misstep, Feinberg fails to see that the whole point of middle knowledge is to affirm that God knows what humans might freely do in the libertarian sense, and if libertarian freedom is rejected, middle knowledge isn’t needed.

Turning to other matters, Feinberg also rejects the doctrine of divine simplicity, believing that we should “abandon it altogether” (p. 433). He argues that scriptural support for the doctrine of simplicity is implicit at best, and it is subject to serious philosophical objections as well. He affirms God’s aseity, provided it is purged of any associations with simplicity.

When Feinberg turns to the moral attributes of God, which include holiness, righteousness, love, grace, mercy, longsuffering, goodness, lovingkindness, and truth, his exposition is abbreviated significantly. Given the gargantuan size of this study, his treatment of these attributes seems unduly meager. Perhaps this is due to the fact that the philosophical discussion surrounding these attributes is of smaller scope than the discussion surrounding many of the non-moral attributes.

Feinberg closes out part two of his study with chapters on God, time, and eternity, and the doctrine of the Trinity. Again, Feinberg’s interest to engage the modern philosophical debates is evident in that his chapter on time/eternity issues receives the same amount of space as his entire treatment of the doctrine of the Trinity. While his treatment of the biblical materials on the Trinity is for the most part ably done, when it comes to theological formulation, the author, in a startling move, feels at liberty to jettison the doctrines of the eternal generation of the Son and the eternal procession of the Spirit. Regarding these doctrines, he writes, “*Despite their firm entrenchment in both Western and Eastern traditions, the doctrines of eternal generation and eternal procession are unclear and are not required by Scripture*” (p. 488, Feinberg’s italics). Feinberg’s confident revision of the trinitarian tradition, coupled with redrafts of other aspects of the classical doctrine of God, elicits a question at this point, namely when do Feinberg’s alterations to classical theism cease to be mere revision and give way to another type of theism altogether? That is not a question easily answered. However, his elucidation of the doctrine of God comes increasingly to look less and less like classical theism.

In part three of his study, Feinberg treats “the acts of God.” In this concluding section he expounds the divine decree, the doctrines

of creation and providence, with special attention given to issues surrounding God's sovereignty and human freedom from a compatibalist perspective. Here, as is true throughout the book, Feinberg tries to do justice to the biblical materials and labors to engage the more sophisticated philosophical questions that are part of debates surrounding open theism and issues pertaining to what is termed "perfect being theology." On the whole, this section is marked by a desire to defend a more "Calvinistic model" of God's relationship to human beings. Feinberg also has a chapter devoted to divine providence and the problem of evil.

By way of further assessment of this volume, it should be observed that a major weakness of this work is the author's failure to examine carefully and closely original source materials and the best historical scholarship pertaining to those materials. Feinberg relies heavily upon secondary and tertiary sources, and seems unaware that this dependency at times skews the accuracy of his over-all exposition and assessment—cases in point are his analysis of the doctrine of divine simplicity and middle knowledge. Moreover, Feinberg fails to really engage the classical theistic tradition in a way that satisfies. For example, I was left wondering whether Feinberg really understands the implications of Thomas Aquinas's philosophical-theological project or the implications of rejecting key features of it. The same could be said regarding other major historical figures that have shaped classical theism. Similarly, inasmuch as Feinberg is concerned to defend compatibalism and a Calvinist notion of divine sovereignty, why does he neglect to consider the philosophically astute Reformed theologians from the seventeenth century? Given that Francis Turretin's *Institutio* has been in print for some years, failure to interact with the arguments of this major "Calvinist" theologian hardly enhances Feinberg's own venture. As intimated earlier, Feinberg's revisions travel far—he rejects divine simplicity and impassability, revises aseity and immutability (at least as he understands the tradition), prefers to think of God as eternally temporal, and muddles the discussion of surrounding middle knowledge and divine omniscience, as well as certain other divine attributes. He attempts to deliver the tradition from a static God and in its stead offers a portrait of a relational God. Behind this project is Feinberg's desire to counter the charges made by process and open theists alike, namely that the vision of God handed down to the church from classical theism is of a deity

who is aloof, impassive, and unrelated to human concerns—hence his desire to depict God as “the king who cares!” (p. 802).

I suspect that many evangelicals, especially those with minimal exposure to the philosophical meaning and significance of the classical tradition, will welcome this volume as something of a breakthrough effort. It is unlikely, however, that the growing company of evangelical philosophers of religion will be satisfied—in part because Feinberg confuses certain issues and in part because he seems committed to compatibilism, which is not the majority opinion nowadays. But this is not to say that that Feinberg’s big book should not be carefully examined. Although I do not think that Feinberg’s proposed revisions help very much, I applaud his effort to treat the difficult subject of God both biblically and philosophically, for indeed there is *No One Like Him*.

—J. Mark Beach

Elyse Fitzpatrick, *Idols of the Heart: Learning to Long for God Alone*. Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2001. Pp. 239. \$12.99. ISBN 0-87552-198-3

The Heidelberg Catechism (Q/A 95) defines idolatry as “having or inventing something in which one trusts in place of or alongside of the only true God, who revealed himself in his Word.” God himself addresses this sin in the first commandment of the Decalogue, thus identifying it as the most heinous of all sins. If a person does not get this commandment right, then all the other commandments will be broken as well. Fitzpatrick (p. 49) rightly notes that the first commandment of the Decalogue is “preeminent because it is impossible for us to obey any of the other nine if we fail to obey this one.”

This is the thesis that Elyse Fitzpatrick develops in her examination of our hearts’ very subtle idols. She writes that “idolatry lies at the heart of every besetting sin that we struggle with” (p. 15). Later she writes, “The sin of unbelief lies at the heart of all other sins and particularly at the heart of idolatry” (p. 65). Her book focuses on the issue of idolatry in many of the Bible’s characters, and then the book turns its attention to finding idols in the Christian’s heart and life. She concludes her book by looking how biblically one can replace those idols with love and passion for God.

Elyse Fitzpatrick has an M.A. degree in Biblical counseling from Trinity Theological Seminary, and she herself counsels at the Institute for Biblical Counseling and Discipleship. In her acknowledgements she thanks George Scipione and David Powlison for their assistance at various points. Both of these men stand in the tradition of nouthetic counseling, popularized by Dr. Jay Adams in recent decades. Fitzpatrick has also written on the subject of eating disorders.

Throughout the book, but especially in the early chapters, Fitzpatrick examines several biblical characters' struggle with idolatry. In Western civilization there is the tendency to conceive of idolatry as bowing down and honoring graven images and statues of deities. But this is only one form of idolatry. Rachel, one of Jacob's wives, took her father's teraphim, small statues of household gods. But her idolatry went deeper in that she desired to have children to such a degree that it became an obsession for her. "Give me children, or I die," she said to Jacob. But he confesses that he does not stand in the place of God (cf. Gen. 30:1-2). However, Rachel says after the birth of her firstborn son, Joseph, "May the LORD give me [i.e., add] another son," thus revealing the idolatrous motives behind her desire to have children.

Later, Hannah also desired to have children (cf. 1 Samuel 1-2). However, Hannah is contrasted with Rachel in that while Rachel's desire for a child became an idolatrous obsession, Hannah subsumed her natural desire for a child under service to God. Hannah willingly gave up her firstborn son Samuel to the service at the Shiloh shrine.

Another biblical character examined by Fitzpatrick (pp. 35ff.) is the old priest of the Shiloh shrine, Eli. His idolatry manifested itself in his refusal to discipline his two wicked sons in any meaningful way. His idolatry of his children is compared with Abraham, who loved the son of promise, Isaac, but who loved and trusted God more than Isaac (see Gen. 22). Fitzpatrick very ably examines other persons in redemptive history to see how subtle and pervasive idolatry is.

Idolatry is subtle because it so often hides itself behind surface motivations and actions that mask a much more sinister reality. To mention Rachel and Hannah once more: the desire to have children is normal and natural in God's creation, but when such a desire comes to dominate one's heart and motives, even to the point of sinfulness, it has become an idol. Love for God is the most

important command (p. 25). “Anything less than that is idolatry,” says Fitzpatrick. When we do not have what we want but are in turn willing to sin to get it, a person is dealing with an idol, something that our heart continually is able to manufacture.

Fitzpatrick goes on to spell out how the moral law functions now in the life of the Christian (pp. 50ff.). She makes the following points. First, the law helps me by serving as a tutor. Its perfect standards of God have been kept by only one, the Lord Jesus Christ. Therein alone lies my salvation. Second, the law also humbles me and brings me to the end of my self-righteousness. It points out our need for Christ. Third, the law teaches me how thankful I am to be for Christ’s perfect keeping of it. Finally, the law becomes the standard of righteousness that I seek to obey out of thankfulness.

Fitzpatrick’s approach is fully informed by Reformed theology. The law’s demand to love and serve God alone is utterly impossible for the sinner apart from the regenerating work and action of God the Holy Spirit (see chapter 4, “The Heart Changer”). The Spirit works graciously in those who are God’s elect, replacing the idols of the sinful heart with a desire to serve the true God. Obedience is “the only sure evidence that we love Him...,” with John 14:15 among others serving as the proof text (pp. 54-55). Yet even Christians whose hearts have been regenerated have to struggle in their growth in holiness. Sanctification is the spiritual grace in which the Christian grows and makes progress in becoming more holy, less controlled by sinful idols. Fitzpatrick (p. 156) defines sanctification as “the slow process of change whereby God transforms our hearts back into His image and likeness. Sanctification is God’s method to make us holy.” This work is the gracious and progressive work of God the Holy Spirit.

In several chapters, Fitzpatrick provides a diagnosis of the human heart, which she understands to be the interaction of the mind (thinking), affections (emotions), and will (decision-making). Fitzpatrick carefully examines each of these “faculties” of the heart, to show how sin has corrupted each but also to demonstrate how God’s grace in Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit can overcome the sin that has so deeply lodged itself throughout the heart. There is an abundance of Scripture reference, with Fitzpatrick often providing the text written out for the reader (her Scripture preference in this work is the New American Standard Bible, but

other versions used are *The Living Bible*, the KJV, the NIV, and the NKJV).

Chapter 10 (“Resisting Your Idols”) provides an analysis of what temptation is and how it works in a person’s life. Fitzpatrick looks briefly at the temptations that Peter, Judas Iscariot, and Jesus faced; and she points out how Satan’s temptations were successful and how they failed. She identifies the most common idols in all our hearts as fear and pleasure. Such idols control so much of what happens in people’s lives.

For sinners there is grace present in Christ, who is a faithful High Priest that knows and understands all of our own temptations, since he was also tempted like as we are, yet without sin (Heb. 2:18; 4:15). Fitzpatrick does not fail to draw the reader’s attention to the sovereign mercy of God that is able to change and reshape the lives of any and all who have been devastated by the idols of our hearts.

Fitzpatrick does not advocate an “easy-believism” approach in undoing idolatry. Only the Holy Spirit can change a person, but this is not an excuse for a passive attitude in living the Christian life. Rooting out our favorite idols is as painful as plucking out the right eye or cutting off the right hand (Matt. 5:29-30), as Fitzpatrick explains in chapter 11 (“Crushing Your False Gods”). Luke 14:26 calls upon the followers of Christ to hate everything and everyone by comparison with one’s love for God.

Furthermore, it is important that the idols and false gods of our sinful hearts be replaced positively by a joy-filled worship of the living God. You can’t fight something with nothing. Fitzpatrick appeals to the reader to delight in God with a delight that, in imitation of the Psalter’s piety, involves one’s total being, including motion and emotion. She rightly notes that demonstrative worship is “the environment of God” (p. 198).

Throughout her book, the author frequently draws insights from the Reformed tradition, especially the Westminster Standards (e.g., see p. 33), and various Puritan and Christian writers of the past and present (e.g., Calvin, Richard Baxter, Thomas Watson, Os Guinness, John Piper, etc.).

This book shows that idolatry is more than a study of the exotic practices of ancient Canaanites or modern Hindus and Buddhists. Idolatry has infected all of mankind, and Christians also must fight it within their own hearts. The Apostle John writes, “Dear children, keep yourselves from idols” (1 John 5:21).

Fitzpatrick does not clutter her text with footnotes but uses endnotes instead. A full Scripture index is provided as well.

Each chapter ends with questions “For Further Thought,” thus making this volume an ideal book for Bible study discussion and church society groups. This book is highly recommended as a very readable and thoughtful study of the pernicious sin of idolatry. Fitzpatrick’s text is accessible to pastor and layman alike. Pastors especially, who anticipate preaching on the first and great commandment, would do well to go through this study to glean ideas that would be useful for the church.

—Mark D. Vander Hart

John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of God. A Theology of Lordship*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2002. Pp. xxiii + 864. \$39.99 (cloth). ISBN 0-87552-263-7

With this substantial volume on the doctrine of God, John M. Frame, professor of systematic theology and philosophy at Reformed Theological Seminary in Orlando, Florida, returns to his Theology of Lordship series. This volume represents the second of a projected four-volume series, the first volume of which was *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*. In the preface, Frame notes that the two remaining volumes will be *The Doctrine of the Word of God* and *The Doctrine of the Christian Life*. Though fifteen years elapsed between the first and second volumes in this series, the latter volumes are expected, in the words of the author, to appear “in fairly rapid succession” (p. xxii). Though not intended to be a complete systematic theology, which addresses all of the doctrinal *loci* or traditional theological topics, Frame does intend that his series form a kind of comprehensive restatement of the teaching of Scripture, one that is simultaneously biblical and distinctively Reformed in character.

In a relatively brief, yet important, introductory chapter, Frame sets forth several features of his particular approach to the doctrine of God. Noting that there is “nothing more important than knowing God” (p. 1), Frame expresses in this introduction some dissatisfaction with the manner in which the doctrine of God has been handled in the history of theology. By comparison to the other doctrinal *loci*, the Reformation’s fresh handling of the biblical teaching regarding redemption through the work of Christ did not

produce a significant re-working of the doctrine of God. The doctrine of God, consequently, remains as the one doctrinal *locus* that was most influenced by early church fathers' interaction with ancient Greek philosophy and Gnosticism. Many of the customary terms of theology proper, such as "being, substance, attribute, accident, essence, necessity" and the like, find their source, not directly in biblical teaching but in the language and categories of philosophical discussion. Contrary to this tradition, Frame aims to approach the doctrine of God in more biblical and less "scholastic" categories. Though he acknowledges the usefulness, even necessity, of utilizing the language of philosophy and engaging the philosophical debates regarding the knowledge of God, he advocates a more explicitly "biblicistic" (*sola Scriptura*) treatment of the doctrine of God, one that is not slavishly subservient to what he terms a "philosophical imperialism and traditionalism." Unlike many theologians whose doctrine of God is too heavily dependent upon tradition rather than Scripture, Frame maintains that his doctrine of God will be marked by a more direct reference to biblical texts on particular subjects.

The extent of Frame's reworking of the doctrine of God becomes evident in three specific areas. First, consistent with the argument of his earlier *Doctrine of the Knowledge of God* (and the theme of his "lordship theology" generally), he identifies the central theme of biblical revelation with God's revelation of himself as *the Lord of the covenant*. Whereas scholastic theology historically developed the doctrine of God in rather abstract terms, Frame insists that all the features of the biblical doctrine of God find their center in the living reality of God's exercise of his covenant lordship. By focusing upon God as Lord of the covenant, Frame believes that the tendency to speak about God apart from his redemptive relationship with his people will be overcome. Second, Frame treats the various aspects of the doctrine of God in a very different order than that followed by the tradition. Rather than following the traditional order of topics in theology (the existence and knowability of God, the attributes of God, the Trinity, the decrees, creation and providence), Frame orders his treatment unconventionally. Whereas the older order distinguished God's "being" and his "acts," treating the first as basic to the second, Frame "inverts" this order, noting that our knowledge of who God is derives from a consideration of his acts. Thus, Frame treats God's "acts" first, and his nature ("attributes") second. As he describes his method, he proceeds

“from history to eternity, from the ethical to the metaphysical, from the communicable to the incommunicable” (p. 14). And third, Frame divides the doctrine of God into three general parts, each of which corresponds to one of the three “perspectives” that he earlier outlined in his *Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*: the normative, the situational, and the existential. Corresponding to these three perspectives, Frame argues that “[t]he Lord in Scripture reveals himself in three ways: by a narrative of his acts [the situational perspective], by authoritative descriptions of his nature [the normative perspective], and by revealing something of his inner life through the Trinitarian persons [the existential perspective] (pp. 15-16). Each of these three perspectives is further subdivided into triads or groups of three. Thus, the narrative of God’s actions is “further subdivided into narratives of creation, decree, and redemption. God’s authoritative descriptions include images, attributes, and names. And God’s inner life consists of a communion among Father, Son, and Holy Spirit” (p. 16).

Following this reordering of the topics of the doctrine of God, Frame’s study falls into three major parts. The first part, which treats the knowledge of God as covenant Lord, includes Frame’s doctrine of the “lordship attributes” of God and a narrative treatment of the acts of the covenant Lord, namely, miracle, providence, creation, and God’s decrees (in that order). The second part, which treats biblical descriptions of God and forms the most extensive portion of the book, deals with the names, images, and attributes of God. The third and, relatively speaking, shortest part of his study, treats the doctrine of the Trinity. Due to the extensiveness of Frame’s book and the complexity of the arguments throughout, I shall only highlight some of the more significant features of each of these parts of his study.

In the first part of his study, Frame develops his thesis that the dominant theme regarding the doctrine of God in Scripture is that he is the covenant Lord. The name, “Lord,” is not one name among many for the God of the Scriptures; rather, it is the principal and pre-eminent name for the living God, who as a personal God enters into a life-relationship or covenant with his people. According to Frame, the advantage of a theology that focuses upon the covenant lordship of God is that it accents the living and active communion that God seeks with his creatures, and that he restores to his people whom he redeems from sin and death. Furthermore, contrary to the emphases of the contemporary “openness of God” theology, a

lordship theology emphasizes the sovereign authority and control that the Lord exercises over creation and history in the realization of his purposes. In this part of his study, therefore, Frame distinguishes those attributes of God's lordship that especially distinguish the Lord from lesser "gods" who are limited in power and control. He distinguishes three attributes of the divine lordship in particular: control, authority, and presence, each of which corresponds, respectively, to the normative, situational and existential perspectives. In his consideration of these lordship attributes, Frame appeals extensively to Scriptural passages that demonstrate, contrary to the claims of open theists, that the covenant Lord of Scriptures exercises effective and universal control, authority, and presence throughout all of creation and history. What distinguishes the living Lord of the Scriptures is his active engagement with his creation and all his creatures, in which his every purpose and intention are unfailingly accomplished to his glory.

Within the setting of his consideration of the covenant lordship of God, Frame considers several issues that recur in more traditional treatments of the doctrine of God. He maintains, for example, that the usual treatment of God's transcendence and immanence in Christian theology tends to regard these emphases as though they were at odds or in tension. To emphasize God's transcendence is often thought to be at the expense of a proper emphasis upon his immanence or nearness. The virtue or strength of a lordship approach to the doctrine of God is that it is able to emphasize simultaneously and as mutually corollary both features of the biblical revelation regarding God. God who is the transcendent lord and king over all creation is thereby also near and present in the realization of his covenant purposes. Two "problem areas" of Christian theology are also addressed: the problem of human responsibility and freedom in relation to God's sovereignty, and the problem of evil. In his handling of these two areas, Frame provides an extensive and helpful discussion of the meaning of human ability, responsibility and freedom. He does so in close interaction with contemporary debates regarding compatibilism and incompatibilism, libertarian and non-libertarian views of human freedom, and other related subjects. The burden of his argument is that a biblical and Calvinist view of human freedom and responsibility provides a far more cogent resolution of the problem

of divine sovereignty and human freedom, than the Arminian and incompatibilist alternative.

After having treated the meaning of the name “Lord” in Scripture, the lordship attributes of control, authority, and presence, some problem areas that a theology of lordship helpfully addresses, and a philosophy of lordship (including ethics, epistemology, and metaphysics), Frame concludes the first portion of his study with several chapters that treat in narrative sequence the acts of God in miracle, providence, creation, and decrees. Though his ordering of this section reverses the traditional sequence of topics in the doctrine of God, Frame’s actual handling of these topics agrees substantially with that of more classically ordered theologies. Due to his desire, however, to develop a doctrine of God in a more biblical than traditional manner, he does depart from the tradition at a few points, particularly in his definition of key terms or concepts. In a lengthy evaluation of traditional definitions of miracle that emphasize the ideas of natural law or of *immediate* divine agency, Frame argues for a simpler and more inclusive definition: “miracles are unusual events caused by God’s power, so extraordinary that we would usually consider them impossible” (pp. 245-46). Such unusual and extraordinary events are “demonstrations of God’s covenant lordship” that serve to reveal and confirm God’s purposes in redemption. On the disputed subject of whether miracles have “ceased,” Frame takes what I would call a “soft” cessationist position (he terms it, “semicessationist,” p. 263). Though miracles today are relatively rare and do not serve to attest continuing revelation, Frame frankly admits that he can see no reason God would not perform miracles today or to deny reports of their occurrence in conjunction with the preaching of the gospel among new Christians. On the doctrine of creation, Frame summarizes the main points of the classic doctrine of God’s creation of all things “out of nothing” (*ex nihilo*), and treats as well some of the disputed issues regarding the account of creation and the age of the earth. Though Frame cautions against treating alternative views (e.g. “day-age” or “framework”) as heretical, he holds cautiously to a six day creation view and a young earth presumption. While he clearly insists that the Bible is the ultimate arbiter of the debates regarding these issues, he also speaks with a measure of tentativeness due to his acknowledged limitations of “scientific training, aptitude, or knowledge” in this area (p. 307). In a rather brief treatment of the decrees of God, Frame offers a fairly traditional account of the

topic. Though he does not use the traditional language of the “dual aspect” of the covenant, he does distinguish in this section between what he terms an “historical” and an “eternal” election (corresponding, roughly, to the distinction between the visible and the invisible church).

The second part (my division) of Frame’s study consists of an extensive and fresh handling of the doctrine of God’s names, images, and attributes (especially the latter). Though a great deal of Frame’s substantive consideration of God’s attributes corresponds significantly with the more traditional approach to the doctrine of God, several creative features of this part of his study are worthy of notice.

Unlike traditional approaches to God’s names and images that consider at length the whole subject of human language regarding God, Frame argues that a more biblical approach will frankly admit the legitimacy of a diversity of names, images, and figurative descriptions of God. The older discussions, for example, of the nature and limits of human language with respect to God (are our terms used “univocally,” “equivocally,” or “analogically”?) receive rather short shrift. Even the insistence that human language about God is always “analogical” is misleading, according to Frame, since there must be some “literal” component to such language if we are to speak meaningfully of God.

Perhaps the most significant feature of Frame’s treatment of God’s attributes is his reclassification of them into three broad categories. After having rejected most of the traditional ways of classifying God’s attributes (including the Reformed distinction between God’s incommunicable and communicable attributes), Frame chooses to “group the attributes around the general concepts of power, knowledge, and goodness, which have a certain affinity to the lordship attributes, but aren’t quite the same” (p. 397). The three groups of attributes that correspond to the lordship attributes are “powers,” “forms of knowledge,” and “forms of goodness.” Within each of these three groups of attributes, Frame also distinguishes broadly between those that express God’s control, authority, and presence. According to this classification, God’s attributes of goodness are: goodness, love, grace, mercy, patience, compassion, jealousy, wrath, justice, righteousness, joy, blessedness, beauty, perfection, holiness; God’s attributes of knowledge are: speech, incomprehensibility, truth, knowledge, wisdom, mind, knowability; and God’s attributes of power are: eternity, immensity,

incorporeality, will, power, existence, aseity, simplicity, essence, glory, spirituality, and omnipresence.

The third and final part of Frame's study addresses the doctrine of the Trinity. Though the tri-unity of God is the great distinctive feature of any Christian theology, Frame's treatment of this subject comes at the close of his study and is its shortest major part. In his consideration of the doctrine of the Trinity, Frame attempts to avoid the kind of speculative and scholastic tendency that has often plagued Christian theology, particularly in its reflection upon the doctrine of the Trinity.

For the most part, Frame's exposition of the doctrine of the Trinity follows closely the pattern of traditional Christian theology. According to Frame, there are five "basic assertions" that belong to the doctrine of the Trinity: "(1) God is one. (2) God is three. (3) The three persons are each fully God. (4) Each of the persons is distinct from the others. (5) The three persons are related to one another eternally as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit" (pp. 621-22). Frame orders his treatment by following the sequence of these theses, each of which is explained and defended upon the basis of the Scripture's teaching. Though he expresses some reluctance to speak too definitely of the distinction between the personal and eternal "properties" of the Father (generation), the Son (filiation), and the Holy Spirit (procession), he affirms the propriety and necessity of a distinction between the ontological and economic Trinity. He also affirms a functional subordination within the Godhead, while maintaining the full ontological equality of the three persons. On the subject of the legitimacy of analogies of the Trinity, Frame attempts to define the benefits and limitations of both the psychological and social analogies.

I offer this brief overview of Frame's study to illustrate something of the breadth and extent of his consideration of the doctrine of God. This summary of the structure of Frame's study also illustrates the extensiveness of his reordering of the sequence of topics in the doctrine of God. Frame's restructuring of the doctrine of God will strike the reader as one of the more creative and unusual features of his work, which reflects the method of "perspectivalism" that he earlier set forth in his *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*.

There are a number of evident strengths to Frame's approach to the doctrine of God. Unlike many contemporary systematic theologies, Frame exhibits throughout a high regard for the teaching

of Scripture and endeavors to develop his position by a direct appeal to the biblical text. When his argument or position may go beyond the explicit teaching of Scripture, Frame often appeals to the principle of “good and necessary consequence” to justify the conclusion to which he comes. In these respects, Frame’s study fulfills the promise made in his introduction that he will aim at something close to “biblicism” in his doctrine of God, while avoiding the twin dangers of scholasticism and traditionalism.

Though Frame does not interact significantly with Roman Catholic and mainline theological traditions in their more recent reflection on the doctrine of God, he exhibits a keen interest in the contemporary discussions relating to open theism within the evangelical community in North America. In this respect, this volume forms a nice complement to Frame’s recent *No Other God: A Response to Open Theism* (P&R Publishing, 2001). With these two volumes as companions, Frame has presented the most comprehensive and cogent critical assessment of the open theism position that is available today from a biblical and Reformed standpoint. Frame’s evaluation is most helpful, and will provide students with an excellent resource for understanding and evaluating the open theism position. Since the open theism position represents, in some respects, a logical outworking of the traditional Arminian view of libertarian human freedom, Frame’s critique will prove especially valuable in buttressing the historic arguments of Reformed theology in its evaluation of Arminianism.

Readers of Frame’s volume will also benefit at many points from the clarity with which Frame deals with theological and philosophical issues of considerable difficulty. Where possible Frame eschews the unduly technical language and argumentation that have traditionally characterized the doctrine of God in general, and the doctrine of God’s attributes in particular. Students who are not intimately acquainted with the theological tradition will be grateful for Frame’s careful attention to the meaning of different terms and concepts. Unlike those studies that (too optimistically) assume that the reader will immediately grasp the meaning of a technical term of theological discourse, Frame frequently offers a helpful explanation and statement of the more traditional categories of theology. Areas of the doctrine of God where his treatment in these respects is particularly insightful or thought-provoking, include the issue of human responsibility and freedom (one of the best treatments of the subject I have read), the problem of evil, the

definition of miracle, and the review of the various classifications of the attributes of God, particularly the distinction between incommunicable and communicable attributes (which he largely rejects).

Despite these and other evident strengths of Frame's contribution to our understanding of the doctrine of God, there are also several problematic features to his study. Though these features do not detract from the overall value of Frame's treatment of the doctrine of God, they nonetheless constitute sufficient reason to use his volume with some caution. Each of these features relates to what I regard as Frame's peculiar method or approach to the discipline of systematic theology. Without attempting to be exhaustive, I will offer only a few comments on several of the kind of problematic features I have in mind.

As I noted earlier, Frame defends what he calls a kind of "biblicistic" method or approach to the doctrine of God. Unlike the traditional and scholastic approach to the doctrine of God, Frame wants to follow a more biblical method in his handling of theology. He argues that we need a fresh biblical approach to the doctrine of God, one which consistently reflects the reformational principle of *sola Scriptura*. In this approach, all theological affirmations regarding God must be warranted by a direct or indirect appeal to the biblical texts. Readers of Frame's volume will not be surprised, accordingly, to note the frequency of his citation of biblical texts. At a number of places in his book, entire paragraphs consist of little more than a long list of Scripture references. At one point Frame even acknowledges that he may have been guilty of a kind of "textual overkill" (p. 278).

The problem with Frame's "biblicistic" approach is that it sets up a false dichotomy between biblical and traditional/scholastic theology. The tradition of Reformed theology, which includes the formative period of Reformation and post-Reformation orthodoxy, was always characterized by an appeal to the biblical texts. Thus, at a formal level, Frame's theology is no more biblical than traditional Reformed treatments of the doctrine of God. Indeed, the period of so-called Reformed "scholasticism" was marked by the defense in theological prolegomena of the principle of Scripture as the unique *principium cognoscendi* ("principle of knowledge") for all our knowledge of God. Students of Reformed theology are aware of the fact that the theology of the tradition was shaped by a rich exegetical tradition (for an excellent discussion of these issues, see

the new four-volume work of Richard Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*). The best theologians of the tradition, for example, based their theological affirmations upon their prior and foundational work in Scriptural exegesis and commentary. Frame's argument for a "biblicistic" approach, however, gives the unfortunate impression that his theology is "more biblical" than that of the tradition. It also suggests that his *individual* reading of the biblical texts is to be preferred to the rich exegetical tradition that is reflected in the standard Reformed textbooks of an earlier period. The problem with Frame's approach is not that he wants to root his theology in Scripture. Nor is it objectionable that he directly appeals throughout his study to particular texts that support the position he espouses. The problem is that Frame overstates the contrast between his approach and that of the tradition. Reformed theology has always insisted that Scripture alone is the exclusive and supreme norm for the doctrine of God.

Perhaps another way to get at the problem here is to consider the respective role of Scripture, confession, and theological tradition, in the formulation of a systematic statement of the doctrine of God. Because of his commitment to a "biblicistic" approach, Frame tends throughout his study to make rather uneven use of the resources of the historic confessions of the (Reformed) churches and the history of doctrinal reflection upon key elements of the doctrine of God. In these respects, his approach is, as advertised, unlike that of more traditional Reformed theology. In addition to their attention to the biblical texts, Reformed theologians were more attentive to the tradition of exegesis and theological reflection of previous Christian history (witness the long tradition of citing the church fathers). Though these features of Frame's approach may lend to his study a kind of freshness (and even appeal to evangelical writers who disparage the confessions and theological tradition), they betray an inadequate appreciation for what Os Guinness terms the "collegial" character of Christian theology. Theologians who grapple with the doctrine of God do so as members of the church catholic. Hence, they are obligated to read the Scriptures in concert with the church of the present and of the past. As they read the Scriptures, they stand upon the shoulders of many theological greats who have gone before them. They also read the Scriptures in the line of the church's rich confessional heritage, acknowledging the confessions to be a consensus statement of the church's corporate reading of the Bible. A

comprehensive approach to the doctrine of God, therefore, requires more than biblical exegesis and direct appeals to biblical texts. It also calls for careful interaction with the best of the confessions and the history of Christian theology, which are themselves the fruits of the church's reflection upon the Scriptures. Failure to do so risks an unwitting repetition of the mistakes of the past or a failure to recognize contemporary theology's indebtedness to prior theological developments.

Though Frame does quote a number of representative authors and appeals at times to the confessions (primarily, the Westminster Standards), his study interacts in too limited a fashion with the confessional and theological tradition. Though he frequently quotes authors like Thomas Aquinas (representing the Roman Catholic tradition) and Herman Bavinck (representing the Reformed tradition), his discussion often ignores other important writers, past and present, who may have addressed a particular aspect of the doctrine of God. He also makes inconsistent use of the confessions. The Westminster Standards are quoted on some theological subjects, but little use is made of the Reformed confessions of the continental tradition. References are made to traditional terms and concepts of Reformed theology, but the reader is not referred to the standard sources for further study (for example, Rohls' *Reformed Confessions* or Muller's *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms*). Though there are a considerable number of footnotes informing the reader of Frame's personal interaction with some contemporaries, the sources referenced and listed in the selected bibliography do not include a sufficiently representative selection of past and contemporary authors (W. G. T. Shedd, for example, is not listed). Writers whose theological perspective may be more liberal are largely ignored.

Rather than attempt to list a number of examples of the way this unduly restricted use of the resources adversely affects Frame's discussion, one example will have to suffice, namely, his treatment of the doctrine of the Trinity. As we noted earlier, Frame reserves his treatment of the Trinity until the last section of his study. Though there is much that is helpful in his doctrine of the Trinity, there are a number of features of his handling of the doctrine that seem to me doubtful and likely the result of a failure to consider more thoroughly the history of theological discussion. Among these features are: an openness to the idea that the whole Triune God is "one person" (p. 704); the claim that each of the divine persons

“exhausts the divine being” (p. 702); the concession that the “eternal generation” of the Son is not “a test of orthodoxy” (p. 712); the failure to cite or acknowledge sources like G. Wainwright (on the Trinity in the New Testament) and J. Murray Harris (on the deity of Christ in the New Testament), to cite only two; the assertion that “being Trinity” might be regarded as a kind of attribute of God (p. 619); and a diminishing of the importance of the distinction between God’s attributes and the “incommunicable properties” of the three Persons. In these and other respects, Frame’s handling of the doctrine of the Trinity exposes some of the limitations of his biblical, non-traditional approach to the doctrine of God. Since Frame argues that a theology of “lordship” does greater justice to the biblical emphasis upon God’s personal and redemptive dealings with his people, it is perplexing that he does not seem to regard the doctrine of the Trinity as the principal means to resist unbiblical impersonalism in the doctrine of God. Indeed, were he to give far greater place to the biblical revelation of the tri-unity of God, Frame might have to reconsider his claim that “Lord” is the “principal name” for God in Scripture (p. 21).

The last (though not least) feature of Frame’s method that requires comment is his “perspectivalism.” Many of the novel features of Frame’s doctrine of God represent the outworking of his multi-perspectival method, which he earlier set forth at greater length in *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*. Throughout this volume, Frame repeatedly appeals to the triadic structure of his doctrine of God, which is organized in terms of the three principal perspectives he identifies as the situational, the normative, and the existential. This perspectivalism accounts for some of the most distinctive features of Frame’s doctrine of God, including his unusual ordering of topics (the older order still makes more sense to me, following an *ordo essendi* [“order of being”] rather than an *ordo cognoscendi* [“order of knowing”]). For example, the Trinity is treated last because it represents the “existential” perspective upon the doctrine of God. But it is not only the order of topics that reflects the influence of Frame’s perspectivalism. Perspectivalism also materially affects the way Frame handles a number of topics. In the first major section of the book, which sets forth the doctrine of God’s lordship, Frame treats a number of what he calls the “lordship attributes” of God. These attributes appear largely similar to the attributes known traditionally as God’s omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence. However, in a subsequent section

of his study, he treats virtually the same attributes together with others, but now under different headings than those used in the tradition. In his most extensive treatment of the attributes of God, Frame chooses to treat them in three categories, each of which corresponds to one of the three principal perspectives of theology, though he acknowledges that the division is somewhat artificial. These are only a sampling of many other instances of the pervasive influence of Frame's perspectivalism upon his doctrine of God.

Whatever the merits of Frame's perspectival method (a subject for another place and time), there is something rather ironic about this feature of his study. What distinguishes Frame's doctrine of God is not that it is more biblical than traditional doctrines of God. Rather, what especially distinguishes it is his perspectival method. Perspectivalism, in Frame's understanding of the term, gives rise to most of the distinctive or novel features of his theology. The irony here, of course, is that perspectivalism is itself a kind of theological epistemology, which is addressed to the question of the nature and limits of our knowledge of God. Moreover, it is a relatively recent form of theological epistemology that diverges in significant ways from more traditional forms. Without judging whether perspectivalism, as Frame understands it, is a valid or helpful method, it seems clear that it is not directly taught in the Scriptures. If it were a method clearly taught in Scripture, it seems likely that theologians prior to Frame would have discovered it. The problem with Frame's perspectivalism is that it becomes a kind of controlling interpretive grid or heuristic framework for his articulation of the doctrine of God. This in itself is not so objectionable; theologians of the past have generally had other kinds of interpretive grids. But in a theology that purports to be more directly biblical than previous Reformed theology, it seems strange that the method of perspectivalism plays such a formative role in determining the nature and place of the various topics that belong to the doctrine of God.

These concerns regarding Frame's theological method notwithstanding, this study represents a significant achievement for its author and a substantial contribution to contemporary reflection upon the doctrine of God. Due to some of its peculiar methodological features, it will not replace a work like Bavinck's *The Doctrine of God* (soon to be republished in a new translation by Baker Book House, as part of a four-volume set of dogmatics), which represents a more classic and traditional articulation of the doctrine

of God from a biblical and Reformed standpoint. Frame's work, however, represents a worthy contribution to a contemporary restatement of the doctrine of God.

—Cornelis P. Venema

Simon J. Gathercole, *Where is Boasting? Early Jewish Soteriology and Paul's Response in Romans 1-5*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002. Pp. xii + 311. \$32.00. ISBN 0-8028-3991-6

For several decades, Pauline studies have been dominated by the discussion of what is known as the "new perspective on Paul." Though there is a considerable diversity among writers of the so-called new perspective, two features of the new approach can be readily identified.

First, authors of the new perspective generally regard the work of E.P. Sanders and his predecessors as providing a rather definitive account of the pattern of religion characteristic of Second Temple Judaism. Contrary to the traditional assumptions of Protestant New Testament scholarship, which often included the conviction that Judaism at the time of the writing of the New Testament was pervaded by legalism and a merit theology, Sanders's reassessment of Judaism forms a kind of point of departure for the new approach. Writers of the new perspective generally agree that the old portrait of Judaism as a legalistic religion has to be set aside. Sanders has conclusively demonstrated that the pattern of religion in Judaism was what he terms "covenantal nomism." According to this pattern, members of God's covenant community "get in" by divine grace and "stay in" by way of obedience to the requirements of the law of Moses. Contrary to the polemics of reformational scholarship, this means that the Judaism with which Paul was familiar and with which he differed was not a form of legalism, nor was it a kind of precursor to the legalism of medieval Roman Catholicism.

Second, authors of the new perspective typically take a different approach than historic Protestantism to the problem that Paul's doctrine of justification addresses. According to some writers of the new perspective, the problem Paul addressed, when he articulated his understanding of justification by faith, was not Jewish legalism but Jewish nationalism or exclusivism. The "works of the law," for example, that Paul rejected as a basis for justification were not

simply any acts of obedience to the requirements of God's law but those "boundary marker" requirements (like circumcision, for example) that separated Jews from Gentiles as members of the covenant community. Paul articulated his doctrine of justification, accordingly, against the background of a failure on the part of some of his opponents to recognize that, with the coming of Christ, entrance into the covenant community was by faith in Christ rather than by submitting to requirements for inclusion among the Jewish community. The "boast" that Paul opposed by means of his understanding of God's justification of the ungodly was not a boast in works as such, but a boast in the national privileges of Israel as the unique people of God. If we read Paul's polemics in their historical setting (rather than from a dogmatic, theological point of view), we will discover that Paul opposed a different error than that historically assumed by many Protestant interpreters of his writings. We will also discover that the doctrine of justification was not as central to Paul's theology as is often supposed, but served as a means to address the particular problem of how to include the Gentiles as well as the Jews as members of the covenant community of God and heirs to the promise made to Abraham.

Though this is the briefest possible sketch of the main lines of the new perspective on Paul, it provides a background to Simon J. Gathercole's *Where is Boasting? Early Jewish Soteriology and Paul's Response in Romans 1-5*. Gathercole's book, which was originally written as a dissertation under the supervision of James D.G. Dunn, one of the principal advocates of a new perspective on Paul, aims to assess some of the key tenets of the new approach. As the title of his study indicates, Gathercole focuses upon the related subjects of early Jewish soteriology and Paul's response to this soteriology in Romans 1-5. By focusing upon the view of salvation present among those to whom Paul responds in the opening chapters of Romans, Gathercole wants to test some of the principal claims of the new perspective. Gathercole is particularly interested to determine whether the Judaism with which Paul was familiar and to which he responds in Romans was characterized by a form of legalism that the Sanders' thesis fails to consider adequately. He also wants to consider whether the "boasting" to which Paul refers in the opening chapters of Romans is more than a boasting in national privileges, but also a boasting in works of obedience to the law.

In order to achieve his purpose, Gathercole divides his study into two major parts. Part I, "Obedience and Final Vindication in

Early Judaism,” treats the teaching of Judaism at the time of the writing of the New Testament. Part II, “Exegesis of Romans 1-5,” treats Paul’s argument in the early chapters of Romans. In terms of the relative attention given to these two distinct subjects, Gathercole devotes far more attention to the first (Part I is 194 pages in length, Part II is only 67 pages).

The first part of Gathercole’s study is preoccupied with an extensive investigation of the literature of Judaism. The chapter headings of this part of his study illustrate the scope and nature of this literature: “Works and Final Vindication in Pre-70 C.E.” (chapter one), “Works and Final Vindication in the Qumran Literature” (chapter two), “Jewish Soteriology in the New Testament” (chapter three), “Obedience and Final Vindication in the Aftermath of 70 C.E.” (chapter four). After canvassing this considerable body of evidence, Gathercole concludes the first part of his study with a chapter on “Boasting in Second Temple Judaism.”

Upon the basis of his study of the literature of Judaism prior to and contemporaneous with the writing of the New Testament, Gathercole concludes that the arguments of authors of the new perspective are “dangerously one-sided.” Gathercole acknowledges the claims of Sanders and others that Second Temple Judaism acknowledged the place of God’s grace and election so far as the formation of the covenant community of Israel was concerned. He also acknowledges that the “boasting” of Israel was, as Dunn and Wright argue, a national boast over against the Gentiles. However, he vigorously argues that writers of the new perspective have neglected the role of eschatology in their evaluation of Second Temple Judaism. According to Gathercole’s interpretation of the literature of Judaism, there existed a strong emphasis upon the role of good works in the final or eschatological vindication/approval of the people of Israel. One of the problems with Sanders’s approach is that he works with a pattern of religion that focuses upon how one “gets in” or “stays in” the covenant community. However, Sanders fails to do justice to the considerable emphasis within Judaism upon a final justification by works. Consequently, the new perspective does not adequately explain the nature of the “boasting” of Israel. It fails, as Gathercole puts it, to recognize that “obedience as a condition of and basis for final vindication and salvation at the *eschaton* is fundamental to Jewish thought” (p. 13).

Even though Gathercole argues against the new perspective's explanation of the boasting of Israel, he also offers some criticism of what he takes to be the more traditional, Protestant explanation of Paul's argument with Judaism. In this more traditional view, it is often suggested that Paul answers the problem of religious insecurity or lack of assurance before God by means of his doctrine of justification. This view assumes that Judaism left its adherents in a state of uncertainty regarding God's favor. Upon the basis of his analysis of Judaism, however, Gathercole maintains that the problem was not one of uncertainty but of a "misplaced confidence" before God. Paul's argument for justification by faith opposes this kind of misplaced confidence and directs his readers to another basis, God's grace in Christ, as the real occasion for finding favor with God and inclusion among his people.

In the second part of his study, Gathercole offers an interpretation of Romans 1-5. Gathercole, following the scholarly consensus today, believes that the "Jewish" interlocutor of Romans 2 and following represents a contemporary Jewish view, and not a "Jewish-Christian" error. The "boasting" Paul opposes in the opening chapters of Romans is not merely a "national boasting," as writers of the new perspective tend to argue, but a "religious boasting" that reflected the Jewish claim that obedience to the law would vindicate them in the final judgment before God. Upon the basis of a careful analysis of Paul's argument in these critical chapters, Gathercole concludes that Paul sets a boasting in works performed in obedience to the law over against a boasting in God through Christ. While acknowledging the advances the new perspective has achieved in reading the arguments of the apostle Paul in their historical context, Gathercole rejects the restriction of Paul's opposition to Jewish exclusivism. More is at stake in Paul's development of the doctrine of justification than the claim that Gentiles are also to be included among the people of God. All who are included, whether Jew or Gentile, are included through faith in Christ apart from works.

At the conclusion of his study, Gathercole acknowledges that a significant exegetical and theological question still requires further study. That question concerns the relation between Paul's doctrine of *initial* justification, which is by faith in Christ and apart from works, and the *final* justification of believers "on the basis of works" (p. 265). With respect to this question, Gathercole speaks of a tension in Paul's thought that demands further investigation. It is

unfortunate that Gathercole simply raises this question without addressing it significantly. This is especially the case, since he even uses language that is open to serious misunderstanding. How, one is compelled to ask, does what he calls “final justification” differ substantially from the kind of claim he finds in Judaism regarding an eschatological vindication of those who obey the law? Unless this question is carefully addressed, it seems difficult to distinguish what Gathercole calls Paul’s view of “final justification” from the contemporary Jewish teaching of an eschatological vindication before God based upon works of obedience.

By Gathercole’s own admission, his study is rather limited in scope. He seeks only to evaluate whether the new perspective has rightly interpreted the “boasting” of Paul’s opponent in Romans 1-5. His case, however, represents a persuasive critique of the claims of the new perspective. Whatever the modest reach of Gathercole’s work, it illustrates something that is becoming increasingly evident in a number of recent, competent evaluations of the new perspective: that many of the claims of the new perspective are either exaggerated or simply unsubstantiated. The “boast” of the new perspective is that it represents something of a revolution in Pauline studies, one that overturns and exposes as basically misplaced the reformational reading. Studies like Gathercole’s show that the new perspective’s dancing upon the grave of the Reformation’s doctrine of justification was premature at best.

—Cornelis P. Venema

Paul Helm, and Carl R. Trueman, editors. *The Trustworthiness of God: Perspectives on the Nature of Scripture*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002. Pp. xvi + 289. \$28.00. ISBN 0-8028-4951-2

In most treatments of the doctrine of Scripture, the focus of attention is upon such items as the inspiration, the authority, the perfections, and the interpretation (hermeneutics) of Scripture. Despite the obvious connection between the character of the divine Author and the kind of revelation provided by means of Scripture, the doctrine of Scripture has often ignored the foundational questions of theology. The result is a doctrine of Scripture that is often formal and abstract, inadequately related to the distinctive features of the Christian understanding of God.

This collection of essays, edited by Paul Helm and Carl R. Trueman and written by an array of contemporary (primarily English) scholars, endeavors to redress this imbalance. As the title of the volume suggests, the contributions, which are written from a variety of disciplinary standpoints, aim to consider the relation between the trustworthiness of God and the nature of Scriptural revelation.

Consistent with the aim of the essays, which is to address this question from the standpoint of a diverse number of theological disciplines, the volume is divided into three sets of essays. After an introductory chapter by the editors that overviews the subject and approach of the various essays, the first section presents four essays from the vantage point of Old Testament studies. Each of these essays takes a particular book or genre of Old Testament literature and examines its significance for the relation between God's trustworthiness and the reliability of his divine acting and speaking, especially as the latter is inscripturated in the Old Testament writings. The following set of essays does something similar with various New Testament passages or subjects. The final set of essays treats the subject of the volume in historical, systematic, and philosophical perspectives. The volume is then closed with two response essays, one by Colin Gunton ("Trinity and Trustworthiness"), and another by Francis Watson ("An Evangelical Response").

Unlike many books in this genre, this particular volume exhibits a remarkable unity and consistency of theme and focus throughout. The essays are of a uniformly high quality and attest the vitality and rigor of contemporary evangelical theology. Though there are reasons to be concerned about the state of the contemporary evangelicalism, the contributions to this essay suggest that the decline of serious theological work may sometimes be overstated.

Rather than attempt to give an overview of the contents of the various contributions to this volume, I would single out two essays that illustrate the quality of these studies and their approach to the theme of the trustworthiness of God and its relation to the doctrine of Scripture.

The first essay is the contribution of Paul Helm, "The Perfect Trustworthiness of God." In this essay, Helm presents in his customarily careful and tightly argued manner a compelling case for viewing God's trustworthiness as "an essential part" of God's nature. Just as it belongs to God's essential nature to be omnipotent

and omniscient, so it belongs to his nature to be trustworthy. However, the trustworthiness of God is to be distinguished from attributes like omnipotence and omniscience, since it is a “relational power or property of God” (p. 239). Just as we could not speak of God as Creator without his sustaining a relation to his creation, so we cannot speak of God’s trustworthiness without his manifestation of this attribute to someone or something. To be trustworthy, Helm notes, requires a relation of some kind within which being trustworthy can be expressed. Helm further argues that for God to be trustworthy, he needs to possess the attributes of power and knowledge to the fullest possible degree. After all, how can we trust God if he makes promises regarding the future or seeks to effect his purposes, but he has neither the power nor the knowledge requisite to fulfill unfailingly his promises and bring to pass what he has determined to do? Thus, Helms offers a persuasive case for the metaphysical underpinnings of a Christian conviction regarding God’s trustworthiness. God cannot but be trustworthy and faithful, since this accords with his own essential nature.

In the concluding portion of his essay, Helm takes up the question of the relation between God’s essential trustworthiness and the confession of the reliability of Scripture. In order for us to affirm the reliability of Scripture as a means of God’s revelation, we must acknowledge his essential attributes of power, knowledge, and trustworthiness. Contrariwise, if we grant the open theist claims that God’s power is limited by human freedom and that God’s knowledge is limited with respect to the future, then we are in no position to affirm the classic Christian view of a trustworthy Scripture. The doctrine of a reliable Scripture depends upon what Helm terms a “metaphysics of theism” (who God is). Consequently, when open theism redefines the essential nature of God in respect to his attributes, it should come as no surprise that this has adverse implications for our convictions about the reliability of the Bible. To put Helm’s point in the simplest terms: only the trustworthy, omnipotent, and omniscient God of the Scriptures has the competence to provide the church with a reliable Word in Scripture.

The second essay that I will briefly consider is the contribution of Colin Gunton, “Trinity and Trustworthiness.” Gunton’s essay offers an intriguing and persuasive confirmation of Helm’s argument regarding the need for a metaphysics of theism that includes trustworthiness as an essential attribute of the Triune God. According to Gunton, we need to define the attribute of

immutability in terms of the divine trustworthiness: God can be counted upon as fully constant and invariable in all his being, works, and moral character. Rather than define immutability in abstract terms, as a kind of divine immobility, we should think of God's immutability as his trustworthy conformity to his own character in all of his works and words. Furthermore, if we conceive of trustworthiness and immutability in relation to the love of the Triune God, then we have a theological basis for affirming the constancy and trustworthiness of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in their mutual inter-relations and indwelling. By thinking along these lines, we can arrive at a more satisfying understanding of God's essential nature as a trustworthy, reliable, constant, and loving tri-unity. The implications of this understanding for God's self-disclosure in Scripture are readily apparent. When God communicates with his creatures, he does so in a manner that conforms to and expresses his own character as One who is always reliable and trustworthy, who cannot deny his own truthfulness and integrity.

By singling out these two essays, I do not mean to imply that the other contributions to this volume are not, in their own way, valuable and insightful. I mention them only to illustrate the central focus and argument of all of this book's essays. Among recent books on the doctrine of Scripture, this is a worthy contribution.

—Cornelis P. Venema

Stephen R. Holmes, *God of Grace and God of Glory: An Account of the Theology of Jonathan Edwards*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001. Pp. xiv + 289. \$38.00 (cloth). ISBN 0-8028-3914-2

The resurgence of scholarship in the last twenty-five years on the thought of Jonathan Edwards continues at a rocket pace. Increasingly Edwards is serving as an inspiration for the work of many contemporary theologians of varying stripes, or at least as an inspiring foil to modern theological agendas and programs. However, finding the center of Edwards' theology and, then, blending his diverse writings into an integrated and coherent synthesis, true to Edwards' own intentions and concerns, has proven difficult. Scholars are not united in their assessments regarding what is pivotal versus peripheral in Edwards' thought.

With this new study, Stephen R. Holmes argues that the concept of “glory” forms the center of Edwards’ theology, or serves as the key to his larger theological project. Foundational to this project is the divine decision to share his glory, that is, to fashion creatures that can enjoy the overflow of the divine glory. Holmes demonstrates how Edwards’ use of “glory” proves integral to a number of other important doctrines that he treats, specifically creation, the work of redemption, the church, and everlasting punishment.

The first chapter offers a brief biography of Edwards, along with a useful survey of the secondary literature that has interpreted multiple facets of Edwards’ theology. Holmes correctly observes that Edwards has yet to be sufficiently well placed within the Reformed continental tradition. Although he was a Puritan, “his is a distinctively Enlightened Puritanism,” meaning, his was a Calvinism that discovered ways to transform and adapt itself to the changing intellectual climate of that time.

Holmes comes to the heart of his thesis in chapter two, where he sets forth the purpose of God’s glory in Edwards’ thought. Since Holmes is not interested in producing a disinterested historical monograph, he is looking for ways in which Edwards’ ideas might be of service for Reformed theology today. He believes that Edwards offers “a confident, relevant, evangelistic, Reformed theology,” though he didn’t get “all things right” (p. x). Thus in keeping with the spirit of this volume, Holmes moves from an analysis of Edwards’ notion of divine glory, considered in the triune God *ad intra* and *ad extra*, to a comparison of Edwards’ view with that of Karl Barth. Both Edwards and Barth share a measure of dependence upon Petrus van Mastricht and his treatment of the glory of God.

With the third chapter Holmes examines the idea of God’s glory and the glory of creation. Edwards’ trinitarian metaphysics are represented as enlightened and modern, taking cognizance of Newtonian scientific categories. Equally decisive in shaping Edwards’ metaphysics, however, was his commitment to idealism and the doctrine of continuous creation. Concerning the latter, Holmes observes, “If the universe is to give glory to God in the way Edwards sees it doing, it must be possible to describe it as created ‘anew each moment.’” Holmes rightly observes that Edwards speaks of “providence as being ‘equivalent to’ continuous creation, rather than insisting on the actual truth of that theory” (p. 93). He

also rightly observes that this was a majority position among the Reformed orthodox. As for Edwards' idealism, Holmes sets it up in comparison with that of George Berkeley. "[F]or both Edwards and Berkeley, existence is finally in being known by God, but for Edwards this is ... a category of Christological participation" (p. 97). Moreover, Edwards' idealist language must not be divorced from his language of trinitarian agency.

Meanwhile Holmes explores how Edwards' extended use of typology enabled him to show forth God's self-revelation in the physical world and human history.

Chapter four takes up the question of God's glory in the work of redemption. Holmes treats Edwards' doctrine of election and Christology, arguing that Edwards' sought a middle position between supra- and infralapsarianism (though he is more supralapsarian) and that divine election is Christological in character—a point that Barth wrongly thought was missing from the Reformed tradition. The tradition's error, according to Holmes, was its failure to see reprobation Christologically. Holmes also considers Edwards' understanding of atonement and conversion. The atonement forms the center of the narrative of redemption. In back of that narrative is the divine decree. But even within the divine decree, the crucifixion is first and foundational. "Creation, history, and all other divine actions (which is to say all else that is) can be regarded as the necessary backdrop for God to glorify Himself through the death of His Son, and the outpouring of His Spirit." As Holmes further states, "This was, simply, [God's] first and best thought, to which all else is subsequent" (p. 164).

Meanwhile Holmes believes that despite the Christological emphases that can be found in the Reformed tradition, it failed to anticipate the road that Barth carved out and paved, namely that the reprobate, just like the elect, are to be regarded in relation to Christ as to their very created being, for created being is mediated Christologically and pneumatologically. Consequently, given this lapse, Holmes chastises Calvin, Edwards, and the Reformed tradition for allowing the reprobate to be regarded as less human than the elect, the former being wholly detached from Christ. The net effect of this is that the elect and reprobate are distinguishable as created so that not merely a "seed of election" is discernable in created and fallen human beings, but "the largest of the trees of the field" (p. 165). With Barth, Holmes wishes to define our humanity Christologically, since Christ alone is the perfect human. Therefore,

to talk about the existence of the reprobate as Christless and Spiritless is “to deny to them any humanity” (p. 167).

Chapter five looks at Edwards’ trinitarian understanding of life in Christ and life in the community of God, the church. Following Krister Sairsingh in part, Holmes argues that “the Church is the paradigmatic example of God’s act of self-glorification through the giving of His Son and Spirit. As a result, the Church should be a place, indeed the primary place, where God is known through Christ and worshipped in the Spirit” (p. 190).

Chapter six treats Edwards’ doctrine of hell. Holmes helpfully demonstrates that Edwards’ doctrine, for those times, was neither uncommon nor peculiar, except for one feature: the depiction of the saints delighting in the agonies and eternal torment of the lost. At this point, Edwards’ doctrine was for those times “famously, out of step.” Holmes wages a polemic against Edwards’ use of hell as an avenue for God’s glory, fitted as it was with a Christless and Spiritless doctrine of reprobation. Edwards’ doctrine of hell, along with the doctrine of the Reformed tradition, fails the test of divine justice, painting a sinister portrait of God that cannot meet the test of Scripture. Holmes argues that God isn’t glorified in creating people he ordains to damn for eternity, and if some sort of justice exhibit is needed (in contrast to God’s mercy), so that God may be fully glorified, then only one such exhibit is needed, the One who, in the words of the Apostles’ Creed, “descended into hell.” Thus, if such a scheme is to be followed, that is, the whole notion of God’s self-glorification in the damnation of sinners, the cross of Christ suffices as the requisite justice exhibit for God’s glory.

Holmes, however, wishes to follow Barth in opposition to Edwards’ and the Reformed tradition at this point. This means that universalism is denied, but God’s grace and mercy are so affirmed as to constantly draw us “in that direction” (p. 239).

In the last chapter of his book, Holmes offers a recapitulation of the previous chapters and an essay of sorts on the failures of Reformed theology surrounding predestination and the welcome correctives of Karl Barth, focusing on Barth’s Christological doctrine of reprobation. Like Barth, Holmes speaks in a way that strongly suggests universalism, for all are in Christ—the One who was reprobate and elect. Only in this way, “giving Christological content to perdition,” is the gospel genuinely gospel. Yet Holmes wants to deny universalism. He grants the permissibility of referring to the lost as “bearers of God’s wrath.” But to speak of hell

Christianly requires that “we immediately acknowledge that Jesus Christ also bore God’s wrath on the tree” (p. 272).

The last chapter only peripherally treats Edwards. In it, as in some earlier chapters, Holmes clutters the analysis of Edwards’ theology with his own Barthian agenda. This leads me to make an observation regarding the methodology of this account of Edwards’ theology. Holmes’ study, which is a re-working of his doctoral dissertation, bears the marks of a piece of historical scholarship but periodically devolves into critique and assessment of Edwards’ views, usually with Barth serving as the straightedge of a new orthodoxy. This mixing of historical analysis with systematic reflection, Barth being the litmus test of correct thinking, mars Holmes’ entire project. Holmes’ assessment is persuasive, I suppose, if one is a Barthian, but for those who are interested in Edwards’ project (the book, after all, is subtitled “An Account of the Theology of Jonathan Edwards”), Holmes’ systematic ruminations are an encumbrance, and for several reasons. First, Holmes’ musings on Barth are too underdeveloped and uncritical to be very helpful. To introduce them as a corrective to the tradition in general and to Edwards in particular requires a far more nuanced and fulsome discussion than Holmes offers. Second, although Holmes is certainly not unaware of the numerous challenges to and rebuttals of Barth’s proposals, he does not feel obliged either to acknowledge or reply to them. Since he is persuaded by Barth’s program in opposition to features of Edwards’ theology and of the wider Reformed tradition, Holmes is simply content to assert the superiority of Barth’s answers. The reader, apparently, is supposed to agree. Third, and most decisively, it is methodologically inconsistent and unwise to contextually and critically examine Edwards’ views and fail to do the same with the views of Barth. Holmes neglects to set Barth’s theological ideas in context, even as he fails to alert us to possible problems in his proposed solutions, or bridge the historical gap that exists between Barth and Edwards, and between Barth and the Reformed tradition of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Hybrid books like this one, which do not fall squarely into either the genre of systematic theology or the genre of historical theology, press too many agendas simultaneously.

Perhaps the most commendable feature of Holmes’ study, and this should not be overlooked, is his effort to read Edwards within the context of the wider Reformed—and more particularly, the Reformed orthodox—tradition. Another notable feature of this

book is that the author, in treating the idea of divine grace and divine glory as central to Edwards' theology, also weaves into his analysis an examination and critical assessment of a number of Edwards' chief works, including *Religious Affections*, *Freedom of the Will*, *Original Sin*, and other treatises. In this respect, even if readers do not share Holmes' assessment of these works or of Edwards' theology, they are introduced to a number of Edwards' diverse writings, including *The Miscellanies*'. Moreover, the author's chief point regarding the role that glory plays in Edwards' thought seems valid.

—J. Mark Beach

David Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible: The Social and Literary Context*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002. Pp. xi + 355. \$26.00. ISBN 0-8028-4943-1

David Instone-Brewer is a research fellow at Tyndale House in Cambridge, England, and the author of this well-researched and detailed contribution to the continuing discussion of the Bible's teaching about divorce and remarriage. Exegetes and ethicists alike will be interested in weighing his claims, which belong to a wider body of work accessible from his website, www.Instone-Brewer.com. The central aim of this volume is to lay "the academic foundations of a practical and sensitive pastoral response for the millions of people who are suffering from the Church's misunderstanding of this subject" (p. vii).

Already in his introduction the author discloses the conclusions of his study. They are four in number: (1) both Jesus and Paul condemned divorce committed without valid grounds, and discouraged divorce done with valid grounds; (2) both Jesus and Paul affirmed the OT grounds for divorce; (3) the OT permitted divorce for adultery and for neglect or abuse; and (4) both Jesus and Paul condemned remarriage after invalid divorce, but not after a valid divorce (p. ix).

These conclusions depart from the position held by most of the Christian church from the second to the sixteenth centuries, which disallowed divorce with remarriage for any reason, and permitted separation only in cases of adultery or desertion by a nonbelieving spouse. This view arose from an understanding of the Gospel accounts of Jesus' teaching regarding marriage and divorce; the core of Jesus' answer to his disciples and the Pharisees was: Whoever

divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery. But the problem facing exegetes from the second century onward was the meaning, in this instance, of “commit adultery.” Since in all biblical and contemporary literature, the phrase refers to illegal sexual activity with a person who is married to someone else, how can people married to each other “commit adultery”? These interpreters solved the difficulty by assuming that remarriage was adulterous because the person who married a second time was still really married to the original spouse.

To account for his departure from this position, Instone-Brewer argues that this view arose in the second century with the loss of the background knowledge and assumptions shared among first-century Bible readers. To recover this background information, the author searches all of the biblical and contemporary extra-biblical sources to produce a portrait of marriage, divorce, and remarriage that does justice to all the exegetical details and social-cultural facts of the biblical world.

His investigation moves from reviewing the ancient Near Eastern view of marriage as a contract, to examining the OT Pentateuchal and prophetic materials, followed by two chapters on intertestamental and rabbinic teaching, and an exposition of the teaching of Jesus and Paul. This study of the primary evidence leads to three concluding chapters offering a historical survey of marriage vows inherited from the Bible and from Judaism, of the church’s interpretations regarding divorce and remarriage, and of modern answers to the questions generated by the textual material. Flowing from all of this are the author’s pastoral conclusions, aimed at reversing institutionalized misunderstandings in the church’s attitude toward and care for those who have been divorced and remarried.

Many, though not all, of the author’s exegetical conclusions are well-grounded and helpful. The opening chapter presents one of his less persuasive claims, namely, that the best English translation for the ancient Near Eastern concept of “covenant” (בְּרִית) is the term “contract.” This opinion rests, in part, on the dubious premise that the term “covenant” is a later theological construct identifying a relationship involving grace and trust rather than obligations and stipulations (pp. 16-17). However, since the Scriptures present “covenant” as a relationship to be maintained by both partners, in terms of promises and demands, it seems inaccurate to distinguish

and limit the terms “contract” and “covenant” along the lines of grace versus obligation.

Since the documentary sources from Israel and her neighbors are fragmentary, we are told, we should not suppose that Israelite divorce law is preserved in its entirety in the Pentateuch. Therefore, it is not possible to be definite regarding what distinguished Israel from her neighbors in matters of divorce and remarriage.

According to Instone-Brewer, especially two passages supply information about divorce in Israel. The first is Exodus 21:10-11, a law about how someone should treat his slave wife when he marries a second, free wife: “If he takes another wife to himself, he shall not diminish her [the slave wife’s] food, her clothing, or her marital rights. And if he does not do these three things for her, she shall go out for nothing, without payment of money.” The interpretation of these verses by first-century A.D. Jews is, in the author’s words, “the most important consideration for this present study. They provide the best indication of how an original reader of the NT would have understood this text” (p. 100). Rabbis have almost universally agreed that Exodus 21:10-11 refers to maintaining the first wife’s food, clothing, and conjugal rights (categorized as material and emotional support)—the failure to do which would provide valid ground(s) for divorcing the husband. The exegetical steps in the argument moving from this particular law about a slave wife to a general law governing all divorce are inferential. The *a fortiori* argument would reason that if a slave wife may divorce her husband for denying her any of these three benefits, then surely a free wife may do the same, and if a wife may do so, then a husband would have equivalent rights in Israel.

The second passage is Deuteronomy 24:1-4, whose central precept is that a man whose divorced wife has married and divorced a second time may not take her back to be his wife. Deuteronomy 24:1 contains elements that continue to baffle exegetes: “When a man takes a wife and marries her, if then she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, and he writes here a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, . . .” The precise translation and meaning of “some indecency” (עֲרוּת דְּבָר, lit. “nakedness of a thing”), rendered in the LXX as ἄσχημον πράγμα, “a shameful matter,” continue to be disputed, as do the content and purpose of “a certificate of divorce” (סֵפֶר כְּרִיתָה; LXX βιβλίον ἀποστασίου).

Instone-Brewer observes that later Jewish interpretation of the Pentateuch regarded “some indecency” or “nakedness of a thing” as either adultery (the Shammaites, who emphasized “nakedness”) or any matter at all (the Hillelites, who emphasized “thing”). This debate between the schools of Shammai and Hillel provided the primary context—a context available to the Gospels’ original readers, but lost to subsequent interpreters—for Jesus’ teaching on divorce and remarriage.

These OT passages, however, supply very little information about divorce procedures in Israel. Nothing is said about other permissible grounds for divorce, about the rights of children to inherit their father’s property, about procedures for divorce, and the like. This silence, the author claims, suggests that in these matters Israel followed customs prevailing throughout the ancient Near East.

A similar silence is discovered in the Gospel accounts of Jesus’ teaching. These accounts, we are told, are highly abbreviated and therefore require considerable unpacking or expansion. Modern exegetes can do this by determining what would have been omitted from these accounts as patently obvious, and therefore superfluous, for a first-century Jew (p. 133). The longer accounts in Mark 10 and Matthew 19 allegedly contain such abbreviated exegesis, omitting a citation of Genesis 7:9 and shortening the quotation of Genesis 2:24. Moreover, the non-inclusion in Mark 10:11-12 and Luke 16:18 of the exceptive clause found in Matthew 5:32 (παρεκτός λόγου πορνείας, “except for the reason of unchastity”) and 19:9 (ἐπὶ πορνείᾳ/, “except for immorality”) can also be viewed as a form of abbreviation. These gaps in exegetical argument, however, can be supplied by the Damascus Document and by other rabbinic exegeses (p. 161). With reference to Luke 16:18, the author observes that “[t]he most highly abbreviated account is in Luke, which retains only the conclusion without any hint of the context; the only detail that remains is Jesus’ assertion that remarriage after an invalid divorce is adulterous. The reason for this is now clear. This was the only point at which Jesus differed with everyone else in Judaism” (p. 167).

A number of maxims summarize Jesus’ teaching about marriage, divorce, and remarriage. Marriage is (or should be) monogamous, lifelong, and optional (thus, infertility is not a valid ground for divorce). Divorce is not compulsory (even in cases of adultery), is allowable in cases of impenitent adultery, and is

disallowed for “any matter” (the loose application of divorce laws in Jesus’ own day). Significantly, Jesus did not specify what should happen after an invalid divorce, since we have nothing in the Gospels suggesting that Jesus called anyone to separate from a spouse whom one had married after an invalid divorce. Three factors suggest, moreover, that Jesus recognized the other three OT grounds for divorce (denial of food, clothing, and conjugal rights, from Ex. 21:10-11). First, in his discussion about divorce Jesus never commented on these other grounds, leading us to assume that he considered them to remain valid. Second, since no Jewish group in first-century Judaism rejected these as valid grounds for divorce, and since we read nowhere that Jesus rejected them, we may assume he continued to recognize them. Third, Jesus’ very formulation of the exceptive clause is almost identical to the wording used by the Shammaites, who in fact did recognize these other grounds for divorce. Again, we may therefore assume that Jesus shared this position.

Although acknowledging that all the surviving rabbinic literature, including the Mishnah, was produced after the NT documents and the fall of Jerusalem, Instone-Brewer nevertheless believes this literature provides instructive parallels in methods of abbreviating legal argument. This process of abbreviation accounts for the removal of the exegetical portion of the argument, and of commonly understood phrases. Although Jewish readers of the biblical text would have readily inserted the missing elements, non-Jewish readers would have found these abbreviated Gospel accounts difficult to understand. In addition, the Gospel accounts omit mention of Exodus 21:10-11 and of remarrying after the death of one’s spouse, since these matters were not in dispute between the schools of Shammai and Hillel.

The ninth chapter, “History of Divorce: Interpretation in Church History,” begins with the church fathers, showing that their position generally was that only adultery provides a valid ground for divorce, but remarriage was not permitted until one’s former spouse had died. In a significant break from this tradition, the Protestant reformers generally rejected the indissolubility of marriage (related to their rejection of marriage as a sacrament), and permitted remarriage after a divorce for adultery or for desertion by an unbeliever. Luther, for example, considered divorce legitimate for adultery, physical deformity, or denial of conjugal rights. Bucer even allowed divorce for mental incompatibility or by mutual consent (p.

262). In contrast, Calvin and Beza held that only the standard two grounds were legitimate, though in his “Ecclesiastical Ordinances” Calvin permitted as grounds also impotence, extreme religious incompatibility, and desertion.

We agree with the author’s basic conclusions, stated already in his introduction and repeated throughout the book. Nevertheless, we find the route by which Instone-Brewer reaches these conclusions to be problematic in three respects. First, the author relies consciously and heavily on the argument from silence to build his case. To be clear, we are not suggesting that an exegete may not employ an argument from silence—every exegete must do so, if only to have an opinion about the intended audience of the biblical document he seeks to understand. Rather, the issue involves the extent of relying on such an argument to establish one’s case. To suggest, for example, that Jesus must have agreed with contemporary Jewish and rabbinic interpretation and use of Exodus 21:10-11 (permitting divorce and remarriage on the ground of material or emotional neglect) since the Gospels nowhere record his rejection or modification thereof is dubious at best, and dangerous at worst. Surely we are not to assume that NT silence regarding any given point of rabbinic interpretation and application of the OT signals agreement with that rabbinic usage?

A second problem with the author’s approach is that he needs somehow to compensate for the weaknesses arising from his *argumentum e silentio*, and such strength is found in appealing to rabbinic and other extra-biblical methods of legal argument, especially the use of abbreviation in legal argument, to explain what is *not* in the text and why it is not there. Unfortunately, we nowhere find in this volume a discussion of the limitations associated with using rabbinic sources as keys to unlock the meaning of NT texts, one of which involves the dating of these sources. We must beware, however, of an anachronistic reading of rabbinic conclusions as if they were contemporaneous with the NT. In our view, it would be more convincing to explain the relative differences among the accounts provided in the synoptic Gospels in terms of their varying authorial purposes and original audiences, to the extent that we can discern these from the biblical documents themselves, by situating these writings as carefully as possible within their own historically verifiable religious-social-cultural context.

In this connection, if the rabbinic technique of abbreviating the exegetical and legal argument supposedly renders the discussion

more difficult for a non-Jewish reader to understand, because such a reader would lack familiarity with its Jewish background and context, why then would Luke, of all people, employ this technique in writing to the non-Jew Theophilus what our author terms “the most highly abbreviated account” of the discussion in the Gospels (Lk. 16:18)?

Our third reservation concerns the author’s main thesis itself. Recall his claim that the church’s rejection of divorce and remarriage can be explained by the church having lost touch with the religious-cultural background of the biblical divorce/remarriage passages, a background readily available to first-century Bible readers and whose recovery requires familiarity with forms of rabbinic legal argumentation. This claim, however, fails to explain the fact that the Protestant reformers broke with this ecclesiastical tradition without appealing to this allegedly lost background, whether the Shammai-Hillel debate or rabbinic legal methods. To state the matter as a question: Why should we not subscribe to the more simple and plain exegesis of the reformers in concluding that divorce and remarriage are permissible for two reasons only: adultery and wilful desertion? Instone-Brewer needs to convince us—and he nowhere attempts to do so in this volume—that the conclusions of the Protestant reformers, to which his are closely parallel, rest upon inadequate exegesis of the biblical passages themselves.

Among the excellent features of the book are the Greek text of NT passages accompanying the English translation, and the fine bibliography and indices. However, it is puzzling that several times the dative case of *πορνεία* rather than its nominative is used in the English text (pp. 156-159).

In spite of our broader concerns, we genuinely appreciate the pastoral aim of the book, expressed in a candid assessment of sinful divorce and remarriage in today’s church, crowned with an urgent plea that the church proclaim the gospel summons to repentance, faith, and holiness in marriage.

—Nelson D. Kloosterman

Logos Bible Software Series X – Scholar’s Library (Libronix Digital Library System 2.0). \$599.95. *Biblical Languages Supplement*. \$129.95. Logos Research Systems, Bellingham, WA.

Not that long ago some of us experienced the trauma of moving from an IBM typewriter to an IBM computer. The anxiety of learning to compose while looking at a screen, coupled with the predictions of digital resources replacing print media, led many in the academic establishment to greet this revolution with apprehension. The digital revolution soon expanded its attention from industry-oriented products to home-office applications, including programs for balancing your checkbook to planning the travel route for your summer vacation. It was only a matter of time before academic software would provide students with more than word processing programs. Today we can scan, query, summarize, and graph a wide array of digitally tagged original language texts. With more than 3,000 titles in digitized format, Logos Research Systems now permits us to store significant library tools on our computers.

As with the move from oral to print culture, this revolution brings megabytes of information to our fingertips, while leaving the discovery of its meaning to the user. The distinction between information and meaning remains a fundamental methodological operating principle for those using academic digital resources like those under review. Manipulating and retrieving data belong to the beginning stage of understanding, never to be equated with mastering the significance of the data itself.

This Bellingham, WA, company has developed the Libronix Digital Library System (Libronix DLS), a comprehensive digital library software platform with three components. The first is a collection of books (more than 230 titles in the case of Scholar’s Library), digitized forms of the originals that include illustrations and page numbers. This collection is expandable by purchasing from the more than 3,000 titles that are searchable with the Libronix DLS. The library’s second component is the technological core, the operating engine that catalogues, retrieves, and links resources. Third, a large number of addin modules automate many common tasks associated with biblical exegesis, textual comparisons, and topical searching.

Minimum system requirements are a Pentium 133MHz processor (Pentium 300MHz processor recommended), a CD-

ROM drive, Windows 98 / 98SE / Me / NT 4.0 (SP6a) / 2000 / XP, 60 MB hard drive, 64 MB RAM (128 MB recommended), and screen resolution of 800x600 or higher. Scholar's Library comes on a set of CD-ROMs, and the user can expand the library by unlocking various additional titles either from the discs or from the Logos website.

The Series X line is a significant upgrade of the entire family of Logos Bible Software products. Scholar's Library comes with six automation addin modules that perform complex searches, comparisons, and reports. The Word Study Guide report reads the Bible passage and generates a word-by-word guide to the passage with the underlying Strong's number, Hebrew or Greek lemmas (in script and in transliteration), and links to dictionary and lexical entries for each word. The Parallel Bible Versions report permits the display of a specific passage in as many Bible translations or versions as desired, with the results in a verse-by-verse grid for easy viewing, printing, and comparison of different translations. Passage in All Versions is a tool for quickly showing a specific verse or passage in every accessible Bible version. The Auto Lookup report scans the article on screen, looks up all the Bible references, footnotes, etc., and collects them into one easy-to-read report. Verse List performs a similar function on web pages, compiling into a single report all Bible verses referenced on any HTML page.

Scholar's Library also includes professional-level tools for working with the Hebrew or Greek Scriptures, such as the Exegetical Guide. To prepare a list of Greek words appearing fewer than ten times in the LXX of Genesis 35, for example, the user would click on Tools | Original Language Tools | Exegetical Guide, where he can configure the search to show parsing, glosses, keylinks to other resources, and lemmas. The Exegetical Guide generates a custom report displaying information for each word in a passage along with links to full lexical entries, creating a convenient, ready-to-print report that organizes dozens of resources around the passage you're studying.

The Lemma Report is an automated research tool that pulls together all available information about a single Hebrew or Greek lemma, including relevant entries in all original language reference works and a comprehensive list of occurrences in the Bible, fully parsed. In addition, simply pausing the cursor on a Hebrew or Greek word will generate a pop-up box with lemma and lexical information about that word. Right-clicking on the word lets you

open *BDB* or the 10-volume *TDNT*, for example, to that word's entry. At additional cost, users may have within keystroke range *BDAG* (3rd edition), the unabridged Liddell & Scott (coming soon), *HALOT*, *ISBE* (1979 revision), Luther's complete works, Calvin's commentaries, *Willmington's Book of Bible Lists*, the *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, a number of theological journals, and the 20-volume United Bible Societies' *New Testament Handbook* series.

The brand new Graphical Query Editor features a graphical interface (rather than a text-based query box) to assist users in creating any number of morphological searches. The Search | Advanced Search menu brings up the options of a graphical or textual search. The program easily performed a graphical search on the combination within the same context of all forms of two Greek morphemes, *pist** and *dika**, resulting in 43 LXX and 101 NA27 occurrences.

The new Series X Scholar's Library (one of five packages available) contains over 230 Bibles and Bible reference titles, worth over \$5,000.00 in equivalent print editions. Titles included in the Series X Scholar's Library include more than fifteen English language Bibles, as well as seven Greek editions of the New Testament, the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, *Rahlfs Septuaginta*, and the *Biblia Sacra Vulgata*. Lexica include the work by Louw and Nida, *TDNT* (10-volume unabridged and 1-volume abridged), the intermediate Liddell and Scott, *BDB* with *TWOT*, and *Dictionary of Biblical Languages* (Aramaic and Hebrew). The Libronix search engine quickly brings the user to analytical concordances, parsing resources, and reference grammars for Hebrew and Greek. The package includes the *New Bible Dictionary*, the *IVP Background Commentary* (NT), the *New Bible Commentary*, and Matthew Henry's commentary. Study of the biblical text is assisted with the Logos deluxe map set, *Archaeological Encyclopaedia of the Holy Land*, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, the Amarna Letters, and the Dead Sea Scrolls. Theological and historical works include Charles Hodge's *Systematic Theology*, Calvin's *Institutes*, the works of Josephus and Philo, and Schaff's *History of the Christian Church*. (For a complete list of resources included in the Scholar's Library, see www.logos.com/scholars.)

Biblical Languages Supplement. Logos Research Systems is also investing heavily in developing computer assisted original language study resources, available now in the *Biblical Languages Supplement*. This software supplement provides the Bible Analysis

Addin, Biblical Languages Addin, Sentence Diagramming Addin, Bible Puzzles Addin, and Graphical Query Editor Addin, along with twenty additional original language texts, lexicons, and other resources. Key advances involve searchability (both speed and options), user configurability, and innovative visual representation of complex data and relationships.

The use of Visual Filters allows the user to mark up a resource automatically, visually highlighting morphological features right in the text. The Verb River and Bible Version Difference Rivers display verse-by-verse variation in morphological features and translation choices, respectively, over the course of a passage.

The Sentence Diagramming Addin excels in ease of use and supplies an important step in exegetical analysis. The user chooses a verse or range of verses and each word is inserted as a discreet, movable object. English glosses from an interlinear Bible can be associated with each Greek or Hebrew word, or transliteration can be added on a second line.

Third party software developers are beginning to enhance the software's usefulness by developing customizations (macros for Word and Corel WordPerfect, and scripts for custom toolbars, for example). As the number of users increases, the features of the Libronix software will become more widely accessible. At this point, the on-screen help is quite adequate for navigating though the basic features of the program, but a printed manual with copious documentation and illustrations of various options and configurations would be welcome.

All texts in the Logos library may be annotated with personal notes, a feature both powerful and useful for pastors and Bible teachers. These notes may be attached to user-selected texts in the library, nested among the resources, kept in a variety of colors, and flagged with a variety of insignia to indicate significance. Also, notes may be easily searched for rapid access.

Besides obtaining the digitized books offered by Logos in its various packages, the user can customize his library (at additional cost) by purchasing unlock codes for the numerous quality volumes that come with the discs. To its credit, the company is investing heavily in scholarly resources and research tools, having made a giant leap forward with the Biblical Languages Supplement in assisting students with biblical language study.

We heartily recommend this software for use by pastors, by Bible students of every ability, and by seminary students seeking to

build their lifetime library as economically as possible. To learn more about Scholar's Library, visit <http://www.logos.com/demo> or call 800-875-6467. Details about Biblical Languages Supplement can be found at <http://www.logos.com/bls>.

—Nelson D. Kloosterman

George M. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003. Pp. xxi + 615. \$35.00 (cloth). ISBN 0-300-09693-3

October 5, 2003, marks the tercentennial of Jonathan Edwards' birth. In anticipation of that, publishers have turned out an unusually high number of secondary works on Edwards this year. An intensification in the publication of both secondary and primary works (as we've seen in the numerous volumes published in the Yale edition in the last several years) is itself rather remarkable, given the already extraordinary number of works produced on Edwards since World War II. When one becomes a subject of such extensive hagiography as has Edwards, having so much written about him, the challenge to biographers becomes that much more daunting. And George Marsden, in this new biography of Edwards, has amply demonstrated that he is in every way equal to the challenge.

When it comes to the biographers of Edwards, as is usually the case with great figures, one often learns as much about the biographer as their subject. Of course all biographers have, and demonstrate, a perspective. So does Marsden. This does not in itself lessen a biography's value but it does qualify its value. The details in Ola Wislow's biography, for example, are invaluable, though at times compromised by her lack of sympathy with Edwards. The same can be said for Perry Miller with his intellectual history approach and Patricia Tracy with her social history approach, not to mention the jaundiced view of someone like Henry Bamford Parkes, who saw Edwards as the quintessential kill-joy. Marsden is sympathetic, as was Edwards' fine biographer, Iain Murray. But Marsden is more objective than Murray and more properly balanced in his assessment. Marsden is, on the whole, the most even-handed biographer that Edwards has ever enjoyed. He clearly admires Edwards and yet is able to see Edwards' weaknesses as well as his strengths.

I must at this point resist the temptation to pile on superlatives about this biography, for it truly is without equal. As we approach the three-hundredth anniversary of Edwards' birth, I can think of no better tribute to Edwards himself than Marsden's biography. It is a challenge to know where to begin evaluating such a comprehensive treatment of this pivotal figure. Rather than attempting a recapitulation of this work, perhaps it would be best to make just a few observations.

Marsden appreciates Edwards' genius, even in his childhood, yet he does not run to "filiopietistic" excess in extolling his brilliance. Edwards could be stiff; he was not one for small talk and thus appeared, especially to his detractors, to be aloof and sanctimonious. Yet, Edwards had a great sense of his own sin, struggled with despondency, if not depression, and had a genuinely passionate relationship with his wife, enjoying the affection and admiration of his children and of his close friends. He may not have seemed warm and engaging as a pastor, yet when sought after for spiritual counsel he was very caring and personally gave of his own substance to those in need. He was an extraordinarily self-disciplined man, seen for example in his use of time and gifts, in his personal eating and sleeping habits, and in his determination to mortify the flesh. Marsden brings Edwards to life for us, not as a plastic saint but as a real saint with some of our struggles. Edwards was, by all accounts, a man of remarkable holiness in his faithfulness in all religious duties, public and private. Marsden shows him to be the gracious Christian man that he was, though with clear faults.

Why, though, does Edwards merit as much attention as he has received? Surely any number of ministers in colonial New England and elsewhere in the eighteenth century were faithful, able pastors. Why should Edwards so commend himself to our attention? Because he championed Calvinism at a time when it was being fiercely attacked and did so with remarkable force and insight. Beginning in 1731, in his first published work, he attacked Arminianism and continued to do so throughout his career, culminating in his master works of the mid-1750s, *Freedom of the Will*, *Original Sin*, and *The Two Dissertations*. When Edwards wrote or spoke of "Arminianism," he meant that general anti-Calvinist liberalism that was even in his day giving way to Socinianism, Deism, and moving toward Transcendentalism. Thus his genius does not lie in his being the harbinger of a new era so much as it does in

eloquently defending Calvinism not only when it was no longer fashionable, but when it was being assaulted on all sides.

Edwards also merits our attention because of his participation in and critique of the First Great Awakening. Edwards' revivalist theology was linked in no small measure to his post-millennial eschatology. Yet he seems to have considerably modified his judgments about the Awakening, particularly its excesses, which he came to regard as epiphenomena. What concerned Edwards was not the Awakening's concomitants (crying, trembling, etc.) but true religious affections that manifested themselves in an all-consuming love for God and neighbor, the outworking and manifestation of charity in its fruits. There was a remarkable integrity to Edwards' theology. *Religious Affections* (1746), as the capstone of Awakening analysis, was merely the practical theology aspect of Edwards' vision of God as overflowing love, beauty, and sweetness, and the rapture of the soul captivated and transformed by it. In other words, *The Nature of True Virtue* and *The End for which God created the World* are but the ethical and teleological expressions of which the *History of the Work of Redemption* is the historical. Ultimately, it's all about God; the whole of creation is about God expressing his own trinitarian character, to the extension of his own glory and praise.

To be sure, Edwards defended traditional Calvinism, but in a post-Newtonian world in which one faced the question, as Marsden put it, "How can the creator of such an unimaginably vast universe be in intimate communication with creatures so infinitely inferior to himself? How can it be that God hears their prayers and responds by caring not only about their eternal souls but even about the details of their temporal lives" (p. 504)? Edwards' answer involved some strange expressions at times, as in *Original Sin* in which he posits something that looks like continuous creation. I believe it is Edwards' strong way of expressing God's continual upholding of and intimate involvement in all the details of his creation. No practical deist was Edwards. And what some have taken for pantheism (Edwards does speak of "beams of glory" that emanate from and return to God) is but a rather extraordinary, and refreshing, God-centeredness: "So that the whole is of God, and in God, and to God, and God is the beginning, middle and end in this affair" (pp. 462-463). As Piper has noted, this is a remarkably God-centered approach.

So Edwards' genius is that he promoted Calvinism in an age when human freedom and not God's was all the rage. As a part of

that defense, he also sought to vindicate Scripture—appreciating history without succumbing to historicism—as it was under enlightenment attack. Luther and Calvin, in their exposition of the faith, were still in the medieval world in many respects. Edwards was not. He was responding to the Aufklärung in both its European and newly burgeoning American forms. Edwards was, in other words, defending reformational truth in his era just as the reformers had defended it in theirs. And this is the best thing about Marsden’s book. He treats Edwards in his context without thereby rendering him irrelevant to us today. He presents to us an utterly contextual Edwards whose significance can properly be appreciated by churchmen today. Here are two paragraphs from Marsden that give some flavor of his Edwards-in-context—who is also, as some historians like to put it, “usable.”

In *The Nature of True Virtue*—an intellectual gem by any standard—Edwards was challenging the project that dominated Western thought, and eventually much of world thought, for the next two centuries. The grand ideal of that hopeful era was that humans would find it possible to establish on scientific principles a universal system of morality that would bring to an end the destructive conflicts that had plagued human history. Only after the first half of the twentieth century, when the clashes of such ideals had led to the bloodiest era in history and threatened to annihilate humanity, did much of the faith in that project collapse, even though there were no clear alternatives to put in its place.

Edwards’ recognition of the vast importance of the assumptions that lay behind such efforts and his insight into their faults arose not because he was so far ahead of his time, but rather because his rigorous Calvinism—and his position in a distant province—put him in a position to critically scrutinize his own era. His theological commitments alerted him to the momentous implications of trends that were already formidable in Britain when he first came onto the intellectual scene and which during his lifetime advanced rapidly even in New England. Edwards was a thoroughly eighteenth-century figure who used many of the categories and assumptions of his era to criticize its trends. Although he may have underestimated the short-term benefits of the emerging culture, he had genuine insight into the emptiness of its highest hopes.

Whether Marsden is discussing Edwards’ view of women, be it his sisters, daughters, or wife (even as revealed in the so-called “Bad Book” Affair) or his views of commercial land speculation and the

rights of the Stockbridge Indians, Marsden's book goes a long way to dispelling the Edwards of Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr.: the implacable sadist, as some see him, of "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God." Edwards did not preach "fiery" sermons because of some supposed misanthropy. Rather, he preached with urgency about judgment because he wanted sinners to flee to Christ, because he loved their souls and did not relish the thought of his auditors' eternal damnation. Even with regards to preaching judgment, though, Marsden notes a possible "shift in preaching strategy" when Edwards worked in the 1750s among the Stockbridge Indians. Marsden muses: "It may be that Edwards' experience [in preaching to the Indians at Stockbridge] confirmed what he had learned from David Brainerd who had written, 'the more I discour'd of the love and compassion of God in sending his Son to suffer for the sins of men; and the more I invited them to come and partake of his love, the more their distress was aggravated, because they felt themselves unable to come. It was surprising to me to see how their hearts seem'd to be pierc'd with the tender and melting invitations of the Gospel, when there was not a word of terror spoken to them'" (p. 393).

Ultimately, Edwards was a man consumed not with the wrath of God but with the love of God, a theme that he particularly delighted in expounding. Marsden's closing paragraph so well captures the essence of Edwards—"God's trinitarian essence is love. God's purpose in creating a universe in which sin is permitted must be to communicate that love to creatures. The highest or most beautiful love is sacrificial love for the undeserving. Those—ultimately the vast majority of humans—who are given eyes to see that ineffable beauty will be enthralled by it. They will see the beauty of a universe in which unsentimental love triumphs over real evil. They will not be able to view Christ's love dispassionately but rather will respond to it with their deepest affections. Truly seeing such good, they will have no choice but to love it. Glimpsing such love, they will be drawn away from their preoccupations with the gratifications of their most immediate sensations. They will be drawn from their self-centered universes. Seeing the beauty of the redemptive love of Christ as the true center of reality, they will love God and all that he has created" (p. 505).

I have always found reading Edwards and reading about Edwards, while challenging, to be very refreshing, a tonic for the soul. With that in mind, I would urge all readers to run, not walk, to

your nearest bookstore or computer terminal and purchase a copy of this biography of Edwards *nonpareil*.

—Alan D. Strange

Keith A. Mathison, *The Shape of Sola Scriptura*. Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 2001. Pp. 364. \$17.00. ISBN 1-885767-74-9

Things change. In the political sphere, representative government in America used to mean that those eligible to vote elected the best men to govern on their behalf. Now, representative government, as most Americans conceive it, generally means that elected officials are expected to vote as a majority of their constituents would have them vote. Similarly, in the ecclesiastical sphere, *sola Scriptura* (Scripture alone) as enunciated by the reformers, meant that the Bible alone was infallible and thus irreformable. The church, as understood by the reformers, was obviously not irreformable and should instead be ever reformed by being conformed to the teachings of the Bible. This was what the reformers meant in proclaiming Scripture alone. By teaching *sola Scriptura* the reformers did not seek or intend to deny or undermine the authority of the church but to ground that authority in the only *locus* of inspiration and infallibility, the Word of God.

At the hands of the Radical reformers, however, the Anabaptists and their many modern evangelical successors, the doctrine of *sola Scriptura* has been changed. No longer does *sola Scriptura* mean what the reformers meant by it. Modern evangelicals, rather, invoke *sola Scriptura* to reject all proper ecclesiastical authority. Many Christians in America today, when they profess to believe in the Scripture alone, mean by that, “No creed but Christ. No book but the Bible.” We can be grateful to Keith Mathison for his fine work, *The Shape of Sola Scriptura*, wherein he helps us see what the reformers meant by *sola Scriptura* over against what modern evangelicals often mean by it. The reformers did not reject the proper authority of the church, nor did they reject creeds and confessions as many contemporary Christians have done. Mathison, then, in this volume seeks to help us recover the original meaning of *sola Scriptura* on the part of the reformers and in such a recovery to enjoy a revitalized commitment to the Bible and the historic creeds and confessions of the church as they accurately summarize the Bible.

It is commonly understood that the reformers taught and developed *sola Scriptura* as they did over against Rome's emphasis on Scripture and tradition. Mathison does not, however, as do many modern expositors of *sola Scriptura*, simply rail against any invocation of tradition as being necessarily and inherently Romish. Mathison understands that there is a proper use of tradition and that it depends on what one means by "tradition." Mathison, quite properly, adopts Heiko Oberman's definitions of tradition and distinguishes several different strands, denominated as Tradition I, Tradition II, and Tradition III. As Mathison notes, "In present day usage, the term ["tradition"] commonly denotes unwritten doctrines handed down orally in the church. It is therefore often contrasted with Scripture. However, a remarkable scholarly consensus shows that in the early church, Scripture and tradition were in no way mutually exclusive concepts because they coincided with each other completely" (p. 19). Beginning with the apostolic fathers, Mathison seeks to demonstrate that "the concept of 'tradition,' when used by the fathers, is simply used to designate the body of doctrine which was committed to the church by the Lord and His Apostles" (p. 21). Thus in the church of the first centuries, tradition and Scripture were coterminous.

What must be remembered here is that, though the New Testament canon was completed after the Apocalypse of John, the reception of the canon by the church was in process for some time. Many churches in various localities did not have all twenty-seven New Testament books yet by, say, A.D. 150 or 200. We can see from a list like the Muratorian Canon in A.D. 180. that the church was still seeking guidance from the Spirit as to what was properly the New Testament and what wasn't. To put it another way, the same Spirit that inspired the apostles and prophets over the course of at least 1500 years to inscripturate God's Word also illumined the church in the first few centuries to receive the inspired word. Thus tradition, the body of settled and agreed-upon doctrine in the catholic church (of which all sound congregations were a part), would have particular importance while the process of receiving the canon was still underway. We can see that by at least A.D. 367, in the Easter letter of Athanasius, the church had clearly arrived at a Spirit-guided reception of the canon, manifested particularly in the decretals of the Councils in Rome and Carthage at the end of the fourth century.

The concept of tradition in the early church, which Mathison (after Oberman) calls “Tradition I,” was not something opposed to Scripture but rather was expressive of the way that Scripture was understood by and lived out in the church. Tradition, understood in this way, means what the church in the main understands the Scriptures they are receiving to teach. Tradition does not stand over against Scripture; rather, it is the very expression of what is contained in Scripture. Mathison rightly sees much of this tradition being specifically developed over against the heretics. “In his defense of apostolic Christianity,” Mathison writes, “Irenaeus developed the concept of the *regula fidei*: or the ‘rule of faith...,’ a summary of the faith taught by the Apostles” in the Word of God (p. 23). The Gnostics appealed to secret, unwritten tradition. Irenaeus appealed to the church’s right understanding of the Apostles’ teaching. Heretics, one should remember, always appealed to the Scriptures for their doctrine, as did Arius and Pelagius, for instance. The interpretation that they gave the relevant Scripture, however, was at variance with the rest of the church. So when Irenaeus, Clement, Tertullian, Cyprian, Athanasius, and others in the early church appealed to tradition (pp. 23-32), all that they meant by this was the way in which the church understood and interpreted the inscripturated Word.

Mathison, following Oberman (noting that Alister McGrath disagrees), locates what he calls “Tradition II” somewhere between the Cappadocians of the later fourth century and the canon lawyers of the twelfth century (pp. 33-74). There is quite a bit of controversy as to where Chrysostom, Augustine, and others stood on this question. On balance, it seems that even a number of medieval theologians adhered more to the notion of Tradition I, seeing tradition (or the rule of faith) as somewhat analogous to the church’s confession of doctrinal truth, based on and derived from the Word. Tradition II, according to Oberman, argued that the apostles did not commit everything to writing, particularly what Christ taught the disciples in the forty days between his resurrection and ascension. Quoting Oberman, “During these forty days an oral Tradition originated which is to be regarded as a complement to Holy Scripture, handed down to the Church of later times as a second source of revelation..., embedded in Scripture but overflowing in extra-scriptural apostolic tradition handed down through Episcopal succession.” It was against this notion of tradition that the reformers argued.

Mathison summarizes the discussions thus far: “For the first three centuries of the church, a general consensus prevailed on the role of Scripture, the church, and the rule of faith. Tradition was not seen as a second source of revelation but as the apostolic kerygma, and it was co-inherent with the content of Scripture. It is this concept of tradition that we, using the terminology of Oberman, have referred to as Tradition I. In the fourth century the first hints of a two-source theory of tradition are seen in the church. This concept has been termed Tradition II. In the twelfth through fourteenth centuries the two-source theory gained ground among the scholastic theologians and canon lawyers. By the time of the Reformation in the sixteenth century, these two concepts of tradition became part of the larger conflict between the reformers and Rome. The reformers advocated the older concept of Tradition I using the terminology of *sola scriptura*, while Rome reacted by clinging to the new Tradition II theory. This two-source theory was made the official dogma of the Roman Catholic church at the Council of Trent” (p. 210).

There has been even further development within the Roman communion, however. The doctrine of tradition and Scripture has continued to develop at the two modern councils that followed Trent, beginning with Vatican I (1870). At Vatican I, the Roman church promulgated officially the doctrine of papal infallibility. Mathison notes, “This doctrine, together with Cardinal Newman’s theory of doctrinal development, gradually led to the adoption of a completely new theory of tradition in which the magisterium of the church is considered the one real source of revelation. This concept, termed Tradition III by Oberman, coexists in the Roman Catholic Church with the Tradition II concept.” Mathison proceeds to examine, then, the role of tradition as it came more and more to be pitted against Scripture in Rome and in Eastern Orthodoxy (pp. 210-235).

Throughout this fine work, Mathison calls for a return to the *sola Scriptura* position of Luther, Calvin, and the other magisterial reformers. The reformer’s *sola Scriptura* (Scripture alone) is to be distinguished from the Radical reformer’s *solo Scriptura* position (Scripture only). Scripture alone means that only the Bible is inspired, infallible, and inerrant. Scripture only means that one’s only authority is Scripture—the interpretive community, the church, having no proper role to play whatsoever. What started among the reformers as a proper rejection of churchly tyranny and sacerdotal

hegemony—notably Rome’s claim to be intermediary between the Christian and God—has among many evangelicals turned into a rejection of the church altogether, in what Mathison has cleverly termed “Tradition O” (p. 237). Many evangelicals, in rejecting tradition altogether, have rejected the truth that, in the main, the church as God’s true people and Christ’s bride, has not misread the Bible. The true church has rightly read the Bible (though its Roman instantiation has corrupted its way)—that’s why the Protestants did what they did and the truth that had been expressed in the ecumenical creeds is further elaborated in the Three Forms of Unity, the Westminster Standards and like confessions of historic Protestantism.

To confess, as do evangelicals, that the Bible is God’s Word and at the same time to argue that every person should interpret it for him- or herself, giving no heed to tradition, leads only to the kind of ecclesiastical anarchy that we witness all about us in anti-confessional churches. To argue that God gave us his Word, but has not preserved it and illumined us to understand it, is to render our profession of infallibility hollow. What good is a divine Word upon which we can have no clear agreement? This excellent book demonstrates that *sola Scriptura* properly understood is not anti-confessional or anti-tradition but seeks to give heed to the history of godly interpretation of the Word as reflected in the historic creeds of Christendom. Mathison has thereby done us a great service. May his tribe increase.

—Alan D. Strange

Oliver O’Donovan, *Common Objects of Love: Moral Reflection and the Shaping of Community*. The 2001 Stob Lectures. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002. Pp. viii + 72. \$15.00 (cloth). ISBN 0-8028-0515-9

Oliver O’Donovan is Regius Professor of Moral and Pastoral Theology at the University of Oxford. He has authored *Resurrection and Moral Order: An Outline for Evangelical Ethics* and co-edited the *New Dictionary of Christian Ethics and Pastoral Theology*.

The three chapters of this slender volume comprise the 2001 Stob Lectures, sponsored by Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary in honor of Dr. Henry J. Stob, long-time professor of philosophical and moral theology at Calvin Theological Seminary.

These lectures are woven together by the question of what unifies a multitude of human agents into a community of action and experience sustained over time (p. 1).

The author begins his search for an answer by analyzing two moral-philosophical puzzles. The first focuses on the value of political ethics in relation to the mystery of political collectives, while the second concerns the benefit of thinking about past decisions, moral actions already completed. These are puzzling only because they proceed from the assumption that moral thinking must end in making a decision. But if discussing public policy and past moral decisions are seen as moral reflection rather than moral deliberation, then we are freed to seek a kind of moral knowledge for its own sake, a knowledge joined to love.

This loving knowledge possesses a social quality, accounting for the rise of communities in general, and political society in particular. Augustine argued that a community consists of those who share a common evaluation of objects of love and hatred. Such evaluation, signified and transmitted through words-as-representations, sustains a community's identity.

In the face of competing representations of good and evil in modern society, however, O'Donovan properly incorporates a discussion of the corrosive effects of plurality-under-sin, which today is leaving behind disconnected individuals with no practical social philosophy.

Readers will be interested in the author's discussion, in light of the events of September 11, 2001, of the ninth-century iconoclast controversy in relation to the modern conflict between "a religious culture [Islam] identified with the iconoclastic proposition, and a culture marked . . . by publicity, the profuse proliferation of communicated images of every kind" (p. 57). Indeed, O'Donovan's explanation of "publicity" as a mark of modern culture is a useful concretizing of his theoretical points. The closing appeal to John of Patmos warrants careful meditation, for this exiled apostle saw that the appearance of a universal kingdom must needs call forth a false competitor, another image than Jesus Christ, the Image of the Invisible God, that would lay claim to the world's loyalty.

The analysis presented in these lectures, by the author's own admission, "does not circle comfortably around its subject like a pleasant afternoon stroll, but sets out for a far country" (p. 1). Perhaps erecting a few orientation placards (transitions, summaries, and suggestive implications) along the route would have helped the

reader remain alert to the journey's progress and destination. Nonetheless, as presentations that are both philosophical and theological, O'Donovan's contribution forms a fitting addition to the continuing legacy of Dr. Henry Stob.

—Nelson D. Kloosterman

Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church, volume 4: The Age of the Reformation*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002. Pp. xiii + 556. \$45.00. ISBN 0-8028-4775-7

This is the fourth volume of a prodigious series narrating a history of Christian preaching (volumes 1 and 2 of the series were reviewed by this author in *Mid-America Journal of Theology* 10:287-291).

The matrix of themes and objectives that shaped the earlier volumes has supplied the orientation for this volume as well. Guided by the question, How is preaching worship?, Old investigates the doxological function of preaching, reviewing throughout the historical periods the several genres of expository, evangelistic, catechetical, festal, and prophetic preaching.

In the span of eight chapters, each of which receives a bibliography at the end of the book, the author guides us through nearly 250 years of preaching, beginning with Martin Luther (1483-1546) and concluding with François de Salignac de la Mothe Fénelon (1651-1715).

In his opening chapter Old expertly guides the reader in a preaching tour, highlighting the significant figures of the Protestant Reformation. The Reformation's pioneer preacher was Martin Luther, joined by Ulrich Zwingli, John Oecolampadius, the Strasbourg reformers, together with Johann Brenz, John Calvin, and a number of English Protestant preachers.

Along with its development of biblical exegesis, indeed, *because* of that development, the Reformation produced an entire school of preaching marked by textual exposition and pastoral catechesis. Modifying the medieval lectionary system to the pedagogical needs of their day, the reformers blended simplicity with lively imagination saturated with the joy of the gospel. The daily preaching services usually followed the *lectio continua* method, popularized by Zwingli, of working through entire Bible books, while on Sundays the

Gospels and Epistles were taught. Eliminating the saints' days served to focus attention on the Scripture rather than on apocryphal tales that had grown up through the centuries. The preaching of Luther exalts the kerygmatic presence of Christ in the sermon, that of Zwingli champions the culture-transcending authority of God's Word, while Calvin's preaching relies on the faith-generating power of declaring the text's promises and warnings. Because Calvin was convinced that worship supplied the context within which "the covenant is established, maintained, nourished, and renewed" (p. 133), the sermon formed the climax of the dialogue between the congregation and her God.

The volume's second chapter reviews the preaching associated with the Counter-Reformation, represented by a number of Spanish luminaries (Thomas of Villanova, Juan of Ávila, and Luis of Granada), though best exhibited in the work of the Jesuits (Xavier, Canisius, and Bellarmine). The sixteenth-century homiletic work of Borromeo and French Catholic humanists Francis de Sales and Gaspar de Seguiran also receives discussion.

It seems evident that Old took special delight in producing chapter 3, "The Puritans." He writes with fervor as he reviews the preaching of William Perkins, Richard Sibbes, John Preston, Thomas Goodwin, Thomas Manton, Thomas Watson, and John Flavel. In this chapter the reader will find an appreciative discussion of the commentary labors of several Puritans, since preaching and writing commentaries were so closely related for the Puritans.

The Puritans saw biblical preaching to be the work, first, of the Father in drawing sinners to himself. More than that, preaching continues the ministry of Jesus Christ by declaring the inspired apostolic witness to his life, death, and resurrection found in Scripture. Through preaching, the Holy Spirit applies the work of Christ in the lives of his people. Underlying this trinitarian perspective on preaching was the Puritan conviction that because of its divine vitality, the Word of God brings about that which it promises. At the heart of Puritan preaching was a carefully articulated understanding of application, defined by William Perkins as "That whereby the doctrine rightly collected is diversely fitted according as place, time, and person do require" (cited on p. 267). This emphasis arose as Puritan preachers sought to explain the nature of faith as an act of the will whereby the gospel promises are embraced along the route of evangelical obedience known as sanctification or holiness of life.

The next chapter offers a review of the preaching of Anglicans Lancelot Andrewes, John Donne, Jeremy Taylor, Robert South, and John Tillotson.

This historical survey turns, in chapters 5-7, to the flowering of Protestant orthodoxy in Germany, France, and the Netherlands. Among those introduced to the reader are the contemplative preacher Valerius Herberger, the catechetical preacher Christian Scriver, the evangelist Jean Daillé, and the Dutch Second Reformation leaders Willem Teellinck, Gisbertus Voetius, Johannes Cocceius, and Jodocus van Lodenstein.

For Old, the most significant characteristic of Dutch Protestant orthodoxy is its interiority, a feature shared by Dutch preaching and art during this era. The “mystery of the inner room” is, according to Old, what Protestantism is all about (p. 467). Sermons of this genre usually emphasized the believer’s prayer life, his personal and family devotional exercises, and the experience of conversion. So-called “discriminating preaching” applied the Scripture text differently to various groups within the congregation. All of these emphases arose, however, from the primacy of divine grace—the Dutch Reformed always urged piety within the context of God’s grace, never a devotional or liturgical piety isolated from worship-as-response.

Our tour of the Reformation age ends with a discussion, in chapter 8, of preaching during the reign of the most splendid of French kings, Louis XIV. This particular chapter serves as an excellent illustration of the author’s competence in locating preaching within the surrounding intellectual, social, political, and religious culture. In doing this, Old supplies the reader with a sense of how preaching has always been affected as much by its historical context as by the biblical text.

Many who read Old’s volume will appreciate the recurring discussion throughout his narrative of the relationship of preaching to Scripture itself, to the work of the Holy Spirit, to faith, to the sacraments, and to the Lord’s Day. Clearly these relationships involve the very nature of preaching, its power, purpose, support, and context within congregational worship. Problems arise when these ties are broken, and remedies to those problems are to be found in their recovery.

Because our author insists properly that we understand preaching within the context of worship as a liturgical act of the congregation, he devotes welcome attention to festal preaching, or

preaching connected with the Christian feast days. Our guide leads us down the winding trails of reformation and reaction, to show us the struggles and the solutions with regard to celebrating in sermon the Christian feasts. In contemporary discussions of Bible-regulated congregational worship, the claim that the reformers, especially Calvin and Calvinists, refused to celebrate all “special days” requires careful nuance, in view of surviving sermons specifically associated with the seasonal remembrance of Christ’s birth, suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension, and the Holy Spirit’s outpouring—sermons usually accompanied by the Lord’s Supper. (Confirmation of the fact that Calvin did in fact preach festival sermons on associated weekdays appears in *Calvin’s Preaching*, by T. H. L. Parker [Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992], pages 150-162.)

Another issue in continuing discussion today is the matter of application in preaching. Although Old has a keen eye for features that distinguish various preachers (for example, Luther’s preaching was marked by bursts of imagination and flashes of insight, while Calvin’s sermons display clarity and breadth of thought and expression), he never allows such features to obscure the conviction shared among his subjects that the sermon functions to bring God and the congregation together in this world, in this day, here and now.

The author’s discussion of the origin and character of Puritan preaching is an important contribution as well. He shows how the Puritans departed at a number of points from the homiletical practice of the sixteenth century. Attention to single verses of Scripture, together with the use of the scholastic method involving definition, enumeration, and analysis marked a transition from expository to thematic preaching. This transition was accompanied by an emphasis upon faith as an act of the human will, preparing the way for later revivalist preaching.

One puzzle remains, however, as we conclude our review. It involves the proper scope of exegesis, especially as exegesis is transformed by preaching into personal appeal, and is concretized for the life of the congregation.

In commenting on the sermons of the German contemplative preacher Valerius Herberger on the Joseph narratives, Old claims that Herberger took typology much too far, since the Joseph typology is not found in the New Testament. For example, the embarrassment of Joseph’s brothers in the face of his stunning rise to power despite their treachery is similar to the post-resurrection

embarrassment of Jesus' disciples who had deserted him in his suffering. Both Joseph and Jesus encouraged their brothers by rising above reproach to allay their remorse. "Strictly speaking," Old insists, "a true typology must be based on an interpretation of a passage of the Old Testament suggested in the New Testament" (p. 382). Such New Testament confirmation is absent, according to Old. Yet, he abandons such restrictiveness when he later surveys Protestant orthodoxy in the Netherlands, specifically the preaching of Jocus van Lodenstein (pp. 464-465). At one point, he commends the exegesis of van Lodenstein, who appears to have used Song of Solomon 1:4 ("The king has brought me into his chambers") in connection with the Lord's Supper, identifying the "chamber" as the inner communion of the soul with her Lord. This, Old claims, is "a magnificent unfolding of the biblical imagery."

The reader is left wondering why Herberger went too far, when van Lodenstein did not.

With this fourth volume, Hughes Oliphant Old has continued to demonstrate his intense love for preaching, an affection that fuels his facility in constructing a modern history of preaching that is warmly ecclesial and pastorally stimulating. We highly recommend this resource for ministers and churches alike.

Perhaps as the conclusion of this series, the author could provide us a supplementary volume or essay containing a synthesis of his findings, a diachronic summary organized by themes relating to preaching, sacraments, and worship, themes that continue to stimulate theological reflection today.

—Nelson D. Kloosterman

Amy Plantinga Pauw, *The Supreme Harmony of All: The Trinitarian Theology of Jonathan Edwards*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002. Pp. x + 196. \$22.00. ISBN 0-8028-4984-9

Amy Plantinga Pauw is the Henry P. Mobley Jr. Professor of Doctrinal Theology at Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, and serves on the editorial committee for *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* published by Yale University Press. Recently she edited volume 20 (The "Miscellanies" 833-1152) of the Yale edition of Edwards' *Works*. In this current book, Pauw argues that a largely neglected but invaluable feature of Edwards' work, and indeed the integrating source of his thought as a whole—philosophical,

theological, and pastoral—is found in his trinitarian reflections. Hence the book's title, *The Supreme Harmony of All*. In this well written and generally well documented study of Edwards' trinitarian theology, Pauw acknowledges that she writes for two audiences: for the academy, especially for scholars of American religion; and for Christian theologians and their faith communities. This means that she is interested in providing an accurate analysis of Edwards' thinking, and beyond that, offering something for contemporary theologians to consider in their own theological work. Given the resurgence of interest in the doctrine of the Trinity, Pauw believes that Edwards' trinitarianism, which has for the most part been left untapped, can be of value "for understanding the complex issues of Christian practice and communal life" (p. 17). Thus this work is not, strictly speaking, a piece of pure historical scholarship. Sprinkled throughout the book, especially near the end of each chapter, Pauw intimates, in both directive and suggestive ways, how Edwards' ruminations on the Trinity can lend assistance for or point in a corrective manner to modern ecclesial and theological currents. She reckons this an exercise in "ambidextrous" theology (p. 183).

In the first chapter Pauw treats Edwards' use of Scripture, wherein she expositis the reformers distrust for extra-biblical analogies in defining the Trinity and how Edwards, following the vein of this legacy, nonetheless sought to make use of social analogies in an effort to capture the intimacy of fellowship that characterizes the members of the Trinity in the communion of mutual love and friendship, even as he used psychological analogies in order to prop up the role of the Holy Spirit in the intratrinitarian fellowship. For Edwards, traveling in the path of Augustine, the Holy Spirit was not so much a divine lover, as divine love—the bond of love between the Father and the Son. Thus Edwards, in his willingness to make use of extra-biblical analogies in articulating and conceiving of the Trinity, transgressed the boundaries of a narrow kind of biblicism, giving us "an eclectic synthesis." Pauw admits that Edwards' synthesis was "not always harmonious," for his employment of social analogies is not easily reconciled with his use of the psychological analogy. In any case, despite the assistance of human reason, Edwards believed that the doctrine of the Trinity could be believed and its truth grasped only as a gift bestowed by the Holy Spirit.

Pauw next discusses what she takes to be Edwards' rather ambivalent approach to the doctrine of divine simplicity, arguing

that although he made use of the concept he did so rather reflexively and did not allow it to control his more social leaning trinitarianism. In a chapter on Edwards' development of the covenant of redemption, Pauw maintains that covenant theology demonstrates an implicit social view of the Trinity, one that Edwards more explicitly develops, doing so in a way that highlights the equality and mutuality of the persons, so that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit each undertake their respective roles as mutually agreed upon in the eternal covenant transaction. She believes that Edwards helpfully articulated both the unity and irreducible difference within the immanent and economic Godhead, along with the theological implications of each for the Christian community. Nonetheless, Pauw judges the notion of a covenant of redemption, or the so-called *pactum salutis*, as creating "serious theological problems" and takes on the appearance of "salvation-by-committee," agreeing with Barth's critique that this doctrine succumbs to treating God in an excessively anthropomorphic manner (pp. 114-115).

In later chapters Pauw addresses how Edwards handles the work of the divine persons in the divine economy, especially demonstrating the way in which the unity among the persons of the Trinity has implications for other important unions in Christian life and thought, such as the union of Christ with fallen human beings in his incarnation, the union of God with his elect in the enterprise of salvation, and the union of believers with one another in a society of diversity and change. In these interesting and illuminating chapters, Pauw shows how Edwards aimed to keep the work of each divine person distinct, and how this played out in his thought vis-à-vis the work of creation, election, and incarnation, and of conversion and sanctification.

In the last chapter, interestingly entitled, "A Cobbled Trinitarianism," Pauw almost entirely abandons objective historiography and wields the sword of theological assessment and evaluation. For Pauw, the split within Edwards' trinitarianism between the social and psychological analogies is shown to reflect various unresolved tensions within his wider theological and ecclesial program, each playing a distinctive role, neither of which can stand sufficiently without the other. In particular, Edwards' social model for God is vulnerable to a "crude anthropomorphism," which in turn led him to mishandle God's response to human sin and God's nature in relation to divine punishment. Cut loose from the psychological model, which gives us a God who is ever abounding in graciousness

and unyielding in seeking union with his fallen creation, the social analogy for God degenerated into “pitiless divine vengeance” and intratrinitarian discord, with the Father hating the wicked while the Son loves them. According to Pauw, Edwards’ vision of God along the lines of a partly misconceived social trinitarianism was then misapplied ecclesologically in Northampton, producing “a harsh pastoral moralism.” His social conception of the Trinity, with its defects, could not as such “foster sacramental openness and gracious human community” (p. 188).

Meanwhile Pauw maintains that since, for Edwards, the trinitarian work of redemption is the great end or purpose of all God’s labors, this offers the vantage point from which to see the whole of the Edwardsean theological project. This means, says Pauw, that “everything else—his apocalyptic and millenarian speculations, his dispositional metaphysics, his polemics on the freedom of the will, his apologetic appeals to views of the ‘ancient heathens,’ his revivalism, his ardent interest in hell torments—must ‘be looked upon as *appendages* to this great work, or *things* which . . . subserve that grand design” (pp. 184-185). In fact, in Miscellany no. 702 (to which Pauw appeals) Edwards is describing the work of divine providence, which has as its end the glory of God in his disposal of or intention for the world, with the operation of redemption being the principal end or purpose of God’s providential activities. Thus, contrary to Pauw’s intimation, it is not the various aspects of Edwards’ theological corpus that function as “appendages” to the work of redemption, but God’s own providential labors that are subservient to his redemptive intention. Of course, for a theologian in the Reformed confessional tradition, as Edwards was, this observation regarding divine providence is hardly a startling observation, and it certainly is not an innovation.

More to the point, however, it is not at all clear that the multifaceted character of Edwards’ theology can be neatly categorized into aspects central and aspects peripheral, even as it is not at all clear that “Edwards’s trinitarianism provides a vantage point for assessment and critique of other elements in his theology” (p. 185). Unfortunately, Pauw’s own theological agenda and assessment get in the way of discerning the function and place of Edwards’ doctrine of the Trinity within his own theological scheme.

Although Pauw rightly and helpfully reads some of Edwards’ trinitarian ideas within the context of Reformed and Puritan predecessors—particularly the Cambridge theologians Richard

Sibbes, John Cotton, John Owen, and Thomas Goodwin, and with occasional comparison with Francis Turretin and Petrus van Mastricht—the reader is left wondering whether the late seventeenth-century context of Reformed trinitarian thinking has been adequately developed or clearly stated. For example, Pauw believes that Edwards’ doctrine of the Trinity signals a “startling departure from traditional Reformed notions of divine oneness” in that he affirms a “triplicity”—meaning there is in God “three that cannot be confounded.” Says Pauw, “By asserting triplicity in God, Edwards was flatly contradicting the tradition of divine simplicity; Turretin, for example, asserted that ‘simplicity and triplicity are opposed to each other, and cannot subsist at the same time’ [*Institutio*, III.vii.9]” (p. 70).

While it is true that Turretin rejects the term “triplicity,” understood as affirming three divine essences, he does not believe that simplicity and Trinity are opposed to one another, for God is simple as to essence but triune in respect of persons. It is not clear, from the evidence Pauw proffers, that Edwards’ affirmation of triplicity is anything more than an affirmation of a trinity of persons; on its face, it hardly constitutes a flat contradiction to the tradition. And since it seems unreasonable to think that Edwards, in asserting a triplicity in God, wishes to affirm a triplicity of divine essences, thereby falling into tritheism, it appears that he merely makes the un-startling claim that there is a triplicity of persons in God. In fact, what is needed in order to show that Edwards’ social trinitarianism is a major move away from the seventeenth-century Reformed trinitarian tradition is an overt statement to the effect that the divine persons each share or have the divine nature as an abstract substance, each constituting an instance of the divine essence, so that the divine essence (understood in that way) is multiple.

Meanwhile, Pauw’s confident assertion that the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Reformed trinitarian tradition was allergic to extra-biblical analogies, though probably on target, would be more convincing if she had presented more evidence to substantiate that claim. In any case, what is certain is that a strict biblicism was rejected by the tradition; otherwise, Reformed theologians of this timeframe would have judged extra-biblical terminology and the use of human language to elucidate the implicit trinitarian formula of Scripture to be “out of bounds.” Instead, biblicism of that sort was explicitly rejected (see, for example, Turretin, *Institutio*, III.xxiii.16-30).

Despite the above criticisms, Pauw is to be commended for her irenic treatment of Edwards' trinitarian views, her passion to evaluate critically a major theological personage of the past and to explore ways in which his thought makes a contribution in the present, and the fine style in which she sets forth this entire project. This book is sure to remain a major point of discussion regarding Edwards' doctrine of the Trinity and its implications for other aspects of his theology and ecclesial practice.

—J. Mark Beach

James M. Penning and Corwin E. Smidt, *Evangelicalism the Next Generation: Does Conservative Protestantism Have a Future?* Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002. Pp. 203. \$21.99. ISBN 0-8010-2434-X.

The purpose of this volume is to re-examine, fifteen years after the publication of James D. Hunter's *Evangelicalism: The Coming Generation*, Hunter's conclusion that evangelical colleges tend to undermine the evangelical commitments of their students. Remarkably, the outcome of Hunter's earlier influential study of students who attend evangelical colleges was the thesis that such students tend to lose their commitment "to traditional tenets of Christian orthodoxy" and to weaken in their commitment "to moral boundaries that define evangelical lifestyles" (p. 9). According to Hunter's study, evangelical educational institutions, rather than buttressing or confirming the commitments of their students, tended to corrode those commitments. Penning and Smidt, who like Hunter approach their subject from the standpoint of the social sciences, do not approach their subject as disinterested spectators. As the subtitle of their study suggests (*Does Conservative Protestantism Have a Future?*), they regard Hunter's thesis, if true, as a harbinger of decline within evangelicalism. For if those institutions that are indispensable to the formation of an evangelical mind and wealth of conviction, are actually serving to corrode the convictions of future leaders in the evangelical community, the future of evangelicalism would seem rather bleak.

In the opening chapter of their study, Penning and Smidt outline the purpose, limits, and goals of their re-examination of the Hunter thesis. Despite certain methodological weaknesses in Hunter's earlier study (e.g., no comparison was offered between an earlier generation of evangelicals and college students), they regard

Hunter's study as a kind of benchmark for their own investigation of the commitments of contemporary evangelical college students. After providing a brief survey of the history and character of evangelicalism in North America, they present an explanation of their own research method and approach. Their goal is "to discover the theological beliefs, moral boundaries, and religious behavior of students attending evangelical colleges today and how they mirror or deviate from those expressed by evangelical college students at the advent of the Reagan presidency" (p. 22). To achieve this goal, they employed a written questionnaire for evangelical college students that largely asked the same questions as those posed by Hunter in his study. This questionnaire was mailed to 5,257 students at the following evangelical institutions: Bethel College, George Fox University, Gordon College, Houghton College, Messiah College, Seattle Pacific University, Taylor University, Westmont College, and Wheaton College. Of these 5,257 questionnaires, 2,677 or 50.9 percent were returned. Using a questionnaire similar to that of Hunter and addressed generally to the same representative sampling of evangelical college students, Penning and Smidt sought a basis for comparing the results of Hunter's research with the results of their own.

After this introductory chapter and a subsequent chapter, which critically examines and rejects the claim of many social scientists that modernization inevitably serves as a secularizing force, Penning and Smidt summarize the results of their study. In chapters three through seven of their book, they provide a thorough description, respectively, of the "theological beliefs," "moral boundaries," "social theologies," "political world" and "civility and tolerance" of contemporary evangelical college students.

The results of Penning and Smidt's research will likely surprise many readers of their study. In virtually every area they examine, contemporary evangelical students tend to be as committed to basic tenets of evangelicalism as were a previous generation of evangelicals. Whether the issue is a theological belief regarding the infallibility of the Bible or a moral conviction regarding the unacceptability of abortion, Penning and Smidt found a remarkable degree of similarity between the views of contemporary evangelical college students and students of an earlier generation. Little or no evidence was found that the wealth of evangelical conviction is being squandered by the destructive effects of evangelical educational institutions. The only areas where they discovered some

shift in views were on such subjects as gender roles (today's students are more egalitarian than their predecessors) and individual self-improvement (p. 95). Furthermore, when comparisons were drawn between evangelicals generally and evangelical college students, the college students often were found to hold views as conservative, if not more so, than their non-college contemporaries.

If Penning and Smidt's research provides a reliable evidentiary basis for their findings, then the Hunter thesis does not stand up well under further examination. Not only do evangelical colleges tend to reinforce the evangelical commitments of their students, but they also do not appear to be serving the purpose of an alleged secularization among such students generally. Among the conclusions Penning and Smidt arrive at, therefore, is that the "theological views of evangelical college students today are virtually identical to those expressed by evangelical college students nearly two decades ago" (p. 165).

For those who are interested in the subject of the present state and likely future of evangelicalism in North America, this book is an important and useful source of information. It certainly raises questions regarding the thesis of Hunter and others that evangelicalism is in serious decline so far as its theological and ethical commitments are concerned. It also offers a somewhat more optimistic assessment of the present state of evangelicalism than the highly critical jeremiads of recent authors like David Wells (*No Place for Truth*) and Mark Noll (*The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*). Because it is largely based upon the methods of social science research, readers of Penning and Smidt's work will find considerable room for further interpretation and evaluation of their conclusions. As Penning and Smidt acknowledge in their concluding chapter, the diversity of evangelicalism and the continuing struggle for self-definition among evangelicals make any predictions regarding the future tentative at best.

—Cornelis P. Venema

Cornelius Plantinga Jr., *Engaging God's World: A Christian Vision of Faith, Learning, and Living*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002. Pp. xix + 150. \$15.00. ISBN 0-8028-3981-9

In this remarkably fine book Cornelius Plantinga Jr. sets forth a renewed vision and theological perspective for Christian learning

and living. It constitutes a monograph that Plantinga was commissioned to write when he served as Dean of Chapel at Calvin College. This version of that project has been edited for a wider Christian audience (another version of this book is published for use by Calvin College students). As Plantinga states, “The idea in this book is to lay out some main themes of the Christian faith and to show how Christian higher education fits inside a view of the world and of human life that is formed by these themes” (p. xvi).

This modest size volume is framed under the headings of Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Vocation in the Kingdom of God. First, however, Plantinga begins with a chapter on longing and hope. Tracing out themes found in Augustine and Calvin, Plantinga argues that human beings are created for God, but in a disordered world, which includes our disordered “selves,” we both sense and are burdened by the disorder we experience. Thus, from deep within our souls we long for something better. Longing and hope, given the One we were created for, are very human activities.

Considering this from a Christian framework, longing and hope are coupled with imagination, faith, and desire. The Christian thinker *images* a better world, *believes* it is possible, and *desires* it to be so. Put into practice—that is, following through with this in our intellectual, vocational, and civic pursuits—all of this is a pursuit of the will of God; or more specifically and comprehensively, it is the hope for and pursuit of *shalom*. “In the Bible,” says Plantinga, “shalom means universal flourishing, wholeness, and delight—a rich state of affairs in which natural needs are satisfied and natural gifts fruitfully employed, all under the arch of God’s love” (p. 15). Currently, we find evidence for only small approximations and suggestions of what we hope for as the children of God. We long for the cure. In fact, all humans have some sense of the need for something much better than what actually is. Christians are not alone in the “human enterprise of diagnosis, prescription, and prognosis.” But Christians engage in this enterprise from a worldview “constructed from Scripture,” with Christ at the center as Savior and King (p. 15).

We see, then, in this initial chapter, something of a sketch of what is ahead. In subsequent chapters Plantinga fills out this vision.

This brings us to the doctrine of creation. Plantinga rightly affirms that Christ is the mediator of creation, and creation itself testifies to and bears the marks of God’s glory. The meaning of the doctrine of creation and its implications for Christian scholarship

and life are eightfold (pp. 35-41): (1) The original goodness of the creation implies that all within it, all that is fallen within it, is “potentially redeemable.” Fallen creation does not cease to be creation—thus “everything made by God retains at least some part of its goodness and promise.” (2) Created things (though sometimes mysterious) are “purposive and, in principle, intelligible.” (3) “Nothing precedes God or constitutes a true rival for God”—the world is and remains distinct from God. (4) “God loves matter, which is why he made lots of it.” Thus things of the body are not, as such, sinful or less desirable than things of the mind or spirit. “It is not more Christian to play chess than to play hockey.” (5) God affirms the goodness of work and of marriage—the ordinary means or production and reproduction. “We needn’t become priests or nuns in order to have a vocation, and we needn’t withdraw to monasteries in order to serve God maximally.” (6) To be created in God’s image brings with it a host of duties and responsibilities, along with creativity. (7) Bearing God’s image also requires that we wisely “balance our individual and corporate identities.” (8) “The Christian doctrine of creation *places* us in the scheme of things.” We are *images* of God—not God! Yet we are images of *God*—not products of random genetic mutation! In short, the doctrine of creation irrepressibly announces that “there really is ‘a way things are,’ and this is so even if God is the only being in the universe who knows this state of affairs exactly” (p. 43). What God created he declared to be “good.”

The creation, however, with its structural stability and built-in processes of cycles and change, is now fallen under curse and chaos, depravity and death. According to the biblical portrait, the Fall infects the whole creation, introducing sin’s corrosive power, so that all of Adam and Eve’s descendents are now “bent toward sin.” Fallen humans live corrupt lives; they deflect God’s gifts and blessings from their intended purpose, twisting them unto harmful ends; and they join together what God intended to keep apart. Perversion and pollution now mark the *fallen* creation; and, sadly, each of these possesses the powerful tendency to gain momentum and breed more of the same.

A Christian vision of faith, learning, and living must reckon with the Fall and its effects. Although the fallen creation still sings the melody of God’s glory, it is also haunted by tunes of sin and evil. Plantinga explains that “Evil is what’s wrong with the world, and it includes trouble in nature as well as in human nature.” As for

sin, it is a subset of evil and is marked by deviant behavior—that is, the radical deviation from the way things are supposed to be—and involves either transgression or shortcoming (pp. 51-52).

Plantinga's exploration of human depravity, with its multifaceted consequences, is both insightful and sensitive. The reader is taken on a tour in which the author points to numerous "sin exhibits," offering a discerning account of each. The end result is that sin's terrible fall-out is to be fully reckoned with, in all of its dimensions. In fact, Plantinga seeks to do this very thing; he even reckons with the reality that believers, with unbelievers, suppress the truth in unrighteousness. He considers how the fallenness of the creation has extended to our cognitive processes. "Our thinking has gotten bent, and our learning along with it" (p. 66). Meanwhile, everyone engaged in the task of teaching and learning brings his or her own bias to the plate of scholarship, for everyone has *faith* in something or someone. Human pride plays an ugly role as well—and so the academic enterprise bifurcates and fractures into rival movements, systems, and institutions. All of which demonstrates that the miserable fall-out of sin may not be discounted in the pursuit of Christian learning, for everywhere the fallen creation testifies to the way it is *not* supposed to be.

The remedy to the fallen creation is in creation's restoration, which is the story of redemption. Here Plantinga briefly accents the themes of incarnation, atonement, and resurrection, as well as dying and rising in union with Christ. Especially noteworthy is his discussion of the restoration of all things. "At their best, Reformed Christians take a very big view of redemption because they take a very big view of fallenness" (p. 95). Thus God is interested in saving bodies and souls, individuals and social collectives, poor people and warped economic structures. "Everything needs to be redeemed, and that includes the whole natural world, which both sings and groans" (p. 96). The call for reformation is as wide as life's horizon, and this reformation project must follow the straightedge of God's word. Not that the Bible is a textbook that serves up an easy formula for every moral issue, but it is a book, used with the confessions that are derived from it, that gives us "solid principles and directions for reforming life." Creativity comes into play in living the Christian life, for the contemporary world throws believers sliders, curves, and changeups. Precisely because this is true, Christian scholarship is both a duty and an adventure. "In a community of faith," writes Plantinga, "blessed with an abundance

of intelligence, devotion, and experience, bound together by mutual respect and accountability, Christians can explore ‘the heights and depths’ of (among other things) the contemporary world” (p. 99).

Good and evil in a fallen and not yet fully restored world often come wrapped and intertwined together. Christian higher education aims to “test the spirits,” so that Christians aren’t mere consumers of contemporary culture, or worse, merely absorbed by it; rather, discernment, as a feature of wisdom, “is the main goal of Christian higher education” (p. 100).

Having traced out the salient features of the biblical storyline of creation, fall, and redemption, Plantinga takes that essential framework for a Christian worldview and applies it to life lived in the kingdom of God. As Christians pray for the kingdom of God, they do so recognizing that there are, so to speak, kingdoms within the kingdom, for “to some extent we are all rulers just because God has created us in his own image to have ‘responsible dominion’” (p. 105). As believers we are obliged to reign rightly over the realm of our responsibilities, our little kingdoms; and in doing this our kingdoms must mesh with the kingdoms of others and more importantly with God’s comprehensive kingdom. This is possible because the kingdom of God has been inaugurated with Christ’s first coming, and it will be consummated at his second coming. In the meantime there is much to do; and as “kingdom persons” we wish to be busy in this task of the kingdom coming. This means that “working in the kingdom is our way of life” (p. 107).

But what does that actually mean? Or what does that look like? Plantinga introduces the idea of vocation in order to explore kingdom personhood. It is one thing to regard the kingdom as a good idea; it is another to yearn for it—even as it is one thing to wish the world were a better place, another to wage a fight against cruelty and injustice. Plantinga denominates believers who enthusiastically embrace the divine program of redemption in its comprehensive and healing scope “*prime* citizens of the kingdom.” They are passionate about God’s kingdom. These are believers who recognize that they have a *calling*. “A Christian man’s vocation is to become a prime citizen of the kingdom of God—and this is true of every Christian, of artists and engineers as well as ministers and evangelists” (p. 108).

In the portrait of kingdom labor that Plantinga envisions, active participation in the local church is to be at the foundation of all other kingdom labors. But, of course, there are other kingdom

labors. “God also uses an array of other organizations to help the cause of the kingdom, each in its own sphere of influence.” Government figures prominently here, since government has “enormous power to advance or retard human harmony and justice” (p. 109). God also uses industries, hospitals, schools, recreational clubs, and environmental groups. We discover that there are faithful Christians seeking to manifest God’s redeeming sovereignty “in every country, in every precinct of life, including such tough precincts as advertising, journalism, university education, and the military” (p. 110). Meanwhile, God isn’t limited to what Christians and their organizations are able to do. God also uses non-Christians and their organizations to advance his kingdom. In saying this, Plantinga is not denying the existence of a radical antithesis between God and all that is anti-God. But he is affirming that because of the common grace of God, “the world is often better than we expect” (p. 111).

The family also has a pivotal role to play. “If they work right, families become a microcosm of the kingdom of God, incubating us in faith, hope, and love, schooling us in patience, supplying us with memories good enough to take out of storage on a lonely night” (p. 113). Thus in pursuing their primary vocation (the kingdom of God), Christians engage in “a wonderful array of sub-vocations.” We labor day-to-day not merely in the pursuit of a career or to make a living, but to make a difference. And that is why believers, in fulfilling their primary vocation, must assess their unique gifts and talents, temperament and approaches to life, familial responsibilities and geographic necessities, while asking how their career choices might help and bless others.

The fallenness of the creation is pervasive, and God’s program of restoration is just as pervasive. Prime kingdom citizens look to mend the deformities of fallenness, in persons and in culture. In this connection, Plantinga warns against both cultural triumphalism—“the prideful view that we Christians will fully succeed in transforming all or much of culture”—and world flight—“the despairing tendency to write the world off, to abandon it as a lost cause, and to remove ourselves to an island of like-minded Christians” (p. 119). The latter is a form of unbelief. Although most of us will not become great leaders of reform and change, “all of us may offer our gifts and energies to the cause of God’s program in the world.” To be sure, life lived in ordinary occupations might appear to be very ordinary indeed. No matter, says Plantinga. “An

ordinary occupation done conscientiously builds the kingdom of God” (p. 121).

Christian education, however, has much to say pertaining to Christian vocation. Plantinga applauds the courageous souls who brave the secular campus and dare to be Daniels. But he believes most Christian students in such settings aren’t able to obtain the help they need in order to understand what God’s kingdom is about and “their own vocation within it” (p. 123). Education is not faith-neutral. It is easy to absorb views of the world and of life that are in lucid opposition to the gospel. Thus Plantinga argues for the advantages of Christian colleges and universities as “a more excellent way.” How? What is that process? Well, among other things, being educated in a Christian college does not mean—and must not mean—never having to struggle with ideas and alternative approaches. Education is something every student has to achieve; it is a contest that one can only wage for him- or herself. A Christian education doesn’t mean the student need not wrestle with Nietzsche or the theory of evolution. Instead, we must face head on our intellectual Gethsemanes. To assume that we can escape such trials is illusion at best and cowardice at worst. But we do not endure alone. We weigh out intellectual issues in the context of “sure-handed supervision” (p. 125).

Plantinga urges Christian students to take responsibility for their education. Speaking directly to them, he writes: you must see to it that “you gain the knowledge, hone the skills, and develop the virtues you’ll need now and later in order to play your role in the drama of the kingdom” (p. 126). In the concluding sections of this chapter, Plantinga elaborates on each of these, sketching out the scope of knowledge to be obtained and explored, the vast array of skills to be acquired and sharpened, along with the virtues that will incline believers to use their knowledge and skills in the service of God and others. Indeed, a well-educated person possesses all three, and when they are put into the service of God’s kingdom, remarkable and memorable benefits ensue.

In a fitting “Epilogue” Plantinga traces the lines of continuity between our labors on behalf of the kingdom of God in the present and their carryover into the future when the kingdom has reached its consummation. Now we experience only hints and whispers of God’s kingdom come, then we shall bask in the cosmic renewal and joy of the kingdom perfected. Plantinga would have us see, then, the connection between laboring now for the kingdom to come

fully and the kingdom fully come. “What we do now in the name of Christ—striving for healing, for justice, for intellectual light in darkness, striving simply to produce something helpful for sustaining the lives of other human beings—shall be preserved across into the next life. All of it counts, all of it lasts, none of it is wasted or lost. All of it acts like salt that eventually seasons a whole slab of meat, or a seed that grows one day into a tree that looks nothing like the seed at all” (pp. 137-38).

Plantinga also portrays for us, in vignettes and glimpses, a mural of where we are heading as citizens of the kingdom of God, of what the kingdom of God consummated entails; and he does that in language that inspires faith and with images that bring an ache in the soul for the “not yet” to hurry up and become “already.” If we would labor for the kingdom to come, then we must educate for it as well. Students must be challenged to broaden their horizon of concern and deepen their hope for the new heaven and the new earth. For we inevitably will work and study in the same direction as we hope. All of which brings us to our hardest task: “simple, persistent faithfulness in our work and in our attitudes—the kind of faithfulness that shows we are being drawn forward by the magnet force of the kingdom of God” (p. 142). Plantinga states that this is nothing short of a battle, and “what’s needed on God’s side are well-educated warriors” in a world where “all hell has broken loose.” So prime kingdom citizens aim to walk in step with Christ’s redemptive project by seeking to right what’s wrong, transform what’s corrupted, to do the peacemaking labor that endures into the life to come.

As is altogether obvious by now, what Plantinga serves up in this small volume is a renewed and updated manifesto of the Kuyperian vision, without the excess baggage that sometimes encumbers it. He does this, too, in a way that is biblically grounded, theologically persuasive, and cognizant of the enemies poised against the Christian view of life. Moreover, his manifesto is presented in prose that continually pleases the ear and warms the heart.

Engaging God’s World, I’m confident, is destined to be read by myriads of college students in coming years; and since there is a set of reflection and discussion questions that forms an appendix to this volume, adult study groups in churches can make wise use of it as well. Job well done!

—J. Mark Beach

Kim Riddlebarger, *A Case for Amillennialism: Understanding the End Times*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2003. Pp. 271. \$16.99. ISBN 0-85111-997-2

For too long the field of biblical and theological studies known as eschatology has been dominated by the voices of dispensationalists and premillennialists on the one hand, and by postmillennialists on the other. Due primarily to the influence of dispensationalism, eschatology, which addresses the Bible's teaching regarding the end times or the "last things," has typically focussed upon questions relating to the "rapture," the future of Israel, and the imminence (or "soonness") of the coming of Christ. The recent success of the *Left Behind* series, co-authored by Tim La Haye and Jerry Jenkins, witnesses to the way in which this area of Scriptural teaching is often dominated by dispensationalism, particularly within the conservative evangelical community in North America.

With the publication of Kim Riddlebarger's *A Case for Amillennialism*, this lamentable situation is partially corrected. Riddlebarger, who serves as pastor of Christ Reformed Church (URC) of Anaheim, California, and visiting instructor of theology at Westminster Theological Seminary in California, offers a fine defense of amillennialism in this study. Though his book does not provide a complete eschatology, it fills a real gap in the literature. By making the biblical case for amillennialism over against dispensationalism and postmillennialism, Riddlebarger compellingly argues that the historic view of the Christian church generally, and of the Reformed churches particularly, is some form of amillennialism. Written in a clear and charitable manner, Riddlebarger engages the alternatives to amillennialism and provides a solid, comprehensive defense of his position.

Riddlebarger divides his treatment of the subject of amillennialism into four parts. Part one provides a kind of glossary of key terms used in the study of eschatology, and offers a brief definition of the primary millennial views. In addition, this opening part of Riddlebarger's study outlines some of the key questions of biblical interpretation (hermeneutics) that are pivotal to a proper approach to his subject. Part two, which contains the heart of Riddlebarger's argument, sets forth a comprehensive overview of the biblical understanding of the history of redemption. In this part of his study, Riddlebarger argues that the New Testament teaches a "two-age" view of the fulfillment of the Old Testament promises

regarding the coming Redeemer and kingdom of God. With Christ's coming in the fullness of time, the promises of future salvation that pervade the Old Testament are initially fulfilled (already), though not in a way that precludes a further, yet future, consummation (not yet). After the coming of Christ, Christian believers live "between the times" of Christ's first and second coming. Part three addresses a number of key biblical passages that are particularly important to the debates between amillennial, premillennial and postmillennial views (Daniel 9:24-27; Matthew 24; Romans 11; Revelation 20:1-10). In a relatively brief Part 4, Riddlebarger concludes his study by evaluating the millennial options in the context of his preceding biblical exposition.

The strength of Riddlebarger's case lies in his comprehensive treatment of structure of biblical eschatology, which provides the framework within which to evaluate the debate regarding the millennium of Revelation 20. Following the line of biblical theology in the tradition of Geerhardus Vos, Herman Ridderbos, and Richard Gaffin, Riddlebarger argues for what he calls a "two age model" of biblical eschatology. In this two age model, the critical significance of Christ's coming in fulfillment of Old Testament promise is viewed in terms of the distinction between "this age" and "the age to come." Christ's coming inaugurates the future of Old Testament promise, but it does so without eliminating a strong anticipation of the consummation of that future at his second coming. There is, according to Riddlebarger, an "already"—"not yet" pattern to New Testament eschatology that provides the setting for a proper understanding of the millennium.

If we interpret the millennium of Revelation 20 in the context of this two-age model, amillennialism presents itself as the millennial position most in keeping with the biblical understanding of the realization of God's saving purposes in Christ. The millennial reign of Revelation 20, Riddlebarger argues, coincides with the inter-advental period of Christ's kingdom rule. Dispensational premillennialism, by relegating the millennium to a future age of earthly blessing primarily fulfilling God's purposes for his earthly people Israel, fails to see the decisive importance of the first coming of Christ for the fulfillment of Old Testament promise and prophecy. The hermeneutical error of dispensationalism is its fundamental failure to interpret Old Testament prophecy in the light of New Testament teaching and fulfillment. On the other hand, postmillennialism, when it reserves the millennium to a future

period of unprecedented kingdom blessing prior to Christ's return, violates the structure of New Testament eschatology by inserting a *third* period into redemptive history. The millennium of some postmillennialists is a kind of hybrid period of redemptive history, neither the "present age" nor the "age to come," but a kind of interim manifestation of Christ's kingdom that mitigates the tension in the history of redemption between the present age and the future age of consummation.

There is a great deal more to Riddlebarger's case than an appeal to this "two-age model" as a kind of biblical-theological underpinning for his amillennial position. Riddlebarger writes as someone who was raised in a dispensationalist framework, but who now embraces a more coherent, covenantal view of the relation between the various epochs in the history of redemption. Perhaps due to his own personal acquaintance with the dispensationalism he now opposes, Riddlebarger exhibits a keen sensitivity to the need for charitable and respectful handling of the different positions advocated on the subject of the millennium. Unlike many pamphlets and books in the area of eschatology, Riddlebarger's study is a model of clarity, exegetical balance, and a steadfast refusal to engage in over-reaching arguments. For all of these reasons, his study is highly recommended. The only disappointing features of this study are likely due to choices imposed by the publisher. I refer in this connection to the consignment of the notes for the reader to the category of "end-notes," and the absence of a select bibliography and biblical index. If this excellent study should enjoy a second printing (and I hope that one becomes necessary), one can only hope the future form of the book will become more useful to the reader by the inclusion of such a bibliography and index.

—Cornelis P. Venema

Allen P. Ross, *Holiness to the LORD: A Guide to the Exposition of the Book of Leviticus*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002. Pp. 496. \$29.99 (cloth). ISBN 0-8010-2285

Reading through the requirements prescribed for each of the principal offerings in ancient Israel is viewed as daunting by most Christians (including Christian preachers), and that challenge causes

the book of Leviticus to fall by the wayside in Christian study and proclamation.

Allen Ross, professor of Old Testament at Beeson Divinity School, has addressed this situation in an easy to read book that opens up the practices of both ceremonial and moral holiness prescribed in Leviticus, as well as the theology of the book. This book on Leviticus joins Ross's very helpful study of Genesis, *Creation and Blessing*. Both of these books provide the active preacher and student of Scripture with a very readable and highly suggestive exposition of these Pentateuchal volumes. And while much has been written on Genesis and its exposition, not as much is available on Leviticus, particularly material that is of direct homiletical value. *Holiness to the LORD* is a worthy addition to this effort.

Each chapter in this volume is laid out in a similar pattern. Ross's first chapter, "The Study of Leviticus," offers an fine summary of the theology of Israel's priesthood, the sacrificial system, and worship of the true God. This chapter also sketches for the reader his approach to the book. In each chapter, after some introductory paragraphs of summation, Ross uses the following headings: "Theological Ideas," "Synthesis," "Development of the Exposition," "Concluding Observations," and "Bibliography." The bibliography at the end of each chapter is valuable, with nearly all the listings from English sources.

While it is in the "Development" section that the bulk of the exegesis lies, the "Concluding Observations" section provides a helpful connection to New Testament revelation, and especially how the material under discussion should be viewed from a Christological point of view. This Christological focus is perhaps the most useful in terms of the preacher's desire to make the explicit connections from the Old Testament Mosaic covenant stipulations to the New Testament applications in the sermon. However, it seems that a more logical flow to Ross's discussion would be to arrange it in the following manner: "Development of the Exposition," "Synthesis," "Theological Ideas," "Concluding Observations," and then the "Bibliography" at the end. This order of discussion would be more helpful, in this reviewer's estimation, for enabling the reader to see the movement from the textual material ("Exposition") to the theology, and then to the connections with the New Testament realities.

Ross seeks to view the levitical materials through the fulfillment in Christ (pp. 62ff.). He firmly places the Old Testament's sacrifices,

its cultic officials, and the like, within the context of redemptive history. He demonstrates in a fine way how Leviticus is connected to the New Testament, e.g., the inaugural worship at Sinai for the redeemed nation of Israel and the events of Pentecost in Acts 2 (see pp. 227ff.).

Ross distinguishes between offerings of sweet aroma and those without a sweet aroma. The burnt, meal, and peace offerings are made *in* communion, performed in celebration of God's covenant (p. 79). These are denominated as dedicatory and fellowship offerings in distinction from the expiatory/propitiatory offerings. One area where Ross could have expanded his discussion is with regard to the **עֹלָה**), traditionally the "burnt offering" (pp. 85ff.). While noting that the purpose of this offering was atonement, the dedicatory aspect is not highlighted as much as it could be. Furthermore, Ross does not interact with some recent discussions that suggest renaming it the "ascension offering."

The traditional "sin offering" of Leviticus 4 is given the name "purification offering" by Ross, in order to explain why this offering is required after childbirth, recovering from a skin blemish, or contact with a corpse through its burial (pp. 123ff.). These actions, in addition to sin as such, also required an offering in order to restore the member of the covenant community to a holy and right standing with God. Yet childbirth, for example, is not sinful as such. Thus the name "purification offering" is probably a better rendering that covers the areas for which this sacrifice was made.

Ross's discussion of the priest and his relationship to the church of the New Testament era repeats many of the traditional understandings of the priesthood, but Ross makes an identification that is not as helpful. He draws the following lines: the congregation of Israel is equal to the Christian church (or congregation), the priests are the modern day ministers, and the high priest is representative of Jesus Christ. While the connection between Jesus Christ and the work of the high priest is explicit in the book of Hebrews (see, e.g., Heb. 7:26ff.), the virtual equation of Old Testament priests with ministers in the New Testament church is more problematic. The office of priest is indeed mediatorial in that the priest taught the Torah to the people of Israel (Deut. 33:10,11; Mal. 2:7) and assisted in the sacrifices that Israelites brought to the sanctuary. Through the priest God's word came to the people, and through the priest the sacrifices came before the sanctuary of God.

However, God's larger design in the office of priest must be kept in mind. By allowing the priest to enter the sanctuary, and especially by allowing the high priest to approach the divine throne (the Ark of the Covenant in the Most Holy Place) once a year, God is showing that the holiness he both requires and gives by grace is intended to resemble the office and privileges of the first man, Adam. The office of priest recapitulates the reality that God allowed the sinless man into his very presence since the first Adam was holy and righteous. The task of the priest was to guard the sanctuary and regulate the holiness of God's people. What the priest (and the high priest preeminently) was in the Mosaic covenant, is what Adam was in the beginning. It is what the second Adam perfectly fulfills; and it is what is recreated in God's elect.

But along with that was the fact that all of God's people should have that same privilege restored through the mediators. Thus Jesus Christ, as the only High Priest for the Christian church today, takes the place of both the high priest and all the other priests of the older covenant administration. Ministers in the Christian church today are not priests in any mediatorial sense. It is better to see this point of connection in that priests served as community leaders in Israel just as today Christian ministers and pastors serve as leaders in their respective communities. Today ministers do not have any sacerdotal function whatsoever.

Ross also makes a misidentification of the creatures on the so-called "mercy seat" (p. 317). Ross calls them "angels," whereas the Scripture calls them cherubim. Cherubim have wings; angels typically do not. However, in the following paragraph, Ross refers to the cherubim as the creatures upon whom God sat enthroned.

Leviticus 23:1-3 concerns the observance of the Sabbath, and Ross provides a more extended treatment of this matter because "the interpretation of the Sabbath provides a good test case for the exegetical exposition of Leviticus" (p. 397). Ross draws heavily upon Merrill F. Unger's 1966 article in *Bibliotheca Sacra* ("The Significance of the Sabbath," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 123 [January – March 1966]: 53-59).

Thankfully, in his book Ross does not endorse openly the dispensational framework in Unger's argument. That particular eschatological perspective already makes Unger's conclusions somewhat suspect. But neither does Unger's discussion concerning the Sabbath help Ross at this point in his book, whose treatment of Scripture at this point is disappointing.

In essence, Ross argues that the Sabbath reflects God's perfect rest and was/is a reality only for a perfect (or "redeemed") people. After Genesis 2, one does not hear about the Sabbath until Israel (a "redeemed" people) is gathered at Sinai. Then Sabbath observance is imposed on Israel (p. 397). This makes the fourth commandment unique.

But this line of argumentation is in danger of proving too much. Between the Garden of Eden and Mt. Sinai, what *explicit* prohibitions are there against the use of graven images, against adultery, or bearing false witness? God's will certainly is opposed to such practices (both Unger and Ross will agree at this point), and that opposition stands true throughout all time. The question revolves around whether there is a moral component to observing the Sabbath rest or whether the Old Testament Sabbath observance was only a redemptive, ceremonial practice that was binding upon God's "redeemed" covenant people alone.

All of the commandments of the Decalogue have a retrospective glance as well as a prospective view. The Ten Words recall the moral order that God created for man in the beginning ("the Sabbath was made for man"). And the same Ten Words anticipate the perfect state that will again be restored in the new heavens and the new earth. Christians now celebrate that reality on the Lord's Day, Sunday, since the rest belonging to the age to come is inaugurated by the Lord Jesus Christ's resurrection from the dead and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost Sunday. Christ's finished work allows for a Christian observance of the essence of the Sabbath, which is rest, rest from sin that is now so much a part of our labor in this creation. There is a moral element in the Sabbath observance that is rooted in the Lord's order for life in the beginning. And there remains a rest for the people of God.

Ross may have served his purposes better if in desiring to discuss the Sabbath at length, he had moved his discussion to an appendix and then interacted with Christian writers who take a point of view differing from that of Unger. For example, mere assertion that the fourth commandment is unique begs the question. John Murray (*The Collected Writings*, vol. 1, p. 206) says that the Sabbath is "a creation ordinance and does not derive its validity or its necessity or its sanction, in the first instance, from any exigencies arising from sin, nor from any of the provisions of redemptive grace." He later adds, "It would require the most conclusive evidence to establish the thesis that the fourth command is in a

different category from the other nine” (Murray, p. 207). Furthermore, R. Rushdoony (*The Institutes of Biblical Law*, p. 133) suggests that “any law which at one time brought forth a death penalty for violation must involve a principle so basic to man and nature that obviously a hard central core remains in some sense binding in every age.” To be sure, the observance of the Sabbath was a sign between the Lord God and Israel, but it was a sign “throughout your generations” to be observed “throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant ... forever” (see Exodus 31:13-18).

Another curious discussion—one all too brief—concerns the church (p. 483). Ross defines the church as “those who are believers,” raising the question about the children of these believers, who are comprehended with the administration of the covenant within both the Old and the New Testament eras (see Gen. 17; Acts 2:39; Eph. 6:1-3). Ross also goes on to make the curious statement that the exile “actually purged the nation of unbelievers” (p. 483). How that can be determined from the biblical text is left unexplained.

The above criticisms aside, this expositional guide is still a very valuable book. Ross helps the reader (especially the pastor or Bible instructor) to meet that demand by providing helpful suggestions on how to approach the material in a coherent manner. Ross rightly notes that Leviticus is a very demanding book for the Christian expositor (p. 65).

A verse by verse exposition this book is not. One will have to look elsewhere for extended examination of technical points of exegesis in the verses of Leviticus. Yet the book is true to its subtitle (see p. 66): Ross has provided us with a *guide* to preaching and teaching from the book of Leviticus, not an exhaustive exegetical commentary. As a guide, the book fulfills its purpose.

Several minor items mar this otherwise fine publication. First, the printed text utilizes English transliteration rather than Hebrew characters in reference to Hebrew words. Also, there is a spelling error on p. 438, where the name should be “Rylaarsdam” (not Rylaarsdan). Also, the MT reference on p. 489 that reads “[MT 21:24]” should read “[MT 23:24].” Regrettably the book lacks a Scripture index or other indices.

Nevertheless, this book comes highly recommended for that preacher and Scripture expositor who has never been brave enough to plunge into the text and message of Leviticus. Ross gives the

reader direction on how to interpret the law and its various uses, for the law is a “unity” (pp. 58, 60-62). He affirms salvation by grace through faith (p. 59); and since blood was needed to be shed for atonement (p. 92), the work of Jesus Christ lies clearly at the center of his exposition. Ross has an excellent discussion regarding covering and expiation (p. 93).

Ross’s book will be suggestive at many points on both theological and homiletical levels, and this work will help believers see that Leviticus is also about Christ, the kingdom of God, and the holiness that belongs to that kingdom. Those who make use of Ross’s fine volume will be the richer for it.

—Mark D. Vander Hart

John W. Steward and James H. Moorhead, editors. *Charles Hodge Revisited: A Critical Appraisal of His Life and Work*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002. Pp. x + 375. \$25.00. ISBN 0-8028-4750-1

Jonathan Edwards is regarded by a number of scholars as an anachronism in the eighteenth century. From Perry Miller on, one can almost hear them saying something like, “What’s a smart guy like Edwards doing by defending Calvinism in an age of enlightenment?” If Calvinism was passé in Edwards’ time, how much more so in Charles Hodge’s time, the nineteenth century? If Edwards was not in keeping with the currents of his period, Hodge must have been a real dinosaur in an era of Jacksonian democracy. Or so it seems to many in academia. Hodge has little of the philosophical creativeness and speculative genius of an Edwards. So, many scholars have viewed, and view, Charles Hodge as little more than a parody of himself: a rationalist, biblicist, confessional Calvinist in an age that had long before abandoned such quaint sympathies. But he was a tireless defender of the truth for whom all the faithful ought profoundly to be thankful.

This volume, being a collection of essays written by scholars of varying viewpoints and disciplines, is uneven, with some articles being fairer to Hodge than others, but all the articles are of sufficient interest to warrant perusal and thoughtful consideration. If nothing else, this volume signals the demise of the era of benign neglect of Hodge. Though many of the essays in this volume do not come from an evangelical/Reformed point of view and sometimes do not consistently evince the kind of understanding that we would

prefer, Hodge's life and thought are at least recognized as pivotal and significant in the history of North American Calvinism more broadly and of American Presbyterianism more specifically.

If Hodge had done nothing else, he possesses great ecclesiastical importance in his service as professor of systematic theology at Princeton Theological Seminary for more than fifty years. Upon his retirement in 1877, the legacy that he left was enormous. Moreover, during his lifetime, Hodge published a vast number of books, pamphlets, articles (published especially in the *Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review*, and elsewhere), sermons, and other writings. Many writers have produced a large number of books and articles about Hodge, including some important doctoral dissertations. All of these primary and secondary works are contained in a "Bibliography of the Works by and about Charles Hodge" (compiled by co-editor John W. Stewart, pp. 335-375). This feature alone makes this volume quite valuable, particularly for scholars and researchers.

This literary legacy means that Hodge has left a rich treasure trove for scholars and churchmen today. For those who wish to follow after him in the way of orthodoxy, his three-volume *Systematic Theology* (based on his classroom lectures) continues to furnish valuable insight into the truth of God's Word. He also wrote several commentaries that continue to prove useful, viz., on Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, and Ephesians. Particularly helpful for historical/ecclesiastical purposes are his recently reprinted *Constitutional History of the Presbyterian Church* and *Discussions in Church Polity*. And something of his prescience can be seen in his great diatribe against naturalism, *What is Darwinism?* Such scientism continues to bedevil the church today, though post-modernism has struck a blow to it from an irrationalistic direction. One might argue that the Scottish Common-Sense Realism of the Princetonians was epistemologically naïve, but a careful reading of Hodge and Warfield may reveal greater philosophical sophistication and understanding than hitherto recognized (by both liberal and Reformed critics).

Not only did Hodge leave a literary legacy, he left an incalculable human legacy. During his five decades in the classroom, he was involved in the training of more than 3000 students who went on to serve as pastors, missionaries, and teachers. And, closer to home, two of Charles's and Sarah's eight children became professors at the seminary, the theologian Archibald Alexander

Hodge (1823-1886) and Caspar Wistar Hodge (1830-1881), who was a professor of New Testament. What Charles Hodge meant to the Presbyterian church in America, particularly to the “Old School” (1837-1869), can scarcely be overestimated.

Hodge was not always on the winning side of some of the great debates that divided the church during his life: He was not on the victor’s side of the Gardiner Spring Resolution in 1861 (which led to the split of the church into North/South and the formation of the PCCSA, becoming ultimately the PCUS); and he was not on the victor’s side of the movement to reunite the Old and New School in 1869. He also took some positions (e.g., on the question of two/three office, Roman Catholic baptism, and the legitimacy of church boards) that subsequently fell into disfavor, though his views on the above topics have been revived in more recent years. All this is to say that Hodge was not always followed by a majority in the church. Nonetheless, he was a great leader for the Presbyterian church, one from whom Presbyterian churches still have much to learn and whose works warrant careful study.

However, even when he his positions did not gain ascendancy, frequently his godly character and counsel helped to insure that the church came to positions that were more closely in conformity to Scripture and the confessions than would have been the case without his leadership. His warnings against the consequences of the reunion between Old and New School, for instance, appear to have been vindicated by subsequent history, borne out in the heresy trials of men like David Swing and Charles Briggs, the doctrinal downgrade of the 1903 confessional revisions, the 1906 re-union with the Cumberland Presbyterians and the whole Modernist/Fundamentalist controversy that followed. It is something of a testimony to Hodge’s influence that Princeton remained as theologically sound as it did and for as long as it did—far longer than any other seminaries in the PCUSA. Princeton retained its positive influence in the Presbyterian Church long after other seminaries had capitulated to liberalism/modernism, not beginning its decline until some years after Hodge’s death in 1878, with the election of J. Ross Stevenson as President of Princeton in 1914 and the subsequent re-organization of 1927-28.

The essays in this book are derived from a series of lectures given at a symposium on the campuses of Princeton University and Princeton Theological Seminary in the fall of 1997, the bicentennial year of Hodge’s birth. Some of the contributors are historians,

others are church historians, and some are theologians. Some of the contributors are from schools that are ecclesiastically affiliated, while others are from private or state universities. John W. Stewart is an associate professor of Ministry and Evangelism (at Princeton), Ronald L. Numbers is a professor of the History of Medicine and the History of Science (University of Wisconsin) and James Turner is a chaired professor of Humanities at Notre Dame. All of this adds up to remarkable diversity and a rather significant challenge for the reviewer.

Perhaps it would be most helpful to survey the addresses/articles and their speakers/authors. One might simply give the address titles but some of these authors are first-rate and it is helpful, I think, to know who is doing what: "Introducing Charles Hodge to Postmoderns" by John W. Stewart; "Charles Hodge in the Intellectual Weather of the Nineteenth Century," by James Turner; "The Place of Charles Hodge in the History of the Ideas in America" by Bruce Kuklick; "Charles Hodge and the Beauties and Deformities of Science," by Ronald L. Numbers; "Hodge, the Seminary, and the American Theological Context," by E. Brooks Holifield; "Charles Hodge and the Europeans," by B.A. Gerrish; "Charles Hodge, Womanly Women, and Manly Ministers," by Louise L. Stevenson; "Charles Hodge as an Expositor of the Spiritual Life," by Mark A. Noll; "Charles Hodge as Interpreter of Scripture," by David H. Kelsey; "The Politics of Charles Hodge," by Richard J. Carwardine; and "Charles Hodge's Antislavery Moment," by Allen C. Guelzo. Of these articles, the sympathetic voices come from evangelicals like Noll and Guelzo. Both of these articles were informative and enjoyable. But the articles by some less-than-sympathetic interpreters, like Kuklick, Holifield, and Gerrish, were also insightful and instructive.

Many of the readers of this journal might particularly appreciate the rather interesting and telling Afterword by James H. Moorhead, the Mary McIntosh Bridge Professor of American Church History at Princeton Theological Seminary. The Afterword poses the fascinating question: "Where Does One Find the Legacy of Charles Hodge?" The answer given by Moorhead is that the legacy is to be found, in part, in B.B. Warfield and J. Gresham Machen. But, Moorhead goes on to argue that, Hodge, in all his many-sidedness, cannot be exhausted by the fundamentalists and those who left Princeton in 1929. He sees Hodge as representing more than that which came to be defended by many of his followers. Theologically,

Hodge's legacy is obviously focused in the Old-School Presbyterianism that continues in a denomination like the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Moorhead rightly recognizes, though, that the OPC is an heir not only to the Northerner Hodge but also to the Southerner Machen, involving the differences and distinctives that may be entailed with each man. In any case, Machen and the OPC more fully instantiate Hodge's legacy than any other person or ecclesiastical body have done. For that reason alone, all confessional Presbyterians should rejoice to see this "rehabilitation" of Charles Hodge in wider circles, partial as it is, for Hodge has left an abiding legacy for conservative Presbyterians. He has meant so much to the church; and the church owes so much to him.

—Alan D. Strange

John G. Stackhouse Jr., *Humble Apologetics: Defending the Faith Today*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2002. Pp. xvii + 262. \$26.00 (cloth). ISBN 0-19-513807-4

The great *locus classicus* of apologetics is 1 Peter 3:15. In that text Peter instructs his hearers/readers to "sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear." In other words, Peter tells God's people that they are to carry on the task of apologetics in a humble manner, as John Stackhouse, Sangwoo Youtong Chee Professor of Theology and Culture at Regent College, proposes to do in this book. Stackhouse has furnished us with countless insights and useful suggestions in this work. There is much about this book that is winsome and commendable, especially for those who tire of apologetics carried on in a shrill tone. However, at some crucial points, I believe there are some striking differences between Stackhouse's call for humble apologetics and what Peter and other biblical writers have in mind in calling us to act respectfully and gently toward others.

The context of 1 Peter 3:15 requires our attention. In the beginning of the chapter (vv. 1-6), Peter addresses wives whose husbands "do not obey the Word," teaching them that their husbands, nonetheless, "without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives." Peter here encourages inferiors that recalcitrant superiors may be won not by "throwing pearls before swine" (as our Lord put it in Matthew 7)—by forcing the gospel on

those who do not wish to hear it—but by living a godly life before them. These instructions of Peter have implications beyond husband/wife relations to all human relationships: we have no call to demand that either our superiors or our equals listen to us as we seek to give them the gospel. If they do not wish to hear our words, they can see our lives. Stackhouse clearly recognizes this at a number of places, referring to this as an “apologetic of good deeds” (p. 223). Stackhouse also rightly understands that *misdeeds* on the part of Christians who attempt to defend the faith undermine their own witness, counteracting their apologetic efforts (p. 217). Thus the problem that we often encounter in our apologetic efforts is never a deficiency in the message we are defending but our own deficiency of living lives consistent with the gospel message, that is, our failure to behave as those transformed by God and conformed to his Word.

In verses 8-12, Peter continues and expands on the theme of the apologetical importance of living a godly life. He exhorts the followers of Christ, *inter alia*, to be tenderhearted, courteous, to speak no evil, and to seek peace and to pursue it. In v. 13, Peter asks, “Who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good?” In this, Peter argues that the godly behavior of believers is no threat to society’s welfare, but rather a blessing to society. Nevertheless, there are those who hate believers merely because they do good works. The world, in its opposition to the good, will persecute believers for righteousness’ sake, even as they put to death the Lord of glory, not for crimes that he had committed but because they envied him (Mark 15:10). Even if one does suffer for righteousness’ sake, Peter writes in v. 14, one is blessed, and he further encourages believers: “Do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled.”

The only way to avoid being intimidated in the face of the threats that occasionally come to Christians (precisely because they are living in accordance with God’s Word) is to set apart the Lord God in one’s heart (v. 15a). That is to say, one must consciously bow to the Lord. When one bows to the Lord, when one fears Christ, then and only then, may one know the peace and comfort that allows one to answer with meekness and fear (v. 15c). When we fear God, to paraphrase Cromwell, we need fear none other. In the strength and confidence that the fear of God produces, we can give a defense to every one who asks us a reason for our hope (v. 15b). Such is the dynamic of apologetics according to Peter: we are to live

in a godly way, a way that will arrest the attention even of those to whom we might otherwise have no verbal witness; so living for the Lord that our persecutors will at some point be prompted to inquire of us as to our hope. This is especially so when people see us persecuted and yet turning away from evil to do good, as Paul puts it in Romans 12, “not returning evil for evil.”

Apologetics, then, as set forth in 1 Peter 3:15, occurs in a context of suffering in which even our persecutors cannot but inquire as to the reason that we have hope, though to their minds we have no outward reason for hope whatsoever. Our quiet, confident reply, speaking of our hope and trust in Christ who has done it all for us, is the quintessence of humble apologetics. And it can have this meekness because we have set Christ apart as Lord, firmly convinced of the truth and rightness of God and his Word. We can be humble when we are certain of our footing, only then are we saved from the need to be sophisticated and clever; instead, we can answer with the simplicity, confidence, and directness that come from a genuine meekness and fear of the Lord.

Regretfully, Stackhouse never furnishes his readers with grounds for such unshakeable confidence in God and his Word, the confidence that will allow them to reply meekly, even under sharp persecution. This isn't to say that Stackhouse's book doesn't contain many fine touches. But it is to say that, ultimately, his book fails to construct a biblical model of apologetics. This defect arises from both his explicit definition of apologetics and his implicit definition of humility. Stackhouse often gets at things indirectly, so one has to look hard to discover his definition of apologetics, which ranges over pages 114-120. He “suggests” that “*anything* that helps people to take Christianity more seriously than they did before, *anything* that helps defend and commend it, properly counts as apologetics and should be part of any comprehensive program of apologetics” (p. 115). As one committed to a presuppositional approach to apologetics, I find Stackhouse's definition quite inadequate. If everything is apologetics in this sense, then it seems that nothing is apologetics. In opposition to Stackhouse, I would suggest that apologetics is that enterprise that serves to stop the mouths of unbelievers, demonstrating how the rejection of Christianity reduces their worldview to nonsense and how the affirmation of Christianity permits one to make sense of reality as we perceive it. Since Stackhouse says little explicitly about presuppositionalism (or other views for that matter, pp. 121-127), and then what he does say is a

caricature, I would not expect him to have sympathy for the kind of approach that I have just outlined. Rather, what he seems to be after in his version of humble apologetics is how to be as winsome and undogmatic as possible, while granting to the individual to whom we are witnessing his or her own autonomy (see, e.g., pp. 149-150, 159, 173, 189, 201, etc.).

In a variety of ways, the twofold approach of the Van Tilian apologist, namely, the approach that boldly seeks to expose the irrationality/absurdity of unbelief and to show the utter necessity of Christianity as the indispensable precondition of all intelligibility, flies in the face of Stackhouse's "humble" approach. For instance, Stackhouse warns against the Christian "claiming too much" (p. 182). If what he means by this is that the lives of Christians are not always consistent with their doctrine, sadly, or that we as creatures do not have the kind of comprehensive understanding of all things as only God the Creator has, then I could agree with him. But in his book Stackhouse makes it clear that Christianity cannot claim to be the necessary precondition for any valid worldview; instead, he argues that "there are good grounds to claim that Buddhism is rational, or that naturalism is, and so on" (p. 150). Apparently this is what is meant by humble apologetics. But is it humble if believers fail to proclaim (boldly yet meekly) God's truth as set forth in his Word? Must believers pretend that Buddhism is as epistemically warranted as Christianity? I believe that 1 Peter 3:15 requires us to set apart Christ as Lord epistemically, as well as every other way. For Paul would have us to "take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5).

Although Stackhouse does not explicitly define humility anywhere in his book, what he means by it can be gathered from several places, particularly in the book's closing pages (pp. 227-232). Clearly, Stackhouse believes that it is not humble for one to make the kind of claim that the presuppositionalist routinely makes, namely, that by his Holy Spirit, God has renewed the minds of those whom he has chosen. Consequently, they receive and understand God's objective revelation of himself given in his Word. Stackhouse properly understands that we do not know or comprehend the truth as God does. Thus we should be humble. But Stackhouse extends this idea to mean that since we as creatures can know only perspectively and not perfectly, we ultimately cannot have certainty, "for all we know, *we might be wrong* about any or all of this" (p. 232).

At this point, I believe that Stackhouse's position not only contradicts what the Scripture teaches us about its undoubted veracity, but that it is not humble. For true humility involves taking our proper place as creatures before God as Creator and even as sinful creatures before God as our gracious Savior, who loves us in Christ and will never let us go. In other words, humility means taking God at his Word, submitting our understanding to his wisdom, worshiping him as Creator and Lord of our hearts and minds, and trusting him in the bold affirmation that his Word is truth, that Jesus is *the way, the truth, and the life*.

In his chapter on "defining conversion," Stackhouse seems to see conversion as a process over time, coterminous with what we would call sanctification. This isn't necessarily a problem. Jonathan Edwards, for instance, defined sanctification at one point as "continuous conversion." But some of Stackhouse's discussion (particularly from pp. 81-85) points in the direction of saying that the believer's acceptance with God remains provisional and uncertain until they actually get to heaven. In other words, he equates conversion and salvation/sanctification. He does not anywhere discuss justification in this connection. But justification is the ground of our acceptance with God; and the doctrine in its classic Protestant form directly addresses both our sin and sinful nature (along with the imputed guilt of Adam's first sin), pointing the believer to the sole sufficiency of Christ's person and work (in which our sin is imputed to him and his righteousness to us). As it stands, Stackhouse's discussion of conversion/salvation is not decidedly Protestant. As such there is no doctrine of personal assurance. Failing to set forth clearly the doctrine of justification in treating conversion and the necessity of a work of grace to be saved (getting to heaven), Stackhouse offers no basis of assurance for the believer in the present. Everything is provisional; and believers must simply "wait and see."

We should not be surprised, however, given what Stackhouse has argued about the value of "uncertainty" in apologetics, that he sounds no clear note for the assurance of salvation, just as he is squeamish about asserting with assurance the truth of Christianity. While an individual believer may lack personal assurance of his or her salvation, it is altogether another thing to lack certainty as to the veracity and reality of the Word of God and the Christian faith. And while it may be chic and sophisticated to sound like Heisenberg, it

escapes me how that is humble. Such uncertainty is not characteristic of Peter, Paul, or the other biblical writers.

Stackhouse has been influenced by Alvin Plantinga, William Alston, Nicholas Wolsterstorff and others identified as practitioners of “the new Reformed epistemology.” These thinkers argue that Christians have warrant for their faith, rationally and otherwise, and that belief in God can be properly basic. It is not cognitively or epistemically unwarranted to begin with God. In fact, they argue that Christians are within their epistemic rights to view belief in God as properly basic. This means that in the academy, Christians, with their faith commitments, deserve a respectful hearing and a “place at the table.” Presuppositionalism agrees with the new Reformed epistemology that belief in God is properly basic; it certainly agrees that Christianity has warrant. But presuppositionalism, I think, goes further and argues that Christianity alone has ultimate, comprehensive, and cohesive warrant, and that every philosophical claim counter to Christianity is finally unwarranted, for these claims prove to be internally incoherent and inconsistent; these claims also come to undermine rationality itself, and render real intelligibility impossible. Although Stackhouse does not articulate presuppositionalism in this way, he would regard such an approach as arrogant and as not humble. For in his scheme, uncertainty (not certainty) qualifies as humility, even as he frequently calls believers to sophistication, regarding uncertainty as sophisticated.

In the middle of his book, Stackhouse makes a very revealing statement (or admission) about humility. In helping us to understand why our neighbor might be resistant to our apologetical efforts, he writes, “There is a genuine humility among some of our neighbors who simply don’t believe that their beliefs, or practices, or mores are better than everyone else’s, and so they cannot understand why anyone else would believe such a thing, let alone try to persuade other people to change their minds” (p. 121). Here Stackhouse seems to say that humility comes in the way of refusing to be certain that what one believes is better than what others believe (even if those beliefs contradict or oppose one another). This looks, if nothing else, naïve: Most people generally view their own beliefs as superior to the beliefs of others—especially the beliefs that oppose their own. To label one’s pretended or real agnosticism about the validity of differing belief systems “humility” is astonishing, at least from a biblical point of view. For humility, as

defined in Scripture, is a fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:21-22). Only those who have been renewed by the Spirit can truly practice humility. At a number of places, Stackhouse, to his credit, emphasizes that the Holy Spirit alone can renew and illumine believers; only the Spirit can convert sinners. But Stackhouse fails to follow through on this observation by affirming that those thus renewed by the Spirit can have, as the Westminster Confession puts it, “infallible assurance” of their salvation, and through the Spirit’s internal testimony they can know with certainty that the Bible is true. Likewise, they can understand the central doctrines of the Bible.

Stackhouse rightly understands our limits as creatures; he wisely reminds us that we are not the Creator. But he overreaches when he turns this affirmation into epistemological uncertainty. Philosophically, this is skepticism, which is all that remains if we cannot know anything with certainty. Are we to know Stackhouse’s skepticism or the proposition of his skepticism with certainty? We would do better not to succumb to the siren song of pluralistic respectability and embrace an approach to apologetics that sounds more like Sextus Empiricus than the Word of God. Religiously, this looks perilously like unbelief. For Stackhouse argues that though we may hope and trust, that is not the same thing as “knowing” with certainty. His approach is at variance with the threefold definition of faith that characterizes a Reformed understanding of the term, wherein saving faith consists of knowledge, assent, and trust. The content of that knowledge is the sure testimony of God’s Word, the objective truth illumined in our inner being by the work of the Holy Spirit, with a particular focus on the person and work of Christ. Believers give hearty assent to that and they entrust themselves to it. To this we call people as we preach the person and work of Christ, urging all who hear such gospel proclamation to “repent and believe.”

Stackhouse’s apologetic proves to be feeble because his understanding of gospel proclamation is likewise feeble. For those who see evangelism and apologetics as of a piece, involving both proclamation and defense, Stackhouse’s approach is too timid. In fact, Stackhouse argues that we should in our apologetics approach/encounter think in terms of “process” and not of “crisis” (p. 200). Yet, preaching often brings on a crisis. True biblical preaching confronts the listener and demands decision. Of course the preacher cannot induce compliance; but he is to hold forth the

word of life that calls for such. This is what the gospel-call involves. Certainly there is process in our lives as believers, but there are also real moments of crisis, of crucial decision. Apparently, Stackhouse places this under condemnation as well, since it lacks in humility.

There is much in this volume that is genuinely and helpfully useful for doing the work of apologetics when it is divorced from the framework that Stackhouse provides for us. Stackhouse so much wishes to knock the rough edges off of our apologetical encounters that he virtually denies the antithesis that exists between the truth and falsehood. He writes: "Worst of all is the spiritual polarization, with the dualism of 'we = good' and 'they = evil' leading directly to the sin of pride, with the concomitant contempt for, and dismissal of, the neighbor who opposes us. Jesus had very strong words for such attitudes: 'But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgment; and if you insult a brother or sister, you will be liable to the council; and if you say, "You fool," you will be liable to the hell of fire"' (pp. 220-221). Stackhouse identifies real dangers here, but do these serious and sober words of our Lord mean that the person who says in his heart, "There is no God," is *not* a fool? (see Psalm 14:1). Indeed, we are not to go around calling people fools, but God has called the wicked fools; and we act foolishly if we fail to conduct ourselves consistent with that reality. Humble apologetics involves taking God at his Word, and in meek boldness, speaking so as to confound the "wise" and to give comfort to "babes." We do need humble apologetics that is *fortiter in re* as well as *sauviter in modo*, recalling the motto of Cornelius Van Til: strong in substance, smooth (pleasing) in manner. Sadly, in his call for epistemic uncertainty, Stackhouse leaves us all weak in substance, with houses built not on the rock but on sand.

—Alan D. Strange

Samuel Terrien, *The Psalms: Strophic Structure and Theological Commentary*. The Eerdmans Critical Commentary. David Noel Freedman, General editor; Astrid B. Beck, Associate editor. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003. Pp. xix + 971. \$95.00 (cloth). ISBN 0-8028-2605-9

Samuel Terrien was the Davenport Professor of Hebrew and Cognate Languages at Union Theological Seminary in New York

City. Terrien's work on the Psalms is one of the latest additions to the Eerdmans Critical Commentary series. This large-scale study of the Psalms was his concluding masterpiece after a very productive career in Old Testament study, much of it in the poetry and sapiential literature of the Hebrew Bible.

Terrien has aimed this work at "both scholars and general readers" (p. xiv), an ambitious undertaking indeed. He notes in his Preface (p. xiii) that three tasks devolve upon the exegete: first, "to clarify the obscurities and elucidate the theological significance of these poems," second, "to analyze their strophic structure," and third, "to discover a link between their archaic language and the intellectual demands of modern thinking and spirituality." The author has kept himself close to this agenda as he examines each of the 150 Psalms.

His treatment of each psalm is arranged according to a uniform format: Terrien provides his own translation, showing strophic structure, followed by a discussion in succession of "Form," "Commentary," and "Date and Theology." An extensive bibliography that includes many non-English works follows his translation.

The author stays with the consonantal testimony of the Masoretic Text, avoiding the uncertain task of textual emendation where obscurities occur. Interestingly, he retains "Thee" and "Thou" in his translation of the psalms, but some of his translations are rather unique and often attention-getting (e.g., Ps. 1:6: "but the way of the ungodly vanishes in the sands;" Ps. 16:9: "... my glory is gleeful!").

The introduction is a very helpful part of this study (see pp. 1-65). He brings the reader up-to-date with current Psalms scholarship. Questionable as an overstatement, however, is Terrien's idea that the Hebrew psalmists were "trained by the personnel of Canaanite sanctuaries" (p. 36; cf. p. 32).

The author is not dogmatic on date and authorship of many of the psalms. He makes suggestions with regard to the date, frequently finding linkages to the themes and ideas of Jeremiah (e.g., p. 505, concerning Psalm 69). He offers possible explanations for a variety of authors (e.g., p. 151: "if the psalmodic meditation represents the work of a temple chorister.... If the hero was a royal figure..."). Psalm 16 is not from David (pp. 180ff.), says Terrien.

His suggestion that Psalm 45 (a "royal epithalamium") was originally written to commemorate the wedding of Ahab and

Jezebel will be problematic to many. Also, Terrien understands the “gods” (*’ēlōhîm*) of Psalm 82 to reflect a Canaanite “mythological belief” in a divine assembly of lesser deities, and not a reference to “human magistrates and other administrators of high rank...” (pp. 588ff.).

His statement that the New Covenant has not yet entered history is belied by the revelation of Hebrews 8 and 10 (p. 399).

According to Terrien, the Christology (messianism) of the Psalms is apparently not inherent in the text-message of the Psalms themselves (see Luke 24:44), but is found in reflection upon the text by (later) Jewish and Christian communities (see, e.g., p. 522, his comments on Ps. 72). The Christology of Psalm 110, so explicit in the New Testament (cf. Matt. 22:41-46), receives scant attention in Terrien’s discussion (pp. 749-754), much to the disappointment of any reader of Scripture who wants to see the redemptive-historical connections between the Davidic monarchy and Jesus the Messiah.

This work requires close reading at times, as Terrien’s prose is sometimes meditative, sometimes more philosophical, always thoughtful.

The price of this volume will be prohibitive for many, but the book’s value is evident in its attention to strophic structure (always a difficult element in Psalm studies) and suggestive directions in the exegesis. It is not written in the style of a devotion or personal appropriation of the Psalms’ messages. Those who expound the Psalter will want to supplement Terrien with other commentators who are more intentional in pointing out the Christology of the Psalms and its current application in the world and the church.

This reviewer is disappointed that the printed text, rather than using Hebrew characters, employs transliterations instead. It is also disappointing that there is no differentiation in the printed type between the divine Name (YHWH) and the name *Adonai* (both are “the Lord”).

Extensive footnotes show that Terrien has read far and wide in the literature of Hebrew poetry in general and in that of the Psalms in particular. There are two indices, one of subjects and another of Scripture and other ancient sources, both of which are extensive and very helpful for the reader.

—Mark D. Vander Hart

Johannes G. Vos, *The Westminster Larger Catechism: A Commentary*, edited by G. I. Williamson. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2002. Pp. xxiv + 615. \$19.99. ISBN 0-87552-514-8

This volume is to be welcomed by pastors and church school teachers who are interested in exploring the Reformed confessional heritage and delving deeper into the doctrines that define and express the faith of Presbyterian churches throughout the world.

The author of these materials, Johannes G. Vos (1903-1983), taught at Geneva College from 1954-1978. The contents of this book, first appearing in *Blue Banner Faith and Life* (January 1946 – July 1949), consist of a commentary on all 196 questions and answers of the Larger Catechism, with these materials being divided into two major headings: (1) What Man Ought to Believe; and (2) What Duty God Requires of Man. The questions and answers are grouped into seventeen chapters, and cover the major doctrines of the Christian faith, as well as an exposition of the Ten Commandments and the Lord's Prayer.

As an illustration of the procedure the author uses throughout this volume, we point to a chapter entitled "The Benefits of the Work of the Mediator." Here Q/As 57-90 are handled. Under each Question and Answer of the catechism, Vos's approach is uniform: first a list of important scripture references are listed, then follows a commentary using the question and answer method. For example, Question 73 of the Larger Catechism asks "How does faith justify a sinner in the sight of God?" Vos expounds the catechism's answer by asking and answering his own set of questions, such as: "Is faith the means of our justification, or is it the ground of our justification, or is it both?" "What is the only ground of our justification?" "Is faith regarded in the Bible as a 'good work' of the believer?" "What error is sometimes held concerning the place of faith in our salvation?" "What is meant by saying that faith is 'only an instrument'?" "What is the error of the Roman Catholic Church concerning faith?" And "What is the common error of 'liberal' Protestants concerning faith?" This, I think, should adequately acquaint prospective readers of this book with its methodology and practical character.

It should also be noted that this doctrinal digest is improved and enhanced by a previously published introduction to the Larger Catechism by W. Robert Godfrey, and by Jeffrey K. Boer's "An

Outline of the Westminster Larger Catechism.” There is also a comprehensive Scripture index.

A word of thanks goes to G. I. Williamson for editing this commentary and bringing the separate articles together into one convenient volume. The publishers are also to be complimented for the handsome printing of these materials. This book is highly recommended and ought to benefit Reformed and Presbyterian churches for years to come.

—J. Mark Beach

Rowland S. Ward, *God and Adam: Reformed Theology and the Creation Covenant*. Wantirna, Australia: New Melbourne Press, 2003. Pp. 208. \$13.50. ISBN 0-9586241-6-X

One of the hallmarks of Reformed theology is its development and articulation of the biblical doctrine of the covenant. Though there is a considerable diversity of opinion among Reformed writers of the sixteenth century and in subsequent centuries regarding the covenant, the consensus of the Reformed tradition is well represented in the classic formulations of the Westminster Confession of Faith. According to the Westminster Confession of Faith, all of the Triune God’s dealings with the human race are covenantal in nature. Only by means of “some voluntary condescension on God’s part” (WCF, chapter VII) can man, who was created uniquely in God’s image, enjoy the fullness of blessing in fellowship with God.

Of particular importance to the Westminster Confession of Faith’s handling of the doctrine of the covenant is the distinction drawn between an original, prelapsarian covenant, the “covenant of works,” and a subsequent, postlapsarian covenant, the “covenant of grace.” In the earlier writings of the sixteenth-century Reformers, this distinction between two covenants, one before and the other after the Fall, was not explicit. Though it is not difficult to discern the trajectory of doctrinal development among Reformed theologians in the direction of this kind of two-covenant view, the Westminster Confession of Faith stands out among the Reformed confessions as the first to express clearly a two-covenant theology. In this two-covenant theology, the original covenant that God made with man in Adam was a covenant of *works* that promised life “upon condition of perfect and personal obedience.” Adam was

obliged by the terms of this covenant relationship to offer himself to God in heartfelt devotion and service. The reward promised Adam in this covenant relationship was life in communion with God. However, failure to live in accord with this covenant's stipulation would, in accord with God's truth and justice, bring condemnation and death. Because Adam failed to live obediently and faithfully before God, he plunged himself and his posterity into ruin. The covenant of grace, accordingly, is God's chosen means to provide his people with life in communion with himself. Only by way of Christ's mediatorial work as the second Adam, who perfectly obeyed the law and suffered vicariously its penalty, can believers be restored to life in communion with God. This covenant of grace, though variously administered throughout the course of the history of redemption, is the gracious instrument whereby God is pleased through Christ to grant his people life in unbroken fellowship with himself. In this understanding of the covenant of grace, the work of Christ accomplishes for his people what the first Adam failed to do, namely, procure an inheritance of eternal life in fellowship with God through his obedience and death. The covenant of grace, though distinct from the covenant of works as a postlapsarian remedy for human sin and disobedience, fulfills the obligations and thereby realizes the promise of the covenant of works, namely, eternal life in communion with the Triune God.

I briefly summarize this two-covenant theology and its classic presentation in the Westminster Confession of Faith in order to provide a context for appreciating Rowland S. Ward's study, *God and Adam: Reformed Theology and the Creation Covenant*. Ward, who is an ordained pastor of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia, presents his study in order to defend the thesis that "[t]he covenant of works/covenant of grace distinction is not an artificial one unwarranted by Scripture, but a proper distinction which clarifies and safeguards the heart of the Gospel in the saving union of the believer with Christ through faith" (p. 5). Central to Ward's thesis is the claim that a faulty view of the relationship between God and Adam will inevitably lead to a faulty view of the work of the second Adam, Christ, in his office as Mediator of the covenant of grace. Noting that there is no English monograph that traces the development prior to 1700 of the Reformed understanding of the covenant with Adam, Ward offers his study to fill this gap. In order to achieve his purpose, he begins his book with a brief survey of the biblical data regarding the covenant before and after the fall into

sin. The principal part of his book follows, in which he reviews the development of the Reformed understanding of the covenant of works. Ward's procedure in this section is to let the sources speak for themselves as much as possible, noting differences of emphasis and progress in doctrinal understanding as he goes along. In the concluding section of his study, he overviews developments in covenant theology from 1701-2000.

Since Ward's approach is to quote frequently throughout his study from a wide diversity of Reformed writers, it is not easy to summarize the contents of his work. Anyone who has a keen interest in the historical development of the doctrine of a pre-lapsarian covenant of works in Reformed theology will find a wealth of material to stimulate his or her interest and provide a historical context for contemporary discussions in the Reformed community. Ward's study, however, does clearly argue several important points that are worthy of notice.

First, Ward maintains that the doctrine of a pre-fall covenant of works is either implicitly or explicitly a consensus doctrine of the Reformed tradition. Though Reformed writers prior to the seventeenth century did not expressly teach a two-covenant view, by the time of the writing of the Westminster Confession of Faith this view was able to be crystallized in what is arguably the most complete symbolic statement of Reformed confessionalism. Ward provides sufficient and compelling evidence that in all the branches of the Reformed tradition, whether on the continent of Europe (Netherlands), the British isles, or in North America, the federal theology set forth in the Westminster Confession of Faith represents a point of general consensus among Reformed theologians. Despite areas of diverging opinion regarding the nature of the covenant with Adam, these differences did not materially affect the substance of the teaching that the work of Christ, the second Adam, must be viewed within the setting of Adam's breaking covenant with God and plunging his posterity into ruin.

Second, though Reformed writers historically acknowledged that the Genesis account of creation does not speak expressly of a "covenant" between God and (man in) Adam, they were convinced that all the elements of a covenant were present. Among the principal elements of the pre-fall covenant relationship were the following: (1) the stipulation by God of an obligation of perfect obedience, which was particularized in a special probationary test when Adam was forbidden to eat of the tree of the knowledge of

good and evil (Gen. 2:16-17); (2) the divine promise of eternal life to Adam upon the condition of his perfect obedience and heartfelt devotion; (3) the divine threat of (spiritual and physical) death, should Adam fall into sin and disobedience; and (4) the provision of a sign or sacrament of what this covenant promised in the “tree of life” (Gen. 3).

Third, among those differences of viewpoint regarding the covenant with Adam that came to expression among Reformed writers, Ward mentions several that are of special significance and that remain points of discussion.

In some formulations of the covenant with Adam, it is not clear whether the covenant belongs to Adam’s circumstance as a creature and image-bearer of God, or whether the covenant is a kind of “super-added” relationship that God establishes with Adam subsequent to his creation. In the latter view, there is something of a formal similarity to the Roman Catholic teaching of man’s twofold relationship with God as a creature of nature and as a beneficiary of an additional gracious gift. On the basis of his analysis of the sources, Ward suggests that the majority opinion tends to view man’s covenant relationship with God as inherent within his unique status as God’s image-bearer.

There is also some divergence in terminology among Reformed writers. Some prefer the language of a covenant of “works,” while others prefer the language of a covenant of “life” or “nature.” These terminological differences do not express, according to Ward, any difference in teaching, but simply view the pre-fall covenant from different vantage points (in terms of what it stipulates, what it promises, or what historical epoch it represents).

Another difference of opinion relates to the goal of the covenant of works. Most Reformed writers viewed Adam’s original state as falling short of the perfection that would become his in the consummation of God’s purpose. Since Adam failed to obey God and thereby obtain eternal life, only Christ, the second Adam, secures the more glorious inheritance of unbroken fellowship with God that Adam forfeited through sin. A few Reformed writers past and present, Ward notes, fail to see clearly the connection between Christ’s procurement of eternal life in communion with God and the promise of that kind of life originally made to Adam in paradise. However, the predominant view concluded, from the way in which Christ the second Adam secured for his people a surpassing glory of unbreakable communion with God, that the first Adam was

originally placed in a position that fell short of eschatological glory (compare 1 Cor. 15).

Perhaps the most difficult and, in some respects, unresolved feature of historic Reformed discussion relates to the peculiar features of the Mosaic administration of the covenant of grace. Ward notes that most writers regarded the Mosaic administration as a particular form of the covenant of grace. However, many argued that the Mosaic administration included a stipulation of (legal) obedience that served to imprison Israel under the bondage and curse of the law, so as to prepare her for the coming of Christ and his mediatorial work. Some argued further that the Mosaic administration included a kind of restatement of the covenant of works, since it required an obedience to the law as a condition for the enjoyment of life and blessing in fellowship with God. Whatever the differences of opinion regarding this subject, the consensus opinion of Reformed writers was that, subsequent to Adam's fall into sin, there is no way to inherit life and blessing in covenant with God other than on the basis of Christ's saving work.

Fourth, one of the issues often discussed in connection with the covenant of works is that of grace and merit. In his outline of the Reformed discussions of the covenant with Adam, Ward argues that this issue was prominently discussed among the early Reformed writers, and remains a point of considerable discussion in contemporary debate. This issue concerns such questions as: was the pre-fall covenant with Adam an expression of God's "grace" or favor toward the creature? If it was an expression of God's favor, how does this differ from the "grace" God shows toward his people in Christ, the Mediator of the covenant of grace? Furthermore, if the obedience God stipulated in the covenant of works was the basis for Adam's inheritance of life in fellowship with God, may we speak accordingly of Adam's "meriting" life by means of that obedience?

At various points throughout his study, Ward touches upon these questions and provides some useful help to their resolution. He argues, for example, that it was generally agreed among Reformed writers that the covenant with Adam was a kind of "voluntary condescension" on God's part, and therefore an expression of the divine benevolence or goodness of God. Adam was placed in covenant with God as an act of God's kindness as his Creator and Lord. Moreover, God promised Adam more than he (as creature) could ever claim to deserve, the glory of perfected and

unbreakable communion with God in eternal life. For these reasons, Reformed writers commonly opposed the notion that Adam's obedience under the covenant of works would "merit" the divine reward in an absolute or unqualified manner. However, in a subtle point that some readers might miss, Ward adds that this does not altogether exclude the features of justice and "merit" in the Reformed view of the covenant with Adam (and in the covenant of grace). Since God administers the covenant in accord with his own truth and justice, the obedience of Christ, the second Adam, may properly be termed a just basis for, even a "meriting," of the covenant inheritance for his people. Thus, the language of justice and merit was employed by Reformed writers in a covenantal or "pactional" manner, namely, to express the element of God's justice in requiring the second Adam, Christ, to obey the law perfectly and suffer its curse. A proper view of this issue, Ward insists, is critical to a proper view of the work of Christ in securing the believer's justification and acceptance with God. The justification of believers occurs on the basis of the imputation of the righteousness of Christ to them. Because Christ obeyed the law and suffered its curse on behalf of his people, believers who are united to him by faith justly receive an inheritance of righteousness and life that was lost through the original disobedience of Adam (Romans 5).

And fifth, Ward notes in the closing section of his study that more recent discussions of the covenant with Adam exhibit several unfortunate tendencies. Among these tendencies, he identifies the following: an inclination among some Dutch theologians (K. Schilder and those influenced by him) to "flatten out" the relationship between the pre-fall covenant with Adam and the post-fall covenant of grace; the generally negative appraisal by neo-orthodox theology of a doctrine of a pre-fall covenant of works that requires obedience as a condition for obtaining the promise of life; and the tendency toward one-sidedness in the understanding of the covenant of works. It is the latter tendency that is of special interest, since it relates to a contemporary discussion among Reformed theologians in North America (associated with the names of such noteworthy Reformed theologians as John Murray, Norman Shepherd, and Meredith Kline). In his discussion of this tendency, Ward makes it fairly clear that he believes the contemporary discussion fails to appreciate adequately the tradition of Reformed theology on the covenant with Adam. On the one hand, some contemporary writers are so anxious to avoid the language of

“works” and the “meriting/obtaining” of the reward of life on the basis of works in the covenant with Adam, that they compromise the work of the second Adam, Christ. The failure to appreciate the covenant of works at this point imperils, according to Ward, a proper view of Christ’s obedience (active and passive) as the meritorious ground for the believer’s justification. On the other hand, some contemporary writers are so anxious to avoid the language of God’s “favor” or “grace” in the covenant with Adam that they articulate a doctrine of a covenant of works that fails to appreciate the divine goodness exhibited to Adam before the fall. Ward evidently believes that all participants in these debates would benefit from a more intimate acquaintance with the historical tradition of Reformed theology on the covenant with Adam.

This brief survey of the principal claims of Ward’s study illustrates the breadth of his interest and the usefulness of his work as a point of departure for further study and reflection on the covenant with Adam. Though Ward’s study is only a kind of primer in the most important historical sources, it should serve as a useful guide into a difficult and controversial subject. In some areas, Ward’s treatment is tantalizingly brief. In others, questions that his survey raises are not adequately resolved. Nonetheless, he succeeds in providing the kind of broad overview of the history of Reformed discussions of the covenant of works that he promises in his introduction. Ward’s study is by no means the last word on the subject. However, it is an indispensable resource for those who are engaged in more recent discussions of this subject. Lamentably, most of the more recent discussions exhibit little acquaintance or engagement with the rich and complex history of writing on the subject of the covenant of works that Ward overviews. Many of the missteps and misunderstandings present in these discussions could easily be avoided by participants were they to become more acquainted with those who made similar missteps in the past. Though Ward’s study is no substitute for a direct examination of this history, it does fill a gap in the literature. It certainly deserves to be read by those who would comment today on the subject of the covenant of works. Failure to do so risks extending a needlessly confused and unfruitful discussion.

—Cornelis P. Venema